

Anthony D. Hermann · Amy B. Brunell
Joshua D. Foster *Editors*

Handbook of Trait Narcissism

Key Advances, Research Methods, and
Controversies

 Springer

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Preface

We are very pleased to present *The Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Key Advances, Research Methods, and Controversies*. This handbook is the first of its kind, an edited volume devoted to the latest theoretical and empirical developments on individual differences in narcissism in personality and social psychology. Ours, however, is not the first “handbook” dedicated to narcissism; Campbell and Miller (2011) paved the way with one which sought to bridge the clinical and personality-social “divide” providing a much-needed summary of recent work from both academic spheres. Our effort here is somewhat less ambitious but comes at a time in which narcissism research is exploding and theoretical development is happening at a rapid pace. According to PsychINFO, there have been over 1600 peer-reviewed journal articles published on the subject of narcissism since January of 2011, a more than 50% increase from all those published since the Narcissistic Personality Inventory was published in 1979! In order to accommodate as many topics as possible, we have adopted a “brief chapter” approach in which we have asked authors to summarize cutting-edge research and suggest future research directions in less than 3500 words. We believe this also serves the reader as well, as it makes it quicker and easier than ever before to keep abreast of the latest developments. We hope this handbook will serve the seasoned narcissism researcher trying to keep up with this rapidly advancing and fluid field, the novice researcher or student trying to gain a theoretical foothold, as well as the journalist or member of the public who desires an accurate yet accessible depiction of the science of narcissism.

Our editorial duties for this volume have given us a “bird’s eye” view of our field and we have several observations to offer our readers. First, narcissism research has spread to a dramatically wider variety of domains since Campbell and Miller’s (2011) volume. For example, our handbook includes chapters on topics like followership, memory, friendship, envy, religiosity, and bullying—topics that did not appear in the Campbell and Miller’s (2011) handbook. Moreover, new and fascinating empirical perspectives on the development of narcissism have appeared in the intervening years, which include advances in our understanding of the impact of parenting, economic conditions, behavioral genetics, and other factors, all of which can be found in the current volume.

Our initial intention was to develop a book that focused exclusively on grandiose narcissism research. However, we quickly realized that the literature on vulnerable narcissism had exploded recently as well and was often so

intimately linked to research on grandiose narcissism that it was impractical, and even misleading, to avoid the topic altogether. As a result, a substantial portion of the handbook addresses developments in the literatures on both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. For example, we have four chapters entirely devoted to making key empirical and theoretical distinctions between the two constructs, and a great many chapters address vulnerable narcissism as a substantial subtopic. Questions remain, however, regarding which core traits vulnerable and grandiose narcissism share and how to best conceptualize these distinct (i.e., weakly correlated) personality traits. Moreover, the conceptual and empirical relation between grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and the more clinically oriented constructs of pathological narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder remain underdeveloped. Nevertheless, we think readers of this volume will come away with a more nuanced understanding of narcissism and its many varieties.

A good deal of recent research has also made it very clear that individual differences in grandiosity and self-inflation can take many forms. For example, recent work on communal and collective narcissism has made a compelling case that trait self-aggrandizement can be based on prosocial traits (“I am the most charitable person!”) and also be held on behalf of one’s social group (“We are the best country on Earth!”). These developments have clearly arisen, at least in part, because there is still ample room in the field for psychometric and theoretical innovation. On the other hand, we still lack consensus on how to best measure many of our core constructs and those that are relevant, albeit distinct, from narcissism. The good news is that new and theoretically driven measures are emerging, which serve as useful tools as we seek to advance our knowledge in a more concerted and cumulative fashion.

As we present this work to you, we are filled with gratitude for the excellent contributions of all our authors and to be a part of an intellectually exciting field that is more relevant than ever. The three of us approached this daunting project with a combined sense of excitement and more than a little anxiety. Our anxieties were quickly replaced with feelings of appreciation and indebtedness, however, when we began to receive drafts of the individual chapters. They were overwhelmingly punctual and well-written and required modest levels of editing on our parts. We are so thankful to the contributors, who so clearly put significant effort into their chapters, and did so almost entirely as an act of collegiality. Who knew that narcissism researchers could be so selfless? More specifically, we are thankful for collegial support and advice from W. Keith Campbell and the encouragement and assistance of Morgan Ryan at Springer, without which this book would have never made it off the ground.

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Amy B. Brunell is an Associate Professor at The Ohio State University, Mansfield. She received her M.A. in Psychology from the College of William and Mary and her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 2007. She teaches courses in social psychology, personality, the self, and interpersonal relationships. Her research concerns the role of narcissism in social contexts, such as emergent leadership, decision making, academic cheating, as well as romantic relationship behaviors. She has published papers in academic journals such as *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Research in Personality*. She serves on the editorial board of *Assessment*. She prides herself in conducting and evaluating research with her undergraduate students to help them prepare for graduate school and beyond.

Joshua D. Foster a Washington, D.C. native, earned his Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Georgia in 2005. Since then, he has been a member of the Behavior and Brain Sciences faculty (Psychology Department) at the University of South Alabama where he was awarded tenure in 2011 and promoted to rank of Full Professor in 2017. Dr. Foster's principal areas of research are personality and individual differences, psychometrics, and latent variable modeling. He has published more than 50 papers that have been cited more than 6000 times in the literature. His work has also been featured in a variety of newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Huffington Post*. Dr. Foster has mentored numerous students in his laboratory who have gone on to graduate programs, including University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Columbia University, Colorado State

University, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Penn State University. When not working, he enjoys watching television, playing video games, thinking about exercising, and hanging out with his family. His wife, Dr. M. Hope Jackson, is a practicing clinical psychologist who specializes in treating anxiety, mood, and eating disorders. Together, they have two boys, Mathew and Colin, who specialize in being silly.

Part I

**Definitional and Theoretical Perspectives
on Narcissism**



Distinguishing Between Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism, and Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Brandon Weiss and Joshua D. Miller

Abstract

This chapter draws upon the empirical literature to delineate the distinguishing characteristics of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). We find that these constructs can be well described using models of general personality such as the five-factor model (FFM) and, in particular, three primary traits including (low) agreeableness (or antagonism, entitlement, and self-involvement), agentic extraversion (or boldness, behavioral approach orientation), and neuroticism (or reactivity, behavioral avoidance orientation). Our review led to three primary conclusions. First, the FFM trait correlates of NPD and grandiose narcissism overlap quite substantially. Second, the two differ to some degree with regard to the role of extraversion, with stronger relations found for grandiose narcissism than NPD. Third, extant data suggest that vulnerable narcissism represents a construct that is largely divergent from NPD and grandiose narcissism, composed of the tendency to experience a wide array of negative emotions such as depression, self-consciousness,

stress, anxiety, and urgency. Nevertheless, vulnerable narcissism shares a common core of interpersonal antagonism, though the traits associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are not identical. Finally, our chapter concludes with recommendations for aligning the alternative model of personality disorders (PDs) in Section III of DSM-5 with the substantial and long-standing empirical research literature that documents the improved validity of dimensional, trait-based models of PDs.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Personality · Five-factor model · NPD · NPD impairment · FFNI · Five-factor narcissism inventory

There is increasing recognition that there are at least two different dimensions or forms of narcissism (i.e., grandiose vs. vulnerable) that have been discussed using a variety of titles (e.g., Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller & Campbell, 2008; Wink, 1991). Cain, Pincus, and Ansell (2008) provided a comprehensive list of the terms that have been associated with grandiose (e.g., manipulative, phallic, overt, egotistical, oblivious, exhibitionistic, psychopathic) and vulnerable narcissism (e.g., craving, contact-shunning, thin-

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skinned, hypervigilant, shy). In general, grandiose narcissism is associated with traits such as immodesty, interpersonal dominance, self-absorption, callousness, and manipulativeness; grandiose narcissism also tends to be positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to psychological distress. Alternatively, vulnerable narcissism is associated with increased rates of psychological distress and negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, shame), low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority, as well as egocentric and hostile interpersonal behaviors. Both, however, are thought to contain a core of antagonism (e.g., Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017), although this is weaker in vulnerable narcissism than grandiose, at least according to how they are currently operationalized.

There remain questions as to how these grandiose and vulnerable narcissism dimensions fit into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5* (DSM-5; APA, 2013)/DSM-IV (APA, 1994)-based construct of NPD. Factor analyses of NPD symptoms indicate that the DSM-IV NPD criteria set is either primarily (i.e., six of nine symptoms; Fossati et al., 2005) or entirely (Miller, Hoffman, Campbell, & Pilonis, 2008) consistent with grandiose narcissism, although self-report measures can inadvertently vary in the dimension captured (e.g., Miller et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the DSM-IV/5 text associated with NPD includes content indicative of vulnerability and fragility, such as the following:

Vulnerability in self-esteem makes individuals with narcissistic personality disorder very sensitive to “injury” from criticism or defeat. Although they may not show it outwardly, criticism may haunt these individuals and may leave them feeling humiliated, degraded, hollow, and empty. (APA, 2000, p. 715)

Although the DSM-IV categorical model was retained in the DSM-5 as the primary diagnostic system, an alternative model of PDs was included in Section III in order to encourage further study. The alternative DSM-5 model of NPD similarly involves primarily grandiose elements (Criterion B trait facets: grandiosity, attention seeking), although the personality dysfunction required in Criterion A includes vulnerability (e.g., “excessive

reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation; exaggerated self-appraisal inflated or deflated, or vacillating between extremes; emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem”) (APA, 2013, p. 767).

The purpose of this chapter is to draw upon the theoretical and empirical literature to delineate the distinguishing characteristics of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, as well as NPD. To do so, we use the framework of the most prominent general and pathological personality trait model – the five-factor model (FFM; e.g., Costa & McCrea, 1992). Finally, we discuss the diagnostic model of NPD used in Section III of the DSM-5 in view of the empirical literature.

Trait-Based Understanding of Narcissism

Some of the most constructive tools for identifying distinguishing characteristics of vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism, and NPD have been various structural models of “normal” or “general” personality such as the FFM, which are now instantiated in the DSM-5 to represent more pathological variants of these traits. Multiple studies have demonstrated that personality disorders can be conceptualized and assessed using models of general personality like the FFM (Lynam & Widiger, 2001; Miller, Lynam, Widiger, & Leukefeld, 2001; Miller, Reynolds, & Pilonis, 2004). With respect to narcissism, we review previous expert ratings and meta-analyses in order to delineate the relations between these three narcissism dimensions and general models of personality as assessed by the FFM. The FFM is particularly well suited to this task as it provides a more comprehensive representation of traits related to straightforwardness/sincerity and modesty than other similar models of personality (i.e., Big Five; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), which may meaningfully underestimate the relation between grandiose narcissism and an antagonistic interpersonal style (Miller & Maples, 2011; Miller et al., 2011).

We have included tables of relevant relations between the FFM and narcissism dimensions to guide the reader (i.e., Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

Table 1.1 Five-factor models of personality and narcissism variants

FFM	Meta-analyses			Ratings				
	NPD MA	G. Narc MA	V. Narc MA	Academic ratings G. Narc	Academic ratings V. Narc	Academic ratings NPD	Clinician ratings NPD	Lay ratings general Narc
<i>Neuroticism</i>	0.09	-0.16	0.58	-0.03	0.45	2.74		
Anxiety	0.02	0.03	0.41			2.33	2.71	2.39
Angry hostility	0.23	0.25	0.45			4.08	3.9	3.56
Depression	0.03	0.00	0.57			2.42	2.75	2.75
Self-conscious	-0.03	-0.11	0.54			1.50	1.67	1.83
Impulsiveness	0.14	0.13	0.30			3.17	3.57	3.48
Vulnerability	-0.01	-0.06	0.45			2.92	2.76	2.38
<i>Extraversion</i>	0.12	0.40	-0.27	0.25	-0.20	3.51		
Warmth	-0.07	-0.02	-0.24			1.42	2.05	2.16
Gregariousness	0.04	0.13	-0.17			3.83	3.95	3.75
Assertiveness	0.19	0.24	-0.25			4.67	4.00	4.32
Activity	0.09	0.14	-0.13			3.67	4.14	3.96
Excite. seek	0.16	0.16	-0.02			4.17	4.10	3.89
Pos. emotions	-0.02	-0.05	-0.24			3.33	3.52	3.53
<i>Openness</i>	0.08	-0.03	-0.07	0.18	-0.03	3.18		
Fantasy	0.11	0.08	0.09			3.75	3.82	3.56
Aesthetics	0.04	0.00	0.04			3.25	3.32	3.56
Feelings	0.05	0.03	0.11			1.92	2.68	2.92
Actions	0.04	0.05	-0.16			4.08	3.36	3.18
Ideas	0.07	0.08	-0.03			2.92	3.09	3.17
Values	-0.01	0.02	-0.02			2.67	2.68	2.71
<i>Agreeableness</i>	-0.34	-0.29	-0.35	-0.28	-0.30	1.40		
Trust	-0.2	-0.15	-0.38			1.42	1.86	2.09
Straightforward	-0.31	-0.33	-0.18			1.83	1.91	1.98
Altruism	-0.2	-0.19	-0.18			1.00	1.73	1.77
Compliance	-0.26	-0.27	-0.18			1.58	1.77	1.98
Modesty	-0.37	-0.37	-0.10			1.08	1.23	1.55
Tender-minded	-0.17	-0.18	-0.10			1.50	1.77	2.00
<i>Conscientious</i>	-0.08	0.09	-0.16	0.00	-0.15	2.81		
Competence	0.01	0.06	-0.19			3.25	3.00	3.50
Order	-0.03	-0.05	-0.03			2.92	3.00	3.52
Dutifulness	-0.10	-0.09	-0.15			2.42	2.50	2.75
Achievement Stri.	0.02	0.07	-0.12			3.92	3.18	3.54
Self-discipline	-0.09	-0.03	-0.28			2.08	2.23	2.83
Deliberation	-0.13	-0.10	-0.09			2.25	2.45	2.63
<i>n</i> for domain-level data	3751	~44,000	1002					
<i>n</i> for facet-level data	<i>n</i> = 3207	~3000	599					

G grandiose, V vulnerable, MA meta-analysis, NPD meta-analysis = Samuel and Widiger (2008); Grandiose narcissism meta-analysis = O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, Story, and White (2015); vulnerable narcissism meta-analysis = Campbell and Miller (2013); academic ratings G. & V. Narc = Thomas et al. (2012); academician ratings = Lynam and Widiger (2001); clinician ratings = Samuel and Widiger (2004); lay ratings general Narc = Miller et al. (2018)

Table 1.2 Second-order correlations of narcissism variant FFM profiles

	NPD MA	G. Narc MA	V. Narc MA	Academic ratings NPD	Clinician ratings NPD	Lay ratings general Narc
NPD MA						
G. Narc MA	0.97					
V. Narc MA	0.39	0.22				
Academic ratings NPD	0.81	0.83	0.06			
Clinician ratings NPD	0.87	0.88	0.10	0.94		
Lay ratings general Narc	0.82	0.85	-0.05	0.92	0.95	

G grandiose, *V* vulnerable, *MA* meta-analysis, *NPD* meta-analysis = Samuel and Widiger (2008); grandiose narcissism meta-analysis = O'Boyle et al. (2015); vulnerable narcissism meta-analysis = Campbell and Miller (2013); academic ratings = Lynam and Widiger (2001); clinician ratings = Samuel and Widiger (2004); lay ratings general Narc = Miller et al. (2018)

Tables include results from meta-analyses as well as expert, clinician, and lay ratings of relations between NPD, grandiose, and vulnerable narcissism. The relations between the FFM and NPD were based on meta-analytic reviews by Saulsman and Page (2004; FFM domains only) and Samuel and Widiger (2008; FFM domains and facets). The relations between the FFM and grandiose narcissism were based on the most recent, comprehensive meta-analysis from O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, Story, and White (2015; FFM domains and facets), while relations between the FFM and vulnerable narcissism were based on results from Campbell and Miller (2013). We also included academic ratings of NPD (Lynam & Widiger, 2001) and grandiose/vulnerable narcissism (Thomas, Wright, Lukowitsky, Donnellan, & Hopwood, 2012), clinician ratings of NPD (Samuel & Widiger, 2004), and lay ratings of prototypical cases of narcissism (i.e., subjects were asked to provide ratings of typical individuals "high in narcissism"; Miller, Lynam, Siedor, Crowe, & Campbell, 2018).

NPD

Expert raters – both academicians and clinicians – describe the prototypical individual with NPD as scoring very low on the FFM

domain of agreeableness (antagonism; e.g., straightforwardness, modesty, altruism) and high on the agentic traits of extraversion (e.g., assertiveness, excitement seeking, activity) (Lynam & Widiger, 2001; Samuel & Widiger, 2004; see Table 1.1). Interestingly, lay rating of prototypical cases of narcissism (Miller et al., 2018) shows a very similar pattern suggesting that DSM-based conceptualizations are consistent with those held by the public more broadly in emphasizing traits related to antagonism and extraversion (Paulhus, 2001). Empirical examinations of the relations between FFM and NPD from meta-analytic reviews demonstrate a similar pattern of findings (FFM domains only, Saulsman & Page, 2004; FFM domains and facets, Samuel & Widiger, 2008). At the domain level, the largest effect size was for agreeableness ($mean\ r = -0.34$); none of the other domain-level effect sizes were larger than $|0.15|$ (see Table 1.1). Nevertheless, while (low) agreeableness primarily underlies NPD, a facet-level analysis reveals heterogeneity in relations between NPD and the extraversion domain. Two meaningful contributions to NPD come from facets (i.e., assertiveness [$r = 0.19$] and excitement seeking [$r = 0.16$]) that reflect the agentic dimension of extraversion, while facets reflecting the communal dimension of extraversion (e.g., positive emotions, warmth) are less central to NPD.

Grandiose Narcissism

As noted above, lay raters have described the prototypical individual with narcissism as scoring low on the FFM domain of agreeableness and its facets of straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, tender-mindedness, and self-consciousness and high on the FFM facet of assertiveness (Miller et al., 2018; see Table 1.1). Thomas and colleagues also collected expert ratings of how FFM dimensions should correlate with grandiose narcissism; these raters predicted the largest effect sizes for agreeableness (negative) and extraversion (positive). The empirical relations between the FFM and grandiose narcissism have been meta-analytically synthesized by O’Boyle and colleagues (2015; see also Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017; Vize et al., 2017). Grandiose narcissism manifested significant effect sizes with the domains of extraversion (*mean* $r = 0.40$) and agreeableness (*mean* $r = -0.29$), followed by a negative relation with neuroticism (*mean* $r = -0.16$) and a positive relation with openness (*mean* $r = 0.20$; see Table 1.1).¹

Vulnerable Narcissism

Expert ratings of the expected Big Five/FFM correlates of vulnerable narcissism collected by Thomas et al. (2012) highlighted the role of neuroticism (positive correlations), as well as extraversion and agreeableness (negative correlations). Campbell and Miller (2013) presented a meta-analytic review of the FFM correlates of vulnerable narcissism. At the domain level, vulnerable narcissism was strongly positively related to neuroticism (0.58) and negatively related to agreeableness (-0.35), extraversion (-0.27), and conscientiousness (-0.16; see Table 1.1).

¹Important to note that Big Five-based assessments tend to manifest smaller relations between narcissism and agreeableness due to the exclusion of content related to honesty-humility, which is found to a much greater degree in FFM-based measures (e.g., NEO PI-R).

Similarity of FFM Facet Level Correlations Across the Three Variants

We next examined the similarity of the FFM facet-level characterizations including both the expert/non-expert ratings and meta-analytic profiles. Because of the use of different metrics, we report simple correlations across the columns reported in Table 1.2 (rather than using an absolute similarity index like r_{ICC} that requires values to be on the same metric). The similarity scores for the three sets of faceted ratings demonstrate substantial consistency in how grandiose narcissism and NPD are conceptualized, irrespective of whether they were made by researchers, clinicians, or lay raters (r s ranged from 0.93 to 0.95). Importantly, these prototypicality ratings converge with the empirical trait profiles for DSM NPD and grandiose narcissism (r s ranged from 0.79 to 0.87). Vulnerable narcissism stands out as an outlier, however, as its empirical profile matches neither expert/lay ratings of NPD/narcissism nor the empirical profiles, although modest match was found for the match with the empirical profile for NPD ($r = 0.41$). Although not quantified due to the small number of correlates (5), it is clear, however, that the empirical profile for vulnerable narcissism maps closely on to the expert ratings provided by Thomas et al. (2012). Although measures of vulnerable narcissism yield empirical profiles that are substantially different than grandiose narcissism and NPD, they appear to capture the construct as currently operationalized by experts.

Comparing Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism, and NPD: A Summary

A review of the strongest trait correlates of each narcissism construct leads to three primary conclusions. First, the trait correlates of NPD and grandiose narcissism overlap quite substantially. Both narcissism constructs are composed of traits related to a strongly antagonistic interpersonal style characterized by grandiosity, manipulativeness, deception, uncooperativeness, and anger.

Second, the two differ to some degree, however, with regard to the role of extraversion with stronger relations found for grandiose narcissism than NPD. It is important to note that research suggests that extraversion might actually be parsed further into two components: agentic and communal positive emotionality/extraversion. Church (1994) described agentic positive emotionality as measuring “generalized social and work effectance,” whereas communal positive emotionality “emphasizes interpersonal connectedness” (p. 899). FFM facets that appeared to be commonly elevated in narcissism are those that are more closely associated with agentic positive emotionality (i.e., assertiveness, excitement seeking). Third, although research on the personality correlates of vulnerable narcissism has just begun, the extant data suggest that it represents a construct that is largely divergent from NPD and grandiose narcissism. From an FFM perspective, vulnerable narcissism is primarily composed of the tendency to experience a wide array of negative emotions such as depression, self-consciousness, stress, anxiety, and urgency, consistent with evidence that FFM neuroticism accounts for 65% of the variance in vulnerable narcissism scores (Miller et al., 2017). Furthermore, vulnerable individuals exhibit explicit low self-esteem, while grandiose individuals exhibit high explicit self-esteem most likely due to grandiose narcissism and self-esteem manifesting similar relations with extraversion and (low) neuroticism (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Miller et al., 2010; Pincus et al., 2009). However, although abundant empirical evidence indicates that neuroticism does not significantly underlie grandiose narcissism, one element of neuroticism may. Both grandiose and vulnerable share meaningful relations with FFM angry-hostility ($r = 0.25$ and 0.45 , respectively). These relations are consistent with recent findings suggesting that even the most prototypically grandiose individuals exhibit anger for significant periods of time in response to ego threat (Hyatt et al., 2017). Longitudinal research is needed to elucidate the proximal and distal causes of anger that may differ across grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. For instance, research

suggests that individuals with NPD symptoms respond to perceived dominance from others with increased quarrelsomeness (Wright et al., 2017).

As noted previously, the common core of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism appears to be interpersonal antagonism or (low) agreeableness from an FFM perspective (Miller et al., 2018). However, even within this interpersonal domain, the traits associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are not identical. Vulnerable individuals tend to be particularly low in interpersonal trust, even relative to grandiose individuals (see Table 1.1). Miller et al. (2010) have suggested that individuals high on vulnerable narcissism may manifest a hostile attribution bias such that they read malevolent intent in the actions of others and that these attributions may lead to more overtly problematic interpersonal behavior. In contrast, grandiosely narcissistic individuals tend to be particularly high in immodesty even relative to vulnerable individuals (see Table 1.1). Therefore, although individuals high on either narcissism dimension behave antagonistically, the motivation behind these behaviors may be quite different. For instance, the antagonism found among individuals elevated on vulnerable narcissism may be motivated by hostile attribution bias, whereas it may be motivated by needs for self-enhancement, status, and superiority among more grandiose individuals.

These opposing motives may also explain observed differential relations between grandiose/vulnerable narcissism and aggressive behavior. Grandiose and vulnerable individuals tend to both exhibit higher rates of reactive aggression, but grandiose individuals may uniquely exhibit proactive aggression, a more instrumental form of aggression that could be employed in the service of self-enhancement motives (Vize et al., 2017). Notably, however, at least one study suggests that vulnerable individuals, despite indicating higher levels of self-reported reactive aggression, do not exhibit higher levels of behavioral aggression or increased testosterone production in a laboratory-based behavioral aggression paradigm, while grandiose individuals do (Lobbestael, Baumeister, Fiebig, & Eckel, 2014). Thus, more research, especially that using

behavioral paradigms, is needed to understand how grandiose and vulnerable narcissism similarly and differently relate to aggression.

In general, the trait profile associated with vulnerable narcissism appears to be more consistent with Borderline PD than NPD or grandiose narcissism. Miller et al. (2010) demonstrated that a vulnerable narcissism composite score manifested a nearly identical pattern of correlations ($r = 0.93$) with general personality traits (FFM), etiological variables (e.g., abuse, perceptions of parenting), and criterion variables (e.g., psychopathology, affect, externalizing behaviors) as did a Borderline PD composite. Consistent with this, the FFM facet profile of vulnerable narcissism is also more strongly correlated with the Lynam and Widiger (2001) expert profile for Borderline PD ($r = 0.71$) than with NPD ($r = 0.06$). Ultimately, vulnerable narcissism appears to share relatively little with the other two narcissism dimensions with the exception of an antagonistic interpersonal style and appears to have more in common with other pathological personality disorders such as Borderline PD.

State-Based Understanding of Narcissism

Some researchers posit that a purely trait-based conceptualization of narcissism leaves out important definitional features of narcissism (Pincus & Roche, 2011) and does not recognize intraindividual oscillation between vulnerable and grandiose personality states. Although vulnerable and grandiose dimensions of narcissism may be well differentiated in terms of stable traits, both are conceptualized by some researchers and clinical experts as stemming from a common etiology, namely, “intensely felt needs for validation and admiration,” which motivate the seeking out of self-enhancement experiences (grandiose) as well as “self-, emotion-, and behavioral dysregulation (vulnerable) when these needs go unfulfilled or ego threats arise” (p. 32; Kernberg, 2009; Pincus & Roche, 2011; Ronningstam, 2009). These researchers have argued that a purely trait-based conceptualization of narcissism, involving

between-person typologies (e.g., grandiose vs. vulnerable), may understate the degree to which narcissism involves fluctuating patterns of personality states that oscillate within each individual (e.g., Pincus & Roche 2011).

Unfortunately, much more empirical research is needed to test these ideas as there are few data available that speak to this issue. In fact, existing data suggest that narcissism-related traits are relatively stable (Giacomin & Jordan, 2016). In fact, Wright and Simms (2016) found that core traits of narcissism like grandiosity were as stable across numerous assessments as many other pathological traits for which instability is not considered prototypic such as anxiousness and depressivity. Recent studies have suggested that grandiosely narcissistic individuals may experience some vulnerability, particularly the experience of anger following ego threat (Gore & Widiger, 2016; Hyatt et al., 2017), although there is little evidence to suggest that vulnerably narcissistic individuals experience periods of grandiosity. It is important to note, however, that both of these studies relied on prototypicality ratings of narcissism rather than longitudinal or ecological momentary assessment-based approaches (i.e., involving repeated measurement of participants’ current behaviors in real time) which are necessary for testing dynamic, oscillation-based hypotheses.

Narcissism and DSM-5

The inclusion of an alternative model for the conceptualization and diagnosis of personality disorders in Section III of DSM-5 (i.e., alternative DSM-5 model for personality disorders) marks an opportunity for aligning the diagnosis of PDs with the substantial and long-standing empirical research literature that documents the improved validity of dimensional, trait-based models of PDs. Although we believe this change represents an important and much-needed move toward the use of an empirically informed taxonomy, we believe there are a number of areas that can benefit from further attempts at refinement, particularly with regard to NPD. First, the use of only

two traits to assess NPD as part of Criterion B (i.e., grandiosity, attention seeking) may provide inadequate coverage of the NPD construct. NPD is assessed with 50% fewer traits than the PD measured with the next fewest (4 – obsessive-compulsive, schizotypal) and less than 30% of some other PDs (e.g., 7, antisocial). Whether the limited number of traits articulated for NPD was due to its last-minute inclusion (NPD was slated for deletion until being reinstated; Miller, Widiger, & Campbell, 2010b) or concerns with discriminant validity with PDs such as antisocial, it is likely that additional traits would be helpful in capturing this construct. In fact, experts believe there are several other traits from the DSM-5 alternative PD trait model that are relevant to NPD including manipulateness, callousness, risk taking, and hostility (Samuel & Widiger, 2008; Samuel, Lynam, Widiger, & Ball, 2012). If the latter is the case, we believe that the overall construct validity of NPD's diagnosis must be prioritized over discriminant validity-related concerns and that NPD should be conceptualized in a rigorous and content-valid manner, even if the inclusion of these additional traits increases its overlap with near-neighbor disorders like antisocial PD (Miller et al., 2017). Such overlap is to be expected when one works from the perspective that all PDs represent configurations of some limited number of general/pathological traits (Lynam & Widiger, 2001).

Second, the alternative model of NPD as currently presented fails to adequately reflect a growing body of research that supports the addition of traits reflecting vulnerably narcissistic features (e.g., Miller & Campbell, 2008). Descriptions of these features have been found in numerous clinical accounts of the disorder (Cain et al., 2008) with increased empirical attention growing rapidly in the last 10–15 years (e.g., Miller et al., 2010b, 2011; Pincus et al., 2009). While there remains substantial ongoing debate as to the role of these vulnerable features in NPD (e.g., do all narcissistic individuals experience both grandiosity and vulnerability via a pattern of oscillation vs. many individuals fitting predominantly into a singular dimension (i.e., grandiose narcissism only; vulnerable narcissism only)), it

is clear that the DSM-5 model should include some representation of vulnerability for cases where it is relevant.

Research to date demonstrates that while the two traits articulated in Criterion B do a fairly good job of accounting for variance in measures of grandiose narcissism (i.e., $R^2 = 63\%$), the same is not true for vulnerable narcissism (i.e., $R^2 = 19\%$; Miller, Gentile, Wilson, & Campbell, 2013). It is our contention that the core of narcissism/NPD are traits related to interpersonal antagonism and that traits from this domain should form the bedrock of its assessment in DSM. We believe the traits used should be expanded to include other relevant traits beyond grandiosity and attention seeking, particularly those emphasized by other expert-based characterizations (e.g., manipulateness, callousness, entitlement; Ackerman, Hands, Donnellan, Hopwood, & Witt, 2016; Lynam & Widiger, 2001; Samuel et al., 2012) and indicated by FFM-NPD relations (e.g., manipulateness, hostility, deceitfulness, callousness; Samuel & Widiger, 2008) and by recent work demonstrating that certain emotionally reactive personality traits are found in prototypically grandiose individuals (e.g., hostility; Gore & Widiger, 2016; Hyatt et al., 2017).

Next, we would include specifiers that would allow for the delineation of more grandiose (e.g., attention seeking, domineering) and vulnerable forms of narcissism (e.g., depressivity, anxiousness, separation anxiety). The flexibility of this trait-based approach is ideal for allowing many different representations of narcissism, beyond the two that have been the focus of substantial discussion and study in the literature. For instance, it is easy to imagine the clinical relevance of cases where narcissistic traits (e.g., grandiosity, callousness) are paired with traits from the domain of psychoticism (e.g., unusual beliefs, eccentricity).

Third, the alternative model's assessment of impairment can be improved upon in at least two ways. Growing evidence suggests that impairment, as currently operationalized, may not contribute further information beyond traits (Bastiaansen et al., 2016; Few et al., 2013;

Sleep, Wygant, & Miller, 2017), suggesting that greater incremental validity and clinical utility might be had by replacing Criterion A with a set of criteria that overlaps less substantially with the underlying traits. We believe these criteria should be more directly tied to functioning in specific domains (e.g., work and love) but also be widened in its purview to include impairment caused to others, which is particularly relevant to constructs like NPD (Miller, Campbell, & Pilkonis, 2007; Pilkonis, Hallquist, Morse, & Stepp, 2011). In addition, we believe the ordering which the Criteria A (impairment) and B (pathological traits) are assessed should be reversed, such that impairment is assessed only after one has determined whether there is the presence of pathological traits (e.g., Widiger, Costa, & McCrae, 2002). This ordering is both more logically coherent and should increase efficiency.

Future Directions

The time has come to clarify and consolidate a myriad of varied yet overlapping conceptualizations/models of narcissism, especially since many of the conceptualizations of narcissism converge in important ways. Regardless of whether one is describing NPD, grandiose, or vulnerable dimensions of narcissism, a comprehensive empirical literature demonstrates that narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder are well described by models of general personality and, in particular, three primary traits including (low) agreeableness (or antagonism, entitlement, and self-involvement), agentic extraversion (or boldness, behavioral approach-orientation), and neuroticism (or reactivity, behavioral avoidance-orientation). Such a three-factor model is already instantiated in the five-factor narcissism inventory (FFNI; Glover, Miller et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2016) and has been proposed recently as a necessary evolution in the field's conceptualization of narcissism (e.g., unified trait model, Miller et al., 2017; narcissism spectrum model (NSM), Krizan & Herlache, 2018). This three-factor model is better able to

account for the many different presentations of narcissism that go beyond the grandiose vs. vulnerable distinction that has been the focus of research for the past decade. For instance, research has generally shown a bifurcation in how grandiose (positively) and vulnerable narcissism (negatively) relate to self-esteem. However, a three-factor model shows that further differentiation is necessary and helpful such that the core of narcissism – antagonism – is unrelated to self-esteem, while the extraverted/agentic component is positively related and the vulnerable/neurotic component is negatively related. This three-factor model, which has close ties to three of the five major domains of personality, provides a framework for examining the mechanisms that underlie narcissism's relations with both maladaptive and adaptive functioning. Ultimately, we believe that the field is now well situated to unify scholarly perspectives on narcissism into a singular integrative model.

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The Narcissism Spectrum Model: A Spectrum Perspective on Narcissistic Personality

2

Zlatan Krizan

Abstract

The *narcissism spectrum model* synthesizes extensive personality, social-psychological, and clinical evidence, to address three key, interrelated problems that have plagued narcissism scholarship for over a century. These problems can be summarized as: What are the key features of narcissism, how are they organized and interlinked, and why are they organized that way? By viewing narcissism as manifested in transactional processes between individuals and their social environments, this model integrates existing measurement and theoretical perspectives on narcissism and provides a guiding framework for future examination of its developmental pathways. Specifically, narcissism is defined as entitled self-importance, with an inflated sense of importance and deservingness marking the core phenotype. However, differences in entitlement reflect two distinct functional patterns of influence, based on approach-dominant (bold) and avoidance-dominant (reactive) personality orientations supported by reinforcing social experiences. Critically, these distinct

patterns of influence yield distinct dimensions of narcissistic grandiosity (hubris and exhibitionism) and narcissistic vulnerability (resentment and defensiveness). The narcissism spectrum model builds common terminology regarding core features of narcissism, is grounded in a shared set of observations about the empirical structure of narcissistic traits, and provides a novel and comprehensive framework for integrating scholarship of narcissism with that of personality and psychopathology more broadly.

Keywords

Grandiosity · Vulnerability · Self-importance · Entitlement · Boldness · Reactivity

Although virtually all scholars accept the existence of a narcissistic personality, intense disagreements persist about what are its core features, how these features are organized, and what accounts for their manifestation. These three issues have plagued narcissism scholarship for almost a century, with divergent opinions on these matters often falling along the lines of scholars' own subdisciplines or the instruments they employ to assess narcissism (Ackerman, Hands, Donnellan, Hopwood, & Witt, 2016; Miller & Campbell, 2008), raising the proverbial question of "Will the real narcissism please stand

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up!?” Achieving at least a preliminary consensus on these issues is essential for advancing narcissism theory and clinical practice and for uniting views across social, personality, and clinical psychology—views which have often strayed uncomfortably apart. To this end, the present chapter summarizes the narcissism spectrum model (NSM), an integrative model of narcissism that specifies the structure of trait narcissism and points to underlying socio-behavioral processes responsible for this structure (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). First, narcissism is introduced and defined. Second, entitlement is positioned as the shared phenotype of narcissism. Third, distinct dimensions of narcissism (grandiosity and vulnerability) are described in terms of their personality bases and underlying self-regulatory styles (boldness and reactivity, respectively). Fourth and final, implications of the model for future research are presented.

Narcissism Defined Narcissism can be broadly defined as *entitled self-importance*. Narcissistic individuals are those who view their own needs and goals as more significant than others’ and exhibit an inflated sense of importance and deservingness (synonyms include egotism and arrogance). This definition is inclusive of the foundational descriptions of narcissistic personality (e.g., Freud, 1914; Murray, 1938) and previously proposed definitions (e.g., “as a cognitive-affective preoccupation with the self”; Westen, 1990, p. 227). In this vein, it emphasizes features widely agreed upon as central to narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder (i.e., self-preoccupation and entitlement; see Ackerman et al., 2016) and features still listed as central “symptoms” of narcissistic personality disorder both in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and the ICD-10 systems (World Health Organization, 1995). Critically, positioning entitled self-importance at the center of narcissistic personality enables meaningful theoretical and empirical linkages between grandiose and vulnerable narcissistic traits across a wide breadth (i.e., a spectrum) of personality features. These features are linked by a common psychological core: *a sense of oneself*

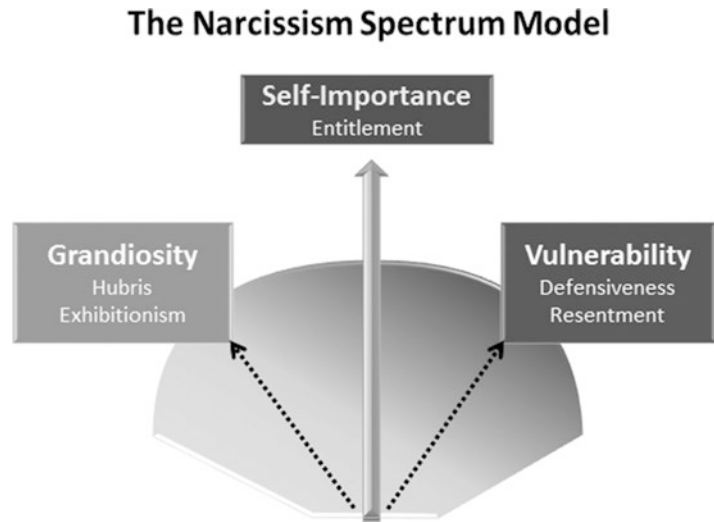
and one’s needs being special and more important than others. As a result, entitlement and self-importance are the personality characteristics that most consistently co-occur with both grandiose and vulnerable features of narcissism in both normal and clinical populations (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008; Krizan & Johar, 2012; Miller & Campbell, 2008). This makes them the ideal conceptual and empirical anchors for understanding the surprisingly broad spectrum of narcissistic personality.

The Narcissism Spectrum Model

The central premise of the model is that psychological processes that produce individual differences in narcissism (i.e., self-importance) reflect two distinct functional patterns of influence, based on approach-dominant and avoidance-dominant functional orientations supported by reinforcing social experiences (Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Wood, Gardner, & Harms, 2015). Ultimately, these processes manifest themselves in two related yet distinct dimensions of narcissistic personality, namely, narcissistic *grandiosity* (marked by boldness and approach) and *vulnerability* (marked by reactivity and aversion). Although sharing attributes of self-importance and egotism, these dimensions are the result of separate, sometimes opposing, forces. How the spectrum model represents the structure of individual differences in narcissism is illustrated in Fig. 2.1, together with key features anchoring the three cardinal axes of the spectrum.

Common Phenotype: Entitlement Positioning entitled self-importance at the core of the narcissism spectrum reflects the premise that this feature defines narcissism in the *broadest sense*. In fact, that entitlement phenotypically ties manifestations of narcissistic vulnerability and grandiosity is one of the few premises that received widespread support in a recent survey of narcissism researchers’ views on the subject (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2016). Considerable empirical evidence indicates that both narcissism dimen-

Fig. 2.1 The three core axes of the narcissism spectrum. (Reprinted with permission by Sage Publications (Copyright 2018))



sions predict impressions of arrogance (Wink, 1991) as well as relate to measures of entitlement, hypercompetitiveness, and image-consciousness (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Glover et al., 2012; Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Krizan & Johar, 2012, 2015; Miller & Campbell, 2008; Miller et al., 2011). Finally, reports of clinicians who treat patients suggest that feelings of privilege, entitlement, and special treatment are the most indicative and distinctive markers of narcissistic pathology (Russ et al., 2008).

Distinct Functional Presentations: Boldness and Reactivity

The functional orientation proposed to underlie grandiosity is *Boldness*: an eager and hardy disposition driven by high approach (relative to avoidance) motivation and manifested in seeking and satisfying self-aggrandizing goals. The orientation proposed to underlie vulnerability is *Reactivity*: a stress-prone and volatile disposition dominated by high avoidance (relative to approach) motivation and manifested in detecting and combating threats to self-image. In essence, the left “grandiose” quadrant of the narcissism spectrum in Fig. 2.1 reflects a *bold* aspect of narcissism, whereas the right “vulnerable” quadrant reflects a *reactive* aspect of narcissism.

Put another way, the full narcissism spectrum is anchored by the core feature of entitled self-importance whose manifestation is shaped by distinct functional orientations (Boldness and Reactivity). The narcissism spectrum model thus provides an integrative framework for understanding diverse presentations of narcissism across both personality and social behavioral levels of analysis.

Narcissistic Satisfaction Seeking: Grandiosity as Boldness

According to the model, narcissistic grandiosity reflects a *Bold* functional orientation underlying entitled and arrogant self-views. Boldness can be broadly described as a heightened motivational orientation toward seeking rewarding experiences, often trumping concern about risks or costs associated with reward pursuit (Block & Block, 1980). Critically, narcissistic boldness parsimoniously captures grandiose individuals’ (1) approach-dominant personality and (2) a self-regulatory style focused on self-enhancement benefits over costs revealed by boastful, assertive, and exhibitionistic social behavior.

A Reward-Driven Personality First, Boldness characterizes core aspects of grandiose individuals' temperament and personality. Closely related concepts include fearless dominance, daringness, and eagerness (Patrick et al., 2009). All these constructs share strong appetitive and exploratory tendencies that typically overpower avoidance tendencies. In terms of biobehavioral motivational systems governing the responses to rewards and punishments, this implies a strong behavioral activation coupled with muted inhibition, i.e., a strong desire for, and sensitivity to, opportunities and rewards that outweighs concerns over costs (Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Depue & Collins, 1999; Gray & McNaughton, 2002). In terms of adult temperament and personality, this implies especially high positive emotionality, extraversion, and assertiveness, with only somewhat lower *negative* emotionality (Clark & Watson, 2008).

Consistent with these premises, evidence consistently finds grandiosity to strongly correlate with extraversion, especially facets of dominance and assertiveness most closely tied to social boldness (Johnson, Leedom, & Muhtadie, 2012; Miller et al., 2011). Similar links are observed with behavioral activation scale, intended to capture individual differences in chronic approach motivation (Foster & Trimm IV, 2008). Moreover, studies of both trait-level and daily affect show that grandiose individuals have higher than average positive affect (with smaller differences in negative affect, Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998). Consistent with the conception of boldness, this positive affect often reaches the level of hypomania (Fulford, Johnson, & Carver, 2008). Finally, grandiosity reflects a chronic propensity toward sensation-seeking and daring behavior such as jumping out of planes and diving with sharks (Emmons, 1981; Miller et al., 2009). Whereas grandiosity is sometimes negatively linked with avoidance-oriented constructs such as neuroticism, shyness, distress, doubt, and negative affect, these links are weaker (Brown, Freis, Carroll, & Arkin, 2016; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2011; Rhodewalt et al., 1998). In short, existing evidence clearly implicates a

highly agentic, dominant, and excitement-drawn personality as a key aspect of narcissistic grandiosity (see Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Paulhus, 2001 for a similar argument).

A Confident and Exhibitionistic Self-regulatory Style How is boldness embodied by social self-regulatory processes of those exhibiting grandiosity? Grandiose individuals should be intently oriented toward enacting their entitled self-views, acquiring the riches they view as rightfully theirs, creating social impressions of superiority and status, and maximizing social and sexual pleasure. In terms of person-environment transactions, this social confidence and expansive thinking is likely to fuel general satisfaction of narcissistic needs and expectations, as a grandiose person surrounds him or herself with a social circle ready to admire, follow, and listen while dismissing those that don't. Existing evidence on self-regulatory processes in those high on grandiosity is consistent with these assertions. In fact, existing theoretical perspectives on narcissistic grandiosity emphasize that narcissists are driven by pursuing power, status, and admiration while drawing on a flexible set of interpersonal and intrapsychic self-enhancement strategies to keep themselves going (Back et al., 2013; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In this vein, empirical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that grandiosity reflects (1) high self-esteem, overconfidence, and self-enhancement; (2) pursuit of social status, admiration, and power; and (3) engagement in exploitative and self-serving relationships focused on personal pleasure.

First, grandiose individuals have high self-esteem, positive self-views, and an exaggerated sense of ability. This pervasive pattern extends to high self-liking and self-competence (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), a sense of clear superiority in ability and importance over others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; John & Robins, 1994; Krizan & Bushman, 2011), and exaggerated appraisals of status-related attributes such as attractiveness and intelligence (Campbell, Rudich, &

Sedikides, 2002; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994). Second, fueling these qualities are dogged ambitions at *being* the best, the most influential, and the center of attention. These motivations are reflected in an eagerness to assume leadership roles (Brunell et al., 2008; Watts et al., 2013), in fantasies of power and in willingness to adopt overly ambitious goals (Carroll, 1987; Fulford et al., 2008), and in sexualized, exhibitionistic, and attention-grabbing behavior such as wearing revealing clothes or recounting stories of conquest and brilliance (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). Third, these cognitive and motivational qualities lead grandiose individuals to engage in exploitative, self-serving, and ultimately shorter-term social transactions that suit their ongoing desires (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Leckelt, Kunfer, Nestler, & Back, 2015). This “you’re here for my pleasure” relationship mentality is revealed by higher promiscuity and lower level of commitment (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Reise & Wright, 1996), by sexual entitlement, aggression, and more self-oriented love styles (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2012), and by less empathy and concern about the partner’s wants and needs (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006).

Narcissistic Frustration and Conflict: Vulnerability as Reactivity

Whereas narcissistic grandiosity builds on an approach-dominant orientation, narcissistic vulnerability builds on a *reactive* orientation focused on avoidance and “fight-flight” responses. Emotional and behavioral reactivity can be described as a general functional orientation toward tracking obstacles, appraising setbacks, and combating threats, which trump concerns about missed rewards or opportunities (Gray, 1982). Critically, the construct of reactivity elegantly captures vulnerable individuals’ (1) avoidance-dominant personality and emotional dysregulation and (2) a self-regulatory style over-focused on self-preservation and revealed in shy,

dismissive, but ultimately volatile social behavior.

An Anxiety-Driven Personality First, reactivity characterizes core aspects of vulnerable individuals’ temperament and personality. Closely related concepts include anxiety, inhibition, neuroticism, and emotional dysregulation (Ruocco, Amirthavasagam, Choi-Kain, & McMain, 2013; Scott et al., 2013). All these constructs share strong aversive and avoidance tendencies that interfere with approach goals. In terms of biobehavioral motivational systems governing the responses to rewards and punishments, this implies a strong behavioral *inhibition*, i.e., a strong vigilance for threats that overshadows concerns over missed opportunities for advancement (Carver et al., 2000; Depue & Collins, 1999; Gray, 1982; Gray & McNaughton, 2002). In terms of adult temperament and personality, this implies especially high negative emotionality, neuroticism, and anger, with only somewhat lower *positive* emotionality and extraversion (Clark & Watson, 2008).

Consistent with these premises, heightened narcissistic vulnerability is strongly and positively linked with avoidance-oriented constructs such as high neuroticism, distress, anxiety, and angry rumination. Specifically, vulnerability is strongly correlated with self-consciousness and depression, although it is broadly related to anxiety, anger, and personal distress (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Miller et al., 2010). Moreover, studies of both trait-level and daily affect show that vulnerable individuals have higher than average negative affect (with smaller differences in positive affect, Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2010; Given-Wilson, McIlwain, & Warburton, 2011). Consistent with the conception of reactivity, this negative affect often reaches the level of clinically significant depression, anxiety, or rage (Meier, 2004; Ogrodniczuk, Piper, Joyce, Steinberg, & Duggal, 2009; Ryan, Weikel, & Sprechini, 2008; Tritt, Ryder, Ring, & Pincus, 2010). Finally, vulnerability reflects a chronic propensity toward shy and anxiously-inhibited behavior such as not asserting one’s true wishes,

dismissing opportunities, and passively resenting others from afar (Brown et al., 2016; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Krizan & Johar, 2012; Lannin, Guyll, Krizan, Madon, & Cornish, 2014). Whereas vulnerability is sometimes negatively linked with approach-oriented constructs such as extraversion, boldness, confidence, and positive affect, these links are weaker (Fossati et al., 2009; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2010). In short, existing evidence clearly implicates a highly neurotic, frustration-prone, and typically inhibited personality as a key aspect of narcissistic vulnerability.

A Shy and Vindictive Self-regulatory Style How is reactivity embodied by social self-regulatory processes of those exhibiting narcissistic vulnerability? Vulnerable individuals should be intently oriented toward detecting threats, avoiding criticism and inferiority, and finding flaws in others or their intentions. Note that this social reticence, ruminative thinking, and distrust reflect a general frustration of narcissistic needs and expectations, as a narcissistically vulnerable person copes with the lack of admiration and success they so desperately fantasize about. Existing evidence on self-regulatory processes in those high on vulnerability is fully consistent with these assertions. In fact, existing theoretical perspectives on narcissistic vulnerability emphasize unmet fantasies of importance and proneness to a torrent of shame, anger, and anxiety over their frequently frustrated narcissistic needs (Pincus et al., 2009; Roche, Pincus, Lukowitsky, Ménard, & Conroy, 2013; Ronningstam, 2005). As illustrated below, the empirical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that vulnerability reflects (1) low self-esteem, pessimism, and inferiority; (2) avoidance of the social spotlight, indirect action, and distrust of others' intention; and (3) tumultuous relationships reflecting needy and obsessive tendencies.

First, narcissistically vulnerable individuals have very low self-esteem, uncertain self-views, and highly contingent beliefs about their competencies. This pervasive pattern extends to low feelings of self-worth (Miller & Campbell, 2008;

Pincus et al., 2009), a sense of uncertainty regarding one's self-concept that is contingent on a variety of external appraisals and supports (Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008), and a sense of inferiority plagued by envy and resentment of others' riches (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Second, reflecting these doubts, are many social anxieties, concerns about being accepted and respected, and a resultant mistrust of others' intentions. These concerns are reflected in social reticence and introversion (Fossati et al., 2009; Lannin et al., 2014), in a sense of low relational evaluation and shame (Freis, Brown, Carroll, & Arkin, 2015; Ogrodniczuk et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2011), and in paranoid conclusion about the world and others' behavior (Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Krizan & Johar, 2015). Third, these cognitive and motivational qualities lead vulnerable individuals to get tangled in conflict-prone relationships with unclear boundaries that are ultimately unstable given their constant need for validation (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2010). This "I may need you, but you should know when or why" relationship mentality is revealed by high anxiety about relationship intimacy and a fear of rejection (Pistole, 1995; Smolewska & Dion, 2005), by prioritizing one's own needs and having unrealistic expectations of support or intimacy (Zeigler-Hill, Green, Arnau, Sisemore, & Myers, 2011), and by engaging in passive-aggressive and retaliatory responses to relationship conflicts (Besser & Priel, 2009). In terms of person-environment transactions, such individuals thus tend to overreact to negative events, evoke abandonment and criticism from others by their obsessive behavior, and ultimately end up in more socially stressful situations that impede narcissistic need satisfaction.

Note that these features are *not* reducible to more general tendencies toward neuroticism or anxiety, as measures of narcissistic vulnerability predict signs of "narcissistic injury" such as envy, anger, and paranoia above and beyond measures of neuroticism or general distress (Krizan & Johar, 2012, 2015). Furthermore, it may appear that these vulnerable qualities are inconsistent with the notion of narcissism given concomitant *low* self-esteem and a sense of disadvantage.

However, recall that narcissistically vulnerable individuals nevertheless believe they are more *important* and *deserving* than others and also endorse *fantasies* of grandiosity and success (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Pincus et al., 2009; Table 2). In short, narcissistic vulnerability reflects entitled self-views that function within a reactive self-regulatory framework. Narcissistically vulnerable individuals are thus marred in the constant struggle for validation from others who are inevitably pushed away by their negativistic and volatile behavior driven by unrealistic self-aggrandizing goals and relationship demands.

Future Directions

We next consider the NSM's implications for understanding narcissism and guiding future empirical research.

Dimension vs. People Critically, personality dimensions do not by themselves fully describe an individual. Researchers must avoid equating dimensions with people. Although it is easier to discuss a “grandiose narcissist” rather than a person “high on narcissistic grandiosity,” these are *not* interchangeable. Both describe a person with elevated grandiosity features, but the former typically implies a “type” of person marked by grandiosity at the exclusion of other features (e.g., when contrasting grandiose with vulnerable narcissists). However, as elucidated by the spectrum, those who score high on entitlement will have both elevated grandiosity and vulnerability, but combinations of these levels will drastically vary across individuals. This renders people with a particular standing on a specific dimension (e.g., entitlement) as *functionally diverse* and reveals the need to represent narcissistic personality in terms of the multiple axes stressed by the present model. This view also fits well with clinical experience which reveals individuals with varying combinations of grandiosity—vs. vulnerability—based problems (Ronningstam, 2005; Russ et al., 2008). As a result, it is important for

researchers to assess the entire spectrum of narcissism features when identifying correlates and consequences of narcissism (see Siedor, Maples-Keller, Miller, & Campbell, 2016 for a similar argument).

Intensive Measurement Third, there is a need for new forms of data that confidently speak to classic controversies and to questions raised by the present model. The most fascinating aspects of narcissism involve apparent incongruities, such as ideas that a bloated self-concept “masks” self-doubt or mood instability (Bosson et al., 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). However, empirically addressing these possibilities is extremely challenging. Confidently addressing the narcissists' presumed vacillation in mood or self-esteem requires longitudinal designs that track short-term experiences (e.g., mood and state self-esteem) as a function of context and self-relevant events, assess all axes of narcissism, and are ideally combined with other sources of data (e.g., behavioral observation). The data examining whether narcissism is associated with more self-esteem and mood instability are mixed (Bosson et al. 2008; Rhodewalt et al., 1998; Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013; Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clark, 2010), so a focused assessment of all cardinal narcissistic features stressed by the present model is vital to identifying which aspects of narcissism (or combination thereof) are the most critical. The NSM clearly suggests that narcissistic vulnerability should be the most indicative of instability, revealed in labile mood and strong affective reactions to self-relevant events. A promising direction involves examining narcissism itself as a *state*, given narcissistic thoughts and emotions also vacillate over time (Giacomin & Jordan, 2016a, 2016b). This research also suggests that narcissistic states themselves are multifaceted and differentially indicative of narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability (Giacomin & Jordan, 2016b). In this vein, the NSM should be helpful in providing a clear nomenclature for assessing distinct state aspects of narcissism as well as a starting point for assessing the structure of narcissistic states.

Development of Narcissism Similarly, appropriately addressing developmental puzzles about the role of caregivers in creating healthy or inflated egos (Kohut, 1971; Millon, 1969) requires large longitudinal designs that tie childhood events and parental context to adolescent or adult personality features. Narcissistic qualities indicative of adult narcissism (e.g., histrionic tendencies, antagonism) appear relatively early in childhood, so tracing their development is crucial (e.g., Carlson & Gjerde, 2009). To this end, Wetzel and Robbins (2016) recently identified that negative parental behaviors (e.g., hostility) in a sample of Latino youth contributed to higher exploitativeness (indicative of entitlement) 2 years later, but did not contribute to higher superiority (indicative of grandiosity). Grandiosity, as suggested by another longitudinal investigation of adolescents, appears more strongly linked to parental overvaluation (Brummelman et al., 2015). Critically, the proposed model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how distinct factors shape distinct aspects of narcissism, helping transcend debates mainly driven by definitional or semantic concerns (e.g., Kealy, Hadjipavlou, & Ogrodniczuk, 2015).

Conclusion

The construct of narcissism shows no signs of fading away. It is one of the oldest personality constructs, it continues to fascinate psychologists, and it has infiltrated popular culture. Empirical evidence reveals that narcissism is a complex construct, with scholars continuing to disagree about how to best define and measure it. The narcissism spectrum model can help build common terminology, a shared set of observations about the empirical structure of narcissism, and provide a novel and comprehensive framework for integrating scholarship of narcissism with that of psychopathology more broadly.

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Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism

3

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Abstract

The concepts of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism present a puzzling enigma: how can the key features of narcissism (i.e., entitlement, self-centeredness, and low empathy) manifest into such different subtypes? Past work shows that grandiose narcissists are arrogant, dominating, and manipulative self-enhancers, whereas vulnerable narcissists are hypersensitive, distrustful, and neurotic self-doubters (e.g., Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). In this chapter, I propose a new perspective to explain why grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share a narcissistic core but otherwise exhibit vastly different characteristics. Specifically, I propose that their diverging characteristics and behaviors stem from a difference in perceived control. Much previous research has shown that people are motivated to view the world around them as predictable and controllable, and that perceiving high controls tends to be beneficial and perceiving low control tends to be detrimental (e.g., Abramson et al., 1978; Langer and Rodin, 1976). According to the Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism (PCTN), grandiose narcissists have high perceived control over their own outcomes, the behavior of others, and the

world around them, whereas vulnerable narcissists' perceived control over these domains is low. In this chapter, I outline how past research supports perceived control as a differentiating feature between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists, including how differences in perceived control account for the narcissistic subtypes' other divergent characteristics. I also outline implications of the PCTN, including the theory's ability to explain conflicting research findings and to generate new predictions to aid researchers, lay-people, and mental health practitioners in better understanding trait narcissism.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism
· Perceived control · Self-esteem · Agency
· Close relationships

Self-centeredness and entitlement are increasingly becoming pressing societal problems. Some argue that trait narcissism levels have risen over the past decades, with average scores on a commonly used measure increasing by 0.33 standard deviation from 1982 to 2006 (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008; for discussion of contradictory findings, see Barry & Lee-Rowland, 2015; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008). We know a great deal about the negative interpersonal effects of

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narcissism, including its contribution to aggression (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), bullying (e.g., Ang, Ong, Lim, & Lim, 2010), counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2002), and poor social relationships (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002; Foster & Brunell, this volume). However, researchers have recently proposed that there are two types of narcissists: grandiose and vulnerable (e.g., Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). Though they share key narcissistic features such as entitlement and self-centeredness, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists differ in important ways, which impact their intrapsychic experiences and social relationships.

Most past research on trait narcissism has focused on grandiose narcissism. Grandiose narcissists are confident, outgoing, and charming, but are also vain, manipulative, and aggressive (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). These narcissists have an inflated sense of self, viewing themselves as superior to others (Krizan & Bushman, 2011), overestimating their intelligence and cognitive ability (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002b), and preferring the company of powerful and popular people (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Grandiose narcissists greatly value the admiration of others, and often gain it by being socially charming (Rose, 2002) and making positive first impressions (Paulhus, 1998). However, their appeal typically deteriorates over time (Leckelt, Kufner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Paulhus, 1998), likely because they are insensitive to the needs of others (Gabbard, 1989).

Compared to the wealth of empirical knowledge on grandiose narcissism, relatively little is known about vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerable narcissists are socially inhibited, insecure, defensive, and vindictive (Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Wink, 1991). These narcissists experience heightened negative emotional reactivity, including envy, shame, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Besser & Priel, 2010; Freis, Brown, Carroll, & Arkin, 2015; Krizan & Johar, 2012; Rose, 2002; Wink, 1991). Whereas grandiose narcissists view others merely as a source of admiration and personal gain (Campbell, 1999),

vulnerable narcissists are simultaneously dependent on and suspicious of others (Wink, 1991). They view themselves as interdependent and are highly sensitive to others' feedback and opinions (Besser & Priel, 2010; Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Rohmann, Neumann, Herner, & Bierhoff, 2012). However, their behavior is often unlikely to elicit positive feedback, as vulnerable narcissists lack self-confidence in social settings and are prone to behave vindictively, typically because they interpret others' actions as malevolent (Wink, 1991) or feel that others have not adequately recognized their own underlying sense of importance (Given-Wilson, McIlwain, & Warburton, 2011).

The question of how narcissism can manifest in two such different subtypes has remained unresolved for quite some time, likely because the delineation of the subtypes arose not from social psychological theory but from psychoanalytic observations and factor analysis. For example, Freud (1931) described a kind of narcissism that entails high-functioning social dominance, whereas Kernberg (1975) described a kind of narcissism that reflects internalized shame and dependence on others' validation. These observations sparked the creation of scales and inventories based on differing operationalizations of narcissism. Decades later, Wink (1991) identified these discrepancies and conducted a factor analysis of narcissism scales. A 2-factor solution fit the data best, with 1 factor representing Grandiosity-Exhibitionism and another representing Vulnerability-Sensitivity. Wink argued that although these 2 factors shared narcissistic characteristics like self-indulgence, conceitedness, and disregard for others, their otherwise strong differences necessitated treating the two as distinct forms of narcissism. Although much recent research supports that the subtypes share traits such as entitlement but diverge in traits like self-esteem (e.g., Miller et al., 2010, 2011), it is still unclear exactly why a shared narcissistic core can produce either grandiose or vulnerable narcissists.

Some researchers have offered theories to explain trait narcissism, but few take into account both the grandiose and vulnerable types. For example, Morf and Rhodewalt's (2001) dynamic self-regulatory processing model explains narcis-

sism as a set of processes employed as motivated self-construction, but this theory conceptualizes narcissism as both grandiose and vulnerable simultaneously rather than as two separate subtypes. Campbell and colleagues (2006), Campbell and Foster (2007), and Campbell and Green (2008) posit that narcissists focus on agentic concerns to fuel their “narcissistic esteem,” but despite being a well-supported account of grandiose narcissism, the agency model does not encompass vulnerable narcissism. Similarly, Campbell and colleagues’ contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009) further explains the functioning of grandiose but not vulnerable narcissists.

However, several new models strive to explain both subtypes. Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, and Campbell (2017) argue that the narcissistic subtypes can be explained via the Big Five, positing that the core of narcissism is low agreeableness; adding extraversion to the core creates grandiose narcissism, whereas adding neuroticism to the core creates vulnerable narcissism. Krizan and Herlache (2018; Krizan, this volume) propose that the core of narcissism is entitled self-importance, but grandiose narcissists are bold whereas vulnerable narcissists are reactive; thus, grandiose narcissists pursue self-aggrandizing goals regardless of the social costs, whereas vulnerable narcissists primarily identify and combat perceived self-image threats. Freis (this volume) proposes that both types of narcissist share a need for distinctiveness, but that grandiose narcissists are promotion-focused in pursuing that need whereas vulnerable narcissists are prevention-focused.

In this chapter, I offer another new perspective to further explain why grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share a narcissistic core but otherwise exhibit vastly different characteristics.

Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism

I propose that one answer to this question lies in the degree to which an individual perceives that they have control over their social world, including their own outcomes and the behavior of oth-

ers. People are motivated to view the world around them as predictable and controllable, and this motivation produces biases in favor of maintaining control. For example, Langer (1975) demonstrated that people are biased toward believing they have more control over events than they truly do. In a series of studies, Langer demonstrated that people do not treat chance- and skill-determined events as separately as they logically should, instead overestimating their influence over chance-determined events such as card-drawing and lottery tickets. Langer connected this illusion of control with past theorizing about people’s motivation to control their environment (e.g., deCharms, 1968; Hendrick, 1943) and to avoid negative consequences associated with perceiving a lack of control (e.g., Lefcourt, 1973). More recent research shows that the illusion of control impacts realms like consumer behavior, with one study demonstrating that people who placed their own bets on basketball game outcomes felt more confident about the bet and wagered more than people whose bets were chosen for them (Kwak, 2016). Additional research suggests that the illusion of control is more prevalent in individualistic cultures like the United States than in collectivistic cultures (Hernandez & Iyengar, 2001).

Importantly, high perceived control tends to be beneficial in terms of coping and mental health, whereas low perceived control tends to be detrimental. For example, Langer and Rodin (1976) demonstrated that nursing home residents in a field experiment who were encouraged to choose their activities and take responsibility for their health experienced significant improvement in mental alertness, social activity, and well-being, compared to other nursing home residents who were told that the staff were responsible for their health and would choose their activities for them. These effects apply to mere perceived control in addition to actual control; inducing a perception of control over an aversive impending event reduces how aversive people think the event is, and conversely, lowering people’s perception of control over such an event creates higher anxiety and physiological distress (Bowers, 1968; Geer, Davidson, & Gatchel,

1970; Glass & Singer, 1972; Kanfer & Seidner, 1973; Pervin, 1963). The negative implications of low perceived control are also evidenced by the phenomenon of learned helplessness, where learning that outcomes are uncontrollable results in various motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Maier & Seligman, 1976).

The Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism¹ (PCTN) predicts that although both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists share a core set of narcissistic features, their diverging characteristics and behaviors stem from a difference in perceived control. Specifically, I propose that grandiose narcissists believe they have high levels of personal control over their own outcomes, the behavior of others, and the world around them. These narcissists pursue what they want in life and exert influence over others, including exploiting others for personal gain and maintaining power in relationships. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists feel they have little to no control over the events in their lives and are highly reactive without clear intentionality. They perceive that the world is happening to them, rather than perceiving themselves as causal agents in their lives, and expend their energy trying to protect themselves from negative outcomes without pursuing positive outcomes.

Situating perceived control as the distinguishing factor between the narcissistic subtypes fits well with several existing theories of trait narcissism. For example, the PCTN is consistent with the agency model (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Campbell & Green, 2008; Campbell et al., 2006); specifically, the PCTN predicts that grandiose narcissists employ agentic self-regulatory strategies because they believe they control their own outcomes, but goes beyond the agency model by asserting that these narcissists also believe they control others' behavior and act accordingly in social situations (e.g., they are manipulative and believe they have superior social skills; Brunell et al., 2013; Paulhus, 1998). The PCTN also aligns well with Miller and colleagues' (2017)

trait-based model, Krizan and Herlache's (2018; Krizan, this volume) spectrum model, and Freis' (this volume) need for distinctiveness model. Grandiose narcissists' higher perceived control likely causes them to be extraverted, bold, and promotion-focused, because they are confident in their ability to control the attention of others and manipulate situations to their benefit. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists' lower perceived control leads them to be neurotic, reactive, and prevention-focused, because they feel they are not able to produce or even pursue the outcomes they want from others. Thus, the PCTN demonstrates that perceived control is at the root of the differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists.

Evidence Supporting the Key Role of Perceived Control

Recent work supports the role of perceived control in differentiating grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. For example, my colleagues and I demonstrated that differences in perceived agency explain the association between the narcissistic subtypes and self-esteem (Brown, Freis, Carroll, & Arkin, 2016). Perceived agency refers to traits of action and competence, which allow people to bring about desired outcomes (Bakan, 1966; Bosson et al., 2008). We found that grandiose narcissists have high perceived agency, whereas vulnerable narcissists have low perceived agency; furthermore, their perceptions of agency mediated the link between each type of narcissism and self-esteem, with grandiose narcissists' high agency statistically accounting for their high self-esteem and vulnerable narcissists' low agency statistically accounting for their low self-esteem. Although agency is not a perfect indicator of control, it can be viewed as a specific variant of control, as perceived control includes not only one's own outcomes but also the behavior of others.

Additional support for the key role of perceived control can be found in four studies that assessed the links between the narcissistic subtypes and perceived control across several con-

¹Special thanks to Amy Brunell for helping name this theory.

texts (Hansen-Brown & Crocker, 2017). All four studies included a measure of perceived control designed to capture broad, general control (e.g., “Sometimes I feel that I’m being pushed around in life,” “I have little control over the things that happen to me”). Two studies also included a more specific measure assessing the perception of control within a romantic relationship (i.e., asking participants to indicate whether they or their partner have more control in their relationship), as we reasoned that high or low perceived control should affect close personal relationships. One of these studies was dyadic, with both relationship partners completing measures of general and relationship-specific control.

In all four studies, regression analyses controlling for both grandiose narcissism and socially desirable responding strongly and consistently predicted vulnerable narcissists’ tendency to report low control. Thus, in a broad sense, vulnerable narcissists appear to believe that they have little control over what happens in their lives. Mediation analyses further showed that the effects of vulnerable narcissism on variables such as endorsing a victim mentality and poor-quality relationships can be explained by low perceived control.

In two of the four studies, grandiose narcissism significantly predicted higher perceived control. In the other two studies, the bivariate correlations were directionally consistent but non-significant; however, grandiose narcissism predicted perceiving higher relationship-specific control. The dyadic study of romantic partners also showed that partners of grandiose narcissists perceive that they have lower control in the relationship compared to their narcissistic partner, suggesting that the tendency for grandiose narcissists to report having more control in the relationship is reflective of a true relationship dynamic rather than simply a mere illusion of control.

Thus, it seems clear that perceived control is an important concept in the lives of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists. Studies on perceived agency and perceived control support the tenets of the PCTN, showing that grandiose narcissists

believe they are in control of the people around them and feel capable of pursuing their goals, whereas vulnerable narcissists believe that they are passive bystanders in their own lives, unable to pursue desired outcomes or get what they want from others.

Implications of the Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism

The utility of the PCTN is potentially far-reaching, with one benefit of this theory being its ability to explain conflicting findings. For example, aggression researchers have established that grandiose narcissists lash out harshly against ego threats and other provocations with the aim of punishing transgressors (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, Van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003; Krizan & Johar, 2015), whereas vulnerable narcissists’ heightened anger and suspicion of others’ motives leads them to reactively aggress even onto uninvolved third parties and bystanders (Besser & Priel, 2010; Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010; Krizan & Johar, 2015). According to the PCTN, grandiose narcissists’ high perceived control of their social world leads them to punish anyone who seems to provoke them, whereas vulnerable narcissists’ low perceived control leads them to react to any kind of provocation strongly and indiscriminately as they try to protect themselves from insult.

In another line of work, research on self-presentation shows that although grandiose narcissists choose assertive strategies such as intimidation to make purposeful impressions on others, vulnerable narcissists choose defensive strategies such as excuses and justifications (Hart, Adams, Burton, & Tortoriello, 2017). The PCTN suggests that grandiose narcissists’ perception that they are in charge allows them to engage in proactive self-presentation strategies designed to manipulate others into viewing them the way they want to be viewed. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists’ perception that they are helpless in the face of unpredictable social events leads them to defensively attempt to protect themselves from others’

negative judgments rather than proactively presenting desired self-images.

In the close relationships domain, research shows that grandiose narcissists use relationships as sources of admiration and social status (Campbell, 1999; Campbell et al., 2006) and enjoy keeping their partner uncertain about their commitment to the relationship so they can retain greater power in the relationship (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002a; Rohmann et al., 2012). Vulnerable narcissists, however, tend to be anxiously attached to their close others (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Smolewska & Dion, 2005), distrustful and suspicious of others' intentions and behaviors (Wink, 1991), and predisposed to hostile envy and angry rumination (Krizan & Johar, 2015; Miller & Campbell, 2008). The tenets of the PCTN shed new light on these findings, asserting that because grandiose narcissists perceive that they have high control over their relationship partners, they feel at liberty to behave in ways that most benefit their own agenda. In contrast, vulnerable narcissists' perception of low control over their relationship causes them to constantly worry that their close others will unpredictably abandon them, all the while they counterproductively give their close others reason to do so as they mistreat and suspect the worst of them.

Beyond explaining past research, the PCTN also generates new predictions to aid researchers, lay-people, and mental health practitioners in better understanding trait narcissism. For researchers, the theory provides clear, testable predictions about how grandiose and vulnerable narcissists behave in social situations. For example, if perceived control is restored to vulnerable narcissists, they should at least temporarily resemble grandiose narcissists (e.g., social confidence, higher self-esteem, willingness to take risks), and vice versa if perceived control is taken away from grandiose narcissists. Grandiose narcissists who experience reductions in perceived control, for example, would still be self-centered and entitled, as altering one's perception of control would not necessarily affect the narcissistic core of entitlement and self-absorption, but these narcissists would now perceive low control rather

than high and thus would likely resemble vulnerable narcissists.

These new predictions are also useful outside of academic research, such as in mental health treatment. Regardless of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists' reasons for seeking help, knowing that these narcissists differ in perceived control may prove integral to successful therapeutic outcomes. Because vulnerable narcissists believe they are not in control of their social worlds, they may not believe that anything they do in the course of therapy will actually produce the good outcomes they want. Therapists may need to do additional groundwork aimed at assuring vulnerably narcissistic clients that they are indeed capable of making changes in their lives. For grandiosely narcissistic clients, therapists may need to modify their approach in the opposite direction. Because grandiose narcissists believe they are firmly in control of their lives, they may believe that the source of the problem they face lies in others who need to be punished, rather than recognizing their own faulty strategies. Therapists may need to do additional groundwork to demonstrate to these clients that they need to change the way they perceive and treat others to establish healthy relationships.

The PCTN also outlines the importance of perceived control in the development of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Perhaps grandiose narcissism develops when children experience overvaluation and inflated feedback (e.g., Brummelman et al., 2015; Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006), learning from their family members that they are special and deserve the best and that their own efforts produce good outcomes. This leads them to develop high self-centeredness, entitlement, and perceived control. On the other hand, vulnerable narcissism may develop when children experience devaluation and coldness from their family members (Miller et al., 2010; Otway & Vignoles, 2006), sometimes receiving feedback contingent on their own efforts but often feeling that their parents' responses are unpredictable and inconsistent. This leads the child to develop self-centeredness and entitlement as they strive to compensate for inadequate mirroring and idealization from their parents (Kohut, 1977), but in conjunc-

tion with uncertainty about their own efficacy as a causal agent, and thus low perceived control. Therefore, it may not be parenting or attachment style alone that produces grandiose or vulnerable narcissism, but a permissive parenting style in addition to inflated feedback and excessive praise that produces grandiose narcissism, and an authoritarian parenting style in conjunction with inconsistent and sometimes non-contingent feedback that produces vulnerable narcissism. Using the PCTN to identify when and where grandiose and vulnerable narcissism develop in the lifespan may also help researchers and therapists to slow the rise of trait narcissism and prevent further societal harm from the gradual increase of this sometimes nefarious personality variable.

Conclusion

The field of narcissism research has continuously expanded over the decades and shows no signs of stopping anytime soon. As the reach and prevalence of trait narcissism continues to grow and create social harms, the importance of studying the origins and effects of narcissism also grows. In this chapter, I have provided a description of a new theory to explain how and why trait narcissism can manifest in different forms, provided evidence for this theory, and illustrated the benefits of identifying the role of perceived control both in the academic domain by reconciling past research and generating new lines of research, as well as in the practical domain by providing new suggestions for therapists working with narcissistic clients and a potential application in stemming the tide of increasing narcissism. Although the PCTN is currently in its infancy, it represents a new approach to trait narcissism and a promising avenue through which the trait narcissism research literature can continue moving forward.

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The Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS): What Binds and Differentiates Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

Stephanie D. Freis

Abstract

Grandiose narcissists (GN) and vulnerable narcissists (VN) share traits of self-absorption, entitlement, and callousness but differ in self-esteem and confidence (i.e., high in GN but low in VN). Historical emphasis on the importance of self-enhancement, or maintaining high self-esteem, in narcissism theory places VN at a crossroads. Although some researchers view self-esteem as the primary feature defining the narcissistic subtypes (e.g., Rose, *Pers Ind Diff* 33:379–391, 2002), others use self-esteem to question if VN should be categorized as a narcissism subtype (e.g., Morf and Rhodewalt, *Psychol Inquiry* 12:177–196, 2001). To tackle this conceptual confusion, this chapter outlines the Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS). This motivational model builds on current trait-based theories in order to examine how GN and VN are similar enough to both be considered narcissistic but also different enough to be labeled as separate subtypes. Specifically, the DMNS proposes that GN and VN share a particularly strong need to differentiate themselves from others and be seen as distinct or “special.” However, the subtypes differ in how they orient to this

motivation: whereas GN are promotion-focused in their need for distinctiveness, VN are prevention-focused. This leads GN to concentrate on gains and seek new opportunities to become more distinct. In contrast, VN worry about suffering losses and thus remain vigilant to defend against diminishing specialness. This chapter (a) concentrates on empirical evidence for the DMNS, (b) explores how this model can explain past findings, and (c) discusses the new predictions this model can make in narcissism literature.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Distinctiveness · Motivation

Narcissistic individuals are entitled, low in empathy, and often exhibit self-serving behaviors that hurt others around them (e.g., Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Brunell et al., 2013). Although narcissism has received considerable attention in psychological research and popular culture alike, conceptual confusion exists over the trait construction and expression (e.g., Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). Recent research supports the division of trait narcissism into two subtypes: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism; however, a lack of theoretical

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convergence still exists (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS) attempts to resolve some of these remaining discrepancies. The DMNS applies motivational theory to understand the manner in which grandiose and vulnerable narcissists¹ are similar enough to both be considered narcissistic but also different enough to be labeled as separate subtypes.

Self-esteem Models of Narcissism

Suggesting that narcissism can be understood through motivation is not new. Traditional theory has highlighted narcissists' need to self-enhance and protect their egos (Back et al., 2013; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Campbell, 1999; Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Early researchers interpreted narcissists' self-aggrandizing (Kernberg, 1986) yet self-defeating (Kohut, 1971) behavior as narcissists' attempts to control their secret vulnerabilities through a grandiose veneer. For example, Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) proposed narcissism as a unitary construct where hot/cold systems underlie chronic goals to seek external affirmation and evaluate situations based on impact to self-esteem. Later research viewed this self-enhancement and self-protection as two separate dimensions of narcissism but still connected by an underlying need to maintain a grandiose self (Back et al., 2013). Much research has also concentrated on narcissists' defensive self-esteem strategies (Pulver, 1970; Raskin et al., 1991; Reich, 1960), such as turning aggressive to protect the self (Baumeister et al., 1996; Lobbstaël, Baumeister, Fiebig, & Eckel, 2014).

According to these self-esteem models, one would expect all narcissists to express negative emotion after receiving negative feedback and positive emotion after positive feedback.

¹Although narcissism is a continuous construct, for brevity, this chapter refers to people high in trait narcissism as "narcissists."

Unfortunately, these models no longer reliably predict more recent outcomes reported in the field. For example, vulnerable narcissists feel the greatest shame and anger after positive feedback (Atlas & Them, 2008; Freis, Brown, & Carroll, 2015; Malkin, Barry, & Zeigler-Hill, 2011).

The Narcissism Subtypes: Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

To date, most work has emphasized *grandiose* narcissism and traditional emphasis on self-esteem does well to describe this subtype. Grandiose narcissists have high self-esteem (Bosson et al., 2008) and view themselves as "better-than-average" (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994). They use downward comparisons and affiliate with high-status partners to boost their self (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Campbell, 1999). Although grandiose narcissists do not care about others (Vonk, Zeigler-Hill, Mayhew, & Mercer, 2013), they desire an audience (Arkin & Lakin, 2001) and will change their behavior in hopes of gaining attention or admiration (Byrne & Worthy, 2013; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Collins & Stukas, 2008; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002).

By comparison, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism report low self-esteem (Rose, 2002) and feel inferior (Freis, 2016). Their daily life is fraught with anxiety (Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996), depression (Miller et al., 2010), shame, and anger (Freis et al., 2015; Krizan & Johar, 2015). When situations threaten self-esteem, vulnerable narcissists lack the same self-enhancement strategies that grandiose narcissists use. For example, vulnerable narcissists' attempts to use motivated reasoning to protect against feelings of shame are often unsuccessful and backfire, resulting in higher shame (Freis et al., 2015). Like grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists do not care about others (Vonk et al., 2013); however, since they are not successful in regulating their own self-esteem, they rely upon external feedback (Besser & Priel, 2009). This

contingency on social approval makes vulnerable narcissists hypersensitive, likely contributing to high interpersonal distress and social avoidant tendencies (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003).

Despite these substantive differences across the subtypes, defining narcissism by a self-enhancement – or self-esteem maintenance – motivation has persisted (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Miller & Campbell, 2010; Sedikides, 1993; Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008). Emphasis on this motivation places vulnerable narcissism at a crossroads due to its associated characteristics, including low self-esteem and unsuccessful self-enhancement. Although some researchers view self-esteem as the primary feature defining the subtypes (e.g., Rose, 2002), others use self-esteem to question if vulnerable narcissism should be categorized as a narcissism subtype (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Given the issues with trying to understand narcissism through a self-esteem lens, researchers have turned to more extensive trait-based theories.

Trait Models of Narcissism

To integrate narcissism research, Miller and colleagues (2017) have proposed a 5-factor trait-based approach, which outlines low agreeableness as the core of narcissism. Additions of extraversion versus neuroticism then predict expressions of grandiose versus vulnerable narcissism, respectively. Similarly, Krizan and Herlache (2018; Krizan, this volume) have proposed the Narcissism Spectrum Model, which has a core of entitled self-importance. If an individual's sense of entitlement reflects boldness (i.e., hubris, exhibitionism) versus reactivity (i.e., defensive, resenting), the model predicts an expression of grandiose versus vulnerable narcissism, respectively. These personality perspectives do well to describe and distinguish the traits and behaviors of the narcissistic subtypes using common narcissism measures.

While trait-based models provide a foundation to understand the narcissistic subtypes' characteristic differences, the field should not

lose the motivational roots of narcissism theory. As McCabe and Fleeson (2016) review, using motivational principles in conjunction with personality traits has value in better predicting downstream consequences including social behavior and perceptions. Trait approaches, by definition, make general predictions across situations to understand the commonalities of individuals' behavior. Redefining a motivational approach to narcissism, in comparison, can help explain situational dynamics and make more specific predictions on what happens when a person has satisfied versus not satisfied their motive. Thus, the DMNS's goal is to move away from traditional self-esteem or self-enhancement models and expand on current trait-based models to examine in what other manner grandiose and vulnerable narcissists may be motivationally similar enough to both be considered narcissistic but also distinct enough to be labeled as separate subtypes.

Distinctiveness Model of Narcissism

The Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS) reconceptualizes grandiose and vulnerable narcissism based on a shared desire to differentiate from others (Freis & Fujita, 2017). This motivational need may grow out of narcissists' negative working model of others (Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012) and be reinforced by their high self-absorption (Given-Wilson, McIlwain, & Warburton, 2011). One way to distinguish oneself from disliked others is to assert a unique personal identity.

The DMNS is complementary to previous theories but maintains key differences. For example, the Narcissism Spectrum Model (Krizan & Herlache, 2018) emphasizes entitled self-importance, or perceptions of deserved superiority, and the Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry Concept (Back et al., 2013) emphasizes striving for uniqueness or supremacy in superior status. These models, however, conflate traits which are distinct as also being more special, important, or valued – a common associa-

tion in Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The DMNS, in comparison, posits that one's distinctiveness can work independently of valence; a narcissist may meet their need for distinctiveness by perceiving themselves as uniquely inferior. Then, narcissists' motivation to perceive themselves as distinct may help produce, or sustain, entitled beliefs and perceived self-importance.

Self-esteem also remains a relevant construct in narcissists' narrative. Specifically, narcissists' desire for admiration or social approval (Back et al., 2013; Brunell et al., 2008) may be a product of their distinctiveness motivation, or ways they try to validate their uniqueness. For example, if a narcissist garners attention for a unique outfit, the attention signals to them that they have met their need to be distinct. Attention or social approval thus becomes a means through which narcissists can assess how well they are meeting their primary distinctiveness need. Narcissists' self-esteem should get a boost if they meet their need or decrease if they do not feel distinct.

Regulatory Focus in Narcissists' Distinctiveness

A high need for distinctiveness may be a common feature of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists, but it does not alone explain differences between them (e.g., levels of self-doubt, agency, extraversion). To address this, the DMNS incorporates insights from regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) which is staged on the premise that humans have security needs (e.g., physical safety) and nurturance needs (e.g., nourishment) to survive and thrive. However, these needs breed different psychological experiences: a promotion- or prevention-focused orientation.

When individuals orient toward a situation with a promotion focus, they are primarily concerned with nurturing their desires (Higgins, 1997). The DMNS proposes that individuals with a promotion-focused need for distinctiveness eagerly wish to garner greater gains or opportunities to increase their distinctiveness.

They are not satisfied with non-gains or non-losses where the status quo is maintained and there is no change in whether they perceive themselves as distinct versus ordinary. Maintaining the status quo is avoided just as much as an actual loss in distinctiveness. Therefore, when a gain in distinctiveness is achieved, a promotion-focused individual would feel happiness; but any other outcome such as a loss, non-loss, or even a non-gain would result in sadness, disappointment, and even depression. The DMNS proposes that grandiose narcissists adopt this promotion-focused orientation toward their need for distinctiveness – they are concerned with rewards and eagerly seek gains that increase their distinctiveness.

According to the DMNS, when individuals orient toward a situation with a prevention focus, they feel anxious they might incur losses or be seen as ordinary. Therefore, they become vigilant to defend against potential losses and much prefer to maintain the status quo to insure greater security and certainty. These individuals experience no greater satisfaction from increasing distinctiveness than they do from keeping their situation consistent and predictable. Therefore, a person in a prevention-focused orientation is consumed with anxiety and worry if they incur a loss but, in comparison, would feel equally relieved or calm when a loss is absent (i.e., a non-loss, non-gain, or gain occurs). If prevention-focused individuals do increase their distinctiveness, it means increasing their vigilance to protect their new status quo – the threat of loss becomes heightened. The DMNS proposes that vulnerable narcissists adopt this prevention-focused orientation toward their need for distinctiveness – they are most concerned with losses and vigilantly protect their distinct status.

Evidence for the DMNS

Connections to Previous Research The DMNS's predictions are consistent with previous research. Grandiose narcissists' report striving or needing uniqueness (Back et al., 2013; Emmons,

1984) and self-enhance especially on agentic traits which distinguish the individual from others (Campbell et al., 2002). Furthermore, grandiose narcissists are assertive in action or goal-setting (Brown, Freis, & Carroll, 2016; Campbell & Foster, 2007), reward-focused (Lakey, Rose, Campbell, & Goodie, 2008), and high in approach motivation (Foster & Trimm, 2008). This approach motivation is featured in several past and current narcissism theories, including the Extended Agency Model (Campbell & Foster, 2007), Narcissistic Spectrum Model (Krizan & Herlache, 2018), and Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (Back et al., 2013). Past research also documents vulnerable narcissists' hypersensitivity to threats, losses, or injustices to the self as they report a high avoidance motivation (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Krizan & Herlache, 2018).

Previous work on approach/avoidance theory (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Krizan & Herlache, 2018) aligns with the distinction the DMNS proposes to make. However, the DMNS hopes to compliment these previous results by generating additional predictions. For example, original approach/avoidance theory focuses on valence and direction when predicting individuals' reactions; a person should approach what is good and avoid what is bad. Regulatory focus theory, by comparison, defines what is good to approach or bad to avoid based on whether a person's primary concern is nurturance or security. For example, it is unclear from an approach/avoidance perspective whether maintaining the status quo (i.e., experiencing a non-gain or non-loss) is good or bad. However, the DMNS would predict a promotion-focused grandiose narcissist should see the status quo as something bad to avoid as they are more concerned with nurturing increased distinctiveness. Therefore, they would feel disappointed if they experienced a non-gain and maintained the status quo. In comparison, a prevention-focused vulnerable narcissist should see the status quo as something good to approach as they are most concerned with preventing losses. Therefore, they would feel relieved if they experienced a non-loss and maintained the status

quo. In sum, while previous research is consistent with key aspects of the DMNS, the specification of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists' regulatory foci toward their primary need to be distinct helps extend approach/avoidance theories.

Current Research Preliminary investigations provide more direct support for the DMNS. For example, Freis and Fujita (2017) measured contingencies of self-worth (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003), including a new domain in which self-worth is contingent on perceived distinctiveness (e.g., "I will go out of my way to obtain greater individuality," "If I were to lose my uniqueness, I would lose my feelings of self-esteem"). Freis and Fujita (2017) found that individuals high in general narcissism (SINS, Konrath, Meier, & Bushman, 2014),² grandiose narcissism (NPI, Raskin & Terry, 1988), or vulnerable narcissism (HSNS, Hendin & Cheek, 1997) were all more likely to report self-worth contingent on perceived distinctiveness, even when controlling for other contingency domains.

In additional studies, Freis and Fujita (2017) developed a new scale, Scale of Distinctiveness Motivation (SDM), to measure individuals' promotion-focused need for distinctiveness (e.g., "I am driven by the idea of being distinct compared to others.") and prevention-focused need for distinctiveness (e.g., "I'm concerned that I'm just like everyone else."). General narcissism (Konrath et al., 2014) positively correlated with both subscales, regardless of regulatory foci, providing further support that the common motivation of narcissistic individuals is a high need for distinctiveness.

Furthermore, the narcissistic subtypes demonstrated unique associations with the SDM subscales. Grandiose narcissism was associated

²The single-item narcissism scale (SINS) positively correlates to previous measures of narcissism (e.g., NPI, HSNS) and is therefore proposed to subsume both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism subtypes to serve as a general narcissism measure (Konrath et al., 2014).

with a promotion-focused need for distinctiveness, whereas vulnerable narcissism was associated with both a promotion- and prevention-focused need for distinctiveness, suggesting vulnerable narcissists may be hyper-motivated. Vulnerable narcissists may have a desire to be distinct at the same time they feel worried they are average. Although these findings may be a product of solely examining individuals in highly individualistic cultures, which encourage promotion-focused orientations (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000), the results still provide support that regulatory focus can differentiate the narcissistic subtypes.³

In another study, Freis and Fujita (2017) designed advertisements where a unique product (i.e., tree art) was framed as a symbol that could address participants' need for distinctiveness. After reading the advertisements, participants reported their attitudes, emotions, thoughts, and behavioral intentions toward owning the unique product. Results revealed that the two narcissistic subtypes held unique associations in their reasons for wanting to own the distinct product, and these different reasons predicted their emotional and behavioral reactions. Specifically, grandiose narcissists felt more upset if they were not able to obtain the unique product and were willing to pay more for the product because they had wanted the product to stand out. Thus, grandiose narcissists' promotion focus (not prevention focus) motivated their reactions. Vulnerable narcissists also felt more upset if they were not able to obtain the unique product and were willing to pay more for the product, but these reactions were a result of wanting to own the product in order to not be seen as commonplace. Thus, vulnerable narcissists' prevention focus (not promotion focus) motivated their reactions.

Collectively, these results help support the DMNS's predictions such that both narcissists

demonstrate a high need for distinctiveness but orient to that need differently.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The DMNS not only clarifies what is common as well as different between the narcissistic subtypes but also reveals new phenomenon, such as insights into what ultimately motivates narcissists' behavior, therefore offering more dynamic theoretical and practical contributions to the field.

What Differentiates the Narcissistic Subtypes Theoretically, the DMNS may help clarify other differences between the narcissistic subtypes. Currently, the DMNS speaks to narcissists' contingent self-esteem on perceived distinctiveness; but it may also address the narcissists' chronic self-esteem levels (i.e., grandiose narcissists' high self-esteem and vulnerable narcissists' low self-esteem; Rose, 2002). Scholer, Ozaki, and Higgins (2014) demonstrate how people may use more positive or negative self-evaluations to help sustain their underlying motivational concerns. A person in a promotion-focused orientation, like grandiose narcissists, could sustain their eagerness for advancement by maintaining positive self-evaluations, promoting chronic high self-esteem.⁴ In comparison, a person in a prevention-focused orientation, like vulnerable narcissists, could sustain their vigilance for safety by maintaining negative self-evaluations, leading to chronic low self-esteem.

³If replicated, these results suggest the DMNS may be revised to account for vulnerable narcissists holding both a promotion- and prevention-focused orientation, though indirect measures will be helpful in replication to circumvent cultural influences.

⁴People do not always maintain an orientation for the entirety of their day or year – people can shift their current evaluations to strategically fit future goals (Scholer et al., 2014). This may help reinterpret research on grandiose narcissists' discrepant self-esteem levels (e.g., Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006) – if grandiose narcissists found themselves outside a promotion-focused context, their self-evaluations may look different.

Regulatory focus may also help illuminate narcissists' differences in agency (i.e., grandiose narcissists' high agency and vulnerable narcissists' low agency; Brown et al., 2016). Grandiose narcissists, living in promotion-focused cultures, likely experience frequent occurrences of regulatory fit – where their personal promotion-focused orientation matches the orientation of their environment. Experiences of regulatory fit “feel right” and garners greater value, persistence, and interest in goal pursuit; but “feeling right” can be misattributed (Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008). As a result, grandiose narcissists' experiences of regulatory fit may trigger or strengthen perceptions of high agency. In comparison, vulnerable narcissists likely experience fewer instances of regulatory fit as their prevention-focused orientation may clash with the predominantly promotion-focused cultures in which they find themselves. This can impede goal pursuit (Cesario et al., 2008), potentially leading vulnerable narcissists to misattribute their lack of regulatory fit to their own low agency.⁵

What Unites the Narcissistic Subtypes A larger purpose of the DMNS is to highlight narcissists' primary motivation to better understand their psychological experience and behavior, and design more effective interventions. For example, in comparison to self-esteem based models, the DMNS proposes narcissists' reactions are divorced from evaluation or valence – what matters most are implications for distinctiveness. Therefore, the DMNS would predict that both narcissistic subtypes would be satisfied to claim a negative characteristic if it signified distinctiveness (e.g., being uniquely manipulative, having a rare injury). Seeking to obtain, or working to protect, such a terrible characteristic would illuminate the strength of narcissists' distinctiveness motivation.

Many other narcissistic behaviors may reflect actions taken to stand out or defend one's distinct status. Specifically, narcissists may engage in symbolic self-completion (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981) where people desire to define themselves by using various external indicators. This could be in the number or type of possessions narcissists own (Pilch & Górnik-Durose, 2017), the rate of their compulsive buying (Rose, 2007), or the individuals, groups, or systems that they choose to affiliate with (Campbell, 1999). Of course, the DMNS would propose that while grandiose narcissists will exhibit continual desire to accrue more symbols, vulnerable narcissists would be more protective over the symbols they already have.

The DMNS's motivational approach suggests healthy ways to satisfy narcissists' need for distinctiveness. Perhaps grandiose and vulnerable narcissists could self-symbolize to assuage the aggressive or exploitative ways they may otherwise pursue distinctiveness. For example, narcissists could design their work/home environments with distinctive symbols or use phone apps that prompt reminders of their distinctiveness. Researchers could also advise others on ways to recognize and respond to narcissists' need for distinctiveness. For example, a grandiose or vulnerable narcissist might respond most to the availability of treatment if it is framed to emphasize the commonality of mental distress and uniqueness of individuals who seek and complete treatment.

Summary

By integrating insights from motivation and trait-based theories, the Distinctiveness Model of the Narcissistic Subtypes (DMNS) highlights the unique social challenges that grandiose and vulnerable narcissists present. Whereas the promotion focus of grandiose narcissists leads to constant expansion of their “specialness,” the prevention focus of vulnerable narcissists leads to ever-vigilant guarding against threats to their uniqueness. Such insights may provide more dynamic predictions about narcissists' emotions,

⁵For any differences discussed, an upward or downward cycle is plausible. Self-esteem or agency differences could reinforce narcissists' different regulatory foci toward distinctiveness.

cognitions, and behavior as well as promote the development of novel interventions and policies with which to address some of the negative social implications of these personality traits.

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What Separates Narcissism from Self-esteem? A Social-Cognitive Perspective

5

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Abstract

Psychologists claim that narcissists have inflated, exaggerated, or excessive self-esteem. Media reports state that narcissists suffer from self-esteem on steroids. The conclusion seems obvious: Narcissists have too much self-esteem. A growing body of research shows, however, that narcissism and self-esteem are only weakly related. What, then, separates narcissism from self-esteem? We

argue that narcissism and self-esteem are rooted in distinct *core beliefs*—beliefs about the nature of the self, of others, and of the relationship between the self and others. These beliefs arise early in development, are cultivated by distinct socialization practices, and create unique behavioral patterns. Emerging experimental research shows that these beliefs can be changed through precise intervention, leading to changes at the level of narcissism and self-esteem. An important task for future research will be to develop interventions that simultaneously lower narcissism and raise self-esteem from an early age.

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Around the time of grammar school I had this incredible desire to be recognized. [...] I got the feeling that I was meant to be more than just an average guy running around, that I was chosen to do something special. At that point, I didn't think about money. I thought about the fame, about just being the greatest. I was dreaming about being some dictator of a country or some savior like Jesus. Just to be recognized.

—Arnold Schwarzenegger, in an interview with *Rolling Stone* (Peck, 1976)¹

As a young adolescent, Arnold Schwarzenegger was already thinking like a narcissist. He saw himself as a superior being, while seeing others as “average guy[s] running around.” Yet, despite looking down on others, he still depended on them to achieve what he valued above all else: recognition. In fact, he used his social relationships as a means to achieve recognition. And it did not matter how he achieved it—whether by being a dictator or a savior. As we know now, he ended up as bodybuilder, actor, and politician, all professions that allowed him to wallow in the limelight.

But did Arnold Schwarzenegger have high self-esteem? Despite his clearly narcissistic self-views, nowhere did he mention that he was happy with the person he was or that he considered himself worthy or valuable. This is surprising, given that conventional wisdom tells us that narcissism is a form of high self-esteem. In this chapter, we argue that narcissism and self-esteem are two distinct dimensions of the self. We focus on prototypical, grandiose narcissism, rather than on its vulnerable counterpart (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008; Miller et al., 2011). We suggest that recognizing the line that runs through narcissism and self-esteem is key to scholarly efforts toward helping people develop healthy views of themselves.

Conventional Wisdom

People intuitively infer that narcissism and self-esteem are intimately linked. In his essay *On Narcissism*, Freud (1914/1957) wrote that

¹Even when we describe individuals, we would not and could not diagnose them as “narcissists.” Our chapter focuses on narcissism as an everyday, subclinical personality trait, not as a personality disorder.

“self-regard appears to us to be an expression of the size of the ego” (p. 98). Today, the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines narcissism as “excessive [...] admiration of oneself,” and self-esteem as “pride in oneself.” This definition suggests that narcissism simply represents an excess of self-esteem—taking too much pride in oneself. This belief exists among experts and laypersons alike. Psychologists, including ourselves, have defined narcissism as a form of “excessive self-esteem,” “inflated self-esteem,” “exaggerated self-esteem,” “unwarranted self-esteem,” or “defensive high self-esteem.” Similarly, media reports have labeled narcissism as “self-esteem on steroids” or “blown-up self-esteem.” The conclusion seems obvious: Narcissists like themselves a little too much.

However, narcissism and self-esteem might be much more distinct than conventional wisdom has led people to believe (Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides, 2016). If narcissism really is an inflated form of self-esteem, narcissism and self-esteem should correlate strongly, and there should be no narcissists with low self-esteem. However, the correlation between narcissism and self-esteem is only weak or modest (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016) and becomes even weaker when researchers use more valid measures of narcissism and self-esteem (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004) and when they encourage narcissists to report their self-esteem truthfully (Myers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012). Moreover, latent class analysis shows that there are narcissists with low self-esteem; in fact, there are about as many narcissists with low self-esteem as there are narcissists with high self-esteem (Nelemans et al., 2017).

A Social-Cognitive Perspective

These findings beg the question: What separates narcissism from self-esteem? We approach this question from a social-cognitive perspective (Brummelman, 2017; Olson & Dweck, 2008). Rather than describing the stable patterns of behavior that characterize narcissism and self-esteem, we identify underlying core beliefs of

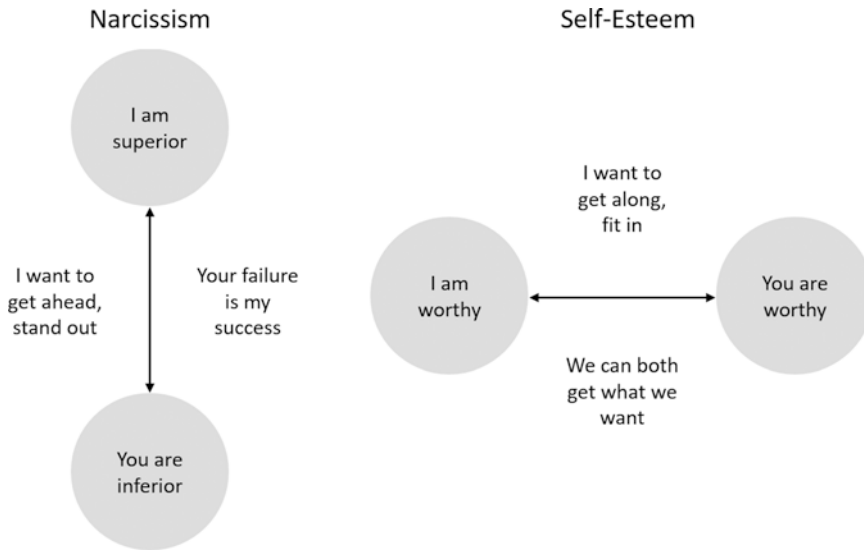


Fig. 5.1 The belief system underlying narcissism and self-esteem

narcissists and people with high self-esteem (hereafter: high self-esteemers). These beliefs concern the nature of the self, of others, and of the relationship between the self and others (Fig. 5.1). Such beliefs can create stable behavioral patterns by shaping what goals people pursue and by guiding how people perceive, select, modify, and respond to their environments.

Beliefs About the Self

Narcissists believe they are inherently superior to their fellow humans. When Ernest Jones (1913/1951) described narcissism as a personality trait, he labeled it the God Complex, echoing narcissists' belief in their own greatness. Narcissists see themselves as superior on agentic traits such as competence and intelligence, but not on communal traits such as warmth and kindness (Campbell et al., 2002). In addition, they hold exalted views of themselves even if such views conflict with reality (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016). For example, narcissists think they are superb leaders when they hinder group performance (Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011); they believe they are interpersonally attractive when others do not think so (Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994); and they see themselves as geniuses

when their IQ scores are not on par (Paulhus, Harms, Bruce, & Lysy, 2003).

By contrast, high self-esteemers believe they are worthy, but do not consider themselves superior to others. As Morris Rosenberg (1965) wrote, "When we deal with self-esteem, we are asking whether the individual considers himself adequate—a person of worth—not whether he considers himself superior to others" (p. 62). Whereas narcissists primarily value their agentic traits, high self-esteemers value both their agentic and their communal traits (Campbell et al., 2002). And while narcissists close their eyes to reality, high self-esteemers' views of themselves are more grounded in reality (Gabriel et al., 1994).

Beliefs About Others

Unsurprising given their sense of superiority, narcissists look down on others. Not only do they believe that others are subservient to them (Park & Colvin, 2015), they sometimes even dehumanize others (Locke, 2009). Yet, at the same time, narcissists covet others' admiration. Roseanne Barr expressed this sentiment in an interview with *Gear Magazine*: "I hate every human being on earth," she said, "I feel that everyone is beneath me, and I feel they should all worship

me” (Guccione, 2000). According to some researchers, narcissists are addicted to admiration: They crave admiration, are tolerant to its effects, and experience withdrawal symptoms when it is withheld (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001; Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016). To elicit admiration, narcissists strive to stand out and get ahead (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002), even in settings where such behavior is inappropriate (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002). For example, even in their close relationships, narcissists attempt to dominate others, surpass others, and ridicule others (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Keller et al., 2014).

To a great degree, narcissists base their sense of worth on others’ admiration for them. When they are admired, they feel on top of the world; but when they are not, they feel like sinking into the ground (Brummelman, Nikolić, & Bögels, 2018; Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009). Narcissists often externalize these feelings of shame by lashing out angrily or aggressively against others (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof, 2008; Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, & Nezelek, 2011). This process, known as *humiliated fury* or the *shame-rage cycle*, can escalate into acts of violence; for example, case studies suggest that narcissism puts youth at risk for school shootings (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000).

In contrast, high self-esteemers do not look down on others or dehumanize others (Locke, 2009; Park & Colvin, 2015); they believe that others have intrinsic worth and do not see others as a means to obtain admiration. Even if they are rejected by others, high self-esteemers are unlikely to feel ashamed or to lash out; rather, they tend to forgive others and seek reconciliation with them (Eaton, Ward Struthers, & Santelli, 2006; Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, & Kusche, 2002).

Beliefs About Relationships

Narcissists believe that their relationships follow a *zero-sum principle*: Only one of us can be the best, so your failure is my success, and my success is your failure (Brummelman et al.,

2016). Narcissists desire to get ahead rather than get along (Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008), even in interdependent settings. When they collaborate with others, narcissists praise themselves for successes, blame their partners for failures (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000), and attempt to secure short-term benefits for themselves, at the expense of their partners and the common good (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). Unsurprisingly, this puts a strain on their relationships: Narcissists’ charming first impressions crumble with the passage of time (Leckelt, Kүfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Paulhus, 1998).

In sharp contrast, high self-esteemers believe that their relationships follow a *non-zero-sum principle*: We can both be worthy, so we can both get what we want (Crocker, Canevello, & Lewis, 2017). High self-esteemers desire to get along rather than get ahead (Thomaes et al., 2008). Thus, they are likely to care for others, share with others, and help others in their goal pursuits (Zuffianò et al., 2016). This benefits their relationships: High self-esteemers are well-liked by others, even in the long run (De Bruyn & Van Den Boom, 2005; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000).

Research Priorities

Whereas much existing research describes the stable patterns of behavior that characterize narcissism and self-esteem, we attempted to uncover the core beliefs that give rise to those behavioral patterns. Our social-cognitive approach builds on classic theories of personality that feature beliefs, such as cognitive-affective encodings (Mischel & Shoda, 1995), basic beliefs (Epstein, 2003), implicit theories (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), working models (Bowlby, 1969), schemas (Young, 1994), personal myths (McAdams, 1993), and personal constructs (Kelly, 1955). Core beliefs can be defined precisely, measured directly, and changed effectively. Our approach thus enables researchers to peer under the surface of narcissism and self-esteem: to trace their origins, understand their stability, and explore their malleability.

Origins

One issue is where narcissism and self-esteem come from. Both emerge around the age of 7 (Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016), when children begin to make global self-evaluations (e.g., “I am great!”) and to use social-comparison information for the purpose of self-evaluation (e.g., “I am better than others!”).

Although partly genetic (Neiss, Sedikides, & Stevenson, 2002; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008), narcissism and self-esteem are shaped by the social environment. Longitudinal research has revealed that they arise from distinct socialization experiences in childhood (Brummelman et al., 2015; Brummelman, Nelemans, Thomaes, & Orobio de Castro, 2017; also see Harris et al., 2017). Narcissism is nurtured, at least in part, by *parental overvaluation*—how much parents see their own child as extraordinary and entitled. Overvaluing parents overestimate, overclaim, and overpraise their child’s qualities, while helping the child stand out, for example, by giving him or her an uncommon first name (Brummelman, Thomaes, Nelemans, Orobio de Castro, & Bushman, 2015). From these experiences, children infer that they are superior, the core belief underlying narcissism. By contrast, self-esteem is nurtured, at least in part, by *parental warmth*—how much parents treat their child with affection and appreciation. Warm parents value their child’s company, share joy with the child, and show interest in the child’s activities (Davidov & Grusec, 2006; Rohner, 2004). From these experiences, children infer that they are worthy, the core belief underlying self-esteem.

The research agenda should deepen our understanding of these socialization processes. What are the precise behavioral manifestations of parental overvaluation and warmth? What inferences do children make based on those manifestations? And how do these inferences come to bear on new situations? Researchers should also study socialization influences outside of the family context. Especially when children transition into adolescence, peers begin to assume the role of socializing agents (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Harter, 2012). How are narcissism

and self-esteem shaped by experiences within the peer group?

Stability

Another issue is how narcissism and self-esteem change over the course of life. Despite emerging at the same age, they have remarkably distinct developmental trajectories. While narcissism peaks in adolescence and then gradually falls throughout life (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009; Foster, Keith Campbell, & Twenge, 2003), self-esteem drops in adolescence and then gradually rises throughout life (Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002). Still, individual differences in narcissism and self-esteem are remarkably stable (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009; Frick, Kimonis, Dandreaux, & Farell, 2003; Trzesniewski, Brent, & Robins, 2003).

Why are these individual differences so stable? There might be several reasons (Caspi & Roberts, 2001). One is that narcissists and high self-esteemers perceive, select, modify, and respond to situations in ways that maintain or even exacerbate their traits over time. For example, narcissists may select settings with a clear hierarchy, such as corporations that enable them to rise through the ranks (Zitek & Jordan, 2016). They may compete with others to reach the top (Roberts, Woodman, & Sedikides, 2017). As they move to increasingly responsible positions, they may come to perceive themselves as even more special and entitled, which fuels their narcissism levels (Piff, 2014). Unlike narcissists, high self-esteemers may select settings in which people are treated as equals. They may collaborate with others to advance the collective, while building relationships with them (Campbell et al., 2005; Crocker et al., 2017). As they work with others and feel socially valued, they may perceive themselves as even more useful and needed, which fuels their self-esteem levels (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Thus, narcissism and self-esteem may not be set in stone (i.e., inborn, deeply ingrained, impossible to change) but rather be maintained through self-sustaining transactions between the person and the environment (also see Crocker & Brummelman, in

press). Studying these transactions will shed light on the processes that drive continuity and change in personality more broadly.

Malleability

Can narcissism and self-esteem be changed? Although scholars agree that self-esteem can be changed (O'Mara, Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 2006), they are more skeptical about changing narcissism, and with good reason. When left untouched, narcissism is remarkably stable (Frick et al., 2003). Narcissists might be unwilling to change, because they see their narcissistic traits as strengths rather than as weaknesses (Carlson, 2013) and they readily blame their problems on others rather than on themselves (Thomaes et al., 2011). Even if they try to change, they do so halfheartedly; for example, they quit therapy prematurely (Ellison, Levy, Cain, Ansell, & Pincus, 2013).

Nevertheless, our social-cognitive approach suggests that narcissism can be changed if interventions target pointedly its underlying core beliefs (Brummelman et al., 2016). A promising development in psychology is the emergence of brief, psychologically precise interventions that change people's core beliefs (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Walton, 2014). Because these interventions are *stealthy* (i.e., consisting of brief exercises that do not convey to recipients that they are in need of help), they may circumvent narcissists' resistance against change (Brummelman & Walton, 2015). Emerging research illustrates this. For example, inviting people to think about what makes them similar to others or connected with others reduces their narcissism levels (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014; Piff, 2014), curtails their narcissistic aggression (Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006), and improves their relationship functioning (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009). Similarly, helping low self-esteemers reconstrue their social relationships so that they feel more included and valued raises their self-esteem levels and improves their relationship functioning over time (Marigold, Holmes, & Ross, 2007, 2010).

Thus, changes in core beliefs may lead to changes in personality (Dweck, 2008). Researchers should develop such interventions, test them through rigorous field experiments, and explore how their effects can be sustained over time.

Conclusion

As we have shown, narcissism and self-esteem are underpinned by distinct core beliefs: beliefs concerning the nature of the self, of others, and of the relationship between the self and others. Although these beliefs arise early in development and generate stable patterns of behavior, they can be changed effectively through precise intervention. Thus, recognizing the line that runs through narcissism and self-esteem can help researchers develop interventions that nurture healthy self-views from an early age onward.

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The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept

6

Mitja D. Back

Abstract

In this chapter, I present a theoretical framework that is aimed at explaining the complex and seemingly paradoxical structure, dynamics, and consequences of grandiose narcissism: the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC). I first very briefly review the state of research on grandiose narcissism, showing that the content conceptually aligned with, and the measures typically applied to assess, grandiose narcissism can be sorted into more agentic and more antagonistic aspects that show unique nomological networks, dynamics, and outcomes. Then I describe a novel self-regulatory perspective, the NARC, which distinguishes between these agentic and antagonistic aspects of grandiose narcissism. According to the NARC, narcissists overarching goal to create and maintain a grandiose self can be pursued by two social strategies (narcissistic self-promotion and narcissistic self-defense) that translate into two sets of dynamics (narcissistic admiration and rivalry) with distinct affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioral states that tend to have different social consequences (social potency and conflict). The NARC is meant to provide a clearer understanding of what grandiose nar-

cissism is, how it works, and why it produces a rich variety of seemingly contradictory outcomes. I continue by presenting a summary of existing empirical evidence for the validity of the NARC, underlining its two-dimensional structure, the distinct mental and behavioral dynamics of narcissistic admiration and rivalry, and their unique intra- and interpersonal as well as institutional outcomes. Finally, I outline an agenda for future research that focuses on how admiration and rivalry combine, fluctuate, and develop within persons.

Keywords

Narcissism · Self-regulation · Grandiosity · Self-enhancement · Self-protection · Personality processes

Grandiose narcissism is a very popular concept in both the general public and scientific endeavors. Part of the fascination with grandiose narcissism stems from its paradoxical dynamics and outcomes: narcissists are often described as self-assured but fragile, seeking social approval but being uninterested in others, charming and assertive, but also arrogant and aggressive. They seem to impress peers, dating partners, co-workers, and supervisors early on but evoke relationship conflict and dissolution in the long run. In this chapter, I present a theoretical framework that is

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aimed at explaining the complex structure, dynamics, and consequences of grandiose narcissism: the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013).

Previous Findings: Grandiose Narcissism as a Heterogeneous Trait with Complex Dynamics and Consequences

Grandiose or overt narcissism is a well-established construct in the personality and social psychology literature (Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017), typically defined as some sort of entitled self-importance (Krizan & Herlache, 2018) that goes along with grandiosity, arrogance, and dominance (Miller et al., 2011). It is typically distinguished from more pathological, vulnerable, or covert aspects of narcissism such as hypersensitivity, self-doubt, and shame (Miller et al., 2011; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991).

Whereas the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism has been a very important one, particularly given that the two conceptualizations of narcissism are barely correlated (Miller et al., 2011), grandiose narcissism is far from being a homogenous trait construct itself. This is already apparent in typical descriptions of grandiose narcissists as high in extraversion and antagonism (Miller & Campbell, 2008) or as “disagreeable extraverts” with a “combination of optimism about the self and disdain for others” (Paulhus, 2001, pp. 228–229). Moreover, factor analyses across narcissism measures such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009), and the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI; Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012) have revealed separate agentic (e.g., NPI, leadership/authority; PNI, grandiose fantasies; FFNI, authoritativeness) and antagonistic (e.g., NPI, exploitativeness/entitlement; PNI, entitlement rage; FFNI, exploitativeness) facets.

This differentiation is also reflected in the two-sided nature of the nomological network, processes, and consequences that have been asso-

ciated with grandiose narcissism: positive relations with extraversion, need for power, and dominance but also with disagreeableness, low need for intimacy, and antagonism (Ackerman et al., 2011; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Miller & Campbell, 2008), more charming and expressive but also more arrogant and combative behavior (Back et al., 2010; Krizan & Johar, 2015; Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2013), higher self-esteem but also higher self-esteem fragility (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013), initial social approval and peer popularity but also later social disapproval and peer conflict (Küfner et al., 2013; Paulhus, 1998), higher dating success but also more romantic relationship conflict (Brunell & Campbell, 2011; Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013), and positive relations with leadership emergence but also with risky, exploitative, and unethical behaviors in the workplace (Braun, 2017; Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011; Grijalva, & Newman, 2015; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015).

In sum, classic conceptualizations and measures of grandiose narcissism enmesh agentic and antagonistic aspects of narcissism and treat them as though they belong to the same underlying dimension. This approach might make this construct more enigmatic and fascinating because it produces diverse and seemingly paradoxical correlates and outcomes that are driven by one or the other aspect. At the same time, however, it is unsatisfactory from either an explanatory point of view (because it remains unclear what drives what kinds of processes) or a predictive point of view (because potentially stronger and more specific associations are masked). Consequently, going beyond the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, more recent research across multiple laboratories and work groups has suggested an alternative three-dimensional structure of narcissism that encompasses distinctive agentic, antagonistic, and neurotic aspects (see Back & Morf, 2017; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2016; Wright & Edershire, 2018).

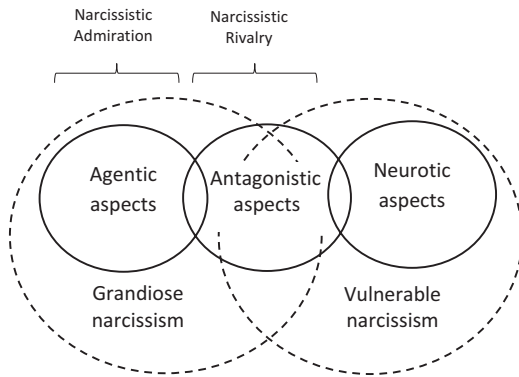


Fig. 6.1 Conceptual and empirical relations of narcissistic admiration and rivalry to the overarching structure of narcissism

Figure 6.1 illustrates the conceptual and empirical relation between this three-dimensional conceptualization of narcissism and the more classic two-dimensional distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Following this updated structural conceptualization, grandiose narcissism is best understood as composed of two moderately related agentic and antagonistic narcissistic aspects.

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC): Disentangling and Understanding Agentic and Antagonistic Aspects of Grandiose Narcissism

The NARC (Back et al., 2013) distinguishes two positively related dimensions of grandiose narcissism: an agentic dimension called narcissistic admiration and an antagonistic dimension called narcissistic rivalry (see Fig. 6.1 for how this fits into the overarching structure of narcissism outlined above). It aims to (a) disentangle the self-regulatory processes that constitute the agentic and antagonistic aspects of grandiose narcissism, (b) illuminate the distinct motivational underpinnings of both sets of processes, and (c) explain their unique social outcomes. In doing so, the NARC is also aimed at providing a parsimonious explanation for the diversity of seemingly paradoxical narcissistic

correlates and consequences. The NARC (Fig. 6.2) borrows from a number of important predecessors, particularly the dynamic self-regulatory processing model (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf et al., 2011), the extended agency model (Campbell & Foster, 2007), and the contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009).

Narcissists are motivated to create and maintain not just a positive but a grandiose self (Horvath & Morf, 2010; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002), and this overarching goal is also at the motivational core of the NARC. According to the NARC, this goal can be pursued by two social strategies that can be seen as narcissistic variants of the universal motives of self-enhancement and self-protection (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009, 2011; Higgins, 1998): narcissistic self-promotion and self-defense (Fig. 6.2, left box). These strategies translate into two sets of behavioral dynamics (narcissistic admiration and rivalry) with distinct affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioral states (Fig. 6.2, middle box) that tend to have different social consequences (social potency and conflict; Fig. 6.2, right box). The social strategies are then reinforced via ego boosts and ego threats, respectively.

The default strategy of those high in narcissism (“I am grandiose!”) is narcissistic self-promotion. This assertive self-enhancement strategy can be summarized with slogans such as “Show the world how great you are!” or “Let others admire you!” and is thought to be accompanied by a certain hope for greatness (e.g., “a star is born”). This strategy should be chronically activated in those with a strong sense of grandiosity, and it can be additionally triggered by appropriate social cues (e.g., getting-acquainted situations as opportunities for glory; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). In terms of individual differences in self-signatures, such a trigger mechanism can be described as “IF opportunity for promotion or demonstration of the grandiose and superior self, THEN self-affirm, self-promote, and self-enhance!” (Morf, Horvath, & Torchetti, 2011, p. 402). The self-promotion strategy is played out as a set of behavioral dynamics called

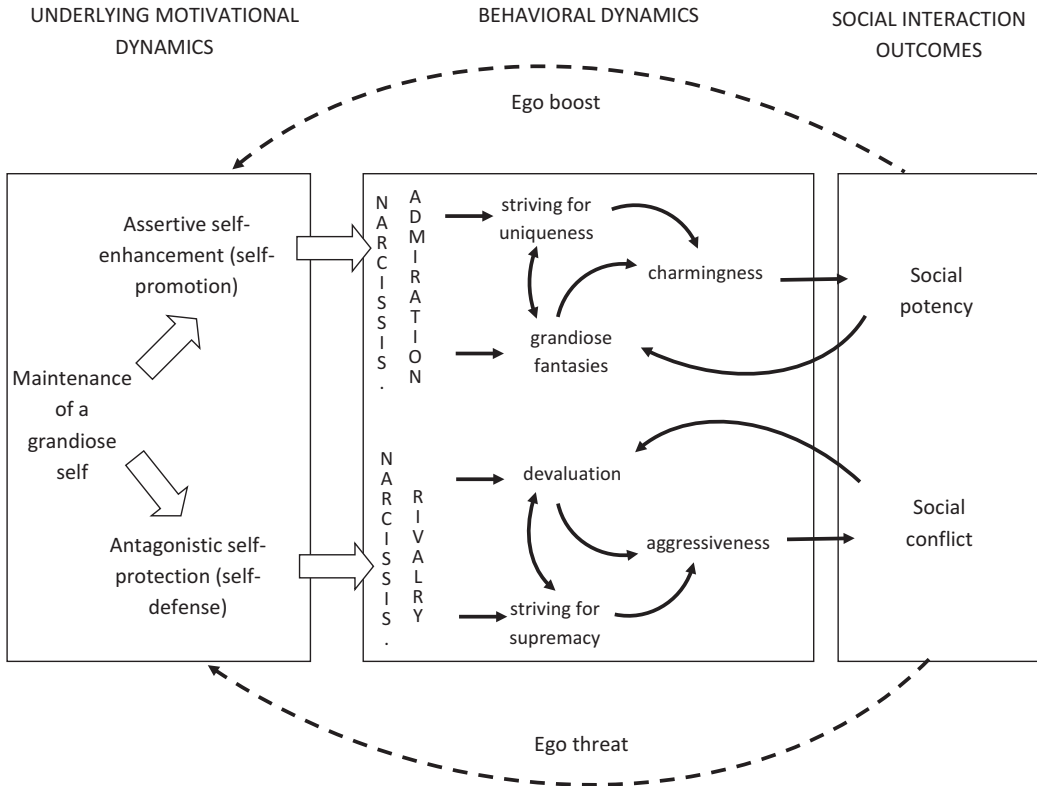


Fig. 6.2 The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept. (Adapted from Back et al. (2013). Reprinted with permission)

narcissistic admiration and includes a striving for uniqueness, actualized grandiose fantasies, and charming (expressive, self-assured, and dominant) behavior. These behavioral dynamics, in turn, should be typically related to indicators of social potency such as popularity, social interest, attraction, and the attainment of social resources and status. Perceiving these desired social outcomes should provide an ego boost and can be accompanied by positive moral emotions such as pride (Tracy, Cheng, Martens, & Robins, 2011), both of which should reinforce the self-enhancement strategy (“They admire you: Go on self-promoting!”; cf. Baumeister & Vohs, 2001).

Narcissistic self-defense is an alternative strategy that should particularly come into play as soon as the perceived social outcomes (“only mildly positive or even critical feedback”) do not fit the desired social outcomes (“praise and admiration”). This antagonistic self-protection

strategy can be summarized with the imperative “Don’t let others tear you down!” and is thought to be accompanied by a certain fear of failure (e.g., “the hero’s fall”). This strategy should be chronically activated in those with a strong sense of grandiosity and a history of failed social success, and it can be additionally triggered by indications of social disapproval (e.g., negative verbal feedback, frowning). In terms of individual differences in self-signatures, such a trigger mechanism can be described as “IF threat to own grandiosity and superiority, THEN strike back!” (Morf et al., 2011, p. 402). The self-defense strategy is played out as a set of behavioral dynamics called narcissistic rivalry, including a striving for supremacy, devaluation of others, and aggressive (annoyed, hostile, socially insensitive) behavior. These behavioral dynamics, in turn, should be typically related to indicators of social conflict such as rejection, unpopularity,

relationship dissolution, criticism, and lack of trust. Perceiving these undesired social outcomes should provide an ego threat and can be accompanied by negative moral emotions such as shame (Tracy et al., 2011), both of which should reinforce the self-protection strategy (“They are trying to tear you down: Go on defending yourself!”; cf. Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

Empirical Evidence for the Validity of the NARC

Initial evidence for the validity of the NARC stems from research on the psychometric validation of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ). Confirmatory factor analyses in both convenience and population representative samples have confirmed the two-dimensional structure with the admiration and rivalry factors, each being composed of affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioral facets (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2018).¹ Admiration and rivalry are moderately correlated, with manifest correlations typically ranging between 0.30 and 0.50 (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2018). Internal consistencies, temporal stabilities, and self-informant agreement correlations of both scales are satisfactory (Back et al., 2013). In addition, IRT analyses indicate good reliability across a large range of the latent trait spectrum (Grosz et al., *in press*; Leckelt et al., 2018). Besides being a tool for validating the NARC, the NARQ provides a theoretically grounded, differentiated, economical, and reliable alternative for measuring grandiose narcissism in general.

Nomological network analyses underscore the necessity to differentiate between admiration and rivalry and provide further evidence for their agentic (admiration) and antagonistic (rivalry) nature. Admiration is particularly related to other

agentic aspects of the self-concept, extraversion, openness, interpersonal dominance, a lower preference for solitude, hope for success, achievement, stimulation, hedonism, self-direction values, and trait self-esteem. Rivalry is particularly related to other antagonistic aspects of the self-concept, disagreeableness, low conscientiousness, neuroticism, interpersonal coldness, preference for solitude, impulsivity, anger proneness, fear of failure, power values, and low trait self-esteem (Back et al., 2013; Fatfouta, 2017; Grove, Smith, Girard, & Wright, 2018; Lange, Crusius, & Hagemeyer, 2016; Miller et al., 2016; Rogoza, Wyszynska, Mackiewicz, & Ciecuch, 2016; Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Rogoza, Piotrowski, & Wyszynska, 2016).

The NARC also helps to provide a clearer picture of the complex dynamics of self-esteem involved in grandiose narcissism. Using laboratory- and field-based designs, Geukes et al. (2017) investigated the level of and fluctuations in state self-esteem measured on a momentary, daily, and weekly basis: admiration was related to high and rather stable self-esteem, whereas rivalry was related to lower and more fragile self-esteem. The findings also indicate that the perceived lack of social approval might be one mechanism driving the higher self-esteem fragility of those high in rivalry. That is, “it is admiration that puffs the self up but it is rivalry that makes it shaky” (Geukes et al., 2017, p. 783).

Moving beyond correlations with other self-reports, research capturing direct behavioral observations and interpersonal perceptions during laboratory interactions revealed that admiration is related to benign envy, more agentic behaviors (e.g., self-assured voice, expressive gestures, engagement), being seen as assertive and sociable, and seeing others as more attractive. By contrast, narcissistic rivalry is related to malicious envy, less communal and more antagonistic behaviors (e.g., less warm voice, arrogant gestures, annoyed reactions), and being seen and seeing others as aggressive and untrustworthy (Back et al., 2013; Lange et al., 2016; Leckelt et al., 2015). Rivalry is also related to a lack of forgiveness (Back et al., 2013;

¹Please note that I focus on studies that have applied the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2018; see <http://www.persoc.net/Toolbox/NARQ> for German, English, Polish, Dutch, Danish, Chinese, Italian, and Turkish versions).

Fatfouta, Gerlach, Schröder-Abé, & Merkl, 2015; Fatfouta & Schröder-Abé, 2017) and a lower willingness to apologize for one's transgressions, a finding that can be explained by reduced levels of empathy and guilt (Leunissen, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2017).

Research on typical mental and behavioral processes linked to admiration and rivalry was further expanded to explain the effects of grandiose narcissism on the emergence of peer popularity. In a large longitudinal laboratory study that spanned multiple videotaped interactions and round-robin ratings among participants in small groups, Leckelt et al. (2015) showed that admiration predicts initial popularity among peers, whereas rivalry predicts a decline in popularity over time. These findings were further explained by two unique behavioral-perceptual-evaluative process pathways in line with the NARC. The effect of admiration on initial popularity seems to be driven by more dominant and expressive behaviors that in turn lead to being seen as assertive, which is evaluated positively by peers (particularly during initial encounters). The effect of rivalry on unpopularity over time, by contrast, seems to be driven by an increasing amount of arrogant and aggressive behaviors, which lead to being seen as untrustworthy, which is evaluated negatively by peers (particularly during later stages of the getting-acquainted process). The distinct effects of admiration and rivalry on social potency and conflict have also been replicated in further cross-sectional research (Lange et al., 2016).

Similar dynamics seem to be at play when it comes to romantic relationships. Across seven studies including surveys, laboratory interactions, and dyadic partner reports, Wurst et al. (2017) showed that positive effects of narcissism on dating outcomes (e.g., perceived attractiveness, desirability as a partner) can primarily be attributed to admiration, whereas negative effects on relationship quality and maintenance (e.g., relationship commitment, dysfunctional conflict reactions) can primarily be attributed to rivalry. For both domains of social relations (i.e., friends and lovers), it is important to remember the

positive correlation between admiration and rivalry: in many (but not all) cases, the narcissists who are liked and thrive initially might be the same ones who are disliked and cause problems later on.

Less is known about the consequences of admiration and rivalry in the domain of institutional consequences, although it can be expected that the behavioral pathways outlined above have similarly distinct consequences in the workplace as well. That is, those high in admiration might more easily gain leadership positions, whereas those high in rivalry might cause more workplace conflict. In a recent population representative investigation (Leckelt, Richter, Wetzel, & Back, 2017), admiration was found to be related to employment, leadership, income, and job prestige, whereas rivalry was found to be related to unemployment and lower financial satisfaction. Another study in which the personality of high-net-worth individuals was compared with the normal population (Leckelt et al., 2017), the link between narcissistic admiration and financial success was corroborated: millionaires scored higher on admiration, and this difference held when gender, age, and education were controlled for with propensity score matching analyses. With regard to occupational interests and choices, actors have been found to score higher in admiration but lower in rivalry (Dufner et al., 2015).

Future Directions: Toward a More Dynamic and Person-Centered Understanding of Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry

As is true for most contemporary personality research, previous studies on narcissistic admiration and rivalry have followed a trait-centered approach by investigating between-person differences in narcissistic aspects and their correlations with between-person differences in other personality aspects and outcomes. However, a full understanding of narcissism requires supplementary person-

centered analyses of how different trait aspects of narcissism combine within (more or less narcissistic) individuals. This is even more important in the field of narcissism research as both everyday discourse and research tend to apply a categorical language (i.e., describe what “narcissists” think, feel, and do).

A recent person-centered analysis of admiration and rivalry (Wetzel, Leckelt, Gerlach, & Back, 2016) provided initial evidence for the existence of qualitatively distinct narcissism subgroups that go beyond quantitative levels of narcissism. Specifically, in addition to low and high narcissism groups, a latent class analysis revealed two groups of individuals with similar moderate levels of narcissism: those primarily characterized by admiration and those characterized by admiration and rivalry. The existence of these groups, but the nonexistence of a group characterized by rivalry without admiration, further underscores the idea of admiration as the default strategy and rivalry as a strategy that comes into play only when there is a lack of narcissistic goal achievement. Of all four groups, the moderate admiration group showed the most adaptive trait and outcome characteristics (including the highest self-esteem and the lowest neuroticism and impulsivity). By contrast, the moderate admiration plus rivalry group showed the most maladaptive characteristics (including the lowest self-esteem and empathy and the highest impulsivity).

Future research should move even further toward a process-based understanding of narcissistic admiration and rivalry within persons. That is, instead of applying retrospective self-report proxy measures, one might try to directly capture the hypothesized state dynamics, for example, using experience-sampling and smartphone-sensing designs (e.g., Harari et al., 2016; Wrzus & Mehl, 2015). This would need to include repeated moment-to-moment assessments of the cognitive, affective-motivational, and behavioral states that define admiration and rivalry in a given situation, as well as the environmental cues that characterize each situation (including the richness of real-life social

interactions). Such a process-based assessment of narcissism directly in line with the NARC would allow for more detailed and precise analyses of the structure and mechanisms of narcissism (also see Baumert et al., 2017; Geukes & Back, 2017; Geukes, van Zalk, & Back, 2018; Wright & Simms, 2016).

In addition to (and optimally in combination with) such a microlevel analysis of moment-to-moment fluctuations, more research on the development of narcissistic admiration and rivalry over longer periods of time is needed. Beyond the findings that admiration and rivalry have rank-order stabilities that are similar to those of other trait domains and that both dimensions are negatively related to age (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2017), little is known about their development. Building on a handful of existing longitudinal studies that examined either specific aspects or a global dimension of grandiose narcissism (e.g., Brummelmann et al., 2015; Grosz et al., *in press*; Orth & Luciano, 2015; Wetzel & Robins, 2016), there is a particular need for representative and contextually informed longitudinal data sets that systematically distinguish between admiration and rivalry. Such data sets would allow for the investigation of normative and nonnormative social life events in the domains of family, friendship, and work and how the occurrence and experience of these events are shaped by (selection effects) and shape the development of (socialization effects) narcissistic aspects.

Combining the outlined person-centered, within-person dynamics, and developmental perspectives, future research should try to investigate how different aspects of narcissism exhibit stability and variability within individuals over situations and time and why the grandiose system of some but not other narcissistic individuals collapses and merges into a more vulnerable, pathological system. Figure 6.3 outlines a rough self-regulatory working model that offers a parsimonious description of how individuals maintain or switch between different narcissistic modes. It is based on the NARC and contains the respective agentic (admiration) default mode, which is

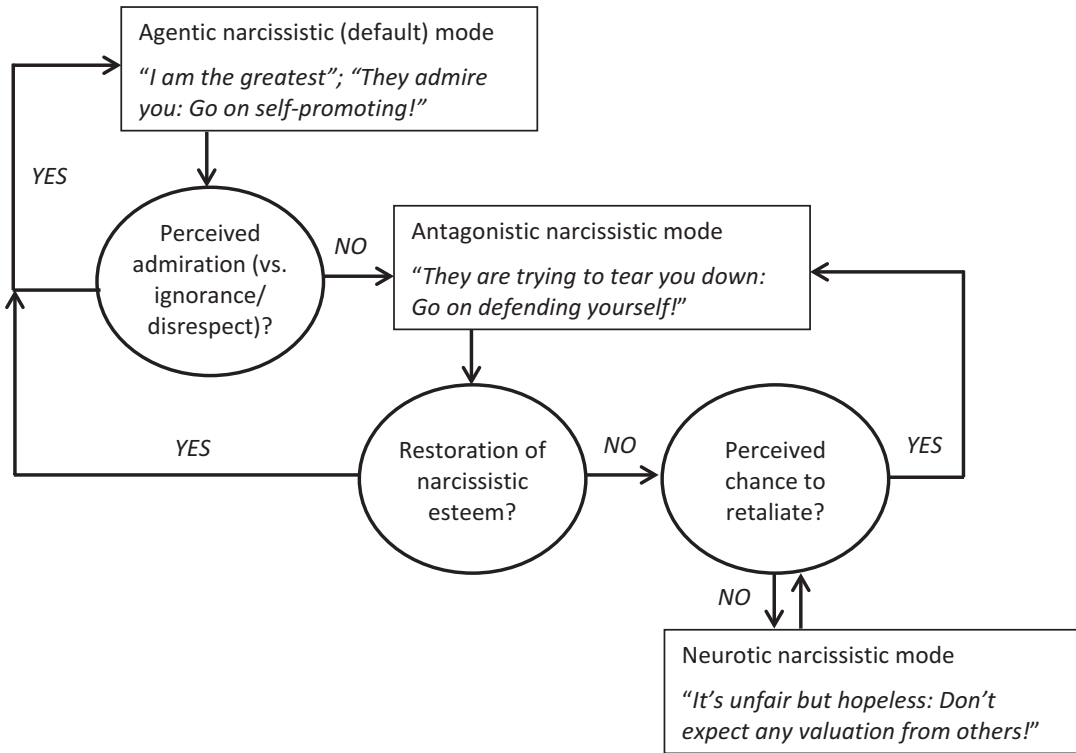


Fig. 6.3 A working model of within-person self-regulatory dynamics underlying systematic variation and development across agentic, antagonistic, and neurotic narcissistic modes

thought to be active as long as narcissistic individuals perceive social admiration, as well as the antagonistic (rivalry) mode, which is thought to come into play as soon as narcissistic individuals perceive a lack of admiration (or even ignorance or disrespect). It also incorporates the more neurotic, vulnerable mode, which is thought to be activated when antagonistic actions fail to lead to a restoration of narcissistic esteem (activating the agentic mode) and when there is no perceived chance for further retaliation (again activating the antagonistic mode). The working model can be applied to investigate both short-term moment-to-moment fluctuations in narcissistic states as well as the long-term development of narcissistic traits. It can be fleshed out by including specified personal (e.g., cognitive and social abilities) and contextual (e.g., self-presentational vs. cooperative environments; the presence of intergroup conflict) moderators.

Conclusions

Since their introduction in 2013, the NARC and its accompanying measure, the NARQ, have been widely applied and have become increasingly popular. Empirical studies have so far underscored the validity and utility of a two-dimensional reconceptualization of grandiose narcissism in line with the NARC. By disentangling the agentic and antagonistic aspects of grandiose narcissism, the NARC provides a clearer understanding of its structure, dynamics, and consequences. Future research should build on these findings and apply the NARC across a wide range of contexts and samples and include relevant personal and contextual moderators. I am particularly looking forward to examinations of how admiration and rivalry combine, fluctuate, and develop within persons.

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Communal Narcissism: Theoretical and Empirical Support

7

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Abstract

Grandiose narcissists' global self-evaluations are characterized by exceptional self-importance, entitlement, and social power. But what are the specific content domains in which grandiose narcissists evaluate themselves so highly that they can subjectively justify their narcissistic self-evaluations at the global level? The classic view is that grandiose narcissists base their global self-evaluations on excessive self-enhancement in the agentic domain (e.g., extremely inflated self-views concerning intelligence, creativity, and scholastic aptitude), but not on excessive self-enhancement in the communal domain (e.g., no extremely inflated self-views concerning morality, prosociality, and interpersonal aptitude). We maintain that this classic view only captures one form of grandiose narcissism—agentic narcissism—at the expense of a complementary form: communal narcissism. Like agentic (i.e., classic) narcissists, communal narcissists hold global self-evaluations of exceptional self-importance, entitlement, and social power. Unlike agentic narcissists, how-

ever, communal narcissists base those global self-evaluations on excessive self-enhancement in the communal domain, not on excessive self-enhancement in the agentic domain. We review the theoretical and empirical support for communal narcissism's existence. We conclude that communal narcissism is real and that a full understanding of grandiose narcissism necessitates attention to both classic/agentic and communal narcissism.

Keywords

Communal narcissism · Grandiose narcissism · Self-concept content · Agency · Communion · Agency-communion model of narcissism

Grandiose narcissists see themselves as inordinately important, feel overly entitled to special treatment, and like to be exceptionally influential (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Thomaes, Brummelman, & Sedikides, 2018). In other words, grandiose narcissists' *global* self-evaluations are characterized by super-exalted self-importance, entitlement, and social power. But what is the subjective evidence on which grandiose narcissists base those global self-evaluations? What are the *specific content domains* in which grandiose narcissists evaluate themselves so highly that they can subjectively

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justify their grandiose self-evaluations at the global level?

This question has been at the center of narcissism research since the publication of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), the standard measure of grandiose narcissism used in 77% of published research (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). By now, well over 30 studies have examined the subjective evidence with which grandiose/NPI narcissists justify their global self-evaluations. Grijalva and Zhang (2016) meta-analyzed those studies and found a coherent pattern of results: grandiose/NPI narcissists unduly overestimate themselves in one (but not the other) “big two” content domain of self-perception (Gebauer, Paulhus, & Neberich, 2013). In particular, they overestimate themselves in the *agentic* domain (e.g., intelligence, creativity, scholastic aptitude), but not in the *communal* domain (e.g., morality, prosociality, interpersonal aptitude). Put otherwise, they base their global self-evaluations on intemperately self-enhancing their agentic attributes, but not their communal attributes.

Grandiose/NPI narcissists’ selectivity in their excessive self-enhancement (agency, yes; communion, no) has become so influential in the narcissism literature that most theories revolve around it. For example, Paulhus and John (1998) classified grandiose/NPI narcissism as an egoistic (aka agentic) self-perception bias, not a moralistic (aka communal) self-perception bias. Likewise, Paulhus (2001) described grandiose/NPI narcissism as an extreme form of agency, at the expense of communion (see also Leary, 1957). Vazire and Funder (2006) equated grandiose/NPI narcissism with unmitigated agency and defined the latter as “overly positive self-views on agentic traits” (p. 161). Campbell and colleagues considered agentic self-enhancement so integral to grandiose/NPI narcissism that they labeled their theory the “agency model of narcissism” (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007). Finally, Sedikides and Campbell (2017) built their energy clash model of narcissistic leadership on the premise that narcissists unduly self-enhance in the agentic domain, not in the communal domain.

We (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012; Gebauer et al., 2018) wondered *why* grandiose/NPI narcissists evidently base their global self-evaluations on unduly self-enhancing their agentic attributes, but not their communal attributes. We considered several answers to that question and found one intriguing. Perhaps there is not one form of grandiose narcissism but two parallel forms, agentic and communal. Agentic narcissists would, by definition, base their global self-evaluations on unduly self-enhancing their agentic attributes. Communal narcissists, by contrast, would hold the same global self-evaluations but base them on unduly self-enhancing their communal attributes. From a traditional narcissism perspective, that possibility spelled trouble, as it assumed that the NPI is not a measure of grandiose narcissism per se but a measure of one form of it: agentic narcissism. Consequently, prior NPI-based work had examined one form of narcissism only (i.e., agentic narcissism) at the neglect of the other form (i.e., communal narcissism).

The small literature on communal narcissism has been mainly concerned with the question of whether communal narcissism is real. This concern is justifiable. The construct of communal narcissism is controversial from a traditional narcissism perspective. Also, establishing the construct would redirect the stream of narcissism research. We aim here to summarize theoretical and empirical support for the communal narcissism construct.

Theoretical Support for Communal Narcissism

Is communal narcissism an oxymoron? It appears like it from the vantage point of the traditional narcissism literature. In fact, communion is typically regarded as antithetical to grandiose narcissism. As a case in point, experiments that primed communion found a reduction in narcissism-signifying interpersonal behavior (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009) and in grandiose/NPI narcissism itself (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014). Outside the narcissism literature, however, it is well-accepted

that global self-evaluations fall into content-specific factors (here: agentic and communal narcissism).

Consider global self-esteem, for example. Tatarodi and Milne (2002; see also Schmitt & Allik, 2005) factor analyzed Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, the most widely used measure of *global* self-esteem (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Self-esteem consisted of two factors: self-competence (aka agency) and self-liking (aka communion). Likewise, Paulhus and John (1994—as cited in Paulhus & John, 1998) factor analyzed self-enhancement indices regarding a diverse set of traits (i.e., dominance, extraversion, intellect, openness, neuroticism, ambition, agreeableness, nurturance, and dutifulness). Two factors emerged: a superhero-type (aka agency) self-perception bias and a saint-type (aka communion) self-perception bias. Furthermore, humility is relevant, too, because a hallmark of humility is the absence of self-enhancement (Hill & Laney, 2017) or grandiose narcissism (Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012). The humility literature distinguishes between two factors: intellectual (aka agentic) humility and relational (aka communal) humility (Davis et al., 2011; Roberts & Wood, 2003).

Taken together, there is plenty of evidence outside the narcissism literature that global self-evaluations typically fall into the two content-specific factors of agency and communion. Gebauer et al. (2018) reasoned: If this is true for global self-evaluations in the “normal” range (i.e., self-esteem) and the biased range (i.e., self-enhancement, low humility), why shouldn't it also be true for global self-evaluations in the grandiose range (i.e., grandiose narcissism)? Put differently, the construct of communal narcissism may seem daring from a traditional narcissism perspective, but it seemed timely from a broader self-evaluation perspective.

Empirical Support for Communal Narcissism

Assuming that there are individuals who qualify as communal narcissists, what criteria would they have to meet? Gebauer et al. (2018) identi-

fied six such criteria. In this section, we describe those criteria and summarize relevant empirical evidence (for primary and detailed evidence, see Gebauer et al., 2018; for a complementary account, see Gebauer & Sedikides, *in press*). The criteria are (1) positive, but non-perfect, relation with agentic/NPI narcissism, (2) communal self-enhancement, (3) grandiose self-evaluations at the global level, (4) psychological adjustment, (5) distinctiveness from the communion facet of vulnerable narcissism, and (6) distinctiveness from communal self-perceptions. We note that communal narcissism is measured with the 16-item Communal Narcissism Inventory (CNI; Gebauer et al., 2012; see also: Žemojtel-Piotrowska, Czarna, Piotrowski, Baran, & Maltby, 2016). Sample items are the following: “I am extraordinarily trustworthy,” “I am the best friend someone can have,” “I will be able to solve world poverty,” and “I will bring freedom to the people.”

Criterion #1: Positive, But Non-perfect, Relation with Agentic/NPI Narcissism

To qualify as grandiose narcissism (vs. non-narcissism), communal narcissism must relate positively with agentic narcissism, given that agentic and communal narcissism are both presumed to be forms of grandiose narcissism. That positive relation, however, must not be perfect (i.e., latent $r < 0.85$; Clark & Watson, 1995), given that the two forms of grandiose narcissism are presumed to be distinguishable. The primary evidence points to such positive, but non-perfect, relation. As a case in point, the largest published study on the relation between agentic/NPI narcissism and communal narcissism (Fatfouta, Zeigler-Hill, & Schröder-Abé, 2017) used a sample of more than 1000 participants and found a medium-size relation (Cohen, 1988). Gebauer et al. (2018) obtained similar results in a meta-analysis on well over 7000 participants largely from the USA, the UK, and Germany (including Fatfouta et al.'s data). The omnibus correlation between agentic/NPI narcissism and communal narcissism was again of medium size (Cohen, 1988). Gebauer

et al. (2018) examined the relation between agentic/NPI narcissism and communal narcissism in a cross-cultural study of 50+ samples from various countries (total $N > 13,000$). The relation between agentic/NPI narcissism and communal narcissism differed somewhat between countries, but its size consistently ranged between medium and large (and was never perfect). Luo, Cai, Sedikides, and Song (2014) conducted a twin study to shed light on the shared genetic and environmental influences upon agentic/NPI and communal narcissism. Most of those influences were unique rather than shared. These genetic results further corroborate the conceptual distinction between agentic/NPI narcissism and communal narcissism.

Criterion #2: Communal Self-enhancement

To justify the prefix “communal,” communal narcissists ought to unduly self-enhance primarily in the communal domain. Gebauer et al. (2012) provided initial evidence for this proposition. They assessed agentic versus communal self-enhancement with a variant of the overclaiming task (Paulhus, Harms, Bruce, & Lysy, 2003). Specifically, one item-set assessed the degree to which participants overclaimed their knowledge in agentic domains (e.g., international stock market, chemistry and physics, market principles), whereas another item-set assessed the degree to which participants overclaimed their knowledge in communal domains (e.g., humanitarian aid organizations, nature and animal protection organizations, international health charities). The results concerning agentic/NPI narcissism replicated much previous research on agentic/NPI narcissism and agentic versus communal self-enhancement (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016). Compared to non-narcissists, agentic/NPI narcissists unduly overclaimed their agentic knowledge, but not their communal knowledge. (Actually, agentic/NPI narcissists overclaimed their communal knowledge particularly little.) More relevant to our purposes, the results concerning communal narcissism buttressed the conceptual viability of the communal narcissism

concept. Compared to non-narcissists, communal narcissists unduly overclaimed their communal knowledge, but not their agentic knowledge. Gebauer et al.’s (2012) original finding rested on a relatively small sample. Thus, to draw firmer conclusions, Gebauer et al. (2018) carried out a meta-analysis of seven samples that included agentic/NPI narcissism, communal narcissism, agentic overclaiming, and communal overclaiming. The meta-analysis included over 4000 participants (and, among them, the original participants from Gebauer et al., 2012). Results replicated the original findings very closely. Thus, Gebauer et al.’s (2012) initial findings stand on firm empirical ground.

Of importance, the evidence is not limited to the overclaiming task. Complementary findings come from two well-powered studies on grandiose narcissism (agentic/NPI and communal) and prosociality (Nehrlich, Gebauer, Sedikides, & Schoel, *in press*). In their first study, Nehrlich et al. compared grandiose narcissists’ prosociality self-reports with their actual prosocial behavior. In their second study, the authors compared grandiose narcissists’ prosociality self-reports with prosociality peer reports. The results across the two studies were highly consistent. Compared to non-narcissists, communal narcissists unduly overstated their prosociality and, thus, evinced particularly high levels of communal self-enhancement. By contrast, the results looked very different for agentic/NPI narcissists. Agentic/NPI narcissists did not overstate their prosociality any more or less than non-narcissists did. (For conceptually similar results in the domain of trust, see Yang et al., 2018).

Criterion #3: Grandiose Self-evaluations at the Global Level

To qualify as grandiose narcissists (vs. non-narcissists), communal narcissists must share with agentic/NPI narcissists the same global self-evaluations (i.e., super-exalted self-importance, entitlement, and social power). Gebauer et al. (2012) reported initial evidence for such sharing: positive relations between communal

narcissism and global self-evaluations of grandiose narcissists (i.e., grandiosity, entitlement, social power). Moreover, the relations between agentic/NPI narcissism and those global self-evaluations were similar in size. Furthermore, communal narcissism's relations with grandiosity, entitlement, and social power held when agentic/NPI narcissism was controlled for. Gebauer et al. (2018) recently sought to replicate the just-described pattern of results in a much larger sample ($N > 1000$) of U.S. adults. The results replicated very closely. Other researchers similarly found that communal narcissists report exacerbated levels of entitlement (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2016; Žemojtel-Piotrowska, Piotrowski, & Maltby, 2015). Additionally, experimental evidence suggests that communal narcissists' communal self-enhancement is in the service of upholding social power (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015). In all, the evidence converges in illustrating that communal narcissists and agentic/NPI narcissists hold the same global self-evaluations. Finally, Gebauer et al. (2018) found evidence for a positive relation between communal narcissism and entitlement in their cross-cultural study from 50+ countries. The positive relation between communal narcissism and entitlement appears to be pan-cultural.

Criterion #4: Psychological Adjustment

To qualify as grandiose narcissists (vs. vulnerable narcissists), communal narcissists must be psychologically well-adjusted, at least on an equal plain with non-narcissists (Barry & Malkin, 2010; Campbell, 2001; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). Gebauer et al. (2012) provided initial evidence for communal narcissists' good psychological adjustment. In particular, they obtained a positive relation between communal narcissism and self-esteem. This relation was moderate in size, and it was also virtually identical in size with the relation between agentic/NPI narcissism and self-esteem (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). Moreover, Žemojtel-

Piotrowska, Clinton, and Piotrowski (2014) found positive relations between communal narcissism and life satisfaction, positive affect, social well-being, and self-esteem. Again, those relations were moderate and virtually identical in size with the relations between agentic/NPI narcissism and those four psychological adjustment indicators. In addition, Gebauer et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis on the relation between grandiose narcissism (agentic/NPI and communal narcissism) on the one hand and psychological adjustment on the other. That meta-analysis, too, confirmed prior findings (Gebauer et al., 2012; Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2014) across diverse indicators of psychological adjustment.

Furthermore, Gebauer et al. (2018) examined the relation between communal narcissism and psychological adjustment (self-esteem, life satisfaction) in their cross-cultural study of 50+ countries. The different countries differed widely in the relation between communal narcissism and psychological adjustment (the same was true for the relation between agentic/NPI narcissism and psychological adjustment). Of importance, however, the relation between communal narcissism and psychological adjustment was never significantly negative. The omnibus effect size between communal narcissism and psychological adjustment was medium across all 50+ countries. Finally, the pattern of results regarding communal narcissism and psychological adjustment did not conceptually change when agentic/NPI narcissism was statistically controlled for (Gebauer et al., 2012, 2018).

Criterion #5: Distinctiveness from the Communion Facet of Vulnerable Narcissism

To qualify as grandiose narcissism (vs. vulnerable narcissism), communal narcissism must be empirically distinguishable from the communal facet of vulnerable/pathological narcissism, namely, the "self-sacrificing self-enhancement" facet (SSSE; Pincus et al., 2009). Gebauer et al. (2018) provided the first test of the relation between communal narcissism and SSSE by

relying on two large samples with over 1000 participants each. The results confirmed that the two constructs are distinct: The two constructs shared about 25% of their variance. Additionally, the nomological networks of communal narcissism and SSSE were very different. Controlling for SSSE, communal narcissism was moderately related to higher agentic/NPI narcissism (see criterion #1). By contrast, controlling for communal narcissism, SSSE was hardly related to agentic/NPI narcissism at all. Moreover, controlling for SSSE, communal narcissism was moderately related to better psychological adjustment (more positive affect, higher life satisfaction, less negative affect, lower anxiety, and lower depression). By contrast, controlling for communal narcissism, SSSE was moderately related to worse psychological adjustment (less positive affect, more negative affect, higher anxiety, and higher depression). Overall, these results indicate that communal narcissism and SSSE are distinct constructs: communal narcissism is a type of grandiose narcissism, whereas SSSE is a type of vulnerable narcissism.

Criterion #6: Distinctiveness from Communal Self-perceptions

To qualify as communal narcissism (vs. communal self-perceptions), communal narcissism must be empirically distinguishable from communal self-perceptions. The primary evidence points to a moderate positive relation. Gebauer et al. (2012) found moderate positive relations between communal narcissism and self-reports of communal orientations, feminine traits, and warmth-agreeableness in interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Nehrlich et al. (in press) found moderate positive relations between communal narcissism and prosociality self-reports (a core aspect of communion) across two studies. Additionally, Gebauer et al. (2018) devised a non-narcissistic version of the CNI. More precisely, they rephrased all 16 items in an effort to eliminate their narcissistic flavor. For example, the CNI item “I am the most helpful person I know” was rephrased to state “I am generally very helpful.”

Gebauer et al. (2018) examined the relations between the CNI, its non-narcissistic sibling, and three well-validated communion scales. The correlation between the CNI and its non-narcissistic version was positive, but far from perfect. Furthermore, the correlations between the CNI and the three communion scales were again only moderate in size and they were only about half the size of the correlation between the CNI’s non-narcissistic version and those three scales. Finally, Gebauer et al. (2018) found evidence for a moderate relation between communal narcissism and agreeableness (another core aspect of communion) in their cross-cultural study of 50+ countries. Thus, the moderate relation between communal narcissism and communal self-perceptions seems to be pan-cultural.

Taken together, we have summarized the empirical evidence for communal narcissism along six criteria. We have seen that there is good empirical support for most of these criteria, but we have also seen that some criteria have received more research attention than others. Table 7.1 provides an overview of the six criteria together with some estimate of the empirical support for each criterion. The table may be useful to identify research questions regarding communal narcissism that are in particular need of further empirical scrutiny.

Conclusion

From the traditional view of grandiose narcissism, the construct of communal narcissism is counter-intuitive and perhaps daring. Yet, there is now solid theorizing and substantial empirical evidence suggesting that communal narcissism is real. In the self-literature, it has long been an empirical fact that global self-evaluations (self-esteem, self-enhancement, and humility) fall into an agentic facet and a communal facet. From that theoretical vantage point, the proposal that grandiose narcissism also falls into agentic and communal facets appears timely, if not overdue. Also, the evidence for communal narcissism is plentiful (see Table 7.1). As a result, it has become clear by now that prior research has focused disproportionately on

Table 7.1 Six criteria for communal narcissism's existence and their amount of empirical support

Criterion	# of samples	# of participants	Multiple labs	Support
#1 Positive, but non-perfect, relation with agentic/NPI narcissism	70+	≈21,000	Yes	Very strong
#2 Communal self-enhancement	9	≈5000	No	Strong
#3 Grandiose self-evaluations at the global level	60+	≈16,000	Yes	Strong
#4 Psychological adjustment	70+	≈21,000	Yes	Very strong
#5 Distinctiveness from the communion facet of vulnerable narcissism	2	≈2000	No	Strong
#6 Distinctiveness from communal self-perceptions	60+	≈16,000	Yes	Very strong

We judged the amount of empirical support on (a) the number of studies, (b) the number of participants (total), (c) whether the data came from multiple independent labs or from our labs only, and (d) our subjective estimate of alternative explanations (e.g., we believe that the correlation between agentic and communal narcissism is subject to fewer alternative explanations than the correlation between communal narcissism and grandiose self-evaluations at the global level, because there is no strong consensus on what measures should be used to capture grandiose self-evaluations at the global level)

one side of the narcissistic coin (i.e., agentic narcissism) while overlooking the other side (i.e., communal narcissism). Consequently, the field knows much more about agentic than communal narcissism. Further research into the construct of communal narcissism promises to redress this imbalance.

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Collective Narcissism: Antecedents and Consequences of Exaggeration of the In-Group Image

Agnieszka Golec de Zavala

Abstract

Collective narcissism is a tendency to exaggerate an in-group's importance and desire for its external recognition. The concept was coined to help explain the mass support for the Nazi politics in Germany. Recently, several successful populist campaigns were based on collective narcissistic calls for revival of national purity, uniqueness, and greatness. This chapter reviews research on collective narcissism to elucidate why collective narcissism is robustly associated with hypersensitivity to intergroup threat and intergroup hostility. Collective narcissism is differentiated from (a) nationalism (i.e., a desire for national supremacy) based on its approach to in-group's vulnerability, (b) in-group satisfaction (i.e., feeling proud to be a member of a valuable group) based on its approach to in-group's membership, and (c) individual narcissism (i.e., exaggerated self-image dependent on admiration of others) based on its means to fulfill self-entitlement. Collective narcissism is associated with retaliatory intergroup hos-

tility over and above other predictors such as nationalism, blind patriotism, right wing authoritarianism, or social dominance orientation. It is associated with exaggerated responses to in-group criticism, conspiratorial thinking, and a tendency to perceive the in-group as threatened by external hostility. It is predicted by low self-esteem via vulnerable narcissism (i.e., frustrated and unfulfilled sense of self-entitlement). Thus, the reviewed research suggests that collective narcissists engage in intergroup hostility to protect their vulnerable self-worth invested in in-group's exaggerated greatness.

Keywords

Collective narcissism · Intergroup hostility · In-group satisfaction · Nationalism

Collective narcissism pertains to individual difference in a belief in exaggerated greatness of one's own group contingent on external recognition (Golec de Zavala, 2011, 2012; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009). This definition extends the concept of individual narcissism as an exaggerated self-image dependent on admiration of others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) onto the social level of self. People who score high on the Collective Narcissism Scale agree that their group's importance and worth are not sufficiently

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Table 8.1 Collective Narcissism Scale

Collective Narcissism Scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, shorter version includes items 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8, Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013)

Typical instruction: *Please think about [this group] when answering the items of the scale. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements using the scale 1, I strongly disagree, to 6, I strongly agree*

1. I wish other groups would more quickly recognize the authority of [my group]
2. [My group] deserves special treatment
3. I will never be satisfied until [my group] gets the recognition it deserves
4. I insist upon [my group] getting the respect that is due to it
5. It really makes me angry when others criticize [my group]
6. If [my group] had a major say in the world, the world would be a much better place
7. I do not get upset when people do not notice achievements of [my group] (R)
8. Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of [my group]
9. The true worth of [my group] is often misunderstood (R) Denotes a reverse-coded item

The Collective Narcissism Scale originally appeared in Golec de Zavala et al. (2009). Reprinted with permission

recognized by others, their group deserves special treatment, and they insist that their group must obtain special recognition and respect (Table 8.1, Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Rather than contributing to their in-group's welfare, collective narcissists engage their energy to monitor whether the greatness and uniqueness of their in-group are sufficiently acknowledged and recognized by others.

When Theodore Adorno first proposed that collective narcissism motivated support for the Nazi politics in Germany, he argued that the exaggerated sense of national entitlement compensated for hidden weakness of the self. He maintained that by dissolving in an idealized and omnipotent group, the "weak egos" sought protection from the sense of alienation, powerlessness, and self-blame. Unfortunately, once legitimized by national authorities, unrestrained collective narcissism led to support for the aggressive leaders and escalation of intergroup hostilities (Adorno, 1963/1998).

Recently, appeals to national collective narcissism could be observed in political campaigns

alarming about the loss of national greatness in the USA ("Make America great again") and in the UK ("Take back control"). Collective narcissism predicted the Brexit vote in the UK because of the perception that the country was threatened by immigrants and foreigners (Golec de Zavala, Guerra, & Simão, 2017). Collective narcissism predicted an increase in conspiratorial thinking during Donald Trump's presidential campaign (Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018) and the Trump vote in the 2016 American presidential election (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018).

This chapter reviews previous studies examining the link between collective narcissism and intergroup hostility. Next, the chapter presents recent results pointing to collective narcissistic vulnerability and compensatory nature and differentiating collective narcissism from in-group satisfaction – taking pride in being a member of a worthy group (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Leach et al., 2008). However, first the chapter differentiates national collective narcissism from a related concept of nationalism.

Collective Narcissism Vs. Nationalism

People can be collective narcissistic about various social groups (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). When applied to a national group, collective narcissism may make similar predictions regarding intergroup attitudes as nationalism: a desire for national supremacy (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). However, there are reasons to think that the two constructs refer to different psychological realities. First, nationalists are openly dominant and deny weakness. They are convinced that their nation should dominate others (Blank & Schmidt, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Mummendey, Klink & Brown, 2001; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009). Collective narcissists emphasize weakness and lack of in-group recognition to justify their hostility (Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides et al., 2017). In addition, when the overlap between nationalism and national collective narcissism was controlled, collective narcissism, not nationalism, was related to hyper-

sensitivity to intergroup threat and retaliatory hostility (Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra, & Baran, 2016). Finally, in line with this finding, recent results indicate that collective narcissism and nationalism may be underlain by different motivations. Unlike collective narcissism, nationalism was related to individual grandiose narcissism (i.e., a sense of agentic superiority over others) and only inasmuch as it was associated with grandiose narcissism was it also related to high self-esteem. Otherwise, nationalism was related to low self-esteem. Collective narcissism was related to low self-esteem via vulnerable narcissism (i.e., frustrated and unfulfilled sense of self-entitlement, Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides et al., 2017).

Thus, both collective narcissism and nationalism seem to be underlain by low self-esteem, and both are likely to use their national identity instrumentally to compensate for deficits in their sense of self-worth. However, they engage in intergroup hostility in different ways and for different reasons. While nationalistic intergroup hostility is actively aggressive and openly dominant, collective narcissistic intergroup hostility may be subjectively defensive. Collective narcissists protect the in-group rather than assert the in-group's dominance (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). This does not make their hostility more justified. The same atrocities would be motivated by nationalistic belief in the in-group's right to dominate and the collective narcissist's belief that the in-group needs to be protected from external threats. However, it is important to recognize that dominant nationalists may use the rhetoric of intergroup threat and loss of national greatness to mobilize defensive collective narcissists to fight their wars.

Previous Studies: Collective Narcissism, Hypersensitivity to Intergroup Threat and Retaliatory Intergroup Hostility

Results converge to indicate that collective narcissism, not individual narcissism or personal sense of entitlement, predicts hostile intergroup

attitudes and behaviors (Cai & Gries, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Bilewicz, 2013, Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). Specifically, collective narcissism predicts retaliatory hostility to past, present, actual, and imagined offences to the in-group (Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2016).

Collective narcissism predicts retaliatory intergroup hostility after the in-group image is undermined by other groups. For example, American collective narcissism predicted support for military intervention in Iraq in 2003 because American collective narcissists felt besieged by hostility of other countries (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). However, out-group aggression is not the only threat that triggers collective narcissistic intergroup hostility. Collective narcissistic prejudice is underlain by the perception of targeted groups as threatening to the in-group's image, position, or narrowly defined identity. For example, the link between collective narcissism and anti-Semitism in Poland was explained by the belief that Jews conspire against Poles (Golec de Zavala & Cichočka, 2012). Collective narcissism in Poland was also linked to homophobia. This link was mediated by religious fundamentalism. Such findings indicate that collective narcissistic narrow definition of the "true" Polish national identity – Catholic and heterosexual (Graff, 2010) – is threatened by Jews and homosexual Poles (Golec de Zavala & Mole, 2017; see also Górska & Mikołajczyk, 2015). In China, collective narcissists disliked American celebrities portrayed on the covers of Chinese magazines. This result was interpreted as their rejection of American cultural intrusion into the "pure" Chinese culture (Gries et al. 2015).

In addition, collective narcissism uniquely (in comparison to individual narcissism, right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, national in-group identification, and blind and constructive patriotism) predicts hostile retaliation to in-group criticism. For example, in an experimental study, American participants were presented with a fictional interview with a foreign exchange student. After reading unfavorable

(vs. favorable) comments about their country, American collective narcissists expressed the intention to engage in hostile behaviors toward all compatriots of the exchange student. In another experiment, Polish collective narcissists advocated hostile confrontation with a team of British scientists with whom Polish scientists allegedly discovered new chemical elements but disagreed over how to name them. Polish collective narcissists preferred hostile strategies only after participants were previously exposed to critical comments about anti-Semitism in Poland issued by the British press. Participants chose conciliatory approach to the same conflict in the control conditions and after the critical comments were attributed to the Austrian press.

In another study, collective narcissists reported that they thought negative opinions about their in-group were threatening them personally. In retribution, collective narcissists made resource distribution decisions that harmed the criticizing out-group. The perception of the in-group criticism as personally threatening mediated the relationship between collective narcissism and retaliatory aggression (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013).

Collective narcissists retaliate not only in response to incontrovertibly intentional intergroup threat or criticism. They feel threatened in ambiguous intergroup situations or even such that require a stretch of imagination to be perceived as insulting. For example, Mexican collective narcissists felt offended by the construction of the wall along the Mexican-American border in 2006 (note that the 2006 attempt to justify the wall was more subtle than the 2016 one by President Trump who unambiguously insulted Mexicans). According to the American government at the time, the wall was constructed to protect against the terrorist threat. Nevertheless, Mexican collective narcissists wanted to boycott American companies and engage in destructive actions against American institutions in Mexico because they perceived the construction of the wall as an insult to Mexico and Mexicans (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Similarly, in Turkey, collective narcissists rejoiced in the European economic crisis after feeling humiliated by the

Turkish wait to be admitted to the European Union. In Portugal, collective narcissists supported hostile actions toward Germans and rejoiced in the German economic crisis because they perceived Germany's position in the European Union as more appreciated than the position of Portugal.

Stretching the definition of intergroup offence even further, in Poland, collective narcissists supported hostile actions toward the makers of a movie which alluded to one of the least laudable moments in the national history: Polish anti-Semitism during the Second World War. Even after a transgression as petty as a joke made by a Polish celebrity about the country's government, Polish collective narcissists threatened physical punishment and engaged in *schadenfreude*, openly rejoicing in the misfortunes of their "offender" (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). Such results indicate that collective narcissists are *hypersensitive* to signs of the in-group image threat and perceive an insult to the in-group even when it is debatable, not perceived by others, or not intended by the other group. Collective narcissists do not have a sense of humor as far as their in-group is concerned, and they are disproportionately punitive in responding to what they consider the in-group image threat.

Such findings are important in the light of analyses suggesting that feeling humiliated in the name of one's own group is one of the most frequently reported motives for political radicalization and violence (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008). Indeed, analyses presented by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (supported by the US Department of Homeland Security) showed that collective narcissism mobilized support for terrorist violence in radical social networks in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Morocco. In radicalized social contexts, either due to the past involvement in political violence (LTTE in Sri Lanka), current ideological climate (Morocco), or explicit ideological agenda (Islamists and Jihadists in Indonesia), collective narcissism predicted support for violent political extremism. Participants who scored high on the Collective Narcissism Scale and were embedded within the extremist

networks felt their group had not received the appreciation it deserved and supported intergroup violence as a means of advancing their in-group's goals (Jaško, Webber, & Kruglanski, 2017).

New Developments: Collective Narcissism and Weaknesses of the Self

In line with Adorno's suggestion, recent studies suggest that collective narcissists protect their in-groups' exaggerated greatness so vehemently because they regard those in-groups as vehicles for fulfilment of their frustrated sense of entitlement. Previous studies linked collective narcissism to the conviction that other groups do not appreciate the in-group sufficiently and to the lack of positive automatic associations of the in-group's symbols with positive stimuli (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). In addition, collective narcissism was linked to low sense of personal control – not having the ability to influence the course of one's own life (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Temporarily lowered sense of personal control resulted in heightened collective narcissism, suggesting that increased investment in the in-group's exaggerated greatness may be a way of compensating for loss of personal control (Cichocka, Golec de Zavala, et al., 2018).

Recent studies, conducted on large and nationally representative samples in Poland and Russia, showed that collective narcissism was related to low self-esteem via individual vulnerable narcissism and it was not related to individual grandiose narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). The dominance analysis and two other relative importance analyses indicated that the role of personal control in explaining variance in collective narcissism was negligible in comparison to vulnerable narcissism (0.01 vs. 0.07) and self-esteem (0.02 vs. 0.07), respectively (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). Collective narcissism was also associated with self-criticism, low self-acceptance, negative affectivity, and a tendency to react strongly to environmental stimuli (Golec de Zavala, 2017). Such findings suggest that engaging in the protection of

inflated in-group greatness may seem essential to collective narcissists who feel entitled to special treatment but concurrently feel unrecognized and disempowered.

Such results indicate also that collective narcissism may be underlain by deficits in the ability to constructively face adversity and soothe and restore after threat. Since collective narcissists may not be able to protect themselves from aversive effects of individual hardship, they may invest their sense of self-worth in a group. When their in-group is undermined, their sense of self-worth is destabilized. Thus, they monitor signs of threat to the in-group image and overreact when they detect them. Since their emotionality is mostly negative, their reactions are as well. They express anger, contempt, hostility, and aggression.

Collective Narcissism Vs. In-Group Satisfaction

When President Kennedy famously asked Americans to think not what their nation can do for them but what they can do for their nation, he recognized that a noninstrumental, intrinsically motivated group identity can coexist with one that is instrumental and compensatory. Research on collective narcissism shows that feeling proud and satisfied to be a member of a valuable group are correlated. Correlations between collective narcissism and private collective self-esteem (participant's own opinion about the in-group, Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) ranged from 0.31 in Turkey to 0.50 in Poland (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2016). Correlations with in-group satisfaction (feeling glad and satisfied to belong to a valuable group, Leach et al., 2008), ranged from 0.48 to 0.63 in Poland (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides et al., 2017). However, research also suggests that these constructs are functionally distinct: they make different predictions for intergroup attitudes, and they are related to different emotional profiles. In addition, those two constructs are related to different attitudes toward the self.

Studies showed that in-group satisfaction suppressed the link between collective narcissism and rejection of out-groups. After the overlap was accounted for, the link between collective narcissism and rejection of out-groups became stronger. In addition, collective narcissism suppressed the link between in-group satisfaction and positive attitudes toward out-groups. In-group satisfaction predicted more positive attitudes toward out-groups after its overlap with collective narcissism was accounted for (Golec de Zavala, 2011; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). Collective narcissism with in-group positivity partialled out can be interpreted as group-based entitlement without the comfort of the sense of belonging to a valuable group. In-group satisfaction with collective narcissism partialled out can be interpreted as a confident, positive evaluation of the in-group, independent of external recognition and resilient to threats and criticism. Indeed, unlike collective narcissism, in-group satisfaction did not predict hypersensitivity to intergroup threat (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016), it was not related to conspiracy beliefs about Jews or siege mentality (Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012), and it was negatively related to the belief in conspiracy explanations of intergroup situations (Cichocka et al., 2016).

Recent studies showed also that unlike collective narcissism, in-group satisfaction was associated with positive affectivity, psychological well-being, and greater life satisfaction. In-group satisfaction was also associated with feeling safe and grounded in social networks and the tendency to experience gratitude. The differences were found when zero-order correlations were analyzed and when the positive overlap between in-group satisfaction and collective narcissism was controlled for. However, some of the relationships changed when residual variables were analyzed. For example, the link between collective narcissism and gratitude changed direction suggesting that this link was suppressed by the positive overlap between collective narcissism and in-group satisfaction (Golec de Zavala, 2017). In addition, the link between in-group satisfaction and high self-esteem was strengthened

after the overlap between in-group satisfaction and collective narcissism was controlled for suggesting that collective narcissism partially suppressed the positive link between in-group satisfaction and high self-esteem (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017).

Findings linking in-group satisfaction to positive affectivity and high self-esteem and collective narcissism with negative affectivity, vulnerable narcissism, and out-group hostility are in line with the application of self-determination theory to understand the social identity processes. This literature suggests that nonself-determined motivations to identify with the social group – such as collective narcissistic investment of one's self-worth in group identity – are linked with in-group bias, defensiveness, and negative attitudes toward outgroups. Positive, noncontingent, intrinsic in-group satisfaction is related to high self-esteem and intergroup tolerance (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011; Legault & Amiot, 2014).

Future Directions

Collective narcissists engage in intergroup hostility because they invest their sense of self-worth in their group identities and feel motivated to protect their in-groups to protect the vulnerability of their self-images. However, investment of the self-worth in the group identity is not the only way of coping with personal vulnerability. Evidence suggests that there are other ways to stabilize emotional regulation and facilitate resilience to threat, such as self-affirmation (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Future studies could explore whether such interventions can weaken the link between collective narcissism and retaliatory intergroup hostility by fortifying collective narcissistic fragile self-image. Studies indicated that self-affirmation reduced the link between individual grandiose narcissism and interpersonal aggression among adolescents (Thomaes, Bushman, de Castro, Cohen, & Denissen, 2009). Perhaps such intervention could also reduce the link between collective narcissism and compen-

satory intergroup hostility. Future research could also explore whether the impact of collective narcissism in shaping intergroup attitudes can be de-emphasized. Studies indicate that negative consequences of collective narcissism for intergroup relations are reduced when collective narcissism overlaps with in-group satisfaction (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). Future studies would do well to examine how and when in-group satisfaction can be emphasized over collective narcissism in inspiring intergroup attitudes.

Future studies could also advance our understanding of the nature of collective narcissism as an individual difference variable. It is not yet entirely clear whether collective narcissism is a general tendency to form narcissistic attachment to all social groups to which people belong or whether some groups inspire collective narcissism more than others. Groups which possess reified existence – such as national, ethnic, or religious group or political parties – may be more likely to inspire collective narcissism. However, even members of more mundane and loosely defined groups (students of a certain university, workers in the same organization) were shown to be collective narcissistic about their groups (Galvin et al., 2015; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Another issue that requires further clarification is whether levels of collective narcissism can be changed by situational factors. One unpublished study indicated that negative feedback to the in-group (university students) increased collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala, 2010). Intensification of political rhetoric emphasizing social divisions and idealizing certain groups may increase collective narcissism with respect to this group. Intergroup conflicts may also increase collective narcissism with reference to the in-group engaged in the conflict but not to other in-groups. Moreover, collective narcissism may be increased in groups experiencing relative deprivation

(Guerra et al., 2017). In the context of perceived disadvantage and deprivation, future studies should carefully distinguish conditions that increase collective narcissism and retaliatory intergroup hostility from conditions that increase commitment to engage in peaceful social protest, resistance, and civil disobedience on behalf of the valued in-group.

Finally, future studies could advance our understanding of the link between collective narcissism and grandiose narcissism. The summary presented in Table 8.2 suggests that collective narcissism was related to individual grandiose narcissism in the USA and the UK but not in Poland, Russia, or China. This data is in line with the proposition that the relationship between individual and collective narcissism may be shaped by cultural contexts (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). It seems that individualistic cultural contexts that allow for the development of a strong ego may enhance the positive relationship between individual grandiose narcissism and collective narcissism. In line with this proposition, this relationship was found in individualistic cultures, where the projection of perceived individual greatness onto in-groups could be more likely. In collectivistic cultures, commitment to the in-group may be associated with the submission of individual needs or goals, thus diminishing the association of grandiose individual narcissism and collective narcissism.

To sum up, collective narcissism is a distinct form of positive attitude toward an in-group uniquely predicting intergroup hostility in the context of intergroup threat. It accounts for intergroup hostility better than individual narcissism, self-esteem, or other forms of positive attitudes toward the in-group. National collective narcissism can be distinguished from nationalism on the level of the antecedents and predictions. Collective narcissism suppresses the link between in-group satisfaction and positive attitudes toward out-groups. This suggests that noncontingent in-group satisfaction refers to a different psychological reality than collective narcissism and can serve as a platform on which to build harmonious intergroup relations.

Table 8.2 Summary of the relationship between collective narcissism and grandiose individual narcissism as measured by Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and vulnerable individual narcissism measured by the Hyper-Sensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS)

Study	Country	r (Grandiose narcissism)	r (Vulnerable narcissism)	N
1 Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Iskra-Golec (2013), study 3, NPI	Poland	-0.09		117
2 Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Iskra-Golec (2013), study 4, NPI	Poland	0.24 ^a		80
3 Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Iskra-Golec (2013), study 1, NPI	USA	0.18 ^a		134
4 Golec de Zavala et al. (2009), study 2, NPI	UK	0.27 ^a		92
5 Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Iskra-Golec (2013), study 2, NPI	USA	0.29 ^a		108
6 Cai and Gries (2013), study 1, NPI	USA	0.15 ^a		279
7 Cai and Gries (2013), study 1, NPI	China	0.04		436
8 Cichocka et al. (2016), study 2, NPQC	USA	0.35 ^a		269
10 Golec de Zavala, unpublished, NPI, HSNS	Poland	0.04	0.15 ^a	569
11 Golec de Zavala et al. (2016), study 4, NPI, HSNS	Poland	-0.008	0.25 ^a	427
12 Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides, Lantos, Baran, Murteira & Artamanova (2017), study 1, NPI, HSNS	Russia	0.02	0.09 ^a	1198
13 Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides, Lantos, Baran, Murteira & Artamanova (2017), study 2, NPI, HSNS	Poland	0.03	0.24 ^a	506
14 Golec de Zavala, Guerra, Sedikides, Lantos, Baran, Murteira & Artamanova (2017), study 3, NPI, HSNS	Poland	0.07	0.24 ^a	1065
15 Murteira, unpublished, HSNS	Portugal		0.18 ^a	276

Meta-analytical summary of the data for the relationship between collective narcissism and grandiose narcissism indicates a small effect (0.09). The weighted mean effect estimated by random effect model was significantly larger than 0 ($SE = 0.03$, 95%CI[0.03;0.15]; $z = 3.20$, $p = 0.004$, $k = 13$) with a significant heterogeneity between countries ($Q(12)=53.03$, $p < 0.001$). Collapsing the relationship in the USA and the UK vs. Poland, Russia, and China indicated significant difference in average effects between those two groups of countries ($Q(2)=42.46$, $p < 0.001$) and no significant variance within countries ($Q(10)=10.61$, $p = 0.39$). The relationship exists in the USA and the UK ($p = 0.25$, $SE = 0.04$, 95%CI[0.18;0.31]; $z = 7.26$, $p < 0.001$, $k = 5$) but does not exist in Poland, Russia, and China ($p = 0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, 95%CI[-0.03;0.04]; $z = 0.35$, $p = 0.77$, $k = 8$)

Meta-analytical summary of the data for the relationship between collective narcissism and vulnerable narcissism indicates a small effect (0.19). The weighted mean effect estimated by random effect model was significantly larger than 0 ($SE = 0.03$, 95%CI[0.13;0.25]; $z = 6.06$, $p < 0.001$, $k = 6$) with a significant heterogeneity ($Q(5)=17.9$, $p = 0.003$)

^aDenotes significant correlations

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The Psychodynamic Mask Model of Narcissism: Where Is It Now?

9

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Abstract

According to the psychodynamic mask model of narcissism, the narcissist's grandiose posturing masks deep-seated insecurities and low self-regard. This conceptualization of grandiose narcissism as fragile self-esteem is pursued within social-personality psychology in tests of three distinct hypotheses: the *discrepant self-esteem hypothesis* (narcissism reflects high explicit self-esteem combined with low implicit self-esteem); the *unstable self-esteem hypothesis* (narcissism reflects high trait self-esteem that is unstable and reactive to contexts); and the *contingent self-esteem hypothesis* (narcissism reflects high self-esteem that is contingent on achievement in agentic domains). Here, we review the background and current state of research on each of these hypotheses. Overall, the contingent self-esteem hypothesis has the most support, likely because it links self-esteem fragility to contingency in agentic domains. Recommendations for researchers include utilizing precise operationalizations of key constructs, seeking evidence of fragility in agentic rather than communal domains, and not conflating "agentic" domains with "non-social" domains.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Explicit self-esteem · Implicit self-esteem · Mask model · Discrepant self-esteem · Unstable self-esteem · Contingent self-esteem

The mask model of narcissism explains the narcissist's overinflated, positive self-views as a protective mask against deep-seated insecurities. This conceptualization of narcissism emerges from psychoanalytic origins (Freud, 1914; Kohut, 1966) and is most evident in the work of Kernberg (1986), who called narcissistic grandiosity a defense against an underlying "empty self." Tests of the mask model in social-personality psychology often conceptualize it as fragile self-esteem that assumes one of several different forms. First, the most literal interpretation of the mask model holds that grandiose narcissism is characterized by high explicit (conscious, deliberative) self-esteem that masks underlying low implicit (automatic, overlearned) self-esteem. We refer to this as the *discrepant self-esteem hypothesis* because it posits high surface self-esteem that is discrepant from low underlying self-esteem. Second, the *unstable self-esteem hypothesis* posits that grandiose narcissism is characterized by fragile high self-esteem that is unstable and prone to fluctuation; that is, the individual's self-esteem is high on average, but it plummets at times in response to

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contextual factors. Third, the *contingent self-esteem hypothesis* operationalizes the mask as overblown self-esteem that is fragile due to its contingency on achievement in agentic domains. Although distinct, these three forms of fragile self-esteem are associated with each other and with verbal defensiveness, suggesting that they may all indicate a similar factor (Kernis, Lakey, & Heppner, 2008). Here, we review the evidence for each of these interpretations of the mask model.

Note that the evidence reviewed here derives from research on grandiose narcissism in non-clinical samples. While narcissism is viewed as a personality disorder within clinical psychology, social-personality psychologists are often more interested in nonclinical, trait-like narcissism (Miller & Campbell, 2008). This personality approach defines grandiose narcissism as an enduring pattern of arrogance, entitlement, self-absorption, and superiority that is measured with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981) or other self-report scales (see Chap. 12 by Foster et al., this volume), but that does not reach clinical levels.

The Discrepant Self-Esteem Hypothesis

Whereas explicit self-esteem reflects conscious feelings of self-worth that are measured via self-reports, implicit self-esteem reflects relatively automatic self-evaluations that are overlearned, difficult to verbalize, and arise in response to self-relevant stimuli (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2010). As noted, the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis predicts that larger discrepancies between favorable explicit self-esteem and unfavorable implicit self-esteem – usually indexed by a statistical interaction between explicit and implicit self-esteem – should be associated with higher grandiose narcissism scores.

Early tests of the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis offered promise. Two studies found that individuals high in grandiose narcissism scored high in explicit self-esteem but low in implicit self-esteem (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Though not a

direct test of the mask model, another study found that people with high explicit and low implicit self-esteem displayed the highest levels of unrealistic self-enhancement, which is a feature of grandiose narcissism (Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003). Similarly, Kernis and colleagues found that people responded in a more narcissistic manner after being primed with either positive or negative implicit self-esteem if the valence of the implicit self-esteem prime was discrepant from their trait self-esteem (Kernis et al., 2005).

These effects proved inconsistent and difficult to replicate, however. A series of studies failed to find evidence that discrepancies between high explicit and low implicit self-esteem predict grandiose narcissism (Bosson & Prewitt-Freilino, 2007; Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey, & Kernis, 2007; Gregg & Sedikides, 2010). A meta-analysis that examined data from both published and unpublished studies found no overall association between grandiose narcissism and the combination of high explicit and low implicit self-esteem, regardless of how implicit self-esteem was assessed (Bosson et al., 2008).

In an adaptation of the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis, Campbell and colleagues asked whether people high in grandiose narcissism have high explicit self-views in agentic domains and low implicit self-views in communal domains (Campbell et al., 2007). This logic is based on the tendency for grandiose narcissists to inflate self-reports of their agentic, but not their communal, traits and tendencies. However, Campbell et al. found instead that grandiose narcissism correlated positively with both explicit and implicit agency and not at all with implicit communion, a pattern that did not support the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis.

Another approach to testing the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis utilizes a bogus pipeline (an ostensible lie detector) to assess people's underlying self-esteem. Using this method, Myers and Zeigler-Hill (2012) found that women higher in grandiose narcissism reported lower self-esteem in the bogus pipeline condition than they did in a control condition. This is consistent with the hypothesis that people high in narcissism mask their fragility behind exaggeratedly

positive self-reports. However, Brunell and Fisher (2014) used a similar bogus pipeline procedure (and a much larger sample size) and found that neither men nor women high in grandiose narcissism modified their reports of their high self-esteem across conditions, thus failing to replicate earlier findings.

In a more recent study, grandiose narcissism was only associated with higher explicit self-esteem among people whose implicit self-esteem was either moderate or high; among those with low implicit self-esteem, grandiose narcissism was unrelated to explicit self-esteem (Di Pierro, Mattevelli, & Gallucci, 2016). Again, these findings are inconsistent with the mask model, because they do not indicate that people high in grandiose narcissism have high explicit self-esteem that masks hidden feelings of low self-regard.

The Unstable Self-Esteem Hypothesis

Unstable high self-esteem is characterized by exaggeratedly positive views of the self that require validation, are vulnerable to threat, and fluctuate regularly in response to self-relevant feedback and events (Kernis, 2003). The unstable self-esteem hypothesis states that individuals with frequently fluctuating high trait self-esteem will score higher in grandiose narcissism.

Evidence in support of the unstable self-esteem hypothesis is inconsistent. While some studies find that narcissism is associated with unstable self-esteem (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998; Zeigler-Hill, Chadha, & Osterman, 2008a), others fail to do so (Webster, Kirkpatrick, Nezlek, Smith, & Paddock, 2007; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). A meta-analysis of 11 datasets representing 1349 respondents indicated no overall relationship between unstable self-esteem and grandiose narcissism (Bosson et al., 2008).

An updated version of the unstable self-esteem hypothesis posits that people high in grandiose narcissism do not display uniform self-esteem reactivity, but instead, demonstrate reactivity to specific events. For instance, one study showed that people high in narcissism reported lower state

self-esteem on days that they experienced more negative achievement-related events (Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clarke, 2010), and this pattern did not hold for positive achievement events or for negative or positive intimacy-related events. Similarly, individuals who scored high in grandiose narcissism demonstrated stronger anger responses to achievement failures compared to interpersonal threats (Besser & Priel, 2010). Note that these patterns reflect the agency-communion distinction discussed earlier: Accruing evidence suggests that agentic and achievement-related events have special significance for the self-esteem of people high in grandiose narcissism, while some types of interpersonal and social events appear irrelevant to their self-esteem.

People who score high in grandiose narcissism may not report as much self-esteem reactivity to interpersonal events because, although they like attention, they are relatively unconcerned with gaining others' approval (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Similarly, people high in grandiose narcissism tend to consider others in terms of their utility rather than as sources of affiliation (Campbell, 1999). Thus, interpersonal events that involve getting attention and controlling others may affect the self-worth of people high in grandiose narcissism, while those that involve connectedness, intimacy, and warmth may not.

However, other findings suggest that the effects of interpersonal events on the self-esteem of individuals high in narcissism may differ as a function of the specific narcissism facet under examination. For example, individuals who score high on the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI demonstrate lower state self-esteem on days that they experience social rejection. Alternatively, the self-esteem of those who score high on the NPI subscales of Leadership/Authority and Grandiose/Exhibitionism is largely unrelated to negative interpersonal events (Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013). That is, their self-esteem remains high even on days that they experience rejection or exclusion. Thus, when grandiose narcissism is measured as a unidimensional construct, people who score high on it appear more reactive to negative achievement-related than interpersonal

events. However, when each facet is examined in isolation, scores on Entitlement/Exploitativeness capture a facet of grandiose narcissism that is fragile in response to negative interpersonal events. Interestingly, this facet of grandiose narcissism – perhaps because it involves mistreatment of others – may also be most strongly predictive of experiencing interpersonal difficulties in the first place.

The Contingent Self-Esteem Hypothesis

Contingent self-esteem is self-esteem that is contingent on specific achievements or achievements in specific domains (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). According to the contingent self-esteem hypothesis, grandiose narcissism should be related to self-esteem that is contingent on achievement in agentic domains.

At first glance, there appears to be a great deal of overlap between “unstable self-esteem that is reactive to negative achievement-related events” as described in the prior section and self-esteem that is contingent on achievement in agentic domains. In fact, these two hypotheses are conceptually similar, but they emerged out of different research traditions and utilize different measurement approaches. Self-esteem instability refers to individual differences in short-term fluctuations of self-worth and is usually assessed by measuring broadly defined state self-esteem – without reference to specific precipitating events – multiple times per day (Kernis, 2005). Contingent self-esteem can reflect either differences in the degree to which people derive self-worth from performance in specific domains (Deci & Ryan, 1995) or differences in the specific domains on which people stake their self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Moreover, contingent self-esteem is usually assessed by asking people to report on the degree to which their self-esteem depends on achievements or events within different domains (e.g., competition, family support, school competence; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Importantly, unstable self-esteem and contingent self-esteem are weakly

correlated, $r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$, indicating that they are distinct (see Kernis et al., 2008). Note that a correlation of 0.32 means that unstable self-esteem accounts for only about 10% of the variance in contingent self-esteem.

In support of the contingent self-esteem hypothesis, people high in grandiose narcissism appear to link their self-worth to events and achievements within primarily agentic domains. For example, scores on the NPI were positively associated with contingent self-esteem in domains of competition and appearance, they were negatively associated with contingent self-esteem in the domains of others’ approval and virtue (being a good and moral person), and they were unrelated to contingent self-esteem in domains of academic competence, family support, and God’s love (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). In a later study, grandiose narcissism scores correlated positively with contingent self-esteem in the competition domain and negatively with contingent self-esteem in domains of approval and family support (Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008b).

Straying a bit from the mask model, a large literature indicates that people high in grandiose narcissism report exaggeratedly positive self-views in agentic domains. For instance, high grandiose narcissism is associated with inflated self-reports of intelligence and power and a tendency to display the “better-than-average effect” for agentic but not communal traits (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). Similarly, as described earlier, Campbell et al. (2007) found that grandiose narcissism is positively related to implicit agency, but unrelated to implicit communion. Moreover, grandiose narcissism is closely tied to social dominance, which is a tendency toward social status and leadership over others (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009). Similarly, adolescents who score higher in grandiose narcissism also report more agentic goals that reflect power and status (Findley & Ojanen, 2013), and narcissism predicts increases in agentic, but not communal, goals over time. These findings do not directly indicate that the self-esteem of people high in grandiose narcissism is contingent on perfor-

mance in agentic domains. However, they do suggest that grandiose narcissists emphasize goals related to social status and power more strongly than goals related to warmth, intimacy, and being a “good” person.

Summary and Conclusions

Is narcissistic personality characterized by a grandiose mask that hides underlying fragility? The answer appears to depend on how one operationalizes key variables. Support for the *discrepant self-esteem hypothesis* is lacking, with the exception of a promising (but unreplicated) recent study that utilized a bogus pipeline paradigm (Myers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012). The lack of consistent support for this hypothesis may arise because researchers conceptualize self-esteem overly broadly (i.e., as general feelings of self-worth) rather than examining specific self-esteem domains (e.g., competence versus self-liking; Tatarodi & Swann, 1995), or fail to link discrepant self-esteem to achievements in agentic versus communal domains. Another possibility is that many researchers seek evidence of the discrepant self-esteem hypothesis in a statistical interaction between explicit and implicit self-esteem (but see Gregg & Sedikides, 2010, for an exception). However, interaction effects are often small and difficult to detect, and implicit self-esteem scores tend to contain a lot of measurement error. These factors combined may make it exceedingly difficult to find clear and consistent support for the mask model. Next, the *unstable self-esteem hypothesis* is not supported in its general form, but there is support for a more specific version of it that proposes that individuals high in grandiose narcissism have unstable self-esteem regarding negative achievement-related events (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2010). Thus, while grandiose narcissism is not generally unstable, it does fluctuate in response to events in agentic domains. That said, scores on one facet of grandiose narcissism – Entitlement/Exploitativeness – are related to self-esteem that is unstable in the face of interpersonal threats.

Finally, the *contingent self-esteem hypothesis* receives consistent and strong support, possibly because it expressly proposes that grandiose narcissists stake their self-worth on agentic – and not communal – goals. This hypothesis is consistent, moreover, with a large literature in which people higher in grandiose narcissism routinely self-report inflated agentic self-views and claim that agentic goals are especially important to them. From the perspective of the psychodynamic mask model, it is interesting that scores on the NPI are positively associated with endorsement of statements such as “My self-worth is influenced by how well I do on competitive tasks” and negatively correlated with endorsement of statements like “My self-esteem would suffer if I did something unethical” (Crocker et al., 2003). In contrast to the more literal interpretation of the mask model – that posits that the fragility of the underlying self must be kept from consciousness because it is too threatening – the contingent self-esteem hypothesis proposes and finds that people high in grandiose narcissism are aware that their self-esteem is linked to their achievements. That is, grandiose narcissists admit that their self-esteem depends on competition and achievement, while denying that it depends on virtuosity and family support. Whether this pattern indicates a truly “fragile” self, however, is another question altogether. After all, if people high in grandiose narcissism routinely convince themselves that their own achievements surpass everyone else’s, then admitting that their self-esteem is dependent on achievements may not reveal much genuine vulnerability.

Going forward, researchers interested in the mask model of narcissism may profit from focusing on the links between narcissistic self-esteem and outcomes in agentic and achievement-related domains as opposed to communal domains. It may be important, moreover, to distinguish between different facets of grandiose narcissism (e.g., Entitlement/Exploitativeness vs. other facets). In the evolution of research testing each mask model hypothesis, gains are made when researchers operationalize variables more precisely and specifically as opposed to globally.

In distinguishing between agentic and communal domains of functioning, we caution researchers not to conflate communal domains with social ones and agentic domains with nonsocial ones. Recall that some research finds that grandiose narcissism is unrelated to reactivity to social- and intimacy-related events (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2010), while other research finds that grandiose narcissism is associated with leadership and social status goals (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Findley & Ojanen, 2013). Thus, it is not the sociality of a given event, but the opportunity that an event affords for demonstrating agency and leadership, that is relevant to the self-esteem of people high in grandiose narcissism. Social contexts that offer opportunities for dominance, assertiveness, and competition should have self-esteem relevance for people high in grandiose narcissism, while those that do not should be less relevant to the self-esteem of grandiose narcissists.

In conclusion, the mask model has come a long way, and each of its various iterations represents an important improvement on older versions. The most promising version of the mask model is one that views the self-esteem of those high in grandiose narcissism as “fragile” insofar as it is contingent on performance and outcomes in domains that are valued by grandiose narcissists: those that offer opportunities for demonstrating agentic superiority and status over others. Researchers who continue this work are encouraged to use specific and precise measures of key constructs, as global measures that gloss over important distinctions may obscure the complex relationships between grandiose narcissism and self-esteem.

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Distinguishing Between Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism

10

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Abstract

Increasingly, studies have shown that grandiose narcissism can be adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive narcissism (characterized by authority and self-sufficiency) and maladaptive narcissism (characterized by exploitativeness, entitlement, and exhibitionism) differ in their associations with the Big Five personality traits, inter- and intrapersonal adaptations, and problem behaviors and differ in their developmental trajectories and genetic and environmental foundations. Supportive evidence includes (1) high maladaptive narcissism tended to be associated with high neuroticism, actual-ideal discrepancies, depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsive buying, and delinquency but associated with low empathy and self-esteem, whereas high adaptive narcissism tended to manifest null or opposite associations with those variables; (2) maladaptive narcissism declined with age, whereas adaptive narcissism did not; (3) adaptive and maladaptive narcissism differed substantially in their genetic and environmental bases. These findings deepen our understanding about grandiose

narcissism and grandiose narcissists and suggest the importance of distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism in future research and intervention practice.

Keywords

Narcissism · Adaptive narcissism · Maladaptive narcissism · Personality · Development · Genetics

Introduction

In most people's eyes, narcissists are arrogant, selfish, exploitive, entitled, and aggressive. In a word, narcissism is "...'bad' and predicts other 'bad' things" (Campbell & Foster, 2007, p. 116; Lasch, 1979). Indeed, narcissism has been treated as a pathological disorder ever since its introduction into psychology (Ellis, 1898; Freud, 1914/1957; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977). Yet, decades of research on narcissism in normal populations has suggested that to some extent and in some aspects, narcissism could also be desirable and adaptive (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusult, 2004; Watson & Biderman, 1993). For example, narcissists tend to be confident, assertive, extraverted, energetic, and happy (Watson & Biderman, 1993), and they are more likely to

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have high self-esteem and less likely to experience depression and anxiety (Sedikides et al., 2004). Conscious of both the pros and cons associated with narcissism, researchers recently have attempted to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism and study them separately (Barry, Frick, Adler, & Grafeman, 2007; Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Hill & Yousey, 1998).

In this chapter, we elaborate on evidence that supports a distinction between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism and discusses the implications therein. In doing so, we focus on narcissism in the normal population (i.e., not the clinical disorder) and a specific variant known as “grandiose narcissism” (in contrast to “vulnerable narcissism”). Grandiose narcissism is characterized by an inflated self-view, agentic orientation, selfishness, and a sense of specialness (Campbell & Foster, 2007).

Distinction Reflected in the Research Tradition

Exploration about narcissism has followed two traditions: clinically based and personality-based. While clinical psychologists have long treated narcissism as a pathological disorder that concerns clinical populations (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977; Pincus, Cain, & Wright, 2014), personality psychologists have largely considered it as a medley of adaptive and maladaptive components that are observed in normal populations (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Emmons, 1987). Almost from the nascence of the personality tradition, researchers have proposed two types of narcissism (Emmons, 1984; Watson & Biderman, 1993). One type is maladaptive, echoing the clinical tradition to some extent and encompassing defensiveness, aggressiveness, and egotism (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). The other type is adaptive, reflecting the healthy components of narcissism and characterized by successful self-exhibition, acceptable self-aggrandizement, and high confidence (Kernberg, 1975; Watson & Biderman, 1993). Consistent with this proposal, decades of research has yielded a large body of evidence supporting a

distinction between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism.

Distinction Reflected in the Measure of Narcissism

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI, Raskin & Hall, 1979) has served as the primary measure of grandiose narcissism. NPI scores, moreover, are often the basis of conceptualizations of grandiose narcissism (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). The NPI was developed in conjunction with descriptions of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980). The scale originally included 220 items, mostly tapping grandiose expressions of pathological narcissism, and eventually was refined and reduced to 40 items (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Factor analyses have revealed diverse factor structures underlying the NPI, with factors of 2 (Power and Exhibitionism, Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004; Leadership/Authority and Exhibitionism/Entitlement, Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008), 3 (Power, Exhibitionism, and Specialness, Kubarych et al., 2004; Leadership/Authority, Grandiose/Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness, Ackerman et al., 2011), 4 (Exploitativeness/Entitlement, Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration, Emmons, 1984, 1987), and 7 (Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, Vanity, and Entitlement, Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Despite the complexity and inconclusiveness of the factors underlying the NPI, researchers have observed that the NPI includes both healthy and unhealthy factors (e.g., Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). This distinction is most evident in the seven-factor model: authority and self-sufficiency are healthy and associated with such desirable traits as self-confidence and assertiveness, whereas entitlement, exploitativeness, and exhibitionism are unhealthy and associated with poor psychological well-being and social adjustment (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson & Biderman, 1993). Using these

factors, researchers have developed two NPI subscales that gauge adaptive and maladaptive narcissism separately (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003). The two subscales have exhibited acceptable reliability (i.e., internal consistency) and validity (i.e., predictive validity and construct validity) (Barry et al., 2007; Cai, Shi, Fang, & Luo, 2015; Hepper et al., 2014). Most evidence we review in the sections below employs this measurement scheme.

Distinction Reflected in Personality Nomologic Networks

Research on overall grandiose narcissism has established that it is positively correlated with extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness but negatively with neuroticism and agreeableness (for a review, Miller & Maples, 2011), with the magnitude of the correlations varying from small for conscientiousness (0.08) to moderate for extraversion (0.39). Research based on factors of grandiose narcissism has consistently demonstrated that all factors, whether they be healthy or unhealthy, are positively correlated with extraversion and negatively with agreeableness. The healthy and unhealthy factors differ, however, in their relationship with neuroticism, while relatively healthy factors, such as leadership and authority, are negatively associated with neuroticism; relatively unhealthy factors such as entitlement and exploitativeness are positively associated with it (Ackerman et al., 2011; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Corry et al., 2008; Hill & Roberts, 2012). Thus, although healthy and unhealthy factors share some similarities in terms of a nomologic foundation for personality, they differ in their associations with neuroticism.

Distinction Reflected in Associations with Intrapersonal Adaptions

Research has revealed that healthy and unhealthy components of grandiose narcissism manifest distinct associations with intrapersonal adaptions.

Individuals with higher scores for exploitativeness or entitlement are more likely to be self-conscious (Watson & Biderman, 1993), to report larger actual-ideal discrepancies (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), and to possess lower self-esteem (Brown et al., 2009). Higher levels of exploitativeness or entitlement have been linked to increased mood variability and emotional intensity (Emmons, 1987), greater neuroticism (Emmons, 1984), and higher scores on the Narcissistic Personality Disorder scale (Emmons, 1987; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). In contrast, individuals who score higher on the Leadership/Authority dimension report a higher level of self-awareness (Watson & Biderman, 1993) and self-esteem (Brown et al., 2009; Emmons, 1984; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman, 1992) and a lower level of neuroticism (Emmons, 1984; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995) and actual-ideal self-discrepancy (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Furthermore, Leadership/Authority is negatively associated with indices of poor psychological well-being, such as anxiety, social anxiety, depression, and personal distress (Emmons, 1984; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson & Morris, 1991). Taken together, adaptive and maladaptive components of narcissism are associated with intrapersonal adaptions in opposite directions: while the former is beneficial, the latter is detrimental.

Distinction Reflected in Associations with Interpersonal Adaptions

Grandiose narcissism can be toxic in interpersonal situations. Not all components of grandiose narcissism, however, are problematic. Two lines of evidence are available so far. The first line of evidence involves the relationship between narcissism and aggression. It is well-known that people with high grandiose narcissism are often high in aggression. When confronted with failure, social rejection, or any other source of threat to the ego, they often respond in aggressive ways (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). For instance, they may

denigrate evaluators, punish competitors, and even act antagonistically toward innocent others (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy, & Miller, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Exploration of the relationship between aggressiveness and specific components of narcissism, however, have shown that aggressiveness is mainly associated with unhealthy components such as entitlement and exploitativeness rather than the relatively healthy self-sufficiency and superiority components (Moeller, Crocker, & Bushaman, 2009; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008; Washburn, McMahon, King, Reinecke, & Silver, 2004; but see Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2015).

A second line of evidence has examined the relationship between grandiose narcissism and empathy. Overall, research has shown that high grandiose narcissism is associated with low empathy (Fan et al., 2011; Watson et al., 1984). For specific components of narcissism, however, research shows that lack of empathy is more likely to be associated with unhealthy components rather than the healthy ones. An early study examined the relationship between empathy and the various factors underlying the NPI (Watson & Morris, 1991). Results showed that exploitativeness/entitlement was negatively associated with empathic concern and perspective taking but others factors were not. Later, a study examined adaptive and maladaptive narcissism among adolescents directly and found that maladaptive narcissism was related to a constellation of callous-unemotional traits (e.g., failure to show empathy, constricted display of emotion), whereas adaptive narcissism was not (Barry et al., 2003). More recently, a series of studies examined how adaptive and maladaptive narcissism were differentially associated with state empathy (Hepper et al., 2014). Results showed that when exposed to a target person's distress, individuals high in maladaptive narcissism (as opposed to those high in adaptive narcissism) displayed low momentary empathy as indicated by both self-reports (Study 1) and autonomic arousal (Study 3). Taken together, it is maladaptive narcissism rather than adaptive

narcissism that is associated with interpersonal problems.

Distinction Reflected in Associations with Problem Behaviors

Two kinds of problem behaviors have been shown to be differentially associated with adaptive and maladaptive narcissism. One has to do with impulsive buying. Grandiose narcissism has been linked to problematic consumption behaviors (Rose, 2007). One of our recent studies, however, showed that it is maladaptive narcissism rather than adaptive narcissism that predicts a tendency of impulsive buying (Cai et al., 2015). In this research, we first demonstrated with an internet sample that impulsive buying is positively associated with maladaptive narcissism but not with adaptive narcissism (Study 1). We then replicated this finding with a twin sample and further showed that the association between maladaptive narcissism and impulsive buying had a genetic foundation (Study 2).

Another involves conduct in children and adolescence (Barry et al., 2003; Washburn et al., 2004). A longitudinal study investigated a group of children and young adolescents over a 4-year period (Barry et al., 2007). Results showed that while maladaptive narcissism predicted delinquency and police contact at all follow-ups, adaptive narcissism exhibited no significant correlation with delinquency and a significantly negative one with police contact. In summary, it is maladaptive narcissism but not adaptive narcissism that predicts problem behaviors.

Distinction Reflected in Developmental Trajectories

Only a few studies have examined the development of narcissism. A longitudinal study showed that in general, observer-rated narcissism increased from ages 14 to 18, followed by a slight but nonsignificant decline from ages 18 to 23 (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009); multiple cross-

sectional studies have shown that narcissism is negatively correlated with age in adulthood (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003; Roberts, Edmonds, & Grijalva, 2010). These studies suggest that narcissism increases during adolescence but tends to decline during adulthood. Interestingly, Foster et al. (2003) also demonstrated that age-related decreases tend to be larger for the maladaptive components (i.e., exhibitionism, exploitativeness, and entitlement) than for the adaptive components (i.e., self-sufficiency and authority). A recent large cross-sectional study has investigated more than 20,000 people in China (Cai, Kwan, & Sedikides, 2012). This study, again, replicated the age-related downward trend for overall grandiose narcissism. It demonstrated, moreover, differential trajectories for adaptive and maladaptive narcissism: while adaptive narcissism remained stable across a life-span, maladaptive narcissism exhibited a decreasing tendency.¹ Together, these findings indicate that adaptive and maladaptive aspects of narcissism follow different developmental trajectories.

Distinction Reflected in Genetic and Environmental Bases

Two previous studies have examined grandiose narcissism from the perspective of behavioral genetics. Overall, substantial genetic influences on grandiose narcissism have been found in both Asian and Western samples (e.g., Luo, Cai, Sedikides, & Song, 2014; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008). Furthermore, non-shared environments (i.e., environments not shared by twin siblings, like life events), but not shared environments (i.e., environments shared by twin siblings, like living conditions), exhibited a pronounced influence on narcissism. Two recent twin studies shed light on how these effects might vary with whether grandiose narcissism is adaptive or maladaptive. One examined the etiology of grandiosity and entitlement, which are reflective of adaptive and maladaptive

narcissism, respectively (Luo, Cai, & Song, 2014). These results showed that the genetic and environmental effects on grandiosity and entitlement were largely different: less than 10% of genetic and environmental effect were accounted for by common genetic and environmental factors. The other twin study examined adaptive and maladaptive narcissism directly. Results revealed that both aspects were heritable, with more than half of their variation accounted for by unique environments (Cai et al., 2015); more importantly, the majority of the genes (54%) and environments (85%) underlying adaptive and maladaptive narcissism were different.² These two studies provide both direct and indirect evidence for the distinct genetic and environmental foundations of adaptive and maladaptive narcissism.

Conclusions, Implications, and Future Directions

To date, studies on grandiose narcissism have focused primarily on overall narcissism and relied on the NPI for analysis. In this chapter, we illustrated evidence indicating that grandiose narcissism actually includes two distinct components: adaptive and maladaptive narcissism. Based on the seven-factor model of the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988), research has established that while exhibitionism, entitlement, and exploitativeness are maladaptive, authority and self-sufficiency are adaptive (with superiority and vanity being neither adaptive nor maladaptive). Adaptive and maladaptive narcissism differ from each other in terms of how they correlate with other personality traits, inter- and intrapersonal adaptations, problem behaviors, developmental trajectories, and genetic and environmental foundations. People with high maladaptive narcissism are more likely to score higher in neuroticism, actual-ideal discrepancies, depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsive buying, and delinquency but lower in empathy

¹This result is based on a reanalysis of Cai et al. (2012).

²This result is based on a reanalysis of the data in Cai et al. (2015).

and self-esteem. In contrast, people with high adaptive narcissism are more likely to manifest the opposite tendencies for almost every one of these traits and proclivities. Moreover, maladaptive narcissism declines with age, whereas adaptive narcissism does not. Particularly notable, adaptive and maladaptive narcissism differ substantially in their genetic and environmental bases. These findings provide convergent and consistent evidence for the distinctiveness between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism as well as the double-edged sword nature of grandiose narcissism.

Distinguishing between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism may help us better understand the complexity of grandiose narcissism as well as other relevant findings. First, we may gain a more nuanced understanding about grandiose narcissism and grandiose narcissists. People with extremely high grandiose narcissism must be high in both adaptive and maladaptive facets, that is, attractive but toxic; people with moderate narcissism may be high in either facet or moderate in both facets, that is, proud but not too annoying, annoying but not too proud, or somewhat proud and somewhat annoying; a low narcissist should be low in both facets, thus behaving in a modest and agreeable manner. These possibilities suggest that narcissists with similar scores on the NPI still may be quite different from each other. Second, we may have a better understanding about the mixed nature of the NPI and further its ambiguous correlations with many other constructs. Although the NPI's latent factor structure is still inconclusive, as the chief measure of narcissism (although see Chap. 12 by Foster et al., this volume, for a review of additional measures of grandiose narcissism), two functionally distinct components emerge: adaptive and maladaptive. These two components may have correlations with other variables differing in magnitude (e.g., correlations with impulsive buying, Cai et al., 2015) or direction (e.g., correlations with neuroticism Ackerman et al., 2011; Corry et al., 2008). As a result, correlations based on the total score of the NPI are possibly confounded and may be misleading at times. These possibilities suggest that we

should be cautious whenever we use the total score of the NPI as an index of grandiose narcissism and examining its relationship with other variables.

Evidence for the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism also suggests future directions for both empirical research and intervention practice. First, most studies on narcissism so far treat it as a singular construct. Given the distinct nature of adaptive and maladaptive narcissism, studies distinguishing between them are needed, particularly in cases where different results are expected to exist. For instance, research has suggested several contrasting self-regulation strategies employed by narcissists, including inter- versus intrapersonal processes (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), admiration versus rivalry approaches (Back et al., 2013), and primitive versus mature strategies (Roche, Pincus, Lukowitsky, Menard, & Conroy, 2013). Future study may examine how adaptive and maladaptive narcissism are differentially associated with these self-regulation strategies. Second, since current conceptualizations and operationalizations of adaptive and maladaptive narcissism are based almost exclusively on reformulations of the NPI, future studies should develop purpose-built measures of these two forms of narcissism. Third, since the dark side of narcissism mainly involves its maladaptive component, future intervention practices should treat adaptive and maladaptive narcissism independently and focus on how to curtail the maladaptive aspect while perhaps leaving the adaptive aspect intact (e.g., Hepper et al., 2014).

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Abstract

Whereas most past research has investigated narcissism as a stable tendency to be grandiose, self-focused, and vain, people's narcissistic tendencies may wax and wane across different situations. Here, we examine how narcissism may function as a personality process or state. That is, people display fluctuations in state narcissism that vary around their more chronic, dispositional levels of narcissism. We begin by reviewing relevant theoretical models of narcissism and recent empirical research examining state narcissism, and then discuss similarities and differences between trait and state narcissism. Last, we discuss future research needed to better understand the within-person variability in people's narcissistic tendencies.

Keywords

Grandiosity · State measures of personality · State self-esteem · Stress · Well-being

Personality is often conceptualized in terms of stable traits—general tendencies to act and behave in particular ways. But advances in personality psychology have expanded how we view personality (e.g., Baird, Le, & Lucas, 2006; Cervone & Shoda, 1999; Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015; Fleeson, 2001; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). People may have broad personality traits (e.g., extraversion, agreeableness) that guide behavior, but people do not behave in the same way across all situations. They behave differently across time or different contexts. When surrounded by a large group of friends, one might behave in an outgoing and extraverted way; when hanging out with a few close friends, the same person may behave in a more reserved and quiet manner. To account for both general tendencies in behavior and variation across time and situations, Fleeson (2001, 2007) introduced the density distribution model of personality, which suggests that people possess mean levels of personality (i.e., traits) that their behavior fluctuates around (i.e., personality states). Personality, in this view, is composed of multiple personality states over time, in an individualized normal distribution. People possess both a characteristic mean level of a personality trait and characteristic variance in its expression over time.

In our research, we have investigated whether grandiose narcissism functions as both a personality trait and a personality state. It is important to note that we focus primarily on subclinical

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grandiose narcissism as assessed by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), as opposed to pathological narcissism or narcissistic personality disorder. Some of our findings, however (as we will discuss later), may have implications for conceptualizing pathological narcissism as well. Researchers have commonly considered grandiose narcissism (the tendency to be egotistical, self-focused, and vain) to be a stable personality trait, such that each individual has a certain characteristic level of narcissism. The majority of research on narcissism in social and personality psychology has examined dispositional levels of narcissism measured at a particular point in time. In this way, researchers have examined how trait narcissism relates to a variety of psychological processes, other traits, or behaviors. People high in trait grandiose narcissism, for example, tend to be more achievement oriented, feel superior to others, have a strong desire to be famous, and have relatively little concern for other people (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2007; Maltby, 2010; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012; Watson & Morris, 1991).

Although narcissism is stable, people may vary in the extent to which they behave narcissistically over time. After winning a prestigious award, one may feel acutely entitled or superior to others, self-focused, even vain. Other times, the same person may behave more selflessly, giving up their seat on a busy train. People's behavior and self-views can fluctuate. These within-person fluctuations in narcissistic tendencies may reflect *state* narcissism. We define state narcissism as the moment-to-moment variation in people's narcissistic tendencies.

Why might narcissism vary over time within an individual? Some theoretical models of narcissism view narcissism as a dynamic self-regulatory system (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In this view, narcissism consists of a number of attributes, emotions, intra- and interpersonal strategies, goals, and behaviors that are mutually reinforcing. They are connected to each other through feedback loops, such that increases in one element of the system may instigate increases in other elements, effectively making the narcissistic system more active

(Foster & Brennan, 2011). Conversely, if an element of the system is reduced or becomes less active, it may lead the narcissistic system to be downregulated. Receiving an award, for example, may lead people to feel more self-focused and superior, which may lead to self-promotion via social media (e.g., posting photographs, tweeting), attracting increased attention and admiration, in turn enhancing and reinforcing grandiose self-views. In this way, narcissism may wax and wane within the individual at different times.

Here, we begin by reviewing our recent empirical research examining state narcissism, and then discuss similarities and differences between trait and state narcissism. Given the relative infancy of research on personality states, especially state narcissism, we also address important future research directions.

Recent Advances

As noted earlier, the majority of past research on narcissism has focused on trait narcissism or how people's mean levels of narcissism influence behavior. But some recent research has begun to examine state narcissism empirically. This research asks the question: Does narcissism function, in part, as a personality process? To begin examining this question, we first wanted to assess whether and to what extent people's narcissism changes across time, deviating from their trait levels of narcissism. In two studies, we were able to quantify the degree of within-person variability in narcissism (Giacomini & Jordan, 2016a, 2016b).

In two daily diary studies, we had undergraduate students complete a series of questionnaires for 10 or 14 days. In each study, participants began by completing the NPI-16 (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006), which measures subclinical grandiose narcissism. For the NPI-16, participants respond to 16 forced-choice questions, by choosing one of two options. For each item, one option is more narcissistic than the other (e.g., "I insist on getting the respect I am due" is more narcissistic than "I usually get the respect I

deserve”). For their daily assessments, participants responded according to how they felt “right now,” in the current moment.

In addition, students answered a series of questions about their daily events, stress, mood, and life satisfaction. In one study, participants completed a daily events checklist for which they indicated whether a certain event occurred each day (e.g., received an award, volunteered, donated to a cause, had a positive social interaction), and they reported how stressed out they felt (e.g., “How stressed out or anxious were you in the last 24 hours?”). In a second study, participants reported their daily positive (e.g., excited, satisfied) and negative affect (e.g., hostile, distressed; Watson et al., 1988) and indicated how satisfied they were with their lives (e.g., “Today I felt my life was close to ideal”; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). In both studies, we included measures of trait (Rosenberg, 1965) and state self-esteem (“I have high self-esteem”; Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001).

Across both studies, we did observe a significant, though modest, amount (24–26%) of within-person variability in narcissism. Rather than simply select the same responses on the NPI-16 each day, participants varied in which options they identified with most. These findings suggest that narcissism does fluctuate across contexts or situations to some extent. Although people do vary in their narcissism across time, the majority of variation in daily reports of narcissism occurred between persons suggesting that narcissism does have a significant stable component. The Big Five personality traits, in comparison, display considerably more within-person variation (50–70%) than between-person variation (Church et al., 2013; Fleeson, 2001, 2007; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002). People are thus more likely to fluctuate, or fluctuate to a greater extent, in their extroversion or agreeableness than their narcissism.

Importantly, we also found that within-person variability in narcissism is systematic, rather than simply being random measurement error. We found that within-person variability in state narcissism was associated with the daily events par-

ticipants experienced, their daily self-esteem, mood, and life satisfaction, in theoretically meaningful ways. For example, on days when people received an award or gained some sort of recognition, and on days when people had a positive social interaction, they reported higher levels of state narcissism. On days when people reported greater stress and anxiety, they reported lower state narcissism. In addition, we found that people reported higher state narcissism on days when they reported more positive affect, more hostility, and were more satisfied with their lives. This occurred controlling for both trait and state self-esteem. Together, our findings suggest that narcissism fluctuates across time and contexts, particularly when people experience events that set them apart from other people (like winning awards or recognition) or experience greater subjective well-being (e.g., more positive affect and life satisfaction, less stress).

Some researchers have also begun to use reports of state narcissism to examine factors that may causally affect narcissism. That is, using experimental designs, some researchers have begun examining state narcissism as a dependent variable. For example, we have found that making people feel more communal toward others reduces state narcissism compared to making them feel more agentic, controlling for trait levels of narcissism (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014; see Giacomin & Jordan, this volume). Other researchers have found that people display higher state narcissism after increased social media use (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012, Study 1; Horton, Reid, Barber, Miracle & Green, 2014), or after being primed with positive traits (e.g., beautiful, smart) or thinking about a time when they impressed others (Sakellaropoulou & Baldwin, 2007). Having participants imagine being a Prince or Princess increased state narcissism, which led to increased anger and aggression after an unexpected provocation (Li et al., 2015). A variety of factors thus appear to causally affect state narcissism. These studies may give insight into the factors that contribute to and maintain more chronic narcissistic tendencies.

Taken together, this research suggests that narcissism fluctuates across time and contexts.

Narcissism can function as a personality process; people display degrees of state narcissism that vary around their more chronic, dispositional levels of narcissism.

changes in state self-esteem. Thus, state and trait narcissism may both predict well-being, but this relation may be due to self-esteem only in the case of trait narcissism.

Differentiating Trait and State Narcissism

How does trait narcissism differ from state narcissism? Given the relative infancy of research on state narcissism, more research is needed to delineate how trait and state narcissism differ from each other. We do know, however, that trait narcissism is strongly correlated with mean levels of daily, state narcissism ($r = 0.79$ in both studies; Giacomini & Jordan, 2016a, 2016b), suggesting that trait narcissism may truly represent average levels of state narcissism over time. Furthermore, when examining how daily fluctuations in state narcissism relate to other psychological states or outcomes, we have controlled trait narcissism. Our findings suggest that people do experience meaningful fluctuations in narcissism beyond their typical trait levels. In addition, none of our findings so far depend on participants' trait levels of narcissism. That is, in none of our studies did trait narcissism moderate our findings. Those high in trait narcissism do not necessarily display greater fluctuations in state narcissism across contexts compared to those who are low in trait narcissism. This is important because it suggests that all individuals vary in the extent to which they display narcissism across time.

Though trait and state narcissism are highly correlated, it is important to determine when they predict different outcomes. The relation of trait narcissism to psychological well-being appears to be entirely mediated by self-esteem (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). In contrast, we found that daily state narcissism predicts greater daily well-being, more positive affect, and higher life satisfaction, even when controlling trait narcissism and state self-esteem (Giacomini & Jordan, 2016b). This pattern of results suggests that state narcissism relates to daily well-being, but this relation is not due to

Future Directions

Given the relative infancy of research investigating narcissism as a personality state, there are many potential avenues for future research. Our research points to some differences between state and trait narcissism, as well as similarities. It may be useful in future research to further seek situations in which state and trait narcissism predict different outcomes. One possibility might be to examine social media behavior. Trait narcissism may predict trends in general posting behavior on social media, but state narcissism may be a better predictor of specific reactions that people enact online in response to other people's posts.

Measurement Issues From a measurement perspective, it may be important to further examine when mean state narcissism (i.e., the average across daily assessments of narcissism) is a more accurate assessment of trait narcissism than trait measures such as the standard NPI. Whole-trait theory suggests that repeated measurements of a person's personality states may provide a superior assessment of people's trait level of that personality dimension (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015). Recent research, however, suggests that state self-reports may contain more self-bias, and that average state self-reports do not predict informant reports independently of global, trait self-reports of personality (Finnigan & Vazire, 2017). Applying this approach to examine trait and state narcissism may be useful. Do people's daily reports of narcissism align with global self-reports and informant reports of trait narcissism?

In addition, in our studies, participants reported their narcissism once a day around the same time. Experience sampling methods, for which people complete assessments of their narcissism several times, randomly throughout the day, could provide a more nuanced approach to examining how much people's narcissism varies

daily. In particular, using the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR; Mehl, Pennebaker, Crow, Dabbs, & Price, 2001), an electronic device that unobtrusively records 30 s sound clips multiple times over multiple days, could provide more descriptive information about an individuals' social surroundings. It is possible to qualitatively code the recorded content to understand the situations under which people are behaving narcissistically (e.g., Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010). The EAR could provide more objective records of participants' verbal behavior, which could help develop insights into their narcissism in the moment. Moreover, such research can help parse out how narcissism occurs in day-to-day occurrences, across situations and contexts. Lastly, this approach can help alleviate an additional limitation of our research examining state narcissism: an overreliance on self-report assessments. We do not know how accurately individuals report their daily behavior, mood, or narcissistic tendencies. It may therefore be beneficial to adopt different methodologies, such as the EAR, to capture within-person variations in narcissism.

An additional issue concerns how to measure state changes in narcissism. In our research to date, we have used the NPI-16, the Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS; Konrath, Meier, & Bushman, 2014), and an adjective rating measure of narcissism that is similar to how Big Five personality states are typically measured. Each measurement scale displays roughly the same degree of within-person variability in daily narcissism (see Giacomini & Jordan, 2016b). There were, however, differences in how state narcissism relates to daily affect depending on whether the measure assessed only grandiose (i.e., NPI-16) or also vulnerable aspects of narcissism (i.e., narcissism adjectives, SINS). These findings suggest that both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism may have state components, a possibility that could be studied further. Vulnerable narcissism is more closely related to neuroticism, low self-esteem, and poor psychological health than grandiose narcissism. Researchers should carefully consider the form of narcissism they wish to assess over time and recognize that different

forms of state narcissism may relate to different experiences across time and contexts.

Context What contexts encourage narcissism? What contexts might reduce it? We have found that increasing people's communal orientation reduces state narcissism, so cooperative contexts may suppress narcissistic tendencies. In contrast, competitive contexts may encourage narcissism. Do people realize that they vary in their narcissistic tendencies across contexts? Do they anticipate that being narcissistic in particular situations will benefit them? These questions warrant further research. More research could explore which aspects of situations enhance or diminish narcissistic tendencies, examining how state narcissism relates to the situations people experience the previous, same, or next day. Adopting a cross-role or cross-context approach may provide a more nuanced understanding of when people are likely to behave more or less narcissistically, by examining people's narcissistic tendencies across a set of preselected, theoretically meaningful social roles or contexts (Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007). That is, do people act more or less narcissistically when they are at home caring for children than when they are managing a company? Aggregating assessments of state narcissism within particular contexts (e.g., home, work) or within the roles people fulfill (e.g., parent, company manager) may help develop greater understanding of when and where people behave narcissistically. Combining person information (e.g., trait and state personality) and respective context (e.g., situational information, roles, environment) by using the Within and Across Context (WAC) Variability framework (Geukes, Nestler, Hutteman, Kufner, & Back, 2016) may also tease apart different types of within-person variability (i.e., within-context and cross-context), their trait associations, and the processes that may underlie these associations.

Conclusion How people behave often depends on the situations they experience. Though everyone has general personality tendencies or dispositions (e.g., being more or less entitled or

helpful), people's behavior, or personality states, can shift substantially across situations and contexts. People may shift from acting more self-focused and egotistical to kinder and agreeable over the course of a day. Whereas past research has conceptualized narcissists' tendency to be grandiose, self-focused, and vain as a stable part of who they are, our research focuses on how people's narcissistic tendencies fluctuate across time and situations (Giacomini & Jordan, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Given the relative infancy of research on state narcissism, more research is needed to understand the within-person variability in people's narcissistic tendencies within the same context or across similar situations. By better understanding when and how these fluctuations in state narcissism occur, we may develop a better understanding of the underlying nature of narcissism.

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Part II

Assessment of Narcissism



The Many Measures of Grandiose Narcissism

12

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of measures available to researchers who study grandiose narcissism (GN). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of some of the more popular measures of GN. Some of these measures attempt to capture GN as a single dimension, some as a multidimensional construct, and some tap into GN along with other related traits, such as vulnerable narcissism and psychopathy. Finally, some measures may be thought of as “special interest” measures that capture variants of GN, such as communal narcissism, as well as GN in special populations, such as children and adolescents. Although not intended to provide a fully exhaustive review of GN measures, this chapter should provide readers an idea about what is available in terms of GN measurement and best practices for assessing GN in the research context. In particular, researchers are encouraged to use multiple measures of GN whenever possible and employ statistical tech-

niques that take advantage of psychometric diversity, such as structural equation modeling.

Keywords

Narcissism · Scale · Measurement · Dark triad · Vulnerable narcissism · Grandiose narcissism · Collective narcissism · Communal narcissism

The term “narcissism” has ancient origins (Bulfinch, 1913) and the psychological study of narcissism dates back more than a century (Freud, 1914). Attempts to objectively measure narcissism in individuals go back nearly as long. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we will treat the publication of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) as marking the beginning of the modern era of grandiose narcissism (GN) measurement. Since 1979, a slew of reformulated NPIs have been published in addition to at least five original measures of GN. These measures will be the primary focus of this chapter. This chapter will also review measures that capture GN in addition to related traits, such as vulnerable narcissism and “Dark Triad” traits of psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Finally, we will briefly review several measures that tap GN in special populations (e.g., children and adolescents) and variant expressions of GN (e.g., communal narcissism).

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The Narcissistic Personality Inventory

The most widely used measure of GN, the NPI, was introduced in 1979 by Robert Raskin and Calvin Hall in an article published in *Psychological Reports*. This publication and an influential reformulation of the NPI published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* by Raskin and Terry (1988) have since been cited over 3500 times in the literature, more than any other GN measurement paper. The development of the NPI corresponded with the inclusion of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) into the DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980) and was designed to measure NPD-like characteristics found in the general (non-disordered) population. The NPI was not specifically designed to measure GN. However, in part because the DSM-III description of NPI was heavily laden with grandiose content, most NPI items tap into characteristics associated with GN.

The original NPI contained 80 items (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Each item contains two self-descriptive statements: one narcissistically toned (e.g., “I like to be the center of attention”) and the other neutrally toned (e.g., “I prefer to blend in with the crowd.”). Respondents select the statement that best describes them. One point is given each time respondents select a narcissistic statement. The NPI has undergone numerous revisions. Most significantly, Raskin and Terry (1988) published a 40-item NPI that is currently the most widely used variant. Factor-analytic work by Raskin and Terry suggested the NPI’s 40 items could be sorted into seven factors (subscales) that tap into narcissism facets: authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, vanity, exhibitionism, entitlement, and exploitativeness. Replicating this seven-factor model, however, has proven to be difficult (Foster, McCain, Hibberts, Brunell, & Burke Johnson, 2015).

Many attempts have since been made to deduce a stable and reproducible NPI factor structure (Ackerman et al., 2011; Barelds &

Dijkstra, 2010; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Corry, Merritt, Mrug, & Pamp, 2008; Emmons, 1984; Kubarych, Deary, & Austin, 2004; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Svindseth et al., 2009). One problem that frequently arises from these proposed factor solutions is that they contain one or more factors that exhibit low internal consistency. For example, Ackerman et al.’s (2011) widely used three-factor model produces an “entitlement-exploitativeness” factor that possesses low internal consistency. To date, no proposed factor solution for the NPI has achieved full consensus acceptance by the research community.

The number of items contained in the NPI may prove too time-consuming for some study contexts. Several short-form NPIs exist for these circumstances. The first of these published was a 16-item NPI that produced an overall GN score (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). More recently, a 13-item NPI was introduced (Gentile et al., 2013) that produces an overall GN score plus three subscale scores that reflect Ackerman et al.’s (2011) three-factor model (i.e., leadership-authority, grandiose exhibitionism, entitlement-exploitativeness).

The NPI was the seminal measure of GN and continues to be the most widely used measure. Indeed, until recently, it would have been difficult to locate studies that measured GN with anything but the NPI. Of course, the NPI is not a perfect measure of GN. Some researchers have argued that it’s not even a very good measure (Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010; Rosenthal, Montoya, Ridings, Rieck, & Hooley 2011; Tamborski & Brown, 2011). Some of the criticisms of the NPI concern its unstable factor structure, low subscale reliability, and questionable content coverage (e.g., overemphasizing leadership/authority). While not everyone agrees that the NPI is a poor measure (Miller & Campbell, 2011; Miller, Maples, & Campbell, 2011; Miller, Price, & Campbell, 2012), there is general consensus that the field would benefit from additional measures of GN. Fortunately, recent years have seen a spate of new GN measures, a selection of which is reviewed next.

Measures that Capture GN Exclusively

Each of the measures reviewed in this section was designed specifically and exclusively to measure GN. These measures serve as alternatives to or complements of the NPI. The first two of these measures—the similarly named Grandiose Narcissism Scale and Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale—were designed to address specific psychometric limitations of the NPI. The third measure, the Single-Item Narcissism Scale, was designed to offer researchers a short-as-possible measure of GN to be included in studies where time is most severely limited. The last measure reviewed in this section, the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire, is based on the theoretical premise that grandiose narcissists are motivated to maintain a grandiose self-concept through the use of self-promotion (admiration) and self-defense (rivalry).

Grandiose Narcissism and Narcissistic Grandiosity Scales

The Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS; Foster et al., 2015) was designed to measure GN based on Raskin and Terry's (1988) seven-factor model described earlier. Whereas Raskin and Terry (1988) wrote NPI items to tap into narcissistic personality in general and only later (post-hoc) extracted seven underlying factors, Foster et al. (2015) wrote GNS items with the specific intent of tapping into these seven factors (e.g., "I'm better than other people at most things" was written specifically to tap into the superiority factor). Presumably, this method would produce items that more reliably sorted into the seven factors and exhibit a stable factor structure. Early psychometric testing suggests the GNS contains a reproducible seven-factor structure and that each factor's corresponding subscale of items—each subscale contains four (superiority, entitlement) or five items (authority, self-sufficiency, vanity, exhibitionism, exploitativeness) for a total of 33 items—exhibits acceptable levels of internal con-

sistency. One potential benefit of using the GNS is that it produces reliable full-scale and subscale scores and thus permits examination of GN at both global and facet levels.

Whereas the GNS sought to reliably measure GN as a multifaceted construct, the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (NGS; Rosenthal, Hooley, & Steshenka, 2011) sought to measure GN as a singular construct. The developers of the NGS thought the complexity of NPI item content was harming its validity as a measure of GN. To address this, they created a set of items that could assess GN as a single-factor construct that specifically tapped into "grandiosity." The original NGS (Rosenthal, Hooley, et al., 2011) contained 16 adjectives that reflected grandiosity (e.g., "powerful," "prestigious"). Participants rated themselves in terms of how well each adjective described them (1 = not at all, 9 = extremely). A subsequent study reduced the number of items to 13 and then again to 6 without much loss of reliability or validity (Crowe, Carter, Campbell, & Miller, 2016). The six-item version may be useful for situations where participant time constraints are particularly severe.

Single-Item Narcissism Scale

Several of the measures discussed thus far have short-form variants. The Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS; Konrath, Meier, Bushman, Conroy, & Jayne, 2014) represents the most extreme version of this. The SINS measures narcissism by having participants respond to the item, "I am a narcissist (Note: The word 'Narcissist' means egotistical, self-focused, and vain)," using a one (not very true of me) to seven (very true of me) scale. Scores on the SINS correlate positively with the NPI, suggesting it is tapping GN. However, at least one study has shown that scores on it tend to correlate weakly and sometimes even negatively with measures of self-esteem (Van Der Linden & Rosenthal, 2016), suggesting possible validity issues. The general consensus appears to be that the SINS, although not possessing the psychometric strengths of longer measures, may be useful

when time and space are most severely limited, such as in very large-scale research projects, like the World Values Survey (www.worldvalues-survey.org), where room for a single item may be all that is available.

Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013) is based on a theoretical model that proposes the fundamental goal associated with GN is to maintain a grandiose self-concept. The strategies that grandiose narcissists use to achieve this goal are called assertive self-enhancement (narcissistic admiration) and antagonistic self-protection (narcissistic rivalry). Specific behavioral dynamics that underlie narcissistic admiration include striving for uniqueness, charmingness, and grandiose fantasizing. In contrast, behavioral dynamics underlying narcissistic rivalry include devaluing others, aggression, and striving for supremacy. If successfully implemented, narcissistic admiration facilitates ego boosts, whereas narcissistic rivalry mitigates ego threats.

The NARQ comes in two versions. The original version contains 18 items (e.g., “Mostly, I am very adept at dealing with other people.”) that participants respond to using a six-point scale (1 = not agree at all, 6 = agree completely). Each of the six behavioral dynamics (e.g., charmingness) is measured with three NARQ items. Thus, the two broad strategies, admiration and rivalry, are measured with nine items each. A short-form of the NARQ containing six items total (one item per behavior dynamic) was recently developed (Leckelt et al., 2017). Obviously, the usefulness of the NARQ as a measure of GN depends on the validity of the theory on which it is based. Although work remains to be done, there is growing evidence that the theory provides a useful organizing framework for GN. For example, a Google Scholar search of “Narcissism Admiration and Rivalry” (quotes included) turned up more than 150 citations, suggesting that the theory is being discussed frequently in the literature.

Measures That Capture GN in Addition to Other Traits

There is growing interest in developing measures that capture GN as well as other related traits in the same scale. This section covers three of these measures. The first measure, the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory, was designed to capture both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.¹ The next two measures, the Dirty Dozen Inventory and the Short Dark Triad Scale, assess the Dark Triad of personality (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), which includes GN in addition to psychopathy and Machiavellianism.

Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory

The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI; Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012) is a measure of narcissism based on the five-factor model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987). The FFNI is the most comprehensive measure of narcissism reviewed in this chapter. It captures traits associated with Narcissistic Personality Disorder as well as grandiose and vulnerable forms of subclinical narcissism. The FFNI is also the longest measure reviewed in this chapter. The original version of the FFNI contains 148 items (Glover et al., 2012). A newer short-form version comes in at 60 items (Sherman et al., 2015). Each item consists of a statement (e.g., “I deserve only the best of everything.”) that participants respond to using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Regardless of version, the FFNI produces a total narcissism score, a GN score, a vulnerable narcissism score, and 15 separate facet-level scores. Facets captured by the FFNI are acclaim-

¹The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009) also purports to measure grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Although the PNI has proven to be a useful measure in many respects, the validity of its GN factor has come into question (Miller et al., 2014; Miller, Lynam, & Campbell, 2016a, 2016b). Because this chapter is going to be of most interest to researchers who study GN, we decided to exclude the PNI from this review.

seeking, arrogance, authoritativeness, distrust, entitlement, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, grandiose fantasies, indifference, lack of empathy, manipulativeness, need for admiration, reactive to anger, shame, and thrill-seeking. GN is computed by summing indifference, exhibitionism, authoritativeness, grandiose fantasies, manipulativeness, exploitativeness, entitlement, lack of empathy, arrogance, acclaim-seeking, and thrill-seeking. Vulnerable narcissism is computed by summing reactive anger, shame, need for admiration, and distrust.

Comparison of the FFNI, NARQ, GNS, and NPI

The FFNI, NARQ, GNS, and NPI all attempt to measure GN as a multidimensional construct. The GNS's primary offering is that it reliably measures factors found in the most widely used version of the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Researchers who use the NPI and would like to implement facet-level examinations into their research may find the GNS appealing. The FFNI overlaps to some degree, in terms of content coverage, with the GNS (e.g., both measure authoritativeness, entitlement, exhibitionism, and exploitativeness). However, the FFNI provides additional content coverage of GN facets (e.g., grandiose fantasies, lack of empathy) as well as coverage of vulnerable narcissism. The choice between the FFNI and GNS may come down to (1) how appealing Raskin and Terry's (1988) NPI factor structure is and (2) how important the additional content coverage provided by the FFNI is. As noted earlier, the NARQ is based on a new model of GN. Whereas the NPI, GNS, and FFNI all conceptualize GN as a collection of interrelated traits, the NARQ conceptualizes narcissism in terms of goal-oriented behavior dynamics. Researchers who prefer dynamic theories of GN may be especially fond of the NARQ, while those who prefer trait theories of GN may show deference for one or more of the other three measures (as well as the NGS and SINS). More generally, however, as will be discussed in detail at the end of this

chapter, we believe that choosing a single measure of GN is usually unnecessary and unwise. Rather, we recommend that researchers employ a battery of GN measures in their research whenever possible.

The Dirty Dozen Inventory and Short Dark Triad Scale

There is a growing body of research that examines what is commonly referred to as the Dark Triad of personality (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). The Dark Triad consists of three interrelated "dark" personality traits: GN, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Although there are measures that tap each of these traits individually, there are at least two measures that attempt to assess them collectively. These measures may be especially useful when researchers wish to measure the entire Dark Triad, but do not have time or space to administer separate individual measures.

The Dirty Dozen Inventory (DDI; Jonason & Webster, 2010) and the Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) are the two most widely used measures of Dark Triad personality traits. Both measures contain items that tap into narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Prior to the development of these measures, researchers who were interested in capturing the entire Dark Triad of personality were forced to use at least three separate measures, which in some cases could prove impractical. The DDI and SD3 have been used in numerous studies and both appear to do a reasonable job of capturing the Dark Triad traits, including GN. However, there appears to be a trade-off between length and validity. At least one study suggests that the SD3 exhibits stronger validity than the DDI, especially with regard to GN (Maples, Lamkin, & Miller, 2014). Nevertheless, the DDI may prove useful when time and space limitations are especially severe. In contrast, when time and space are less constrained, researchers may be better served by using the SD3 or full-scale measures of each Dark Triad trait.

Special Interest Measures of GN

We conclude this chapter by noting the emerging trend of measuring GN in special populations as well as variant forms and expressions of the trait. All the measures described above are suitable for use in adult populations. Nevertheless, GN can be expressed in children and adolescents. Researchers interested in measuring GN in young people have at least two options, including the Childhood Narcissism Scale (Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008) and a version of the NPI designed to be used with children (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003).

In a related vein, researchers interested in exploring the developmental roots of GN may find the Add Health Narcissism Scale (AHNS; Davis & Brunell, 2012) useful. The AHNS is a measure of GN created using variables within Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Harris, 2009). Participants were 18–26 years old during this third wave of the study, and, thus, GN was assessed when they were young adults. The first wave of the study took place when they were in grades 7–12 and the final wave took place when they were 24–32 years old. Therefore, the AHNS may be particularly useful for researchers interested in understanding early developmental predictors of GN in addition to what GN prospectively predicts years down the road.

Finally, two interesting variant expressions of GN have been recently proposed with accompanying measures. A hallmark feature of GN is unmitigated agency (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Grandiose narcissists prefer to think of themselves as bigger, better, and more powerful than others. When it comes to communal domains, such as compassion and giving, they see themselves as average or below average and they do not seem to care much about it. Communal narcissists, however, are individuals who express their grandiosity in communal ways. The Communal Narcissism Inventory (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012; Gebauer & Sedikides, this volume) measures communal narcissism by measuring the level of agreement to statements, such as, “I am the most helpful person I know” and “I will be famous for increas-

ing people’s well-being”. Collective narcissism, on the other hand, describes individuals who possess narcissistic thoughts and attitudes pertaining to their in-groups. The Collective Narcissism Scale (de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009; de Zavala, this volume) is a nine-item measure of collective narcissism that measures respondents’ agreement to statements, such as “I will never be satisfied until my group gets the recognition it deserves” and “It really makes me angry when others criticize my group.” Notably, respondents are asked to think about a specific group, such as their nationality when responding to these items.

Recommendations for Measuring GN

The good news is that GN researchers have plenty of measures to choose from. The problem is that GN researchers have plenty of measures to choose from. A risk to researchers is that they may select a measure that does not meet their needs or does not satisfy the requirements of journal reviewers or editors. A risk to the field is that GN, being a construct that is at least partially defined by how it’s measured, becomes a personality trait with no coherent definition. Although every measure of GN reviewed in this chapter likely correlates positively with one another, the correlations are far from perfect and suggest significant discrepancy across measures. Thus, our primary recommendation is that researchers use more than one measure of GN. In some contexts, this might not be possible, but most research that focuses on GN can probably afford to use multiple measures of the construct. There are many benefits to this approach.

First, it prevents the construct of narcissism from being defined by a single measure. Several years ago, one of us (JDF) gave a talk at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. At the conclusion, one of the audience members asked a seemingly straightforward question: “What is narcissism?” To this, the author responded with tongue slightly in cheek, “The NPI.” At the time, this answer was arguably correct. The NPI was almost always the only measure

of GN included in empirical studies and had become the de facto definition of GN. Today, there is really no excuse for this as there are multiple well-validated and freely available measures of GN.

Second, the use of three or more measures of GN permits the use of powerful latent-variable modeling techniques, such as structural equation modeling (SEM). None of the measures reviewed in this chapter correlate even close to perfectly with each other. Some of this inconsistency may stem from important theoretical differences across measures. For example, the NGS captures grandiosity exclusively, whereas the NARQ captures grandiosity as well as behaviors related to self-defense (e.g., aggression). However, it is also likely that some of the mismatch between GN measures stems from measurement error (e.g., differing wording of items, response scales, and specific content coverage). One of the great strengths of SEM is that it allows for measurement error to be isolated and purged from statistical models, resulting in less confounded theoretical tests. We think research on GN would be improved dramatically by the use of more sophisticated analytical methods, such as SEM, which often require multiple measures of constructs.

Finally, if researchers use more than one measure of GN, they will be able to better understand how the measures differ from one another. Of course, some psychometric studies focus on these sorts of comparisons directly. However, these comparisons need not be limited to psychometric studies. Theory-testing studies that employ multiple measures of GN can be valuable sources of information regarding similarities and differences between measures of GN.

Conclusion

There is a wealth of measures of GN. Several focus on GN as a unidimensional construct, whereas others treat GN as a multidimensional construct. Some measures capture GN in addition to other related traits, whereas others tap into distinct variants of GN. Some measures are quite

comprehensive and lengthy, whereas others are more specific and short. It's hard to imagine a GN researcher who couldn't find an appropriate measure in this age. Of course, the sheer number of measures available can be confusing, even to seasoned GN researchers. Our hope is that this chapter will make the decision process a little clearer and a little easier. And remember, if you cannot decide which measure to use, it's almost always appropriate to use more than one!

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Psychometric Properties of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory

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Abstract

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) is one of the most widely used measures of trait expressions of narcissism in social/personality psychology. This chapter provides an overview of the psychometric properties of the NPI. We first describe the results of various dimensional analyses of the NPI and note the tendency for most solutions to distinguish the social potency content (i.e., items reflecting leadership/authority) from the more socially aversive content (e.g., items reflecting exhibitionism and entitlement). We next describe the reliability and validity evidence available for the NPI total score and its subscales, as well as the implications of the NPI's response format (e.g., forced-choice vs. Likert-type scale) for dimensionality, reliability, and validity. We end the chapter by discussing the content coverage of the NPI.

Keywords

Narcissistic Personality Inventory ·
Reliability · Validity · Factor structure ·
Forced-choice · Grandiose narcissism

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The third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III) introduced Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) as its own diagnostic entity in 1980. Primarily informed by the theoretical work of Kernberg, Kohut, and Millon, the diagnostic criteria for NPD in the DSM-III included descriptions of grandiose self-views and fantasies, exhibitionism, disproportionate responses (e.g., rage or feelings of inferiority) to criticism or other threats, entitlement, exploitativeness, lack of empathy, and overidealization or devaluation of others. Using the terminology of the Narcissism Spectrum Model (Krizan & Herlache, (2018), these diagnostic criteria primarily emphasized an entitled self-image and its grandiose expressions (i.e., self-enhancing behaviors driven by approach-related motivational tendencies); few of the DSM-III diagnostic criteria reflected vulnerable expressions (i.e., self-defensive behaviors driven by avoidance-related motivational tendencies).

Anticipating the inclusion of NPD in the upcoming DSM-III, Raskin and Hall (1979) developed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to measure trait expressions of narcissism in nonclinical populations. To accomplish this, Raskin and Hall (1979) used the NPD criteria to generate their initial set of 223 rationally keyed items. These items had a forced-choice response format, with one response designed to be “narcissistic” and the corresponding response designed

to be “non-narcissistic.” Using internal consistency approaches, these 223 items were winnowed down to 80 items that were used to create two forms of the instrument. Subsequent work by Raskin and colleagues winnowed the instrument down further into a 54-item version and eventually down to the 40-item version that is most widely used today (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

This chapter provides an overview of the psychometric properties of the NPI. We begin by discussing the dimensionality of the instrument and the various component/factor structures that have been proposed. We then provide reliability and validity evidence for the NPI total score as well as the NPI subscales. After this, we discuss the implications of the forced-choice response format for the instrument’s dimensionality, reliability, and validity. We conclude this chapter by considering how well the NPI assesses the spectrum of features associated with narcissism and what future directions research should take.

Dimensionality of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory

Although the items for the NPI were developed using the multifaceted criteria for NPD as a guide, formal investigations of the dimensional structure of the NPI did not appear in the literature until a few years after the measure was introduced by Raskin and Hall (1979). Using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with oblique rotation on the phi correlation matrix of the 54-item version of the NPI, Emmons (1984, 1987) initially identified a solution consisting of four dimensions: leadership/authority, superiority/arrogance, self-absorption/self-admiration, and exploitativeness/entitlement. This early work demonstrated that social potency (i.e., leadership/authority) was a prominent personality feature in the measure. Moreover, these analyses showed that the entitlement content (i.e., exploitativeness/entitlement) could be reasonably differentiated from the grandiose content (i.e., superiority/arrogance and self-absorption/self-admiration).

Guided by their beliefs that Emmons (1984, 1987) may have been too conservative in his extraction of components/factors and that analyses performed on the phi correlation matrix may have obfuscated the underlying dimensionality of the instrument, Raskin and Terry (1988) pursued their own independent investigation of the dimensional structure of the NPI. After eliminating seven items with poor properties from the 54-item version of the NPI, Raskin and Terry (1988) performed a PCA with oblique rotation on the tetrachoric correlation matrix of the remaining items and identified a seven-dimension solution that included authority, vanity, entitlement, exploitativeness, exhibitionism, self-sufficiency, and superiority. Raskin and Terry (1988) dropped seven more items from the scale due to their poor loadings, resulting in a 40-item version of the NPI. Like Emmons (1984, 1987), a prominent personality feature of social potency (i.e., authority) was captured in the analyses. In addition, the Raskin and Terry (1988) solution appeared to partition the remaining content into narrower dimensions.

It was not until more than a decade later that further structural analyses of the NPI were performed. In 2004, Kubarych, Deary, and Austin used a combination of EFA and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to provide evidence for a two- (power and exhibitionism) and three-factor (power, exhibitionism, and special person) solution. Interestingly, the power dimension uncovered by Kubarych et al. (2004) seemed to combine leadership/authority and entitlement content. Moreover, the exhibitionism and special person dimensions appeared to separate the attention seeking and superiority content. A few years later, Corry, Merritt, Mrug, and Pamp (2008) identified a two-factor solution to the NPI using EFA and CFA that consisted of leadership/authority and exhibitionism/entitlement. This solution thus differentiated the leadership/authority content from the other more socially aversive content in the inventory. Ackerman et al. (2011) subsequently identified a three-factor solution to the NPI that consisted of leadership/authority, grandiose exhibitionism, and entitlement/exploitativeness.

In sum, the dimensionality of the NPI has been an area of disagreement among researchers. Nevertheless, virtually all solutions yield a dimension with leadership and authority content. Moreover, the socially noxious (e.g., exhibitionism) and toxic (e.g., entitlement) content generally emerge as dimensions distinct from leadership and authority. Although Corry et al. (2008) kept this more socially aversive content together in a single dimension in their solution (i.e., the exhibitionism/entitlement dimension), Ackerman et al. (2011) found it desirable to bifurcate this dimension. More recent work on the conceptualization and measurement of narcissism also suggests that such a distinction between grandiosity (aka admiration or agentic extraversion) and entitlement (aka rivalry or antagonism) may be warranted (cf. Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2016; Krizan & Herlache, 2018).

Reliability and Validity Evidence for the NPI Total Score

Reliability Evidence The NPI total score generally exhibits high levels of reliability. Raskin and Hall (1981), for instance, showed a high level of alternative-form reliability ($r = .72$) between two 40-item versions of the NPI administered over an 8-week interval. Moreover, del Rosario and White (2005) demonstrated that the NPI total score has high test-retest reliability over the course of 13 weeks. The internal consistency values (i.e., alphas) observed with the NPI total score are also generally equal to or above 0.80 (see, e.g., Ackerman et al., 2011; del Rosario & White, 2005; Emmons, 1984, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010).

Validity Evidence Many studies have shown that the NPI total score is associated with alternative measures of narcissism and NPD (Back et al., 2013; Miller, Gaughan, Pryor, Kamen, & Campbell, 2009; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010; Rosenthal, Montoya, Ridings, Rieck, & Hooley,

2011). Broadly speaking, the NPI total score corresponds well to measures based on the DSM operationalization of NPD as well as those that emphasize narcissistic grandiosity and entitlement. In contrast, it generally correlates weakly with measures capturing narcissistic vulnerability (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell, Donnellan, Hopwood, & Ackerman, 2011).

Consistent with the DSM criteria, higher scores on the NPI total score are associated with self-enhancement (John & Robins, 1994) and self-serving biases (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Similarly, various lines of research show that the NPI total score is linked to an antagonistic interpersonal style. In addition to possessing lower levels of agreeableness (Ackerman et al., 2011; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), persons with higher NPI total scores also report greater levels of aggression (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 2011; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010) and hostility (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), as well as higher levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Ackerman et al., 2011).

Interestingly, higher scores on the NPI are also connected to greater levels of extraversion (a trait connected with interpersonal dominance and increased positive affect; Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Persons with higher scores on the NPI also report greater levels of self-esteem (Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984; Maxwell et al., 2011; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Rosenthal et al., 2011; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010), lower levels of neuroticism (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; but see Ackerman et al., 2011), and higher scores on various indices of psychological health (Rosenthal et al., 2011; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010). These findings suggest that the form of narcissism assessed by the NPI is linked to rather adaptive outcomes as well.

Reliability and Validity Evidence for the NPI Subscales

As noted previously, many different dimensional solutions to the NPI exist. Unfortunately, this means that reliability and validity evidence

exist for a wide variety of different NPI subscales. Rather than describing the reliability and validity evidence for each subscale from every dimensional solution, we simplify our presentation by focusing on those content areas that tend to cohere together across solutions: leadership/authority, exhibitionism, and entitlement/exploitativeness.

Reliability Evidence for the NPI Subscales

Subscales containing leadership/authority and exhibitionism content tend to display higher reliability values than subscales with entitlement or exploitativeness content. Whereas the leadership/authority subscale generally yields satisfactory levels of internal consistency ($\alpha > .65$; Ackerman et al., 2011; del Rosario & White, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988), subscales containing exhibitionism content generally yield somewhat lower levels of internal consistency ($\alpha \approx .60$ or higher; Ackerman et al., 2011; del Rosario & White, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988), and subscales with entitlement and/or exploitativeness content fare even worse (alphas $< .55$; Ackerman et al., 2011; del Rosario & White, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988). del Rosario and White (2005) further showed that whereas subscales containing leadership/authority or exhibitionism content display strong levels of test-retest reliability over the course of 13 weeks ($r > .75$), subscales with entitlement or exploitativeness content fare somewhat poorer ($r \leq .60$; see also Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013).

Validity Evidence for NPI Subscales with Leadership/Authority

Research shows that subscales containing leadership/authority content are modestly positively related to self-report measures of NPD (Maxwell et al., 2011). Nevertheless, they strongly correspond to experts' ratings of grandiose narcissism (Miller et al., 2014). Moreover, although such subscales are positively related to pathological narcissistic grandiosity (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011), they are virtually unrelated to

pathological narcissistic vulnerability (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011).

Persons scoring high on subscales containing leadership/authority content possess slightly lower levels of agreeableness (Ackerman et al., 2011; Corry et al., 2008; but see Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995) and higher levels of extraversion (Ackerman et al., 2011; Corry et al., 2008; Emmons, 1984; Miller et al., 2014). They are more bold (Ackerman et al., 2011), as well as dominant, assertive, and self-confident (Raskin & Terry, 1988). They also report lower levels of avoidance motivation and higher levels of approach motivation (Ackerman et al., 2011). In line with these more positive qualities, the subscale is also connected to increased self-esteem (Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984; Maxwell et al., 2011), decreased neuroticism (Emmons, 1984; Miller et al., 2014; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; but see Ackerman et al., 2011), and decreased distress (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995).

Validity Evidence for NPI Subscales with Exhibitionism

Much like the leadership/authority subscales, subscales with exhibitionism content are strongly positively related to experts' ratings of grandiose narcissism (Miller et al., 2014). They also moderately relate to greater levels of self-reported NPD (Maxwell et al., 2011) and pathological narcissistic grandiosity (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011); however, such subscales are not generally related to measures of vulnerability (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011).

Higher scores on subscales with exhibitionism content are linked to greater levels of extraversion (Ackerman et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2014; Raskin & Terry, 1988), self-esteem (Ackerman et al., 2011), and approach-related motivational tendencies (Ackerman et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988). However, such content is also linked to elevations in the other Dark Triad traits (i.e., psychopathy and Machiavellianism; Ackerman et al., 2011), as well as decreased agreeableness (Ackerman et al., 2011) and self-control (Ackerman et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Validity Evidence for NPI Subscales with Entitlement and Exploitativeness Research shows that subscales containing entitlement and exploitativeness content are moderately positively related to self-reports of NPD (Maxwell et al., 2011) and experts' ratings of grandiose narcissism (Miller et al., 2014), and modestly to moderately positively related to alternative measures of grandiose narcissism (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011; Rosenthal et al., 2011). In addition, they are strongly positively related to experts' ratings of vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2014) and moderately positively related to self-reports of pathological vulnerability (Ackerman et al., 2011; Maxwell et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, subscales with this content are also positively related to other measures of entitlement (Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013) and antagonism (Back et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2016).

In contrast to subscales containing leadership/authority or exhibitionism, subscales with entitlement or exploitativeness content are not typically related to extraversion (Ackerman et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2014). Entitlement subscales are also unrelated (and sometimes even negatively related) to measures of explicit self-esteem (Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984; Maxwell et al., 2011; Rosenthal et al., 2011). Furthermore, persons with higher scores on these subscales generally report increased negative affect (e.g., higher neuroticism; Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984; but see Miller et al., 2014). They are also particularly antagonistic. Indeed, in addition to being less agreeable (Ackerman et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2014; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995) and more hostile (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), they also possess higher levels of psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Ackerman et al., 2011).

Implications of Response Format for Dimensionality, Reliability, and Validity

Recent work has investigated whether the NPI's response format (e.g., forced-choice with pairs of responses vs. Likert-type rating scale with just the "narcissistic" response) has implications for

its psychometric properties. Although modifying the instrument's response format may seem inconsequential, doing so may actually alter how the items are understood and thus impact how well certain items cohere together. Consistent with this, some evidence suggests that response format (i.e., forced-choice vs. true/false responses to narcissistic responses vs. Likert-type rating scale responses to narcissistic responses) affects the factor structure of the NPI (Ackerman, Donnellan, Roberts, & Fraley, 2016). Although the same dimension of leadership/authority emerges across all formats, dimensions related to entitlement and superiority are not as robust (Ackerman et al., 2016; Wetzel, Roberts, Fraley, & Brown, 2016).

Generally speaking, switching from a forced-choice to Likert-type scale response format improves the internal consistency of the NPI subscales (Ackerman et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2018). Ackerman et al. (2016; see supplementary material on Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/npgf5/>) found that the actual differences in the alpha coefficients across formats ranged from modest (.06 for the NPI Grandiose Exhibitionism subscale from the Ackerman et al. (2011) solution) to quite substantial (.19 for the NPI Exploitativeness subscale from the Raskin and Terry (1988) solution), with an average difference of .11 ($SD = .03$). In addition, work by Grosz et al. (in press) used test information curves from item response theory analysis to show that the use of a Likert-type response scale results in NPI subscales that display higher measurement precision (i.e., increased reliability) across the range of the latent trait. Taken together, it seems that switching to a Likert-type response format does yield some benefits regarding reliability.

Last, research suggests that the NPI's correlations with other measures of narcissism and external variables differ slightly depending upon the response format, though these differences primarily involve magnitude. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both forced-choice and scale versions of the NPI correlate strongly with other measures of grandiose narcissism and entitlement and less strongly with measures of vulnerable narcissism

(Boldero, Bell, & Davies, 2015; Miller et al., 2018). The two formats also produce similar correlations with other personality traits such as agreeableness, extraversion, and honesty-humility (Miller et al., 2018). However, there is some evidence that the scale version of the NPI produces stronger correlations than the forced-choice version with traits such as sociability, leadership (Wetzel et al., 2016), and dominance (Miller et al., 2018).

Conclusions and Future Directions

The NPI is one of the most popular measures of narcissism within social/personality psychology (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). Nevertheless, the measure has an ambiguous factor structure (though some dimensions seem to be robust across solutions), and its subscales tend to suffer from lower internal consistency. Although some of these problems can be remedied by switching to an alternative response format, we believe that issues pertaining to content coverage are more difficult to address.

Given that its creators used the DSM-III criteria for NPD as a guide, items were primarily written to capture features related to entitlement and grandiosity. Nevertheless, factor analytic work has shown that the entitlement content on the inventory is limited (Ackerman et al., 2011). In addition, for unknown reasons, the instrument became saturated with leadership and authority content, content that was not present in the initial list of criteria for NPD (see Emmons, 1984; Rosenthal & Hooley, 2010). Although this content may be relevant for narcissism, we do not view it as core to the construct. Indeed, we believe that although beliefs and behaviors concerning leadership and authority may stem from grandiosity, they may also be present in the absence of grandiosity, which makes using such indicators less than desirable.

Consistent with Krizan and Herlache (2018), we believe that the NPI captures grandiose features rather well (along with other non-specific traits such as leadership/authority). Although entitlement is present, few items are available to

measure it precisely. Moreover, vulnerability is not really captured at all. Instead of developing shorter measures of the NPI (e.g., Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) or translating the measure into other languages (e.g. Braun, Kempnaers, Linkowski, & Loas, 2016; Kansu, 2003), we believe that researchers may be better served by adopting and refining newer measures (e.g., the Pathological Narcissism Inventory Pincus et al., 2009; the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012; the Narcissistic and Admiration Rivalry Questionnaire Back et al., 2013) that possess clearer conceptual foundations in addition to improved psychometric properties (for review of extant measures, see Foster et al., this volume). Should researchers continue to use the NPI, we recommend that they use its subscales given their increased conceptual clarity. In addition, if researchers hope to capture the entire spectrum of narcissism (Krizan & Herlache, 2018), we recommend that they supplement their research with alternative measures of entitlement and vulnerability.

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Using Homogenous Scales to Understand Narcissism: Grandiosity, Entitlement, and Exploitativeness

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Abstract

There may be times when researchers want to focus on specific narcissistic traits in their own right. In this chapter, we explore the facets of grandiosity, entitlement, and exploitativeness. It is not uncommon for these facets to be associated with different outcome variables. These outcome variables include mental health as well as immoral and unethical behaviors. Two advantages of examining specific traits are a more nuanced understanding of narcissism and the ability to examine the narcissistic traits that bridge grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

Keywords

Entitlement · Exploitativeness · Grandiosity · Psychological Entitlement Scale · Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale · Decision-making · Moral reasoning · Risk-taking behavior

The focus of the work in this handbook has been on grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, which are frequently assessed as unitary constructs rather than as multifaceted, even though scholars conceptualize narcissism as multifaceted (e.g., Raskin & Terry, 1988). However, there may be times when researchers want to focus on specific narcissistic traits. As Brown, Budzek, and Tamborski (2009) argue, using homogenous scales to study complex, multifaceted constructs can be useful in discriminating which facet of narcissism best predicts outcome variables (see also Crowe, Carter, Campbell, & Miller, 2016; Smith, McCarthy, & Zapolski, 2009). For example, it may be useful to know when a behavior is associated with the darker aspects of narcissism, such as entitlement and exploitativeness, or the ostensibly more harmless trait of grandiosity. These three traits (grandiosity, entitlement, and exploitativeness) are the focus of our present chapter, although we note that there may be other narcissistic traits that should also be examined in their own right.

The work on this topic began when Brown et al. (2009) noted that narcissistic characteristics formed two clusters. The first cluster was intrapersonal and associated with a grandiose sense of self-importance. This characteristic was captured by the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (NGS), first developed by Rosenthal, Hooley, and Steshenko (2007) and later validated by Crowe et al. (2016), which assesses an overinflated and arrogant sense

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of self-importance, such as “brilliant” and “glorious.” The second cluster was interpersonal, pitting one’s sense of self against others. Brown and colleagues’ work focused on entitlement, arguing that the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) assesses interpersonal deservedness over others. We add that exploitativeness should be a dimension to include in the interpersonal cluster later in this chapter.

Brown and colleagues (2009) found that although narcissistic grandiosity and psychological entitlement were modestly correlated with each other, they predicted different outcomes. Specifically, they designed studies to assess mental health (Study 2) and cheating behavior (Study 3). In their mental health study, they assessed depression, satisfaction with life, optimism, and pessimism as a composite of mental health. Brown et al. argued that a grandiose self-concept promotes positive illusions that enhance subjective well-being. They also argued, however, that psychological entitlement would not be associated with mental health, because it was hard to imagine that people who were highly entitled would be happy and satisfied with their lives. Brown et al. found that grandiosity was positively associated with mental health, whereas psychological entitlement was negatively associated with mental health. Additional analyses revealed that self-esteem partially mediated the association between grandiosity and mental health, but did not mediate the association between entitlement and mental health. This is important because both grandiose narcissists and vulnerable narcissists are entitled, but grandiose narcissists tend to have more positive well-being than vulnerable narcissists (e.g., Miller et al., 2011). Understanding how the traits of grandiosity and entitlement, specifically, relate to mental health may help illuminate the distinction and overlap among the subtypes of narcissists.

Brown and colleagues’ (2009) third study was an investigation of cheating behaviors. They used a cheating paradigm created by von Hippel, Lakin, and Shakarchi (2005) that enabled the researchers to assess and distinguish between deliberative cheating (intentionally engaging in

misconduct) from rationalized cheating (situations in which people do not explicitly intend to cheat but are given opportunities to explain away their behavior). They found that psychological entitlement (i.e., the PES) predicted deliberative cheating and grandiosity (i.e., the NGS) predicted rationalized cheating. They explain that psychological entitlement is linked to antisocial behavior and overtly rejecting social expectations for behavior, whereas narcissistic grandiosity is linked to having a self-serving mindset that is associated with rationalizing away negative behavior. In sum, Brown and colleagues’ set of studies did show that grandiosity and entitlement predicted distinct criterion variables.

Tamborski, Brown, and Chowning (2012) followed up their initial work by examining two other domains related to self-serving strategies: unrealistic optimism (an intrapersonal self-enhancing strategy) and unethical decision-making (conceptualized as more interpersonal because it highlights self-promotion without considering the well-being of others). Tamborski et al. found that people who scored higher on grandiosity were more likely to expect positive events to happen to them (e.g., winning a sweepstakes) and less likely to expect negative events to happen to them (e.g., going blind). Entitlement did not predict unrealistic optimism. For the study examining ethical decision-making, participants were asked to read scenarios involving ethical violations. They were asked to indicate the two best courses of action from a list of options, which were scored as high ethicality, moderate ethicality, and low ethicality. They found that entitlement predicted more unethical decision-making, whereas grandiosity was not a significant predictor of ethical decision-making. In sum, individuals may experience more positive personal outcomes, or at least a more positive outlook on life when they are more grandiose, but are more unethical when they are more entitled.

Taken together, multiple studies demonstrate that narcissistic grandiosity and psychological entitlement predict different outcomes. It is unclear, however, how exploitativeness might affect these factors.

Interpersonal Exploitativeness

We believe that exploitativeness is a dimension of narcissism that should also be assessed as a darker interpersonal trait of narcissism. There is a history of research considering entitlement and exploitativeness jointly, although this has had mostly to do with the measurement of the entitlement/exploitativeness facet of narcissism with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988; see factor solutions offered by Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1984), the most commonly used measure of grandiose narcissism. There are several problems with relying on the entitlement/exploitativeness facet of the NPI. As noted elsewhere (Brown et al., 2009; Brunell et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2004), these issues involve inadequate psychometric properties and poor face validity. We add to this list that there is also an inability to disentangle entitlement from exploitativeness. It is possible, for example, for one to be entitled without also having the tendency to exploit others. For example, students might feel entitled to good grades despite inadequate performance, but not necessarily copy others' work to earn them. Thus, entitlement and exploitativeness, both interpersonal in nature, might capture different outcome variables when assessed with homogenous scales.

The Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale (IES; Brunell et al., 2013) was developed as a brief homogenous scale of exploitativeness that assesses one's propensity to take advantage of others. The Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale and the Psychological Entitlement Scale are only modestly correlated (Brunell et al.), but have been shown to perform differently, for example, during a commons resource dilemma. When encountering a commons dilemma, people can choose to use the common resources selfishly or fairly for the common good (Hardin, 1968). When people choose to behave selfishly, the available resource diminishes more rapidly at the expense to others sharing the resource. When people behave more judiciously and use resources more responsibly (i.e., cooperatively), the needs of the community are met and mutual benefits are shared.

To examine behavior in a commons dilemma, Brunell et al. (2013) used a paradigm developed by Sheldon and McGregor (2000) and also used in Campbell et al. (2005). Participants were told that they each represented a forestry company whose goal was to harvest as much of the forest as possible. However, at the same time, there was another company also harvesting the forest and there was a limited amount of the shared resource available. It was explained that the forest regrew by 10% after each annual harvest. Brunell and colleagues hypothesized that exploitative people would be less likely to conserve common resources.

Results suggested that exploitative people were more cooperative in the beginning of the task and less cooperative (i.e., less conservation of common resources) over time. Brunell and colleagues reason that perhaps interpersonally exploitative people use a "bait and switch" strategy to earn the partner's trust early on and then defect when the partner is easier to exploit. This pattern of findings held even when controlling for psychological entitlement; psychological entitlement did not influence allocation behavior in the commons dilemma. Thus, entitlement and exploitativeness may predict different behavior and different outcomes.

Daddis and Brunell (2015) also demonstrate that entitlement and exploitativeness predict different behavior and outcomes. They reasoned that because entitlement and exploitativeness predicted immoral actions such as harassment (Grijalva et al., 2014), aggression (Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008), and cheating (Brown et al., 2009), in addition to resource destruction (Brunell et al., 2013), these two dimensions would likely provide a useful means of understanding how people reason about behaviors that pit concerns for the self against concerns for others. Behaviors are considered moral when people judge them as right or wrong by considering inherent, negative outcomes for others, such as potential harm or unfairness (Smetana, 1995). As an example, one might consider the effects of second-hand smoke on others. Social conventions, in contrast, are agreed-upon behaviors that stem from consensus, such as addressing

someone with a title or a first name (Smetana, 2011). For example, people might reason that they move away from others while smoking because this has become an expectation in American society. The personal and prudential domains both refer to the self. The personal domain pertains to issues concerning the actor only, such as reasoning about personal preferences and choices (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 2002). A person might reason that it is a personal choice to smoke when and where they would like. The prudential domain, by contrast, concerns harm that affects the actor only, such as reasoning about one's own health and safety (Smetana, 2011). Thus, a person might reason that they do not smoke because it is unhealthy.

Daddis and Brunell's (2015) first study used a semi-structured interview and card-sorting task, which asked participants to judge the extent to which multifaceted behaviors were moral, social-conventional, personal, and/or prudential. Examples were smoking in a public place, texting in class, cheating on a boyfriend/girlfriend, and calling in sick to get out of work. Exploitativeness was associated with finding these kinds of behaviors to be more acceptable, whereas entitlement was associated with finding these behaviors to be less acceptable. When asked to justify why they thought behaviors were acceptable or not acceptable, those who were entitled were more likely to use the prudential domain and less likely to use the personal domain, whereas those higher on exploitativeness were more likely to use the personal domain and less likely to reason using the moral domain. Thus, both those who were entitled and exploitative were more likely to focus reasoning on the self than on concern for others. Follow-up research (Study 2) showed that those who were more entitled were less likely to consider the personal domain for reasoning about the behaviors, but were concerned about possible consequences of threat or harm to the self that could occur for engaging in these behaviors (e.g., getting a bad reputation for cheating). Those who were more exploitative were more likely to view these multifaceted issues as concerning personal choice and less likely to consider them moral, pruden-

tial, or social-conventional. Mediation analysis showed that more exploitative individuals were less likely to indicate that the issues were of moral concern, which in turn related to their sense that the behaviors were acceptable to enact.

Taken together, research on interpersonal exploitativeness demonstrated that while entitlement and exploitativeness are modestly related to each other, exploitativeness is a distinct construct. In particular, studies examining entitlement and exploitativeness jointly showed that each measure was capable of predicting different outcomes.

Recent Advances

In more recent research, we included grandiosity along with our assessments of entitlement and exploitativeness to predict behaviors that may be both intrapersonal and interpersonal in nature. We have investigated three areas of research: volunteer motives, risk-taking behaviors, and risky decision-making.

There are many reasons that people may volunteer, and we hypothesized that volunteer motives may be related to narcissistic traits. Motives include humanitarian concerns, the ability to learn or gain new experiences, the opportunity to meet people with similar interests and expand one's social network, to build one's resume and/or acquire new skills, to avoid guilt or other negative feelings, and to boost self-esteem and mood. We hypothesized that the motives that benefited the self would underlie narcissists' reasons to volunteer (Brunell, Tumblin, & Buelow, 2014; Study 2). We administered questionnaires to college students, which asked them if they had volunteered over the past 12 months. If they had volunteered, they were administered the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) to assess their reasons for volunteerism. More than 70% of the students indicated they had volunteered. Each narcissistic trait predicted different motivations for volunteering: Exploitativeness was positively associated with the motivation to volunteer to gain new learning experiences or offer opportunities to exercise

one's knowledge, skills, and abilities that might not be used otherwise. Entitlement, by contrast, was positively associated with the career motivations, such as resume-building or the acquisition of new skills, as well as expanding one's social network and making new connections. Put another way, entitlement and exploitativeness had to do with benefiting the self rather than helping others. Grandiosity was not, however, associated with volunteer motivations.

Because narcissists are frequently described as risk-takers (e.g., Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Foster, Shenese, & Groff, 2009), we looked at the roles of grandiosity, psychological entitlement, and exploitativeness in our assessment of self-reported risk-taking behaviors (Buelow & Brunell, 2014). We used the Domain-Specific Risk-attitude Scale (DOSPERS; Weber, Blais, & Betz, 2002) and the Cognitive Appraisal of Risky Events (CARE; Fromme, Katz, & Rivet, 1997) to assess risk-taking. We found that the primary predictor of risk-taking behaviors was narcissistic grandiosity. Specifically, narcissistic grandiosity predicted reports of ethical, financial, and social risk-taking as well as reports of aggressive behavior and drug use. Exploitativeness predicted ethical and financial risk-taking and reports of risk-taking in sports. Thus, it appears that grandiosity might be more interpersonal in nature than Brown et al. (2009) originally proposed.

In a study of risky decision-making, we examined the extent to which grandiosity, entitlement, and exploitativeness were associated with people's tendencies to take risks on behavioral decision-making tasks that distinguish affective, impulsive decision-making from deliberative decision-making (Brunell & Buelow, 2017; Buelow and Brunell, this volume). We used multiple tasks, including the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT; Bechara, Damasio, & Anderson, 1994), the Balloon Analogue Risk Task (BART; Lejuez et al., 2002), two versions of the Columbia Card Task (Figner et al., 2009), and the Game of Dice Task (Brand et al., 2005). Exploitativeness was not a significant predictor of these decision-making tasks; entitlement was a modest predictor of poorer performance on one task: the Iowa Gambling

Task (IGT; Bechara et al., 1994), which is a test of affective and deliberative decision-making (Brunell & Buelow). Grandiosity was a modest predictor of the "hot" version of the CCT, which assesses affective risky decision-making. Thus, although narcissistic traits are associated with reports of risk-taking, it does not appear that narcissistic traits are primary predictors of risky decisions on behavioral tasks.

Current Directions

Given that the dimensions of narcissism correlate considerably (Buelow & Brunell, 2014 report intercorrelations ranging from .385 to .608), our recent research evaluated the factor structure of the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale, the Psychological Entitlement Scale, and the Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale (Brunell & Buelow, 2018). We have found evidence that these measures assess three separate factors rather than one factor or even two (e.g., one assessing grandiosity and the other assessing both entitlement and exploitativeness). These measures all have strong psychometric properties, including high internal reliability, as each of the scale creators reported. This is important for scholars looking to use homogenous measures of narcissistic traits in their research.

Our research also shows that grandiosity, exploitativeness, and entitlement share qualities such as lower empathic concern, lower agreeableness, and higher impulsivity and sensation-seeking, while only exploitativeness was associated with lower perspective-taking, and only grandiosity was associated with higher extraversion, lower personal distress, lower neuroticism, and lower anxiety and depression. These findings replicate others' assessment that grandiosity is associated with more positive mental health (cf. Brown et al., 2009).

Some have argued that facets such as exploitativeness load on vulnerable narcissism rather than grandiose narcissism (Pincus et al., 2009). However, using the Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale, we have found evidence that exploitativeness is more strongly associated with grandiose

narcissism and weakly associated with vulnerable narcissism (Brown & Brunell, 2017; Brunell & Buelow, 2018). Using homogenous scales of lower-order traits may provide researchers better insight into higher-order traits, such as grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

Conclusion

We believe that it can be beneficial for researchers to use specific homogenous scales to examine narcissism. Our research has revealed that each dimension can uniquely predict outcome variables. Two advantages of this approach are (a) the ability to examine narcissistic traits that bridge grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and (b) a more nuanced understanding of narcissism.

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Part III

Causes and Development of Narcissism



Parents' Socialization of Narcissism in Children

15

Sander Thomaes and Eddie Brummelman

Abstract

Research on childhood narcissism has gained momentum over the past years. Narcissism emerges and develops from childhood onward. One main focus of research has centered around the question of how childhood socialization experiences contribute to the development of narcissism. Evidence accumulates that by overvaluing their children—seeing and treating their children as more special and entitled than others—parents may inadvertently cultivate narcissism in their children. This chapter reviews our current knowledge on the childhood origins of narcissism and highlights priorities for future work. Our aim is to foster an interdisciplinary and theoretically precise understanding of what makes narcissism bloom.

Keywords

Narcissism · Socialization · Parenting · Children · Development · Overvaluation · Warmth · Diathesis-stress

What are the origins of narcissism? Why do some youth think they are superior to others and deserve special treatment, whereas others consider themselves on an equal plane with others? Scholars have grappled with this question since early twentieth century, when narcissism was introduced in the psychological literature. Over the past decade, psychology has accumulated a substantial empirical literature on parents' socialization of narcissism. The goal of the present chapter is to synthesize this literature and to outline key challenges for future research.

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Childhood Narcissism

When we think of narcissists, we typically think of adults—perhaps a charming but manipulative ex-partner or a self-absorbed and authoritarian boss. We do not typically think of children, whose personalities are still in flux. And yet, narcissists do not just begin to love themselves at their 18th birthday; they typically develop narcissistic traits from early life onward.

The literature on childhood narcissism has gained momentum. Researchers have shown that there are pronounced individual differences in narcissism among children and adolescents—across general and at-risk populations and across Western and Eastern countries (Ang & Raine, 2009; Barry et al., 2007; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). Researchers have also demonstrated that narcissism has mostly similar correlates and sequelae in youth as it has in adults. For example, much like narcissistic adults, narcissistic youth tend to be self-aggrandizing, dominant, low in empathy, aggressive, and emotionally reactive (Barry, Kerig, Stellweggen, & Barry, 2011; Ong et al., 2011; Pauletti, Menon, Menon, Tobin, & Perry, 2012; Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016).

Individual differences in narcissism emerge from age 7 or 8 onward. Prior to this age, children can form compartmentalized conceptions of observable attributes or behaviors (e.g., “I’m very good at running”), but they cannot yet integrate these conceptions into global, generalized representations of themselves (e.g., “I’m a great person”). Moreover, prior to age 7 or 8, children are not yet able to use social comparisons to form self-evaluations (Harter, 2012; Thomaes, Bushman, Orobio de Castro, & Stegge, 2009). After this age, however, when children are able to form global and comparative views of themselves, individual differences in narcissism emerge. Importantly, these individual differences are quite stable over time. Narcissistic features in childhood are precursors of narcissism in adolescence and adulthood (Cramer, 2011; De Clercq, Hofmans, Vergauwe, De Fruyt, & Sharp, *in press*).

Narcissism in children and adolescents can be assessed using self-report questionnaires such as the multidimensional Narcissistic Personality Inventory-Children (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003) or the unidimensional Childhood Narcissism Scale (Thomaes et al., 2008). In the past, researchers have occasionally been skeptical of using self-report to assess narcissism, because they assumed that narcissists have limited self-insight or may try to conceal their narcissistic traits. However, research shows that narcissists do have considerable self-insight (e.g., they are

aware that others perceive them as conceited) and do not typically try to conceal their traits; in fact, they tend to see their narcissistic traits as strengths rather than weaknesses (Carlson, 2013).

Origins of Narcissism

What are the origins of narcissism? Like all personality traits, narcissism is partly heritable (see Chap. 16 by Luo and Cai, this volume; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008). Yet, dominant theoretical accounts emphasize the critical influence of parental socialization. This emphasis is consistent with the classic notion that parents play a key role in shaping their children’s self-views. Early symbolic interactionists already argued that self-views are socially constructed and that children come to see themselves as they believe they are seen by significant others—as if through a looking glass (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). Contemporary research has confirmed the general tenets of this thinking (for a review, see Harter, 2012).

Two viewpoints on parents’ socialization of narcissism can be distinguished. Social learning theorists (Millon, 1969) have posited that children acquire their self-views by observing and internalizing the way they are seen and treated by their parents. According to social learning theory, parents cultivate narcissism in their children by seeing them as more special or more entitled than others and treating them accordingly—a phenomenon labeled *parental overvaluation* (Brummelman, Thomaes, Nelemans, Orobio de Castro, & Bushman, 2015; Freud, 1914/1957; Otway & Vignoles, 2006). Research has shown that overvaluing parents overestimate, overclaim, and overpraise children’s qualities and attempt to make children stand out from the crowd (Brummelman et al., 2015). By contrast, psychoanalytic theorists (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971) have held that children develop narcissism as compensations for deprivation in their bonds with parents and, specifically, when their parents are cold or indifferent toward them. According to psychoanalytic theory, narcissistic children seek to obtain what they have been insufficiently able to obtain from their parents: approval.

Over the past decade, several correlational studies on parental socialization of narcissism have been conducted (for overviews, see Horton 2011; Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016). Many of these studies included samples of adults, who were asked to report their current narcissism and their recollections of how they were raised by their parents. However, it is notoriously difficult for adults to accurately remember childhood socialization experiences. What is more, narcissists might be inclined to report their experiences in ways that highlight their specialness and entitlement. For example, they may report that their parents overpraised them and fulfilled their every wish—because who wouldn't for someone as exceptional as them?

In an attempt to overcome these limitations, one study used longitudinal methods to examine the socialization of narcissism (Brummelman et al., 2015a). In this study, a community sample of children and their parents was followed for a period of 2 years—children were 7–11 years old at the study start, the age period when individual differences in narcissism begin to emerge. Children's levels of narcissism and self-esteem were assessed every 6 months, along with parental overvaluation (i.e., parents believing their child is more special and entitled than others) and parental warmth (i.e., parents expressing affection and appreciation toward their child). Results supported social learning theory and contradicted psychoanalytic theory: Parents' overvaluation predicted increases in children's narcissism over time, whereas parents' lack of warmth did not. Attesting to the specificity of these findings, parental warmth did predict increases in children's self-esteem over time, whereas parental overvaluation did not. Together, these findings are consistent with the view that children come to view themselves as they believe they are seen by their parents (Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides, 2016). When their parents see them as more special or entitled than others, children may infer a sense of superiority—which is the core of narcissism. By contrast, when their parents appreciate and love them for who they are, children may infer a sense of being valuable—which is the core of self-esteem.

What are the concrete manifestations of parental overvaluation that may foster narcissism? A recent study examined one such manifestation using structured in-home parent-child observations: parents' tendencies to lavish their children with inflated praise (Brummelman, Nelemans, Thomaes, & Orobio de Castro, 2017). Praise is inflated when it contains an adjective or adverb signaling a very positive evaluation, such as "Excellent!" or "Incredibly good!" Non-inflated praise does not contain such words (e.g., "Good job!" or "Well done!"). In the study, parents administered mathematics exercises to their child. Observers counted how often parents praised their children and whether the praise they provided was inflated or non-inflated. Parents' use of inflated praise predicted increases in narcissism over time—but only among children with high self-esteem (assessed at the study start). This finding suggests that children with high self-esteem may perceive inflated praise as falling perfectly within their latitudes of acceptance (e.g., "Yes, of course I am incredible"), leading them to form more inflated, narcissistic views of themselves. By contrast, children with low self-esteem may perceive inflated praise as falling outside of their latitudes of acceptance (e.g., "No, I am not that incredible"). This study illustrates how parental overvaluation may manifest in relatively subtle behaviors or communication styles that may foretell the development of narcissism.

Perhaps the most common misconception about overvaluing parents is that they are never disappointed in their child. Overvaluing parents have a strong desire for their children to stand out from the crowd; they expect specialness. When children fail to meet their expectations, parents may feel disappointed in them, perhaps even leading them to become harsh or hostile. In fact, overvaluing parents even admit that they would be disappointed if their child was just a "regular" child (Brummelman et al, 2015). This may explain why some studies have suggested that parents' harsh or hostile behaviors toward their children may be related to the development of narcissism (Wetzel & Robins, 2016; also see Cater, Zeigler-Hill, & Vonk, 2011; Givertz & Segrin, 2014; Otway & Vignoles, 2006). Parental

overvaluation and harshness may be more similar than one might infer based on their surface features.

Going Forward

Despite our growing understanding of when and why narcissism emerges, several exciting questions await further research. Parents play an important role in fostering narcissism in their children, but more needs to be learned about codetermination of narcissism (Cicchetti & Toth, 2009): how social (e.g., societal) and constitutional (e.g., temperamental) factors jointly shape the development of narcissism.

One question pertains to how children differ in their susceptibility to parental overvaluation. Research shows that children are differentially influenced by socialization factors (Ellis, Boyce, Belsky, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 2011; Slagt, Dubas, Dekovic, & Van Aken, 2016). For example, narcissism may develop from diathesis-stress: Adverse parenting influences (e.g., overvaluation) may lead to narcissism only among those children who hold a diathesis. We have theorized before how children's approach temperament (i.e., an early emerging sensitivity to rewards) may predispose children to become dependent on social rewards such as praise and admiration (Thomaes & Brummelman, 2016; Thomaes, Brummelman, Reijntjes, & Bushman, 2013). When children with such an approach temperament are enduringly overvalued by their parents, they may become "addicted" to being admired by others, which may foster narcissism. An important next step for the field will be to test such person \times environment models.

Another task will be to understand the psychological mechanisms that link joint socialization experiences and constitutional factors (and their interactions) to the development of narcissism (Olson & Dweck, 2008). Children are active meaning makers. As they go about their daily lives, they form views of themselves, of others, and of their social relationships, and these views underlie their narcissism levels (Chap. 5 by

Brummelman et al., this volume). What are the views that children form based on their experiences of parental overvaluation? Theoretical and operational precision is needed to answer this question (Brummelman et al., 2015b). Most notably, researchers should avoid container constructs—broadly defined constructs such as "positive parenting," which comprise diverse behaviors that may each have unique effects on children's narcissism levels. This is important because seemingly small differences in socialization messages can have considerable consequences for the views that children construct of themselves, for example, praise predicts narcissism only when it is formulated in inflated ways (Brummelman et al., 2017).

Furthermore, future work will need to examine parenting behavior as embedded within a broader, macro-environmental context. Research shows that individuals from individualistic societies tend to be more narcissistic than those from less individualistic societies (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). One plausible causal mechanism is that individualistic ideals make parents more likely to want their children to stand out from others—such an ambition may lead parents to overvalue their children which, in turn, may contribute to the development of narcissism. Another plausible mechanism is that individualistic ideals shape the educational practices to which children are exposed on a daily basis. Educational practices that aim to foster positive self-views in children have become widespread throughout the Western world. For example, school curricula often seek to reinforce students' individualistic features and self-reliance (e.g., by implementing such practices as "all-about-me" projects or having students elect a "child of the week" in class). The concern is that subsets of children might internalize these practices not by forming healthy favorable self-views, but instead, by forming the belief that they are more special and entitled than others (Kopp & Finney, 2013; MacDonald, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Researchers should also examine causes of narcissistic development beyond socialization by adults. For example, the use of certain social media platforms that encourage self-promotion

or “self-branding” may cultivate narcissism in youth (Campbell & Twenge, 2015; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). The process of polishing an idealized image of oneself on social media may, in the longer run, lead some individuals to believe that such an image is true, thus fostering narcissism. Some evidence shows that when college students spend time on social media platforms—specifically those that offer a stage for self-promotion—their narcissism levels rise (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012; but see Horton, Reid, Barber, Miracle, & Green, 2014). There is even evidence that macro-economic conditions influence narcissism. For example, youth who come of age during an economic recession are less likely to develop narcissism than those who do in more prosperous times, possibly because they feel less entitled to positive life outcomes (Bianchi, 2014; also see Leckelt et al., 2016). We call for multidisciplinary research that bridges levels of analysis—from the individual to the macro-environmental level—to examine the origins of narcissism.

Coda

Research on childhood narcissism has gained momentum over the past years, but our understanding of its origins is still in its infancy. By overvaluing their children, placing them on a pedestal or lavishing them with inflated praise, parents may inadvertently cultivate narcissism in their children. We hope this chapter will encourage interdisciplinary and theoretically precise investigations of what makes narcissism bloom.

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The Etiology of Narcissism: A Review of Behavioral Genetic Studies

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Abstract

A great deal of research has delved into the etiology of narcissism via behavioral genetic methodologies in recent years. These studies have established that genetic factors contribute substantially to (1) the variations of various types of narcissism, (2) the stability of narcissism as well as its associations with other personalities, and (3) the distinctions between different types of narcissism. In the meantime, environments (mostly non-shared by family members) also play important roles in these situations. Together, these findings shed light on the origins of narcissism. Future studies may further examine how genetic and environmental factors interplay with each other in influencing narcissism and even what gene(s) is associated with narcissism.

Keywords

Narcissism · Narcissistic personality disorder · Behavioral genetics · Twins · Heritability · Stability

Introduction

Research has documented that over recent decades, grandiose narcissism is on the rise in both the East and the West (Cai, Kwan, & Sedikides, 2012; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Nowadays, people report observing narcissists frequently in diverse situations including on Facebook (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008), reality shows (Stein, 2013), and even in places of worship (Gebauer, Sedikides, & Schrade, 2017). The prevalence of narcissism has prompted more people than ever to ponder: why is someone a narcissist? And why are some people more narcissistic than others? These issues center around the etiology of narcissism. In fact, a great deal of research has approached this topic via behavioral genetic methodologies. The research has addressed an extreme manifestation of narcissism known as narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) as well as many other forms in the normal population, including grandiose narcissism (also known as agentic narcissism), communal narcissism, adaptive narcissism, maladaptive narcissism, grandiosity, and entitlement. One sector of the research has also explored the etiology of the stability of narcissism and its associations with diverse relevant variables. In this chapter, we aim to make a thorough review of these studies. We will also highlight some implications of existing findings as well as possible directions for future study. To

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begin with, we give a brief introduction to the methodology of behavioral genetic analysis in order to help people to understand the findings under review.

The Methodology of Behavioral Genetics

Behavioral genetics has mainly relied on the studies of twins. There are two kinds of twins: monozygotic (MZ) twins and dizygotic (DZ) twins. While MZ twins share 100% percent of their genes, DZ twins share only 50% of them. In the usual case, a pair of twins reared together in the same family or environment allows us to assume that the shared environment exerts similar influences on them. Thus, for a specific trait, if the resemblance (or correlation) between monozygotic (MZ) twins is significantly higher than that between dizygotic (DZ) twins, we can infer that the observed trait is heritable. By conducting a univariate genetic analysis with structure equation modeling, we can further estimate the genetic effect (A: additive genetic effect; or D: non-additive genetic effect), shared environmental effect (C: influence arising from environments common to both twin siblings), and non-shared environmental effect with measurement error included (E: influence arising from environments unique to each sibling of a twin pair), which indicate the portion of each effect that contributes to the variation of the trait (Plomin, DeFries, Knopik, & Neiderhiser, 2012). If two correlated traits are involved, we can conduct a bivariate genetic analysis to estimate the genetic and environmental influences on the association between them. Further, we can also estimate the genetic correlations and environment correlations, which indicate the extent to which the genetic/environmental influence on one trait resembles that on the other one.

The Etiology of NPD

To date, only a few behavioral genetic studies have examined the sources of NPD. One study examined NPD among a nonclinical sample of

686 Canadian twin pairs (340 MZ, 346 DZ). NPD was assessed by a subscale of the Dimensional Assessment of Personality Disorder-Basic Questionnaire. Results showed that NPD was substantially heritable, with 44% of individual differences attributed to genetic influences and the remaining 56% to non-shared environmental influences (Livesley, Jang, & Vernon, 1998). Another study investigated NPD among 221 Norwegian twin pairs (92 MZ, 129 DZ) with at least one of the twins being treated for a mental disorder (Torgersen et al., 2000). Results showed that genetic effects accounted for 77% of the variance in NPD, with the remaining 23% explained by non-shared environments. A more recent study examined a larger sample of 2794 twin siblings from Norway. NPD was measured by a Norwegian version of the Structured Interview for DSM-IV, Personality (SIDP-IV). Results revealed moderate genetic influence (37.3%) along with large influence of the non-shared environment (62.7%; Kendler et al., 2008). Taken together, these studies have consistently demonstrated that genetic influence constitutes a major source of NPD. Non-shared environments also exert substantial influence on NPD. Notably, shared environments had no significant influence on NPD in any of these studies.

The Etiology of Narcissism in the Normal Population

Grandiose or agentic narcissism as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) is widely researched. Two studies have examined its etiology. One study investigated 139 pairs of twins (75 MZ pairs, 64 DZ pairs) from the USA and Canada and found that variations in narcissism were mainly explained by genetic factors (59%) and non-shared environmental factors (41%) (Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008). We examined 304 pairs of twins (152 MZ, 152 DZ) in a different culture of China and also found that genes (47%) and non-shared environments (53%) chiefly influenced narcissism (Luo, Cai, Sedikides, & Song, 2014a). These findings suggest that about

half of the variation of grandiose narcissism can be attributed to genetic influence, with the remaining half attributed to non-shared environmental influences, a pattern which holds true across cultures.

Based on the same twin sample, we surveyed adaptive and maladaptive narcissism in a second study. Adaptive and maladaptive narcissism are formed on the basis of the seven-factor model of NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Adaptive narcissism includes the two factors of authority and self-sufficiency, whereas maladaptive narcissism includes the three factors of entitlement, exploitativeness, and exhibitionism (superiority and vanity factors were not used). Past research showed that these two forms of narcissism have distinct personality foundations and adaptive functions (for a review, see Chap. 10 by Cai and Luo, this volume). Our twin study found that both adaptive and maladaptive narcissism were heritable (37% and 44%, respectively), with the individual differences largely explained by non-shared environments (63% and 56%, respectively) (Cai, Shi, Fang, & Luo, 2015). Furthermore, 54% of the genetic effects and 85% of the non-shared environmental effects on adaptive and maladaptive narcissism differed.¹ These findings indicate that although adaptive and maladaptive narcissism share some genetic (46%) and environmental (15%) ground, the majority of their variations are determined by different genes and environments, providing evidence for the distinctiveness of adaptive and maladaptive narcissism.

We also investigated grandiosity and entitlement, which represent the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of narcissism, respectively. While grandiosity refers to “a grandiose sense of self-importance”, entitlement denotes “an entitled, socially objectifying sense of the self in relation to others” (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009, p. 953). Results showed that genetic factors explained 23% and 35% of individual differences in grandiosity and entitlement, respectively, whereas non-shared

environments accounted for the remaining portion of variation of grandiosity (77%) and entitlement (65%) (Luo, Cai, & Song, 2014b). Further bivariate analysis showed that most of the genetic influences were unique to each type of narcissism (grandiosity, 92%; entitlement, 93%) as was the case with non-shared environmental influences (grandiosity, 92%; entitlement, 93%). Hence, these findings provide etiologic evidence for the phenotypic differentiations of these two aspects of narcissism (Brown et al., 2009).

In another study, we compared communal narcissism assessed by the Communal Narcissism Inventory (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012) with agentic narcissism (assessed by the NPI) in terms of their etiologies (Luo et al., 2014a). Communal narcissism and agentic narcissism are similar in their basic goals (i.e., grandiosity, self-esteem, power, and entitlement) but differ in their means (agentic versus communal) to achieve those goals (Gebauer et al., 2012). Results of the twin study showed that genetic influences accounted for 42% of the variation in communal narcissism, with non-shared environmental influences explaining the remaining 58%. Moreover, bivariate analysis found 68% of the genetic influences and 94% of the environmental influences on communal narcissism differed from those on agentic narcissism. In summary, although communal narcissism shares some genetic and environmental bases with agentic narcissism, most of its underlying sources are specific to itself.

To summarize, narcissism is heritable regardless of its manifestations. As to the environment, it is the non-shared environment (e.g., unique life events) rather than the shared environment (e.g., shared physical family) that exerts substantial influence on narcissism. These findings are consistent with a large body of twin studies on personality (Bouchard, 2004). Two points are notable. First, genetic and environmental influences on narcissism vary with its manifestations, with larger genetic influence on overall narcissism (e.g., agentic narcissism and communal narcissism) than its components (e.g., adaptive narcissism and maladaptive narcissism) or

¹This result is based on a reanalysis of the data in Cai et al. (2015).

dimensions (e.g., grandiosity and entitlement). Second, all contrasting manifestations of narcissism are substantially (although, not entirely) dissimilar in terms of their genetic and environmental foundations.

The Etiology of the Stability of Narcissism

Narcissism manifests around age 8, peaks in adolescence, and declines in adulthood (for reviews, see Hill & Roberts, 2011; Thomaes, Bushman, Orobio de Castro, & Stegge, 2009). Nevertheless, narcissism is highly stable in terms of rank order: a person with high narcissism still tends to be narcissistic years later (Cramer, 2011; del Rosario & White, 2005; Edelstein, Newton, & Stewart, 2012; Luo, Wang, & Cai, *in preparation*, Study 1). To examine the origins of such stability, in one of our studies, we had 304 pair of twins (152 DZs and 152MZs) complete the NPI twice in a 2-year period (Luo et al., *in preparation*, Study 2). Results showed that the rank order stability of narcissism across 2 years was very high ($r = .71$); moreover, 73% of the stability variation was due to genetic effects with the remaining 27% due to non-shared environmental effects. Notably, while the non-shared environmental correlation across 2 years was .40, the genetic correlation between narcissism for the two times was 1.00. This perfect genetic correlation suggests that the same genes contribute to the individual differences of narcissism across 2 years and thus play a major role in stabilizing narcissism over time. In contrast, the non-shared environmental correlation is moderate, which indicates that non-shared environments influencing narcissism may vary greatly from time to time and give rise to a change in narcissism across time.

The Etiology of the Relationship Between Narcissism and Other Personality Traits

During the last two decades, numerous studies have examined the relationship between narcissism and various personality traits, includ-

ing the Big Five traits (Costa & McCrae 1992). According to a recent meta-analysis, narcissism is positively correlated with extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness but negatively so with neuroticism and agreeableness (Miller & Maples, 2011). The magnitude of the correlations varied from small (with conscientiousness, .08) to moderate (with extraversion, .39). A twin study examined the genetic contributions to these correlations (Vernon et al., 2008). Results showed that narcissism had significant and positive genetic correlations with extraversion (.42) and openness (.29) and significant and negative genetic correlation with agreeableness (-.42). These findings indicate that narcissism and several Big Five traits share common genetic foundation, at least to a moderate extent. In contrast, except for a small negative non-shared environmental correlation with agreeableness (-.13), narcissism and the Big Five traits share no common environmental bases.

Research has also examined the etiology of associations between narcissism and other personality traits in addition to the Big Five. One twin study examined the three traits of the Dark Triad of personality (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism) (Vernon et al., 2008). Results showed that narcissism had a significant genetic correlation with psychopathy (.48) though not with Machiavellianism. Another twin study examined narcissism and emotional intelligence among 214 adult twin pairs (156 MZ, 58 DZ) and found modest genetic (.23) and non-shared environmental correlations (.28) between them (Petrides, Vernon, Schermer, & Veselka, 2011). In a twin study of 154 MZ pairs and 82 DZ pairs, null correlations between narcissism and moral reasoning were found at both the phenotypic and etiological levels (Campbell et al., 2009).

Overall, narcissism shares some genetic foundations simultaneously with positive traits (e.g., extraversion, openness, and emotional intelligence) and negative traits (e.g., psychopathy), suggesting that narcissism consists of both healthy and unhealthy components, and at least some of this duality has genetic roots (See Chap. 10 by Cai and Luo, this volume).

The Etiology of the Relationship Between Narcissism and Behavior Tendencies

People high in narcissism exhibit their narcissism in various daily behaviors such as taking “selfie” pictures (Halpern, Valenzuela, & Katz, 2016), luxury consumption (Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007), impulsive buying (Cai et al., 2015), and risk-taking (Foster, Reidy, Misra, & Goff, 2011). One of our studies has examined the relationship between narcissism and impulsive buying tendency (based on self-report) as well as its etiology (Cai et al., 2015). In this study, we distinguished between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism and found that maladaptive narcissism was significantly correlated with the tendency of impulsive buying, whereas adaptive narcissism was not. Moreover, we found that the association between maladaptive narcissism and impulsive buying tendency was mainly due to genetic factors shared by them as they had a medium genetic correlation (.44) but a null non-shared environmental correlation (.02).

Another twin study examined narcissism and self-reported risk-taking tendencies simultaneously among 359 MZ pairs and 98 DZ pairs from Canada and in the USA (Veselka, Schermer, & Vernon, 2011). Results showed that narcissism was significantly correlated with risk-taking tendency. In addition, both genetic and non-shared environmental factors contributed to the association between narcissism and risk-taking tendency as indicated by a significant genetic correlation ($r = .26$) and non-shared environmental correlation ($r = .17$). In summary, although behavioral genetic research on the relationship between narcissism and behavior tendencies is limited, the few existing studies suggest that some genetic factors may be partly responsible for the link between them.

Summary, Implications, and Future Directions

All personalities are heritable (Turkheimer, 2000), and narcissism is no exception. Based on existing twin studies on narcissism, several

findings can be summarized. **First**, narcissism appears to be heritable no matter whether it is agentic or communal narcissism, adaptive or maladaptive narcissism, grandiosity or entitlement, and a personality disorder or a normal personality trait. The heritability ranges from moderate to high, with overall narcissism (grandiose/agentic narcissism and communal narcissism) manifesting higher heritability than its specific facets (adaptive narcissism and maladaptive narcissism) or dimensions (grandiosity and entitlement). **Second**, environment is also likely to contribute substantially to the variation of narcissism, arising primarily from non-shared environments rather than shared environments. **Third**, several contrasting variants of narcissism, including agentic versus communal narcissism, adaptive versus maladaptive narcissism, and grandiosity versus entitlement, have been found to differ substantially in their genetic and environmental foundations. **Fourth**, it seems that the stability of narcissism is largely caused by genetic contributions, although non-shared environments also play a role. **Fifth**, associations between narcissism and many other personality traits, such as extraversion, agreeableness, openness, psychopathy, and emotional intelligence, tend to have genetic foundations as do associations between narcissism and behavior tendencies, such as impulsive buying and the risk-taking tendency. In summary, genetic factors play crucial roles in modulating variations of narcissism as well as its stability and associations with other personality traits and behavior tendencies and in distinguishing between different types of narcissism. Environment also plays a role in these phenomena, but for the most part, non-shared environments rather than shared environments are paramount.

Overall, these findings shed light on the etiology of narcissism as well as its relationship with many other variables. Specifically, these findings can help us understand special features of narcissism. *First*, narcissists are notoriously stubborn and hard to change (Kaufman, 2011). Why? Existing twin studies suggest that these qualities may have been caused by genetic factors because genetic influences on narcissism

seem pronounced and rarely change across time. *Second*, due to narcissism's complexity, researchers have proposed distinguishing between many different forms of narcissism such as agentic versus communal narcissism (Gebauer et al., 2012), adaptive versus maladaptive narcissism (Chap. 10 Cai and Luo, this volume), and grandiosity versus entitlement (Brown et al., 2009). Much phenotypical evidence also has accumulated. The findings from twin studies as reviewed in this chapter provide solid genotypic evidence for these distinctions, suggesting they are fundamentally valid. *Third*, both theories and empirical findings have demonstrated the importance of microenvironments, such as family (Brummelman et al., 2015; Kohurt, 1966), and macroenvironments, such as social culture (Cai et al., 2012; Twenge et al., 2008). However, the twin studies suggest that most influences arising from environments are unique to an individual. This indicates that the same environment may not nurture the same levels of narcissism across individuals.

Although twin studies on narcissism have produced rich findings and greatly facilitate our understanding about narcissism, there are still many unknowns that deserve future studies. *First*, individualism is on the rise around the world (for a review, Cai, Huang, & Jing, *in press*). As a personality trait that may be fostered in individualistic cultures (Stern, 1980), narcissism may also be becoming more prevalent around the world. The twin studies on narcissism have only encompassed a few cultures. Future studies should explore more cultures, testing the generalizability of current findings while exploring cultural specifics. A cross-cultural twins study is also desirable, enabling us to test how culture may moderate the influences of genetic and other environmental factors. *Second*, narcissism is associated with many psychological phenomena and behaviors. Current studies have only addressed the etiology of a limited array of the associations between them. Future research may explore the etiology of additional associations and examine whether they are due to pleiotropy—the same genes influencing both

traits—or due to a special process that is modulated by a particular gene and leads further to covariation between them. *Third*, existing studies have only examined independent influences of genetic and environmental factors. Genes and environment are, however, not entirely independent. For example, genes may predispose narcissists to shape their environment in a way that fits with their narcissism (e.g., decorating their rooms with selfies), leading to a gene-environment correlation. Genes may also render narcissists more sensitive to narcissistic cues in their environment (e.g., a song emphasizing self-specialness), manifesting a gene-environment interaction. Future studies also may employ sophisticated designs as well as larger samples to explore the roles of the gene-environment correlation and interaction. *Fourth*, although genetic influences on narcissism are substantial, it is still unknown what genes are involved in the process. Preliminary evidence suggests that the serotonin transporter protein gene (5-HTTLPR) plays a role in the individual differences in narcissism (Sadeh et al., 2010). Future study should continue to explore the molecular basis of narcissism.

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Narcissism and the Economic Environment

17

Emily C. Bianchi

Abstract

While much is known about the consequences of narcissism, relatively little is known about the conditions that foster or temper the development of an inflated ego. This chapter reviews evidence suggesting that entering adulthood during bad economic times is associated with lower narcissism in later adulthood. The author draws on two lines of research to make this prediction. First, past work suggests that narcissism is tempered by adverse experiences and failure. Given that young people who begin their adult lives in challenging economic times often have considerable difficulty establishing their professional and personal lives, the author suggests that they are less likely to develop an overinflated sense of self. Second, economic downturns are associated with greater interdependence and less individualism. Past work has shown that people are often influenced by the macro-environmental conditions and norms of their early adulthood. Thus, the author proposes that greater interdependence during one's "impressionable years" is likely to yield less narcissism later in life. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Keywords

Recessions · Economic downturns · Impressionable years · Generational imprinting · Grandiose narcissism

You are not special. You are not exceptional. Contrary to what your U9 soccer trophy suggests, your glowing seventh grade report card, despite every assurance of a certain corpulent purple dinosaur, that nice Mister Rogers and your batty Aunt Sylvia, no matter how often your maternal caped crusader has swooped in to save you... you're nothing special.

David Halberstam, Jr.
Speech at Wellesley High School Graduation, 2012

For the high school and college graduating classes of 2012, David Halberstam Jr.'s humbling message was likely to be reinforced again and again. Like the previous three graduating classes, these students were beginning their adult lives in the worst recession in 80 years. They were likely to face considerable challenges finding work, securing student loans, or living independently. Recessions tend to be particularly hard on young adults. They have little work experience and limited skills. When budgets tighten and hiring slows, young people tend to have a particularly hard time securing a job (Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez, 2010). Those who do find work during recessions are often underemployed and underpaid relative to their prerecession counterparts (Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2010). These

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difficult early job experiences often hamper their wages and career success even decades later (Kahn, 2010; Oreopoulos, von Wachter, & Heisz, 2012; Oyer, 2006).

Increasing evidence suggests that these difficult experiences may have lasting implications for how special, unique, entitled, and self-important these young adults become (Bianchi, 2014; Leckelt, et al., 2016). Grandiose narcissism is characterized by inflated self-views (e.g., Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002) and perpetual self-enhancement (e.g., Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). Narcissists¹ believe they are entitled to superior outcomes and deserve excessive admiration. They tend to be less attuned to and concerned with others (Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984) and typically prioritize their own interests and goals even when doing so is costly to others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). Thus, they have difficulty developing and maintaining intimate social relationships (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002).

Why would coming of age during times of economic prosperity or scarcity have lasting implications for narcissism? One reason is that narcissism appears to be hampered by challenging events and setbacks (e.g., Kohut, 1977; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). For instance, Twenge and Campbell (2009) argue that narcissism has increased in recent decades in part because children are continuously praised and rarely allowed to fail. As a result, they are less likely to encounter the type of negative feedback that can correct rapidly inflating egos. In addition, other work has proposed that narcissism is aided by overprotective parenting and excessive praise (Kohut, 1977). Along the same lines, Piff (2014) found that wealthier people have higher narcissism scores than their poorer counterparts. People with greater resources typically face fewer financial, psychological, and even physical challenges. As such, less adversity may underlie these trends.

¹I use the term narcissist to refer to people who score relatively high on subclinical grandiose narcissism measures. Moreover, consistent with past work (e.g., Bianchi, 2013; Kahn, 2010; Oyer, 2006), the terms recessions and economic booms refer to periods when the national unemployment rate was relatively low or high.

Together these findings suggest that adversity tempers narcissism. Given that young adults who come of age in recessions tend to have a more difficult time finding jobs, establishing their careers, and constructing independent adult lives, this considerable adversity may thwart the development of a grandiose sense of self.

Another reason that coming of age during recessions may temper narcissism is that societal events, trends, and concerns tend to have a strong and enduring effect on young adults. Young adulthood is characterized by increased independence from one's family and childhood community and greater dependence on and attention to the macro-environment. Scholars have long noted that this is a particularly impressionable time in life. During this age, people typically first leave home, finish their education, and begin building a career and constructing an adult life (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968; Levinson, 1978). Perhaps more than at any life stage, the future remains uncertain and many different paths and selves remain possible (Arnett, 2000). Thus, this time period is typically a time of identity exploration and formation (Arnett, 2000; Duncan & Agronick, 1995; Erikson, 1968; Levinson, 1978).

Macro-environmental conditions during this period can leave a lasting mark on people's world views and behaviors. As young adults become less dependent on their childhood families and communities, they become more dependent on and attuned to the greater environment (e.g., Arnett, 2000). Thus, people tend to have a particular affinity for movies (Holbrook & Schindler, 1994), music (Holbrook & Schindler, 1989), and books (Rubin, Rahhal, & Poon, 1998) that were popular during their late adolescence and early adulthood. Moreover, people more frequently and accurately recall historical events that occurred during this period and regard these events as particularly meaningful and formative (Duncan & Agronick, 1995; Rubin et al. 1998).

Macroeconomic experiences during these impressionable years tend to leave a particularly lasting imprint on later attitudes, beliefs, and values, often in ways that reflect the concerns of the period when they came of age (e.g., Giuliano & Spilimbergo, 2009; Inglehart, 1997; Malmendier

& Nagel, 2011). For instance, people who come of age amidst relative wealth tend to embrace postmodernist values including individualism, tolerance for diversity, and self-transcendence (Inglehart, 1997). People who come of age during times of relative economic scarcity or major national conflicts, on the other hand, tend to prioritize survival values including conformity and respect for authority.

Several features of economic recessions are likely to undermine narcissism. First, signals of economic scarcity are associated with greater interdependence or other-orientation (Bianchi, 2016; Park, Greenfield, & Twenge, 2014). During recessions, popular music tends to be more other-oriented and Americans tend to place more emphasis on other-oriented socialization and personal values (Bianchi, 2016). For instance, during the Great Recession, American teenagers became more interested in prosocial causes and less attuned to material distinction (Park et al., 2014). Recessions engender uncertainty which appears to temper self-sufficiency and foster interdependence (Bianchi, 2016).

Conversely, booms tend to be associated with more self-oriented behavior. For instance, during prosperous time, Americans tend to choose more unusual names for their children and are more likely to socialize their children to be autonomous rather than interdependent. Similarly, popular music tends to be more self-focused during good economic times, while teenagers become more materialistic (Bianchi, 2016; Park, Twenge, & Greenfield, 2014). Wealth facilitates self-focus because it allows people to satisfy their own needs without relying on others. Self-focus and adulation is only viable when people are not dependent on others to satisfy their basic needs. As such, even transient signals of wealth make people more apt to work and play alone and to physically distance themselves from others (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006). In short, signals of affluence foster self-sufficient and self-interested behavior even in the absence of individual financial gains. At an extreme, self-focus or individualism can result in narcissistic beliefs, whereby the self is seen as unique from and superior to surrounding others. Indeed, more individ-

ualistic countries tend to score higher on narcissism (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003), as do individuals from higher-income families (Piff, 2014).

Additional support for the possibility that recessions may temper narcissism among young adults comes from the evidence showing that many of the values and behaviors associated with coming of age in an economic recession are negatively correlated with narcissism. For instance, people who come of age in recessions tend to be more grateful for their jobs (Bianchi, 2013), an other-oriented sentiment rarely embraced by narcissists (Bono, Emmons, & McCullough, 2004). Moreover, people who experience economic stagnation during their impressionable years are less likely to break rules at work for their own financial gain (Bianchi & Mohliver, 2016). For instance, in one recent study, Bianchi and Mohliver (2016) found that CEOs who came of age in recessions were less likely to backdate their stock options, a common unethical practice in the 1990s that came at the expense of shareholder value and company earnings. Narcissists, however, are more likely to cheat than are non-narcissists, in part because they believe that they are less likely to be beset by guilt (Brunell, Staats, Barden, & Hupp, 2011).

Recent research supports the contention that people who come of age in a recession are less likely to be narcissistic in later life than their counterparts who come of age in more prosperous times. One recent paper found that coming of age during worse economic times was associated with lower narcissism scores later in life (Bianchi, 2014). This pattern emerged among large, representative cross-sections of American adults. It also emerged among CEOs. Recent work has suggested that narcissistic CEOs tend to receive considerably higher salaries than the next most highly paid executive (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). CEOs have some control over their own salaries and considerable control over the salaries of other members of their management team. More narcissistic CEOs tend to earn considerably more than other senior employees, suggesting that these CEOs believe that they are uniquely valuable and important to the company. The

results showed that CEOs who came of age in recessions were substantially less likely to score highly on this behavioral measure of narcissism. Subsequent research has similarly found that people who come of age in recessions have more modest narcissism scores (Leckelt et al., 2016), though this more recent research suggests that the effect is limited to men.

These findings have some important implications for our understanding of the development and maintenance of narcissism. First, they add to the body of research, suggesting that culture contributes to a sense of grandiosity and self-importance (e.g., Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Keith Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Scholars have argued that narcissism has increased in recent decades in part because of cultural changes which have facilitated self-focus (Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). For instance, social media seems to encourage people to display and celebrate their individuality and tout their distinctiveness. But past work has portrayed cultural changes favoring individualism as unfolding in a gradual and fairly linear way. Evidence of a relationship between recessions and narcissism similarly highlights the role of culture in cultivating or thwarting self-focus. However, this evidence suggests that these cultural forces can expand and recede over relatively short periods of time, depending in part on the economic environment.

These results provide perhaps somewhat encouraging news about the trajectory of narcissism among young Americans. There has been considerable academic and nonacademic concern that narcissism is increasing. The press has widely bemoaned the arrival of a self-absorbed, entitled, and lazy generation. This sentiment was summed up by a 2013 Time Magazine cover story in which young Americans were christened the “Me, Me, Me Generation.” Some academic work has supported this portrayal. For instance, Twenge et al. (2008) found that narcissism among college students exploded between 1979 and 2006, with successive cohorts becoming steadily more self-absorbed. But it is important to consider the economic trajectory of this time frame. It began with the recession of the early 1980s, in

which unemployment peaked at 9.7%, and in which the cultural forces favoring narcissism may have been subdued. It extended through the prosperous 1980s, a mild recession in the early 1990s, and then through the roaring 1990s, one of the most prosperous periods in American history. The two recessions during this period were relatively modest and short-lived. As a result, it is possible that this upward trajectory in narcissism was fueled by the general prosperity of this period. If so, then the Great Recession may thwart this upward trajectory. Moreover, unless the United States experiences another substantial boom, narcissism may not continue to rise in such steady succession.

While a reduction in narcissism following the Great Recession may be a welcome finding to many employers and older Americans, there are some possible negative consequences for individuals who come of age in bad economic times. For one, narcissism can have fairly sizable career advantages. For instance, narcissists are more likely to advocate for themselves in ways that are likely to help advance their careers (Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015). Indeed narcissists’ are comfortable celebrating their achievements and are skilled at garnering attention for their work. This type of behavior helps them attain leadership positions (Brunell et al., 2008) and obtain higher salaries (Hirschi & Jaensch, 2015). Thus, diminished narcissism among cohorts coming of age in bad economic times may have negative implications for their career progression and success. Indeed, past work has shown that recession graduates earn less than their boom time peers even decades into their careers (Kahn, 2010). Reduced narcissism may help explain this pattern.

Moreover, a more pessimistic view of these findings suggests that recessions erode not only narcissism but also self-esteem. Narcissism reflects excessive confidence, while self-esteem reflects healthy and appropriate confidence. While curbing narcissism is largely viewed positively, undermining self-esteem is not. It is possible that recessions undermine self-esteem in young adults as well as narcissism. Indeed, past work has shown that the shaky financial begin-

ning that many recession graduates are likely to have can delay residential independence, challenge perceptions of success, and undermine life satisfaction (Clark & Oswald, 1996). If so, then entering adulthood could leave a devastating imprint on the self-concepts of young adults.

Future Research

Our understanding of when and how economic recessions produce more humble adults is still in its infancy and there are many follow-up questions and puzzles that future research could continue to explore. One question is whether these effects emerge similarly throughout the population. For instance, it seems possible that these effects are more pronounced among people who are well-educated and from high-income families. These populations are most likely to have high and perhaps even grandiose expectations of what awaits them in adulthood. People without a college or even a high school degree, however, are not as likely to have lofty expectations about what the future may hold and as a result may be less prone to narcissism in the first place. Moreover, it is possible that people in lower-income families never fully enjoy the financial benefits of economic booms and therefore never adopt the sense of deservingness and entitlement that appear to drive these effects. Finally, past work suggests that wealthier and better educated people inhabit cultural worlds that emphasize individuality and uniqueness (e.g., Snibbe & Markus, 2005). As a result, people growing up in these settings may be particularly influenced by conditions that seem to thwart it.

Future research could also examine whether other types of noneconomic societal events can also leave a humbling imprint on the egos of young adults. For instance, major international conflicts or significant terrorist attacks may similarly subdue the egos of young adults. Some evidence suggests that Americans became more community-oriented after the September 11th terrorist attacks (e.g., Lowe & Fothergill, 2003). Indeed, after the attacks, a rising number of Americans reported donating to charity, giving

blood, and volunteering (Smith, Rasinski, & Toce, 2001). Thus, it seems likely that noneconomic adverse events may similarly temper individualism. As such, they also seem likely to curb narcissism among young adults.

Finally, future research could also explore whether personal adverse events during adulthood could similarly temper narcissism. One reason that economic recessions are likely to temper narcissism is that adverse events are often humbling reminders of one's vulnerability and limited control. As such, they are likely to calm a sense of grandiosity and superiority. If so, then adverse personal events during this stage, such as the death of a parent or a close friend, may similarly leave a humbling imprint on the egos of young adults.

Narcissism can have substantial individual and interpersonal consequences. Yet while we know a lot about the consequences of narcissism, we know relatively little about the causes of narcissism. The research discussed in this chapter suggests that narcissism can be influenced by the ethos and character of the surrounding culture. Moreover, these cultural factors appear to be especially influential for young adults.

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Narcissism as a Life Span Construct: Describing Fluctuations Using New Approaches

18

Patrick L. Hill and Brent W. Roberts

Abstract

Personality trait development has been linked to the major life transitions and developmental challenges individuals confront across the life span. This work typically focuses on how people may be encouraged to increase on the dispositional characteristics that promote success during these transitions, such as conscientiousness and emotional stability. The current chapter focuses on employing these same theoretical frameworks for understanding how individuals change on narcissism from adolescence through adulthood, focusing on “normal range” levels of narcissistic traits, rather than clinical manifestations. This chapter explores how individuals may change their dispositions as a result of experiencing the benefits in daily life associated with lower levels of narcissism. In addition, we describe how a socioanalytic approach to personality traits proffers new opportunities for considering how to change narcissism over time, by intervening upon the state-level manifesta-

tions of the trait. The chapter concludes by setting forth an agenda for future research, focusing on the need for additional studies that chart the trajectory of narcissism over time, as well as efforts to formally test the potential framework for explaining change in narcissism over time.

Keywords

Narcissism · Personality development · Sociogenomic trait intervention model · Adult role adoption

Debates frequently arise as to which birth cohort is the “greatest” generation. Support for claims often comes in the form of recognizing strong leadership from authority figures, such as political or military figures. This discussion also typically involves attacking the opposing generation by demonstrating how they were too “entitled” or harbored unjustified perceptions of their own grandiosity. However, empirical work on the topic of cohort-to-cohort differences has been more equivocal and controversial. Research has found at best modest (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008) and often little to no evidence (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2009; Roberts, Edmonds, & Grijalva, 2010; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008), in

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which cohorts differ on narcissism levels over recent decades. In fact, recent work suggests there may in fact be a downward trend when one employs more sophisticated analytic techniques (Wetzel et al., 2017). Instead of comparing generations, increasing work suggests that research should focus on within-person fluctuations in narcissism, with the notion that differences in narcissism may be better described as a developmental phenomenon than a generational one (Hill & Roberts, 2011). Put differently, it is valuable to consider the potential that, during certain periods of the life span (such as the transition from adolescence into adulthood), researchers should anticipate higher levels of narcissistic tendencies, regardless of the given cohort or generation. The key then is to understand why these fluctuations occur and to consider which models of personality trait change may assist in both explaining these tendencies and potentially informing interventions targeting narcissism levels over time.

This primary goal of the current chapter is to provide a foundation from which researchers can consider the development of narcissistic tendencies across the life span, primarily focusing on more grandiose manifestations, as discussed below. First, we will present the evidence that narcissism is not perfectly stable over time and instead demonstrates fluctuations both within-persons and between developmental periods. Second, we proceed to consider narcissism within the lens of two frameworks for personality trait change: the sociogenomic trait intervention model (Roberts, Hill, & Davis, 2017) and the invest-and-accrue model (Hill & Jackson, 2016). Both frameworks were initially employed to describe the development of conscientiousness, a generally valued trait; however, in building from these frameworks for discussing change in narcissism, we intend to demonstrate their broader utility for describing personality trait change. Third, building from these frameworks, we consider which developmental periods may be more or less promotive of increases in narcissism. In so doing, we provide future directions for research that directly tests these developmental predictions.

We will discuss narcissism as a multifaceted trait captured by inventories designed to assess

“normal” populations, rather than clinical manifestations. Specifically, we follow past psychometric work (Ackerman et al., 2011) in suggesting that narcissism inventories typically capture at least three unique facets of the trait: perceived leadership/authority, grandiosity and exhibitionism, and entitlement. As their labels suggest, leadership tends to be viewed as a more “adaptive” form of narcissism compared to the others (see also Hill & Roberts, 2012). Our discussion later in the chapter will focus on how this facet may fluctuate across the life span in response to developmental presses, in order to present clearer predictions regarding how narcissistic tendencies may change as a reflection of commitment to adult roles. However, as discussed next, most of the research supporting the potential for narcissism to change over time has focused on the trait as a more unitary construct.

Longitudinal Studies of Narcissism

Although studies are limited on this front, research on whether it is possible for narcissism to change over time have focused on two fronts. First, though the current chapter is focused on nonclinical manifestations of narcissism, it is important to acknowledge that clinical research has demonstrated the difficulty in changing narcissistic personality disorder (e.g., Clemence, Perry, & Plakun, 2009). However, evidence does suggest that individuals can fluctuate in their levels of clinical narcissism over time, insofar that some treatments may show efficacy for reductions in the disorder (see Cukrowicz, Poindexter, & Joiner, 2011, for a review). Second, though limited in number, longitudinal research also has investigated the childhood precursors to later narcissistic ideation. This work has focused primarily on parenting methods, demonstrating that certain practices are associated with higher narcissism in children than other parenting techniques (e.g., Cramer, 2011; Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006). For instance, parents who “overevaluate” their children’s capacities may place those children at greater risk for developing later narcissistic symptoms, relative to parents who instead provide greater warmth (Brummelman et al., 2015). Furthermore, parental hostility may

influence later levels of exploitativeness among adolescents (Wetzel & Robins, 2016). Though these studies often fail to assess narcissism at multiple occasions, they do suggest that narcissism should be viewed through a life span perspective, insofar that early experiences may predispose individuals to developing narcissistic characteristics as adolescents and adults.

Regarding longitudinal trajectories of narcissism, most extant studies have focused on identifying fluctuations prior to adulthood, typically defined as the teenage years and into the early twenties. Though limited in number, these studies often come to the conclusion that mean-level increases on narcissism are not common during childhood and adolescence (e.g., Barry & Lee-Rowland, 2015; Reijntjes et al., 2016). Moreover, one study attempted to identify different latent classes of trajectories in narcissism, and the three groups found in their sample all differed with respect to level, but none demonstrated significant changes in narcissism over time (Reijntjes et al. 2016). In other words, their overall sample failed to demonstrate mean-level increases over time, and it did not appear that the sample could be reliably characterized by differing patterns of change in narcissism over time. Accordingly, though more work is sorely needed in this area, thus far, the longitudinal evidence on narcissism does not support claims that individuals are prone to increase in narcissistic ideation prior to adulthood.

One potential explanation is that the tasks and challenges that confront individuals before adulthood may prove limited or inconsistent developmental presses for changes in narcissism. Personality theorists have frequently pointed to the transition to adulthood as a period wherein individuals often are pressured to commit to societally prescribed roles (e.g., work, community engagement, building a family) or face potential risks to reputation and status (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). Similarly, psychoanalytic and developmental theorists have suggested that it may in fact benefit individuals to hold more grandiose or idealized self-views during the preadult years, insofar that these grandiose impressions may assist to buffer the individual against feelings of self-doubt following the inevitable diffi-

culties inherent in the process of starting to make these important life decisions on one's own (e.g., Blos, 1962; Elkind, 1967). Indeed, this transitory period has been described as the "crucible of personality development" (Roberts & Davis, 2016), insofar that researchers have had greater success with defining consistent mean-level patterns of personality trait change, and with identifying potential catalysts for these changes, often focusing on the role commitments made during this period. Our focus in the sections ahead then is to present two models that can help researchers understand why the movement from adolescence and emerging adulthood (a period ranging from 18 to around 25–30 years old; Arnett, 2000) into adulthood may engender developmental changes in narcissism.

Narcissism Development from an Invest-and-Accrue Approach

Given these reasons to focus on narcissism during emerging and young adult years (see also Paulsen, Syed, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2015), it is important to consider potential frameworks that may explain fluctuations in narcissism postadolescence and to motivate future longitudinal research on narcissism trajectories in adulthood. As alluded to earlier, one such framework is the social investment model (Roberts, Wood, & Smith, 2005), which posits that the adoption of societally prescribed adult roles changes one in ways that promote the successful adoption of those roles. Previous work has discussed how social investment theory may be employed for describing narcissism from a life span developmental perspective (Hill & Roberts, 2011). As such, below, we add to this work by evaluating narcissism using two more recent offshoots of that original theory, which help describe why and when personality traits may be likely to change.

One framework for consideration is the invest-and-accrue model of personality change (Hill & Jackson, 2016), which focuses on volitional efforts to change personality as a result of experiencing benefits from higher levels of trait. This framework was initially developed to help

explain why individuals fluctuate on conscientiousness over time, a trait known to be associated with life success across different domains. It therefore may seem less intuitive for considering narcissism, a trait typically viewed as negative in nature. However, facets of narcissism have been differentially associated with well-being and occupational success. For instance, leadership appears associated with greater life satisfaction, at least among emerging adults (Hill & Roberts, 2012). Moreover, some research suggests that individuals higher on narcissism may fare better in job interviews, if it leads to the perception that they are assertive (Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2013).

Accordingly, it may be beneficial to assert oneself as a leader during the transition to adulthood and roles within the workplace. Implicit evidence for this claim comes from research suggesting that women tended to score higher on assertiveness as they gained greater opportunities in the workplace (Twenge, 2001). The invest-and-accrue framework can assist in explaining these trends insofar that individuals may deepen their tendencies toward leadership and assertiveness, under the assumption that these traits will allow them to accrue later benefits across life domains. Benefits often are evidenced with respect to greater life satisfaction, which may explain why leadership is linked to life satisfaction primarily for emerging and young adults (Hill & Roberts, 2011). Similarly, focusing on personal financial and occupational success appears important for well-being during the transition to adulthood (Hill, Jackson, Roberts, Lapsley, & Brandenberger, 2011), goals seemingly aligned with higher levels of assertiveness and leadership.

Extrapolating from these points, it also helps to explain the increasing evidence for “developmental me” instead of “generation me” (Hill & Roberts, 2011). If young adulthood is a period wherein greater leadership and assertiveness are adaptive, it would support claims that all generations tend to be higher on narcissism during this developmental period. That said, research is limited with respect to testing the claims of an invest-and-accrue model. Longitudinal studies

are needed to understand whether individuals “invest” more in their leadership and assertiveness tendencies during this developmental period and, in turn, whether these trait changes are met with concurrent benefits in the form of increased life satisfaction, which would align with correlational work with age differences (Hill & Roberts, 2012). Contrarily, once the longer-term benefits associated with “investment” in narcissistic tendencies fail to pan out, the individual should be less motivated to be an assertive leader. For instance, during developmental periods of greater community involvement and connectedness (such as middle and older adulthood), it is less likely that being assertive will promote life satisfaction, and thus the benefit accrual will fail to occur.

Narcissism Development from a Sociogenomic Trait Perspective

The sociogenomic perspective (Roberts & Jackson, 2008; Roberts, 2018) centers on the notion that personality traits are not static constructs. Though similar to the invest-and-accrue model in some of its predictions, as noted below, the sociogenomic perspective can provide a more detailed account of the dynamics underlying personality change. Believing traits to be unmalleable would run counter to our knowledge of human development, insofar that most, but not all people in most places tend to change systematically on personality traits as they age. The challenge for personality science was to explain how change in traits came about, given the fact that the primary theoretical models did not provide a mechanistic explanation of this process. The sociogenomic model of traits argues for a bottom-up process, where experiences accumulate. In order to respond to the common developmental presses associated with the environments individuals encounter in adulthood (e.g., starting a family, community engagement, workplace, etc.), most people respond to the incentives of young adulthood by increasing in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. Of course,

not all individuals experience the social investment press or respond similarly even if they do.

This invites the question of how the bottom-up process would work for a trait constellation like narcissism. Presumably, to produce changes in narcissism would entail “pressing” individuals to be in trait-promoting situations over time, under the expectation that consistent manifestations of personality states will aggregate toward changing the individual at the trait level. In turn, these presses will influence the individual’s behavior in future novel circumstances (Roberts et al., 2017).

How would this process result in change in narcissism? First, it should be noted that narcissism, being somewhat the opposite of agreeableness, would be contradicted by normative life-course incentives to change. Presumably, then, experiences in relationships and workplaces in young adulthood would act to counter narcissistic tendencies for most people. However, other facets of narcissism, such as leadership, may be promoted with age and experience. One can see clear applications in daily life where experiences in young adulthood would result in increases in confidence and assertiveness. For instance, leadership summits and other seminars focused on occupational achievement promote individuals to view themselves as “good leaders” with a “natural talent for influencing people,” directly captured by items on the leadership/authority facet of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Ackerman et al., 2011). Similar themes are present in several self-help books that encourage individuals to reduce their self-doubt.

Moreover, the sociogenomic trait intervention model (Roberts et al., 2017) points to important moderators that will influence the extent to which motivations, either personal- or intervention-based, lead to shifts in narcissism. Specifically, the model suggests that the extent to which motives to change personality actually lead to changes in personality is dependent on (a) their original standing on the trait, (b) the environment, (c) the amount of time needed to infect change, and (d) the developmental timing. We have outlined above the potential roles for developmental timing and environment on change, and the clinical literature at least suggests that the amount of

time needed to change may be significant. Regarding initial standing on the trait, a fair question then would be whether narcissistic individuals would be motivated to change their own personality. We know from prior research that narcissists are well aware of their grandiosity and the fact that they sometimes come across negatively to others (Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011). Narcissists genuinely believe that they are superior to other people and that others’ negative reactions are a sign that the other people fail to appreciate the narcissist’s specialness. It may be then that people high in narcissism may be less motivated to change than others.

Assuming that the press of experience might register in the psyche of some narcissists, how would the remaining factors contribute to changes in narcissism? Given the focus of this chapter, this latest element provides an interesting consideration regarding when motivations to be (or not to be) narcissistic depend on when in the life span these motivations occur. For instance, middle adulthood and often older adulthood are periods wherein individuals are expected to hold stronger connections to their community (Havighurst, 1972; Hutteman, Hennecke, Orth, Reitz, & Specht, 2014), requirements that typically are hindered by acting in narcissistic and overly assertive states. As such, the sociogenomic trait intervention model (Roberts et al., 2017) may provide an explanation again for why adolescence and emerging adulthood may be periods of more pronounced narcissistic tendencies, if one considers societal expectations as an “intervention” of sorts that describes when narcissistic states are more appropriate.

Future Directions

An obvious direction then for future research is to formally test the extent to which these two frameworks can advance our understanding of when and why narcissism changes across the life span, particularly given that neither were initially designed for considering trait narcissism. The invest-and-accrue perspective (Hill & Jackson, 2016), similar to the social investment model

(Roberts et al., 2005), would predict that life span trajectories of narcissism should map onto those developmental periods during which narcissistic tendencies provide long-term benefits with respect to societally prescribed roles. As such, one would predict correlated changes between measures of perceived life success (such as life satisfaction) and those on narcissism during these periods of the life span. The sociogenomic trait intervention model, though, provides more insight into the bottom-up effects that may change narcissism at the trait level over time and clearly suggests that motivations to change narcissism may be more influential during certain developmental periods more than others.

Implicit in these models is the need first for additional longitudinal research into how trait narcissism fluctuates over time. Though limited in nature, the recent studies described earlier provide immensely valuable insights into whether we should expect normative mean-level changes in narcissism during the adolescent years, and work now is needed to follow participants from childhood into adulthood. On this front, we would encourage researchers to adopt sophisticated analytic approaches for studying personality change that test for and potentially account for measurement invariance across assessment occasions. Indeed, recent work on cohort effects has shown the clear need to avoid simply evaluating manifest means when charting levels of narcissism (Wetzel et al., in press). Such concerns likely are even greater for longitudinal studies, as the meanings for specific items (such as being a good leader) on prominent narcissism inventories are likely to shift for individuals across the life span.

Along this front, it is worth considering whether and when it is appropriate to assess trait narcissism using identical measures for differently aged samples. Though it is easier to adopt identical measures across time from a methodological and statistical perspective, developmental theorists would be likely to critique efforts that employed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) in an identical format for young children as for adolescents and then adults, given the item content may not be developmentally appropriate for all three groups. In support, efforts have been taken to develop

child- and adolescent-specific measures of narcissism that deviate in content from the NPI (see, e.g., Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). A challenge for researchers in the years ahead is to strike a balance between measuring narcissism using developmentally appropriate assessments while still allowing for insights to be reached regarding how levels of trait narcissism actually change over the life span.

These are neither unique nor easy challenges for personality and developmental psychologists; indeed, for most constructs in these fields, one could call for increased longitudinal research as well as efforts to develop more developmentally appropriate measures. That said, progress toward more rigorous developmental studies of the construct may have been hindered, relative to other individual difference variables, given that most studies have focused instead on outlining its maladaptive nature instead of considering that developmental increases on narcissism may be both normative and even beneficial. As such, the field has been left with a great number of experimental studies on the social aspects of narcissism, with a surprisingly limited view on how the trait actually develops over time. The current chapter sought to provide a foundation for future work on this front, by demonstrating how frameworks used to explain fluctuations on other personality dimensions could inform future longitudinal studies of narcissism. As such, we hope the next generation of research focuses less on identifying narcissistic generations and more on how we generate narcissism.

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Did Narcissism Evolve?

19

Nicholas S. Holtzman

Abstract

This chapter, like each chapter in the edited book, focuses on narcissism (arrogance, exploitativeness, self-admiration, etc.). My goal is to entertain and evaluate the possibility that narcissism evolved. It is important to point out that, by way of background, just because something is morally suspect does not mean that it didn't evolve; indeed, bad things can evolve. But despite narcissism being heritable, there is no direct evidence that narcissism is caused by specific genes, indicating that the evolutionary mechanisms are unknown. Through which pathways—such as mating pathways—does narcissism get passed onto the next generation? Narcissism appears to be positively correlated with short-term mating (e.g., promiscuity), suggesting that narcissism gets pushed into subsequent generations via promiscuous activity. The idea that narcissism evolved via short-term mating, however, is currently questionable, mainly because narcissists are not physically attractive at the unadorned level; in theory, narcissists should be attractive at the unadorned level because short-term mating situations select for raw attractiveness. All told, the prospect of narcissism having

evolved is in a precarious position as of this writing. Several gaps in the literature lead to a call for more molecular genetic research and collaborative, large-scale behavioral research.

Keywords

Evolution · Evolutionary psychology · Genes · Mating · Narcissism · Short-term mating

Narcissism involves traits like arrogance, exploitativeness, and self-admiration (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). In this chapter, I entertain and critically evaluate the hypothesis that my colleagues and I have offered, namely, that individual differences in narcissism are at least partially due to evolutionary factors (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015; Holtzman & Strube, 2011). Although narcissism is generally perceived to be a bad quality or at best a neutral quality (Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012), it very well may have served some evolutionary function. Indeed, sometimes traits that are disadvantageous to other organisms can be advantageous for the organism who enacts this “bad” behavior (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). For example, a man who cheats on his partner, without the woman noticing, may accrue evolutionary benefits (e.g., additional offspring) and may not incur substantial costs (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). By this logic, it is plausible

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that narcissism was selected, despite the fact that it contains some socially aversive facets (Paulhus, 1998; Wurst et al., 2017). Moreover, it is worth pointing out that narcissism could have been selected on the whole, even if some facets of narcissism were selected against.

The seed for the idea that narcissism evolved can be found in sociobiology (Wilson, 1975) and evolutionary psychology (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1995; Buss, 1995)—schools of thought that helped form Linda Mealey’s idea that sociopathy evolved (Mealey, 1995). In 2002, Paulhus and Williams coined the term the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Combining these literatures, and based on the finding that narcissism is linked to short-term mating (Foster, Shrirra, & Campbell, 2006; Reise & Wright, 1996), scholars argued that the dark triad—Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy—served the evolutionary function of facilitating short-term mating, at least in men (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009). It is within this context that my mentor and I formulated the first evolutionary theory focused specifically on narcissism (Holtzman & Strube, 2011). We hypothesized that narcissism evolved in concert with the viability of short-term mating (STM). It is worth noting that others have argued that it is specific to men (Jonason et al., 2009), but we avoid that claim (Holtzman & Strube, 2011); the data seems to support the idea that STM is positively correlated with narcissism among women too (Carter, Campbell, & Muncer, 2014; Holtzman & Strube, 2013a; Jauk et al., 2016). Our evolutionary hypothesis was followed by a chapter (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015), which refined some of these ideas.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on the evolution of narcissism (especially in relation to the theory that narcissism evolved via STM), to critically evaluate it, and to provide some ideas for future research.

Evidence Needed to Support an Evolutionary Theory of Narcissism

If narcissism evolved, then several pieces of evidence should manifest. First, it should be evident that there are genes for narcissism. Second, it should be clear that narcissism is tied to a mating function—a means by which to propagate the genes across generations. Relatedly, there should be markers of this mating function that should be correlated with narcissism. The paragraphs that follow will elaborate on this evolutionary logic and lay the groundwork for evaluating the idea that narcissism evolved. I will focus especially on the notion that narcissism evolved by way of short-term mating (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015; Holtzman & Strube, 2010, 2011).

Heritability and Genes Associated with Narcissism

Narcissism, like almost every personality trait, is heritable (Coolidge, Thede, & Jang, 2001, 2004; Livesley, Jang, Jackson, & Vernon, 1993; Luo, Cai, & Song, 2014; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008). Long ago, it was the case that the heritability of some trait served as a springboard for evolutionary hypotheses, but more recent work has revealed that such behavioral genetic evidence is not sufficient justification for creating an evolutionary theory about a trait. Heritability estimates contain correlations between genes and environment as well as contain interactions, such as gene \times gene interactions and gene \times environment interactions (Johnson, Penke, & Spinath, 2011). Moreover, heritability does not automatically signify a genetic substrate (Jackson, Hill, & Roberts, 2011). This means that it becomes far too easy to conflate the notion that “narcissism is heritable” with the notion that “narcissism has an immutable genetic substrate” (Jackson et al., 2011). As a consequence, on the basis of behavior genetic studies of narcissism, it is easy to mistakenly infer that specific genes for

narcissism necessarily were passed along from parents to offspring.

One prerequisite for an evolutionary theory of narcissism is that there must be genes that get passed from parents to offspring—genes that capture variance in narcissism. As noted in a previous chapter on this topic (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015), such a link between narcissism and specific genes has been elusive. Narcissism is linked to high extraversion and disagreeableness (Paulhus, 2001), but extraversion and disagreeableness are not linked to specific genes (De Moor et al., 2012). One key trait highly correlated with narcissism—antisocial personality disorder—was indeed recently linked to particular genes (Rautiainen et al., 2016). Like antisocial personality disorder, narcissism is an externalizing trait (Harford et al., 2013), leaving room for the possibility that antisocial personality disorder and narcissism share genes in common. All in all, the evidence is currently mixed that there are genes for narcissism (for a discussion of one gene by environment interaction, see Sadeh et al., 2010).

A Mating Pathway by Which Narcissism Could Have Evolved

If there are genes that code for narcissism, and if narcissism evolved, then it would have to be the case that the narcissistic genes get propagated somehow. That is, there would have to be a reproductive pathway by which the genes get passed on to the next generation. Holtzman and Strube (2011) hypothesized that short-term mating is the pathway by which that has occurred. The theory is that the putative genes underlying narcissism and the putative genes underlying short-term mating are (in theory) the same genes, and these genetic substrates compete against other sets of genetic substrates (e.g., underlying long-term mating) for propagation. Nature achieves a balance of such strategies in the population (Buss, 2009; Penke, Denissen, & Miller, 2007).

The evidence that narcissism is tied to short-term mating is somewhat mixed. Some data

gathered on the topic points to a large positive correlation (Holtzman & Strube, 2013a). Others have found medium correlations (Reise & Wright, 1996; Schmitt, 2017; Wurst et al., 2017), small correlations (Jones & de Roos, 2016, Study 1), or correlations that are not statistically different from zero (Jones & de Roos, 2016, Study 2). No studies show a negative correlation between narcissism and short-term mating. Taken together, the best estimate for the link between short-term mating and narcissism is that it is positive and small to medium in size (perhaps $r = 0.15\text{--}0.25$). It is worth noting that this association may be driven by the larger association between psychopathy and STM (Jones & de Roos, 2016), but the partialing methods used to argue against a narcissism-STM correlation have been called into question (Sleep, Lynam, Hyatt, & Miller, *in press*).

How does this positive correlation between narcissism and STM manifest? Are narcissists doing the choosing or are they being chosen? Most of the available evidence based on behavioral studies points to narcissists *not* being engaged in the active pursuit of STM. One clue as to whether narcissists are pursuing STM is whether they are selective regarding potential STM partners—selectiveness would be taken as a sign that narcissists are not that interested in STM (Jonason, Valentine, Li, & Harbeson, 2011). While some researchers have found that narcissists are not more or less selective than average (Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013), others have shown that narcissists are more selective than average—choosing “trophy partners” (Jauk et al., 2016); thus, the literature based on behavioral designs suggests that narcissists may not actively pursue STM. That is, the behavioral work in this domain tends to show that, if anything, narcissists are being more selective, signifying that they don’t pursue STM indiscriminately. (Admittedly, it remains possible that narcissists pursue STM but only in a discriminating way (e.g., with serial “trophy partners”); however, currently, the literature is not advanced enough to evaluate this possibility.) The research based on self-report questionnaires is more straightforward; it tends

to show that narcissists are actively pursuing STM (Foster, Shenese, & Goff, 2009; Jonason et al., 2009, 2011; Schmitt, 2017). Schmitt and colleagues (2017) conducted a massive cross-cultural self-report study of narcissism and short-term mating and concluded that narcissism is indeed positively linked to the active pursuit of STM. Thus, some research (largely based on behavioral work) suggests that narcissists are not actively pursuing STM, but other research (largely based on self-report studies) suggests that narcissists are actively pursuing STM.

The second possibility that helps explain the link between narcissism and STM is that narcissists are being sought out by others for STM, allegedly because they have “good genes” (Byers & Waits, 2006; Hamilton & Zuk, 1982). Indeed, this seems to be the case in one speed-dating study (Jauk et al., 2016)—narcissism entails positive effects, especially in short-term contexts. So, it seems that a key reason narcissists are engaging in STM is because of their prospective partners’ choices (Cronin, 1993; Darwin, 1871; Gangestad, 2000; Trivers, 1972). Thus, narcissists have more opportunities for STM because they are being sexually selected for STM (Gangestad, Garver-Apgar, Simpson, & Cousins, 2007). More work is needed to corroborate this finding, especially given that some of the studies mentioned in this paragraph have been underpowered ($Ns < 100$).

If narcissism was sexually selected specifically for STM, then we can derive some falsifiable hypotheses from this theory: First, because attractiveness is differentially valued in STM partners (Li & Kenrick, 2006), narcissism—which is a variant of STM according to the theory—should be associated with attractiveness in general; indeed, this is the case (Holtzman & Strube, 2010). However, this correlation could be due to self-regulation of appearance (Egan & McCorkindale, 2007; Holtzman & Strube, 2010; Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007). For instance, it could be the case that narcissists do things to make themselves look more attractive than they actually are (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). So, it might not be the case that narcissists are more attractive in the raw (i.e., unadorned appearance—without

being able to alter one’s appearance). Based on this idea, Holtzman and Strube (2013b) set out to test the idea that narcissism should be associated with unadorned attractiveness specifically. We found that narcissism is not associated with unadorned attractiveness (Holtzman & Strube, 2013b). This means that narcissists aren’t innately more attractive than average—quite honestly, a blow to our evolutionary theory of narcissism. It is reasonable, however, that narcissism might be associated with unadorned attractiveness in specific mating contexts, such as STM contexts. Yet one study showed that in STM contexts, the face images of narcissists were viewed as less attractive than the face images of people low in narcissism (Lyons & Simeonov, 2016). Another way to test this idea is to correlate narcissism with physical symmetry on bilateral features (Rhodes, 2006)—a proposed indicator of raw attractiveness (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1994). Based on my dissertation data, however, there was little to no evidence that narcissism is associated with being more symmetrical ($r = -0.002$), even though my collaborators and I did indeed find that socially aversive traits were associated with greater symmetry (Holtzman, Augustine, & Senne, 2011). All in all, the idea that narcissism is positively associated with unadorned physical attractiveness is in question. At this juncture, this raises concerns about the theory that narcissism evolved in concert with short-term mating (Holtzman & Strube, 2011). It seems evident that STM contexts would heavily select for raw physical attractiveness (Li & Kenrick, 2006), but the evidence does not support this view. At the same time, it is possible that some self-regulatory trait like vanity is genetic and that this enables the self-regulation of appearance; however, there is no evidence at this time as to whether vanity involves specific genes.

Evaluation of the Theory that Narcissism Evolved

Table 19.1 summarizes my evaluation of the theory that narcissism evolved. The fact that narcissism is both heritable and that neighboring traits

Table 19.1 Evaluation of the theory that narcissism evolved

<i>If narcissism evolved, then all of the following must be the case:</i>
Narcissism is heritable; <i>evidence is clearly in favor of this</i>
There are genes for traits tightly linked to narcissism; <i>some evidence is in favor of this</i>
There are genes for narcissism specifically; <i>no evidence for this; little research done</i>
<i>If the STM variant of the theory is true, then at least one of the following must be the case:</i>
Narcissists pursue STM; <i>there is mixed evidence for this</i>
Other people select narcissists for STM; <i>there is evidence in favor of this</i>
<i>If the STM variant of the theory is true, then both of the following must be the case:</i>
Narcissism confers unadorned attractiveness; <i>the correlation is near zero</i>
Narcissism is linked to a reproductive pathway that could lead to fitness benefits; <i>the evidence is in favor of this</i>

(externalizing tendencies) have some genetic evidence for them indicates that there is still some possibility that narcissism did indeed evolve. However, there is no evidence currently for specific genes for narcissism, and thus it is important to be very cautious in assuming that narcissistic genes exist.

Importantly, however, a major hypothesis of the theory of narcissism having evolved (at least in our version of it) is that narcissism should be associated with attractiveness at the unadorned level (i.e., when in a neutral outfit or from neutral photographs of the face). It appears that—although narcissists are attractive when they are allowed to dress up—narcissists are no more attractive than average at the unadorned (raw) level.

Although it is relatively evident that narcissism has some nontrivial zero-order relationship with STM, this is not sufficient evidence to support an evolutionary perspective. There are numerous ways in which narcissism could have become tied to STM across development as a function of environmental events. Thus, the link between narcissism and STM is a necessary but not sufficient element of the evolutionary theory.

Taken together, the evidence leaves room for other perspectives on the evolution of narcissism—such as perspectives about dominance (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010), overconfidence (Johnson & Fowler, 2011), and reactive heritability (Holtzman, 2011; Holtzman & Donnellan, 2015), where reactive heritability means that there are no genes for the trait per se but rather genes for physical traits to which an individual calibrates their psychological selves (Lukaszewski, 2011; Lukaszewski & Roney, 2011, 2015; Tooby & Cosmides, 1990).

Future Directions

Perhaps the most important discovery regarding the evolution of narcissism would be finding genes linked to narcissism. In the absence of such a finding, it is difficult if not impossible to claim that narcissism evolved; arguments about the pathways by which narcissism evolved are secondary to this primary research goal. It is recommended that researchers pursuing genetic mechanisms of personality include measures of narcissism in their research.

Given the mixed evidence on whether narcissism is linked to the active pursuit of STM, it seems that this literature is in need of rigorous large-scale studies. The extant large-scale studies have (understandably) relied on self-reports (e.g., Schmitt, 2017); there are a few studies that have used peer reports (e.g., Holtzman & Strube, 2013a); one problem with self- and peer report methods is that they are susceptible to random responding which can counterintuitively inflate correlation magnitudes (Holtzman & Donnellan, 2017; Huang, Liu, & Bowling, 2015). Importantly, this has been shown to impact narcissism scores; it likely impacts STM scores too; thus, it may inflate the narcissism-STM correlation. This leads me to call for more behavioral research on narcissism (Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010). The two rigorous behavioral studies done to date have both reported that narcissism is not associated with active pursuit of STM, but these have relied on very small samples (Dufner et al., 2013; Jauk et al., 2016). It seems that this

behavioral research (albeit clearly limited in statistical power) points to narcissists being *chosen for STM*, rather than vice versa. (Briefly, it is worth noting some other possible explanations for why narcissists self-report more STM—such as narcissists engaging in some self-deceptive process in which they fool themselves into believing that they pursue STM (and thus report pursuing STM) even though in reality they do not pursue STM.) All in all, it seems prudent to call for more rigorous, large sample, behavioral research into narcissism and STM. This will help reveal whether narcissists are actively pursuing STM, whether others pursue narcissists for STM, or whether some other process (e.g., self-deception) is driving the apparent link between narcissism and the pursuit of STM.

It will be necessary to conduct a comprehensive large-sample study exploring whether narcissists are viewed as more attractive for STM. The sole study on this (Lyons & Simeonov, 2016) needs to be replicated, ideally in different cultures, as the implications are far-reaching. This future study should involve higher ecological validity (not mere choice of stimuli but choices that entail that one would actually date the individual chosen).

One final future direction is to explore narcissism at the facet level in the context of evolutionary theorizing. It is quite possible that one or two of the facets of narcissism have been adaptive while other facets have not. For example, it is possible that risk-taking—a narcissistic feature (Foster & Trimm, 2008)—confers advantages (e.g., via accruing resources; Foster, Reidy, Misra, & Goff, 2011; Kuhnén & Chiao, 2009) while self-absorption serves little evolutionary purpose or is simply maladaptive. Going forward, it will be helpful for researchers to consider narcissism at the facet level.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite narcissism being heritable, there is no direct evidence that narcissism is caused by specific genes. Narcissism appears to be positively correlated with STM; however, the idea that narcissism evolved via STM is currently question-

able, mainly because narcissists are not physically attractive at the unadorned level (Holtzman & Strube, 2013b). The literature on the evolution of narcissism is in a precarious position at the moment. There are several gaps in the literature that need to be filled in order to more fully evaluate the plausibility of the idea that narcissism evolved—and these gaps won't be filled by doing simple (e.g., self-report) studies. It is time for researchers to pool their resources and start doing large-sample, rigorous, behavioral studies (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007) and molecular genetic studies (ala: Rautiainen et al., 2016), which may help begin to elucidate the origins of narcissism.

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Generational Differences in Narcissism and Narcissistic Traits

20

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Abstract

Research related to narcissism is controversial in many regards. Debates about classification, conceptualization, and categorization of narcissism and narcissistic traits continue to rage into the present. However, of all the current debates related to narcissism, perhaps the most intense and contentious are those related to generational differences in narcissism. Beginning in mid-2000s, research emerged suggesting that younger generations were more narcissistic than older generations, both cross-sectionally and cross-temporally. In response to these claims, numerous rebuttals and counterarguments emerged. These debates have continued into the present, with each side of this debate presenting new evidence or rebuttals within the past 2 years. The present chapter seeks to review and synthesize this disparate and contentious literature into a cohesive whole, highlighting clearly established findings, areas of contention, and areas of ongoing debate. Future directions for research are also proposed.

Keywords

Grandiosity · Entitlement · Cross-temporal analysis · Individualism · Volunteerism · Generation · Millennials

I am about to do what old people have done throughout history: call those younger than me lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow. But I have studies! I have statistics! I have quotes from respected academics! Unlike my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents, I have proof. – Stein, 2013

The above quote was the featured lede into the 2013 *Time* magazine cover story, “The Me, Me, Me, Generation.” Although the story went on to extol the virtues of the millennial generation and later framed rising individualism and narcissism in much more positive terms, the dramatic introduction to the article captures a sentiment that has become extremely popular in recent years: Young adults—particularly millennials—are persistently referred to as the most narcissistic, self-obsessed, and entitled generation to date (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Beginning in 2008, empirical reports started to note significant increases in measures of narcissism (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008a). These reports were joined by other studies confirming the same idea (e.g., Twenge & Foster, 2008, 2010; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008b), popular works detailing these trends in layman’s terms (e.g., Twenge, 2006, 2014; Twenge & Campbell,

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2009), popular weblogs decrying the crisis of increased narcissism (Gillespie, 2014; Oleksinski, 2016), and popular print media popularizing the idea (Davidow, 2013; Dingfelder, 2011; Dombek, 2016; Quenqua, 2013; Williams, 2016). And these popular works have not been without effect, as public perceptions of young adults describe them as being more narcissistic, entitled, and overconfident than prior generations (Grubbs, Exline, McCain, Campbell, & Twenge, 2016; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). In short, as empirical evidence of increases in narcissism mounted, the popular saturation of these ideas became much more intense, as did controversies surrounding the evidence.

In response to initial empirical works detailing the rise of narcissism in recent generations, critical commentaries, purportedly disconfirming reports, and skeptical replies began to emerge (e.g., Arnett, 2013; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2009; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). The points raised by these diverse rebuttals often varied, but the central arguments were consistent: generational differences in narcissism are, at best, overstated and, at worst, completely illusory (Roberts, Edmonds, & Grijalva, 2010). At present, the debate between these opposing viewpoints still soldiers on (e.g., Paulsen, Syed, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2015; Twenge, Carter, & Campbell, 2017), with each “side” regularly presenting new evidence to support either the presence or absence of generational differences in narcissism (e.g., Wetzel et al., 2017).

Rather than conclusively determine which “side” may be correct, the purpose of the present review is to examine the findings relevant to generational differences in narcissistic personality traits, to consider critiques of such evidence, to establish key conclusions that can be drawn from this literature, and to consider the implications of and future directions for these lines of research.

Generational Differences in Narcissism

The idea that younger generations are more narcissistic or self-centered has a long history (e.g., Horace, *Odes*, III, vi, l. 46; as translated by

Gladstone, 1894). However, it was not until shortly after the turn of the twenty-first century that the long-standing speculations of ancient poets began to gain empirical support. Specifically, in 2008, Twenge and colleagues (2008a) published a cross-temporal meta-analysis of Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) scores from 1979 to 2006. Twenge included studies of undergraduates in the United States at 4-year institutions that reported means for the 40-item forced-choice version of the NPI. Reviewing 85 samples that included over 16,000 participants, results indicated that NPI scores had indeed risen by an average effect size of $d = .33$ in recent samples in comparison with earlier samples. Intuitively, such findings led the authors to conclude that there were generational differences in narcissistic traits, with recent generations demonstrating greater levels of such traits.

Concurrent with the release of the aforementioned evidence, some works immediately disputed the findings, suggesting that NPI scores had not truly increased in recent generations (e.g., Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008a, 2008b). Citing evidence from specific samples (e.g., undergraduate students at the University of California-Davis and Berkeley; hereafter UC Davis and UC Berkeley), these works (Trzesniewski et al., 2008a) contended that the methodology of the original Twenge and colleagues’ (2008a) work was unsound, the findings un-replicable, and the conclusions unwholesome. Specifically, Trzesniewski and colleagues’ analyses found that NPI scores had not risen over time, with certain facets of the NPI (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness, and self-sufficiency) demonstrating small—but significant—increases, and others (e.g., superiority, exhibitionism, and vanity) demonstrating similarly small but significant decreases (Trzesniewski et al. 2008a). This mix of outcomes resulted in a net effect of no change in NPI scores over time within their samples, which the authors cited as evidence against the general hypothesis that narcissism was elevated in younger generations.

In response, Twenge and colleagues (2008b) performed secondary analyses, initially noting that scores on the NPI in the University of California system had, in fact, not increased over

the three decades of data collection. When campuses in California were removed from cross-temporal meta-analyses, NPI scores were still found to increase substantially over time, with an average effect size of $d = 0.41$ —an effect larger than the originally observed effect size of $d = 0.33$. Such findings suggest that there was a unique trend occurring within the University of California system, in which narcissism did not appear to have risen in a manner consistent with national trends. Importantly, however, these findings were confounded by the universities being studied. Specifically, in the data examined by Trzesniewski et al. (2008a), earlier samples were all drawn from UC Berkeley, and later samples were all drawn from UC Davis (Twenge & Foster, 2010), demonstrating a near-perfect confounding with campus. Later analyses, examining scores within UC Davis separately (Twenge & Foster, 2010), found that there were indeed increases in NPI scores at UC Davis over time.

In further support of the idea that narcissism has risen, cross-temporal analyses at a single university in the Southern United States (Twenge & Foster, 2010; Study 2, $N = 4152$) also replicated these findings. Specifically, examining NPI scores among students at the University of South Alabama from 1994 to 2009, narcissism again showed an upward trajectory, with an average effect size of $d = .37$ (Twenge & Foster 2010). Furthermore, in a simple comparison of historical and current data at a state university in the Southeast (Westerman, Bergman, Bergman, & Daly, 2012), NPI scores from recent samples (e.g., 2010–2012; $N = 536$) were found to be higher than 100% of the studies conducted before 1994, and those differences were found to be significant in 80% of comparisons.

Similar findings have been reported using an alternative measure of narcissism (the narcissism estimate of the California Psychological Inventory—260) in samples comparing students from 2004 to 2008 (e.g., millennials; $N = 588$) with undergraduates before 1990 (Stewart & Bernhardt, 2010). Again, these findings demonstrate a general trend in which more recent generations of college students are likely to obtain higher scores on measures of narcissism than previous generations did at a comparable age.

In summary, across a number of studies using rigorous methods and large sample sizes, there is evidence that NPI scores have risen slightly in recent decades. Although these findings are controversial, arguments that raw NPI scores have not actually increased seem strikingly inconsistent with the body of evidence available. However, how these increases are interpreted continues to be contentious, as we describe below.

Rising Individualism or “Generation Me”

One possible interpretation of generational differences in narcissism is found within the greater body of research on generational differences in individualism. Beginning in the 1990s, academic literature began to note that individualistic traits had become more pervasive in American culture over the previous several decades. These works were initially theoretical in nature (e.g., Seligman, 1990). However, by the late 1990s, evidence for these rises began to appear (e.g., Twenge, 1997, 2001a, 2001b). Self-reported perceptions of agency (Twenge 1997), assertiveness (Twenge 2001a), and extraversion (Twenge 2001b) all rose in the decades prior to the turn of the century. Similarly, generational increases in self-esteem were noted (Gentile, Twenge, & Campbell, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2001, 2008, 2010), as were generational decreases in empathy (Konrath, O’Brien, & Hsing, 2011). Additionally, even popular clinical inventories of psychopathology demonstrated notable increases in individualistic values (Newsom, Archer, Trumbetta, & Gottesman, 2003).

Evidence for increased individualism also appeared in popular culture. Analyses of words and phrases in books published in English from 1960 to 2008 found definitive increases in individualistic, self-focused phrases (Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012, 2013). Analyses of English language books over the twentieth century noted decreases in morality and virtue-based phrases (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012), and analyses of English language books from 1800 to 2000 noted increases in individualistic value systems (Greenfield, 2013). Furthermore, these findings extend into popular music as well (DeWall, Pond,

Campbell, & Twenge, 2011). Textual analyses of American Billboard Top 40 hits from 1980 to 2007 revealed substantial increases in lyrics using self-focused, agentic, and antisocial themes, with clear decreases in phrases examining other-focused, communal, and collaborative themes (DeWall et al., 2011).

Finally, despite Twenge and colleagues' contributing much of this research on rising individualism, independent research groups in other Western countries have found similar results (i.e., self-confidence, leadership motivation, achievement striving; Jokela, Pekkarinen, Sarvimäki, Terviö, & Uusitalo, 2017). Collectively, these findings underscore the notion that Western culture has become quantifiably more individualistic (i.e., "Generation Me," Twenge, 2006, 2014) over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These findings transect various domains of research and methodology and—although controversial (e.g., Arnett, 2013; contentions discussed below)—are compelling in their depth and breadth.

In the context of rising individualism, rising narcissism can be viewed less judgmentally. Narcissism and entitlement are inherently individualistic and self-focused traits that often overshadow more social or collaborative traits (e.g., Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Miller et al., 2016; Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In the context of individualism, rather than being seen as "good" or "bad," rises in narcissism are simply further evidence of increased individualism and likely confer specific advantages and costs in a more individualistic society (e.g., Sedikides & Campbell, 2017).

Developmental Me vs. Generational Me

Another plausible explanation of and counterpoint to the evidence of rising narcissism comes from research about the relationships between narcissism and age (Roberts et al., 2010). More succinctly, some have argued (e.g., Roberts et al. 2010; Stronge, Milojev, & Sibley, 2017) that the

individualism and narcissism that characterize young adults are developmentally normative. The notion of developmentally normal narcissism is at least partially grounded in empirical literature, given clear associations between narcissism and age. In an international study involving more than 3000 participants from all six inhabited continents, clear age-dependent themes in narcissism emerged (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). Older populations reported significantly lower levels of narcissism than younger populations, with a clear negative correlation between narcissism and age, even when controlling for potential confounds (e.g., gender, country of residence). Such findings have been replicated in various other works, both in the United States (e.g., Orth, Robins, & Soto, 2010; Roberts et al. 2010) and abroad (Wilson & Sibley, 2011).

Although narcissism does seem to be associated with age, there is a virtual absence of meaningful longitudinal studies of narcissism over the lifespan, which prevents definitive conclusions about its developmental trajectory. Additionally, given that a number of the previously reviewed studies citing generational differences were cross-temporal in nature, there is—at a minimum—evidence to suggest that the developmental narcissism expressed by young adults in more recent years (e.g., 2002–2007) is higher than the same developmental narcissism experienced by young adults in the 1970s and 1980s. Even if narcissism decreases over the lifespan, the current body of literature suggests that more recent generations started at a higher level of narcissism than the generations preceding them. Although these two positions (i.e., generational differences vs. developmental differences) have been poised as contrary hypotheses in the literature (e.g., Roberts et al., 2010), it is also plausible that elevated narcissism in young adults is a function of both: both generational and developmental differences could be working together to produce observed differences. Even so, without compelling longitudinal studies of narcissism over the lifespan, developmental explanations for generational differences are not currently sufficient in explaining the results of the previously reviewed literature.

Generation We vs. Generation Me

Yet another argument against interpreting increases in NPI scores as true increases in narcissism comes from research suggesting that millennials embody a “generation we” orientation to life (Arnett, 2013; Arnett, Trzesniewski, Donnellan, 2013). Specifically, using secondary data analysis, Arnett and colleagues suggest that younger generation’s attitudes and behaviors are more community-oriented than previous generations, which would undermine the notion of a narcissism epidemic. For example, a nationally representative survey of college freshmen showed that “volunteering” rose steadily from 66% in 1990 to 84% in 2008. Further, a national study of 18- to 29-year-olds showed that younger generations harbor more accepting and tolerant views toward people of different ethnicities and sexual orientations. Other national studies found that behaviors harmful to oneself and others have declined in younger generations, such as lower incidence rates of risky driving, crime, and teen pregnancy, which are interpreted as evidence of perspective-taking and diminished egocentricity.

The “generation we” viewpoint is not without limitations. Chiefly, none of the above traits are direct indicators of narcissism, and none of the above behaviors address the clear increases in NPI scores over time. In a more individualistic society, people may be more likely to endorse policies that support the right for everyone to equally engage in an acceptable level of egocentric behavior. An attitude of “you do you, and I’ll do me” would both account for increases in egalitarian ideals and be consistent with individualistic values more broadly. Given decreases in traits like empathy (e.g., Konrath et al., 2011), increases in agentic traits (e.g., Greenfield, 2013), decreases in communal morality (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012), increases in self-focused ambition (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012), and decreases in civic orientation (Twenge et al. 2012), increased egalitarianism seems to be insufficient evidence of a “we” orientation.

Implications

Despite the relatively compelling evidence for generational differences in narcissism, the impacts of such differences are more unclear. Specifically, as has been repeatedly noted by both proponents (Twenge et al., 2008a, 2008b) and critics (Trzesniewski et al., 2008a, 2008b) of the rising narcissism hypothesis, the effect sizes of generational changes have been small by conventional standards (e.g., $d = .15-.40$). The effects of such a small increase are not currently known. Although these generational differences have garnered a seemingly endless supply of popular media attention (e.g., *Psychology Today* magazine cover stories from September, 2016; March, 2016; July, 2011), the magnitude of the findings is not consistent with such attention. It may be possible that much of the controversy around increases in narcissism is due to sensationalism in popular media, rather than the actual evidence of increases in these traits. Whereas evidence consistently points to generational increases, there is—at the very least—a qualitative difference between reports indicating an increase equivalent to $d = .15-.40$ and headlines labeling all millennials as narcissistic, entitled, or self-absorbed.

Summary

In sum, there is a body of literature that, while contentious, strongly supports a few clear conclusions: (1) narcissism, primarily indicated by scores on the NPI, has increased in recent decades; (2) these increases have been rather small in magnitude, though consistent in replication; (3) these increases have occurred in the context of rising individualism more broadly; (4) these findings remain controversial, despite a relative lack of disconfirming evidence; and (5) the cultural and behavioral implications of these increases are still unclear. Given these conclusions, a few recommendations for future directions are evident.

As has been previously alluded to, much of the literature on this topic has relied on cross-sectional or cross-temporal analyses of NPI scores, neither of which address developmental trajectories. There is a need for more systemic longitudinal work examining trajectories in narcissism over the lifespan. Such research would provide greater clarity to the distinctions between developmental shifts and generational shifts in narcissistic traits.

Another important point to account for in future work is the role of gender, as narcissism is known to vary by gender (Grijalva et al., 2015). In a subsample of the meta-analysis studies that reported gender score differences (44 of the 85), Twenge and colleagues (2008a, 2008b) found that NPI scores had risen significantly for women over time ($d = .28$), but were statistically undetectable in men ($d = .12$, ns). Critics of the evidence of rising narcissism cite these gendered differences as substantial, in that they may serve to undermine the generational shift theory. Specifically, they argued that these findings serve as evidence for a generational *gender* shift, whereby women in each successive generation may have increasingly endorsed more individualistic statements given that it became more acceptable over time for women to possess agentic, assertive, and leadership-like traits (Trzesniewski et al., 2008a). This point is not lost on Twenge and colleagues, as they also discussed the importance of this cultural shift (Twenge et al., 2008b). However, the interpretation of these findings is debatable given that NPI item endorsements were not analyzed by gender and relatively little work has been conducted on this topic since. Future work will need to more clearly examine the role of gender in generational changes in narcissism and related traits.

Another key limitation of this research is related to the NPI itself. As numerous analyses and critiques have pointed out (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2010; Pincus et al., 2009; Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012), the NPI, while very useful in some regards, is a limited instrument that is fraught with controversy on its own. As has been argued elsewhere (Ackerman et al., 2010), there is at least some

evidence to suggest that the NPI may not be accurately capturing pathological elements of narcissism anymore, or that it is more prone to assess general self-assuredness or self-confidence (Pincus et al. 2009). In this regard then, increases on the NPI may not reflect increases in maladaptive or pathological narcissism per se but rather increases in individualism and global self-esteem more generally. Such conclusions are supported by very recent research that has demonstrated that the NPI items are not necessarily equivalent among differing age cohorts (Wetzel et al., 2017). Given that the majority of research reviewed in this particular chapter relies almost exclusively on NPI scores, there is a clear need for literature that assesses narcissism scores over time using more nuanced and in-depth scales.

Fortunately, over the past 10–15 years, there have been considerable advancements in the measurement of narcissism, with meticulously developed inventories such as the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Pincus et al., 2009) and the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (Glover et al., 2012) beginning to be used alongside or in place of more simplistic measures. Additionally, more specific inventories such as the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004) now have an almost 15-year publication history with hundreds of documented uses in the extant literature, leaving open the possibility for shorter-term cross-temporal meta-analyses of specific traits. As these inventories continue to saturate the published literature on narcissism and entitlement, it will be important that future reviews and meta-analyses track their trajectories across generations.

There is also a need for more research examining how emerging adults are affected by messaging about generational differences. As previously mentioned, young adults seem to generally believe that their generation and the one following their own are the most narcissistic and entitled generations ever (Grubbs et al., 2016; Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2014). Furthermore, despite agreeing with the conclusion, emerging adults tend to react poorly to being told that their generation is the most narcissistic and entitled

generation ever, often expressing anger, frustration, and indignation (Grubbs et al. 2016). Such a contrast (i.e., belief in their own generation's narcissistic tendencies and anger as a result) suggests that messaging about generational differences in narcissism is not without impact. These impacts need careful attention and consideration in future works.

Finally, the continuity of these patterns needs to be examined over recent years. The majority of prior analyses of generational differences have used data from 2008 and before, with most analyses not extending into the past 8–10 years of available data. As has been speculated elsewhere (e.g., Bianchi, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2008; A. Uzdevins, Personal Communication, February 13th, 2014), dramatic cultural shifts, such as the economic downturn circa 2008, could influence the cultural manifestation of narcissism. Indeed, individual analyses (Bianchi, 2015) suggest that entering adulthood during an economically challenging time is likely to result in lower levels of trait narcissism. As such, it is plausible that cultural levels of narcissism have in fact decreased over the past 7–10 years. Although speculative at this point, such a possibility warrants careful future consideration.

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Part IV

Intrapersonal Processes and Narcissism



Narcissism and Dark Personality Traits

21

Imani N. Turner and Gregory D. Webster

Abstract

Considered by many to be a “dark” personality trait, narcissism likely occupies a central position in the dark personality nomological net. The present chapter provides an overview of research findings and challenges involving the Dark Triad traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Possible “fourth” traits that may comprise a Dark Tetrad—greed, spite, and sadism—are also discussed, especially in relation to narcissism. This chapter also discusses dark personality trait assessment, general differences and similarities between narcissism and the abovementioned dark personality traits, and current research findings on the Dark Triad and Dark Tetrad. Key issues and controversies regarding the factor structure of the Dark Triad and the efficacy of its expansion to include other dark traits (e.g., a Dark Tetrad) are also discussed. The chapter closes discussing future directions for dark personality traits, including novel assessment methods, further validation, and narcissism’s place in an expanded nomological network of dark traits.

Keywords

Dark Triad · Dark Tetrad · Machiavellianism · Psychopathy · Sadism · Greed · Spite · Measurement

Narcissism and Its Dark Triad Correlates

Narcissism is one of three traits that comprise the Dark Triad of personality along with psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Zeigler-Hill & Marcus, 2016). Although researchers often discuss narcissism and psychopathy as clinical disorders (narcissistic personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder), the Dark Triad literature focuses on subclinical manifestations of these personality traits, which exist in the normal population and do not meet the criteria for clinical diagnosis or supervision (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013).

Subclinical psychopathy is characterized by a lack of remorse, thrill-seeking, and impulsivity (Rauthmann, 2012). Psychopathy is itself a multifaceted trait consisting of at least two dimensions: callousness and impulsivity. Psychopathy’s callousness facet reflects a lack of empathy for others and a self-centered demeanor. In contrast, psychopathy’s impulsivity facet reflects inattentiveness and a lack of self-control (Salekin & Lynam, 2011).

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Machiavellianism is named after the Florentine Renaissance political strategist Niccolò Machiavelli, who advised leaders to be deceptive and manipulative to gain and maintain power. He is commonly credited with the idea that “the ends justify the means,” implying that immoral tactics are often necessary to retain power. Machiavellianism is itself a multifaceted trait. It can be decomposed into its related affects (emotional detachedness), behaviors (manipulation, exploitation), cognitions (negative or cynical views of people or society), and desires (self-interest, impulsivity; Rauthmann & Will, 2011). Machiavellianism may also have different factor structures for men and women (Rauthmann, 2012). At its core, Machiavellianism often reflects cynicism and manipulateness (Furnham et al., 2013).

Although Paulhus and Williams (2002) coined the term “Dark Triad,” psychologists have studied the three traits that comprise it for decades. For example, earlier research showed positive correlations among multiple facets of Machiavellianism and overall psychopathy (McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998). Psychopathy and Machiavellianism are arguably the most highly correlated traits in the Dark Triad literature (Miller, Hyatt, Maples-Keller, Carter, & Lynam, 2016); however, large correlations around 0.50 between narcissism and psychopathy are not uncommon (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Regarding the Big Five personality traits, both narcissism and psychopathy correlate similarly with openness and extraversion (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In contrast, the correlation between narcissism and Machiavellianism is often the weakest among the Dark Triad traits, producing correlations around 0.25 (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Although both narcissism and Machiavellianism are concerned with self-advancement, Machiavellians are more motivated by instrumental goals (Paulhus & Jones, 2015).

Dark Triad Measures

Historically, Dark Triad traits were measured using separate scales for each trait. More recently, researchers developed joint measures of all three traits. We discuss each in turn.

Separate Measures of the Dark Triad

Grandiose narcissism is most frequently measured using the 40-item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Research on the NPI-40 has supported seven-factor (Raskin & Terry, 1988), four-factor (Emmons, 1987), and three-factor (Ackerman et al., 2011) solutions. Subsequent versions of the NPI include 16-item (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) and 13-item (Gentile et al., 2013) versions. Although the NPI-16 includes four items for each of the four factors (leadership/authority, self-absorption/self-admiration, superiority/arrogance, and exploitativeness/entitlement), it relies on a total narcissism score (vs. subscales). In contrast, the NPI-13 was specifically developed to focus on the three factors: leadership/authority, grandiose exhibitionism, and entitlement/exploitativeness.

One alternative to the NPI is the Grandiose Narcissism Scale (GNS; Foster, McCain, Hibberts, Brunell, & Johnson, 2015), which focuses on grandiose aspects of narcissism, yet still reflects the NPI-40's (Raskin & Terry, 1988) seven-factor structure (i.e., authority, exhibitionism, superiority, vanity, exploitativeness, entitlement, and self-sufficiency).

Several other measures of narcissism exist (for a review, see Foster, Chap. 12, this volume), including the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (Hendin & Cheek, 1997), the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (Crowe, Carter, Campbell, & Miller, 2016; Rosenthal, Hooley, & Steshenko, 2007), the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012), and the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (Back et al., 2013).

In contrast, the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009) assesses clinical levels of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissism is characterized by self-centered aggrandizement and measured with four subscales (entitlement rage, exploitativeness, grandiose fantasy, self-sacrificing self-enhancement), whereas vulnerable narcissism is characterized by reactive fragility and measured with three subscales (contingent self-esteem, hiding the self, devaluing).

Perhaps the most widely used measure of Machiavellianism is the Mach-IV (Christie & Geis, 1970). The Mach-IV is a 20-item measure that captures overall Machiavellian and three subscales: impersonal tactics, disregard for conventional morality, and cynical views of human nature. A unidimensional, five-item version of the Mach-IV called the Trimmed MACH* has also been developed (Rauthmann, 2013).

Although the Mach-IV is a popular Machiavellianism measure, it is not without criticism. Specifically, the Mach-IV appears to have problems with scale reliability, item choice, and dimensionality (Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009). To address these concerns, the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS) was developed (Dahling et al., 2009). The MPS provides an overall score and four subscales: distrust of others, engaging in amoral manipulation, desire for controlling others, and status striving (Dahling et al., 2009).

Among the most established psychopathy measures is the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (SRP; Hare, 1980). The SRP is an abbreviated compliment to the Psychopathy Checklist (PCL), which requires an interview (Gordts, Uzieblo, Neumann, Van den Bussche, & Rossi, 2015). A revised version of the PCL, the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1991) is also popular with researchers. This measure can be administered in a semi-structured interview or based on a criminal's file information (Hare, 1998). Whereas the SRP focuses primarily on criminal populations, subsequent versions of the SRP—specifically, the SRP-III (Neumann, Schmitt, Carter, Embley, & Hare, 2012)—attempt to assess subclinical psychopathy in normal populations. The 64-item SRP-III includes four subscales: interpersonal manipulation, erratic lifestyle, criminal tendencies, and callous affect (Gordts et al., 2015). A 28-item SRP scale—Short Form (SRP-SF)—also exists (Carré, Hyde, Neumann, Viding, & Hariri, 2013), which assesses the same aspects of psychopathy as the SRP-III.

Joint Measures of the Dark Triad

Fairly recently, researchers have sought to create scales that assess all three Dark Triad traits jointly (vs. separately). The first of these, the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD) is a 12-item scale with four items for each of the three Dark Triad traits (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Webster & Jonason, 2013). Although the DTDD provides an efficient measure of the Dark Triad for use in situations that place premiums on time or number of items (e.g., daily diary studies), its brevity requires sacrificing construct breadth. As such, the DTDD has been rightly criticized for not covering some specific facets of the Dark Triad traits. Specifically, although the DTDD's psychopathy subscale correlates strongly with the three of four SRP-III facets, its correlation with the fourth facet—antisocial behavior—is only moderate (Maples, Lamkin, & Miller, 2014).

A less-efficient but much-improved successor to the DTDD is the 27-item Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014), which uses nine items to assess each Dark Triad trait. In part because of its increased length and breadth, the SD3 generally outperforms the DTDD regarding some forms of validity and reliability (Maples et al., 2014). Most researchers now consider the SD3 as the gold standard joint Dark Triad measure.

Non-Dark Triad Correlates

There are other dark personality traits beyond the established Dark Triad that also correlate with narcissism. Some researchers have begun advocating for a Dark Tetrad of four traits; however, precisely which trait the “fourth” one should be lacks consensus (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). Candidate traits include sadism, spite, and greed (Chabrol, Van Leeuwen, Rodgers, & Séjourné, 2009; Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015).

Sadism

Subclinical sadism reflects the implementation of physical, emotional, or sexual distress on others

for personal enjoyment, or to assert power over others (O'Meara, Davies, & Hammond, 2011; Plouffe, Saklofske, & Smith, 2017). Like narcissism and psychopathy, sadism can be discussed on a clinical level, and although the DSM no longer includes sadistic personality disorder, it still lists criteria for sexual sadism disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; O'Meara et al., 2011).

Sadism is often assessed with either the Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (O'Meara et al., 2011) or the Assessment of Sadistic Personality scale (Plouffe et al., 2017), which is a more recent measure of subclinical sadistic personality. Sadism's association with narcissism remains relatively neglected in the empirical literature. What little research has been done has shown that subclinical sadism (vs. narcissism) was more strongly associated with the tendency to kill insects and inflict suffering onto human victims (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013). In high school students, those who scored higher on sadistic measures were more likely to engage in delinquent behavior and engage in traditional and cyberbullying (Chabrol et al., 2009; van Geel, Goemans, Toprak, & Vedder, 2017).

Spite

Spite reflects one's willingness to inflict self-harm to hurt someone else, often out of revenge (Marcus, Zeigler-Hill, Mercer, & Norris, 2014). While spiteful people may enjoy the suffering of the wrongdoer, spitefulness diverges from sadism because one is willing to harm *oneself* to facilitate the suffering of another. Research on spite as a personality trait is sparse; however, it can be measured using the Spitefulness Scale (Marcus et al., 2014). Spite is moderately associated with narcissism, but less so with psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Notably, spite is more strongly associated with the exploitativeness/entitlement subscales of the NPI and vulnerable narcissism from the PNI (Marcus et al., 2014).

Greed

Greed reflects an insatiable desire for the acquisition of a given commodity and may be accompanied by betrayal and manipulation to acquire that commodity (Krekels & Pandelaere, 2015; Veselka, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2014). Greed can be assessed with (a) the Dispositional Greed Scale (Krekels & Pandelaere, 2015), (b) the greed subscale of the Vices and Virtues Scale (Veselka et al., 2014), or (c) the greed avoidance factor of the honesty-humility subscale of the HEXACO (Lee & Ashton, 2014). What little research has been done on self-reported greed and narcissism has shown a moderate correlation (Veselka et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the link between greed and narcissism appears to be weaker than that between greed and psychopathy or Machiavellianism (Veselka et al., 2014).

Interim Summary

Sadism, spite, and greed have emerged as three primary candidates for the fourth slot in a possible Dark Tetrad of personality (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). Although each of these dark traits likely show at least a modest positive association with narcissism, additional research is needed to better understand their place in the dark personality nomological network, or whether a "sinful six" structure will be necessary.

Current Research

With the advent of the overarching term "Dark Triad" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), the research on the three focal dark personality traits has grown rapidly (Furnham et al., 2013; Jonason, Webster, Schmitt, Li, & Crysel, 2012). In this section, we summarize some of the current research and debate surrounding dark personality traits.

Given the nature of the Dark Triad traits, people who exhibit high levels of any one trait can make life difficult for others, often resulting in

unpleasant interpersonal interactions. For example, narcissists view themselves in an exaggerated manner in terms of agentic traits, such as seeing themselves as more intelligent than others and seeing others as less conscientious than themselves (Rauthmann, 2012). Machiavellians view others as inferior and see themselves as having less dominance, openness, and sociability. People high in psychopathy are seen as highly dominant, yet minimally conscientious, nurturing, and innocent.

People who score high (vs. low) on Dark Triad traits are more impulsive and more likely to engage in risky behaviors—a pattern consistent with a fast (vs. slow) life history strategy (Crysel, Crosier, & Webster, 2013; Jonason, Koenig, & Tost, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Life history theory refers to discrepancies between energy applied to somatic growth (slow) versus reproduction (fast). A fast life strategy implies a preference for short-term mating, lower levels of self-control, selfishness, and other antisocial tendencies such as aggression (Jonason et al., 2010). Whereas people scoring higher (vs. lower) on Dark Triad traits are typically more aggressive, the aggression trigger may differ among the three traits. For example, narcissists respond more negatively to ego threats, psychopaths to physical threats, and Machiavellians to neither (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

The Dark Triad traits, including narcissism, have commanded much attention in the mating and attraction literatures. For example, some recent research focuses on unadorned attractiveness and effective adornment. Unadorned attractiveness refers to the facets of attractiveness that are not as easily altered, such as facial symmetry, whereas effective adornment refers to the effects of more easily manipulated aspects of attractiveness, such as makeup or clothing (Holtzman & Strube, 2013). Regarding the Dark Triad, its composite score positively related to adorned attractiveness (Holtzman & Strube, 2013). And although all three Dark Triad traits positively associated with effective adornment, psychopathy was shown the strongest correlation (Holtzman & Strube, 2013). People who display or flaunt actions and behaviors consistent with

Dark Triad traits to find a mate may actually appear to be more attractive to the average person.

Aggression related to Dark Triad traits is also present in romantic relationships. For example, all three Dark Triad traits can contribute to one's romantic partner's aggression (Webster et al., 2016). Specifically, narcissism and Machiavellianism in women positively related to displaced aggression in men, and psychopathy in men positively related to trait aggression in women (Webster et al., 2016). Other research focusing on romantic relationship commitment has suggested that the link between women's Dark Triad traits and men's commitment may be mediated by men's relationship satisfaction (Smith et al., 2014).

Current research continues to debate the optimal factor structure for the Dark Triad, how many facets should be present within each trait, and how many traits to assess (Dark Triad vs. Tetrad). For example, many researchers hold that the Dark Triad traits reflect distinct but related constructs (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Nevertheless, the three-factor structure of the Dark Triad has undergone increasing scrutiny as more research and better measures have become available. Some researchers advocate for a bifactor model of the Dark Triad involving four latent traits: a global Dark Triad factor after partialling out variance related to the three traits and each of the three traits after partialling out variance related to the global Dark Triad (Jonason & Luévano, 2013). Others have also argued fairly convincingly that psychopathy and Machiavellianism are empirically similar enough to combine the two into a single overarching factor, with narcissism reflecting its own factor (Miller et al., 2016). Indeed, earlier research on Machiavellianism and psychopathy supports this fundamental link (McHoskey et al., 1998). Nevertheless, a single, latent, global Dark Triad trait may explain some phenomena such as sociosexuality better than the three traits themselves (Jonason, Kavanagh, Webster, & Fitzgerald, 2011). In addition, a latent Dark Triad trait can also be evaluated as a second-order factor that subsumes the three trait first-order factors in a hierarchical model (see Jonason & Webster, 2010, p. 425, Fig. 1c).

Future Directions

As our review suggests, narcissism is one of the core traits comprising the Dark Triad and Tetrad frameworks of a constellation of “dark” personality traits. Researchers will likely continue to examine both narcissism in isolation and in the broader context of its “dark” compatriots, such as psychopathy, Machiavellianism, greed, spite, and sadism. Future research should attempt to tackle at least two pressing questions. First, how can we go beyond self-reports to assess narcissism and other dark traits? Second, how can we broaden the dark personality’s nomological net to gain a clearer understanding of narcissism’s place in it?

Expanding Assessment and Validity

Most research on narcissism in a dark personality context is based on self-reports. A weakness of self-reports is that they are associated with a host of potentially biased responding (e.g., acquiescence bias, socially desirable responding; Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Thus, researchers of narcissism and dark personality should strive to refine and expand their assessment arsenal to include other measures to supplement self-reports. These might include peer reports as well as implicit and behavioral measures.

For example, because there are now multiple brief Dark Triad measures (DTDD, SD3), investigators can more easily conduct small-group research (e.g., four to six persons) using round-robin methods where each person (perceiver) rates each other person (target) in the group on the Dark Triad traits. Using a social relations model approach (Kenny & La Voie, 1984) would allow researchers to decompose variance in dark personality scores among target, perceiver, and unique relationship effects. Target effects describe the extent to which each target elicits a given trait across perceivers (e.g., everyone sees Donald as narcissistic). Perceiver effects describe the extent to which each perceiver shows some bias across targets (e.g., Cersei sees everyone as manipulative). Relationship effects reflect unique

associations between target and perceiver (e.g., only Jill sees Jack as clumsy); they reflect a target-by-perceiver interaction. Finally, if two or more items are assessed per construct, then measurement error can be empirically separated from relationship effects. When combined with self-reports, researchers can even examine trait accuracy (“Do peer and self-reports of narcissism correlate?”).

Implicit measures of narcissism exist, but comparable ones for other dark traits are sparse. For example, language use has been linked to narcissism. Specifically, first-person singular pronoun use (“I,” “me”) positively related to greater displaying of sexy photos on Facebook (DeWall, Buffardi, Bonser, & Campbell, 2011). Narcissism also positively related to self-promotion on social networks (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). And using the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) device to monitor what people say and do in their everyday lives, researchers found that narcissism is positively related to skipping class and using sexualized language more frequently (Holzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010). Still others have observed real-world narcissistic behaviors (Paulhus, Robins, Trzesniewski, & Tracy, 2004). Thus, one challenge that awaits future research will be developing and validating similar measures for a broader array of dark traits.

Narcissism: A Leviathan Caught in Dark Personality’s Nomological Net?

Future research would also benefit from casting a broader nomological net to understand the wide array of dark personality traits, how they relate to one another, and how they relate to traditional personality traits (e.g., Big Five). Such a comprehensive undertaking could also help determine which trait or traits are the most central or influential in their relation to other dark traits. For example, is narcissism so fundamental to dark personality traits that it constitutes the primary or most interconnected factor of all? Only future

research can reveal whether or not narcissism is the large leviathan lurking at the center of dark personality's nomological net.

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Narcissism and the Big Five/ HEXACO Models of Personality

22

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Abstract

Personality psychologists have typically characterized narcissism as grandiose narcissism, resulting in a substantial literature showing narcissism's associations with high Extraversion and low Neuroticism and Agreeableness within the Big Five/Five-Factor Model of personality. To some extent, these personality correlates imply that narcissism is a relatively healthy if disagreeable personality variable. Using the six-factor HEXACO model of personality, it is clearer that narcissism belongs in the “dark triad” cluster of socially aversive personality traits, in that it is also characterized by low levels of Honesty-Humility. In this chapter, issues around the conceptualization and measurement of both narcissism and personality are discussed, including the lack of research on vulnerable narcissism within the HEXACO personality framework.

Keywords

Big Five · Five-Factor Model · HEXACO model · Extraversion · Neuroticism · Agreeableness · Honesty-Humility

Narcissism and the Big Five/ HEXACO Models of Personality

In recent years, there have been many attempts at conceptualizing personality disorders in a dimensional fashion, including mapping them onto the Big Five/Five-Factor Model of personality (e.g., Lynam et al., 2011). Less research has addressed using the HEXACO personality model to represent these disorders. In recent years, psychopathy and narcissism, for example, have been shown to be rather well represented as extreme variants of normal personality (e.g., Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012). Given that personality inventories have been adapted (i.e., items are made more extreme) to assess Narcissistic Personality Disorder, it seems that nonclinical variance in narcissism should be well-reflected in broad personality inventories without resorting to item variants. This chapter will address the associations between trait narcissism and the Big Five/Five-Factor Model of personality and the HEXACO model as well as related conceptual and measurement issues.

Conceptualizations of Narcissism

In thinking of narcissism in relation to the major models of personality, there are some concerns. One issue (discussed elsewhere in this handbook)

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is to what extent clinical narcissism translates downward into nonclinical, trait or “normal” narcissism. This issue becomes important in examining the links between narcissism and personality, because these links will differ depending on the conceptualization of narcissism and how it is operationalized. In the personality literature (but less so, the clinical literature), narcissism is widely assessed with the self-report Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), so much of our understanding of the personality bases of narcissism comes from this measure. To the extent that the NPI captures grandiose rather than vulnerable narcissism, our understanding of the personality underpinnings has similarly taken on a grandiose narcissism flavor. The more recent Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009), on the other hand, assesses both vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, but has not been as widely used in personality studies as the NPI.

Further, in the more than 15 years since Paulhus and Williams’ (2002) seminal article describing the “dark triad” of personality, there has been a great deal of research on this grouping of three personalities: Machiavellianism, subclinical psychopathy, and narcissism. This research interest has led to the introduction of short form dark triad measures (see Visser & Campbell 2018, for a review of dark triad measurement), resulting in many personality studies including very brief measures of narcissism, in which the small number of items all tap into grandiose narcissism.

Conceptualizations of Personality

A second issue is around the conceptualization of personality. Although many researchers and clinicians think of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) and the Big Five as being redundant and interchangeable, they have distinct origins and associated measures. The Big Five is based on lexical studies – that is, studies based on people’s ratings of personality adjectives found in the lexicon of a given language (Goldberg, 1990). These studies led researchers to conclude that variation in personality could be reduced to five broad factors: Extraversion, Neuroticism (which

Goldberg described as its opposite pole of Emotional Stability), Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (which Goldberg referred to as Imagination/Intellect). The Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999) is a 44-item inventory developed to assess these five factors.

The FFM (Costa & McCrae, 1985), on the other hand, was developed from analysis of Cattell’s questionnaire scales, from which they identified three personality factors: Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness. Later, they added Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, based on “big five” lexical findings. In this manner, McCrae and Costa similarly came to the conclusion that there were these same (or very similar) five broad personality factors. The NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992) is the 240-item questionnaire commonly used to assess these five factors. Although the full history of these models and associated measures is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that these measures will have somewhat different “flavors” and content as well as the difference in the number of items in their associated measures.

Although the Big Five/FFM has been the dominant model of personality since the 1990s, Ashton and Lee (2001) more recently introduced the HEXACO model of personality, a six-factor framework, which has a strong evolutionary basis as well as being grounded in lexical studies in several languages. Its associated measure, the HEXACO-PI-R (Lee & Ashton, 2018), has shown excellent validity in many languages and cultures. Since the introduction of the HEXACO model, there has been growing evidence that this model can account for variance not captured by the Big Five/FFM. The HEXACO framework has been shown to be particularly effective in the prediction of antisocial outcomes (Lee & Ashton, 2012; Lee et al., 2013).

Narcissism and the FFM (NEO-PI-R)

When using the self-report NEO-PI-R to assess personality, the NPI is typically associated with low Neuroticism and Agreeableness and high

Extraversion (Trull & McCrae, 2002). Although much of the research relating the NPI to the NEO-PI-R has been done with student samples, Miller and Campbell (2008) found the same pattern of results (i.e., low Agreeableness and Neuroticism and high Extraversion) in a sample of their student participants' parents. Trull and McCrae (2002) noted that low Neuroticism and high Extraversion are typically indicative of good functioning, meaning that the NPI seems to measure a rather adaptive kind of nonclinical narcissism. Indeed, Miller et al. (2016) have noted that although the NPI reliably measures grandiose narcissism, it does not capture vulnerable aspects of narcissism.

Miller and Campbell (2008) reported that the NPI was associated with low Agreeableness and Neuroticism and high Extraversion in a sample of undergraduates and their parents, whereas a clinical measure of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire-4; Hyler, 1994) in the same samples was associated with low Agreeableness and Extraversion and high Neuroticism, suggesting a more distressed narcissism. What was striking about Miller and Campbell's (2008) findings was that neither sample was a clinical sample, so the discrepancy in the direction of the Extraversion and Neuroticism correlations was not due to the clinical instrument being administered to participants having sought treatment due to distress.

Extraversion is associated with gregariousness, social boldness, liveliness, and positive affect. Extraversion is also generally associated with positive outcomes including having greater social support and higher life satisfaction (Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008), better health (Nettle, 2005), and greater occupational success (Lund, Tamnes, Moustue, Buss, & Vollrath, 2007). Findings that grandiose narcissism is associated with high Extraversion seem to suggest that it is, at least to some extent, beneficial and healthy.

The finding that the NPI is associated with low Neuroticism also seems to suggest that although grandiose narcissism can be interpersonally dysfunctional, it may not be personally distressing. High neuroticism is associated with

experiencing anxiety and negative emotions. Many physical and mental illnesses, particularly depression and anxiety, are associated with Neuroticism (see Lahey, 2009 for a review) – that is, Neuroticism is very much associated with negative outcomes. That grandiose narcissism is related to *low* Neuroticism would seem to suggest that it is in some way protective.

Vulnerable narcissism, on the other hand, has a very different personality profile. In fact, Miller et al. (2011b) reported that FFM personality profiles for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were negatively (albeit nonsignificantly) correlated. Grandiose narcissism was related to low Neuroticism and high Extraversion, as in previous studies, whereas vulnerable narcissism was related to high Neuroticism, and correlations with Extraversion were generally negative (although not statistically significant). Although both types of narcissism shared low Agreeableness, the strength of the relations was different. Grandiose narcissism was characterized as generally more strongly disagreeable in general, but vulnerable narcissism was more strongly characterized by low trust (an Agreeable facet subscale).

Narcissism and the Big Five (BFI)

Many researchers, particularly those in the personality rather than clinical field, use the self-report Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999) rather than the NEO-PI-R, and the results tend to be somewhat different. For example, using the BFI and the NPI, Paulhus and Williams (2002) reported that narcissism was associated with high Extraversion and Openness to Experience and low Agreeableness. In this study, the NPI was uncorrelated with BFI Neuroticism. Visser, Pozzebon, and Reina-Tamayo (2014) similarly found positive associations between narcissism (in this case, measured by the Short Dark Triad; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) and BFI Extraversion and Openness to Experience, but also reported a negative correlation with Neuroticism. Likewise, Lee and Ashton (2005) reported that the NPI was positively correlated

with BFI Extraversion and Openness to Experience and negatively correlated with Neuroticism. BFI Openness to Experience captures variance in being complex, unconventional, and imaginative (e.g., “I am someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker”). It seems possible that individuals who are more narcissistic also tend to think of themselves as being quite sophisticated and intellectual. NEO Openness to Experience, on the other hand, has a greater emphasis on interests, with facets around openness to fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values, which may be less subject to narcissistic aggrandizement.

Neither Lee and Ashton (2005) nor Visser et al. (2014) found an association between narcissism and BFI Agreeableness, in keeping with a review in which Miller and Maples (2011) reported that NEO Agreeableness was more highly (negatively) associated with the NPI than BFI Agreeableness. One explanation for this discrepancy in Agreeableness associations may lie in the differing nature of the Agreeableness factors in the BFI and the NEO-PI-R. The nine BFI Agreeableness items reflect being helpful, forgiving, trusting, and pleasant. NEO Agreeableness, on the other hand, assesses six facets: trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness. Miller, Gaughan, Maples, and Price (2011a) reported that although BFI Agreeableness and NEO Agreeableness were highly correlated, the NEO’s facet level subscales were important in better accounting for narcissism. In their study with a sample of 290 undergraduate students, Miller et al. reported that NPI narcissism was correlated -0.28 with BFI Agreeableness but -0.55 with NEO Agreeableness. The authors concluded that the NEO facets of straightforwardness and modesty were important aspects of narcissism that were not well captured within the BFI. The authors found that NEO Agreeableness was more strongly correlated than BFI Agreeableness with a clinical measure of narcissism as well (the Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire-4).

There has been less research on the BFI correlates of vulnerable narcissism, but Thomas,

Wright, and Lukowitsky (2012) reported that the PNI vulnerable narcissism scales were associated with high Neuroticism, low Extraversion, and low (but not statistically significant) Agreeableness. PNI grandiose narcissism scales were associated with low Neuroticism, but were not significantly correlated with any other BFI personality factor, suggesting that PNI grandiose narcissism is not equivalent to NPI narcissism.

Narcissism and HEXACO (HEXACO-PI-R)

Another broad model of personality is the HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2001), which incorporates six personality factors: Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience are quite similar to their Big Five/FFM counterparts, whereas Agreeableness and Emotionality represent rotated versions of Big Five/FFM Agreeableness and Neuroticism. HEXACO emotionality contains the anxiety content of Neuroticism, but without the anger and hostility which is instead encompassed by (low) Agreeableness. Honesty-Humility, a sixth factor, includes fairness, sincerity, greed avoidance, and modesty. These six factors have emerged in lexical studies in several languages, including English, and the associated personality inventory (HEXACO-PI-R; Lee & Ashton, 2018) has been shown to be reliable and valid across cultures and languages.

Miller et al. (2011a) noted that the straightforwardness and modesty aspects of NEO Agreeableness but not BFI Agreeableness were encompassed by Honesty-Humility, thus explaining the NPI’s higher negative correlation with NEO Agreeableness. It could, therefore, be expected that narcissism would be associated with low Honesty-Humility. Indeed, Lee and Ashton (2005) reported that the NPI had large correlations with both Extraversion (0.49) and Honesty-Humility (-0.53). The NPI was modestly negatively correlated with the fairness and sincerity facets of Honesty-Humility but

showed large negative correlations with greed avoidance (-0.48) and modesty (-0.62). In *The H Factor of Personality: Why Some People Are Manipulative, Self-Entitled, Materialistic, and Exploitive – and Why it Matters for Everyone*, Lee and Ashton (2012) claimed that the combination of low Honesty-Humility and high Extraversion is the hallmark of a narcissist: “they stand in awe of their own greatness, and they think you should too” (p. 45). The authors noted that the low Honesty-Humility/high Extraversion combination is associated with social boldness and confidence, combined with a desire to dominate and manipulate authors. Lee and Ashton cautioned that narcissistic charisma can be more potent if the person also possesses other socially desirable characteristics such as intelligence or physical attractiveness.

Other researchers have confirmed the association of grandiose narcissism with HEXACO Honesty-Humility and Extraversion (Lee et al., 2013; Meere & Egan, 2017; Visser et al., 2014; Westhead & Egan, 2015) using the Short Dark Triad, which assesses grandiose narcissism with nine items. Lee et al., Meere and Egan, and Visser et al. also reported significant negative correlations with Agreeableness ($r_s = -0.20, -0.16,$ and -0.23 , respectively), whereas Meere and Egan and Westhead and Egan reported significant negative correlations with Emotionality ($r_s = -0.32$ and -0.25 , respectively). Lee and Ashton (2012) have suggested that Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, and Agreeableness each reflect an evolved strategy of altruism versus antagonism. These authors suggest that an individual who is low on all three would present as a very nasty, antagonistic person. To date, there do not appear to be any empirical investigations of the HEXACO underpinnings of vulnerable narcissism.

What Do Personality Underpinnings Tell Us?

Dimensionality This chapter has presented grandiose narcissism as a construct characterized by low Neuroticism and Agreeableness and high Extraversion (and sometimes BFI Openness)

within the Big Five/FFM personality space, whereas vulnerable narcissism shows a very different, more distressed pattern. The fact that the two personality profiles are so discrepant lends support to the relevance of using multidimensional approaches to investigations of narcissism. When Samuel and Widiger (2008) compared five narcissism measures with regard to their NEO-PI-R correlates, they noted that despite some differences in FFM correlates, all five narcissism measures captured grandiose but not vulnerable narcissism.

Pincus and Lukowitsky (2010) suggested that trait narcissism reflected self-enhancement strategies used by psychologically healthy people, whereas pathological narcissism was dysfunctional and distressing. Consistent with this view, Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, and Rusbult (2004) found that across five studies, what they referred to as “normal narcissism” (NPI narcissism in nonclinical samples) was associated with good psychological health. This reasoning might also suggest that grandiose narcissism is not a good fit with the dark triad of socially aversive personalities, particularly since it is not always associated with low Agreeableness. Recently, Visser et al. (2014) concluded that across three studies, narcissism was less “dark” than Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy.

These findings could suggest that personality researchers might do well to investigate vulnerable as well as grandiose narcissism. Certainly, there are personality researchers who have taken an interest in the multidimensional nature of narcissism, but the personality literature frequently equates grandiose narcissism to narcissism. The scales that have been embraced by personality researchers (e.g., the NPI and the Short Dark Triad) tend to assess grandiose narcissism.

There have been conflicting results around the factor structure of the NPI, including findings that some factors are associated with positive psychological functioning and other factors with dysfunction (Ackerman et al., 2011). Such findings suggest that the use of total NPI scores could be problematic, and it might have been better to look at patterns of relations between NPI subscales with personality.

The HEXACO H Factor Although narcissism was generally associated with indicators of healthy (but antagonistic) personality within the Big Five/FFM framework, the HEXACO findings looked somewhat different due to the inclusion of the Honesty-Humility factor. In research using the HEXACO model, grandiose narcissism was consistently related to high Extraversion and low Honesty-Humility. Lee and Ashton (2012) have maintained that individuals with low levels of this “H factor” pose a problem for those around them. Also, low Honesty-Humility cannot be considered an indicator of good psychological functioning, given its association with risky, exploitive, deceitful, and unethical behavior (Lee & Ashton, 2012). Thus, the HEXACO model of personality is more explicit than the Big Five/FFM in identifying the broadly exploitive and self-entitled aspects of narcissism. The social boldness and leadership aspects of grandiose narcissism are reflected in the Extraversion factor, in keeping with the Big Five/FFM findings. As of yet, researchers have not mapped vulnerable narcissism onto the HEXACO personality framework.

Conclusions and Future Directions

This chapter has reviewed personality correlates of trait or “normal” narcissism and issues around conceptualization and measurement of both narcissism and personality. In this chapter, the extent to which the major models of personality reflect both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism has been addressed. Certainly, there has been a growing recognition that the personality disorders represent extremes of normal personality traits and have been represented with the major models of personality, particularly the FFM. Such personality frameworks may be helpful in elucidating the nature of narcissism and identifying at which extremes narcissistic traits become dysfunctional.

Although there has been good progress in using Big Five/FFM variants to assess Narcissistic

Personality Disorder and trait narcissism, there are limitations in the current research. Many studies assess both narcissism and personality through self-report inventories, which may be associated with common method variance as well as response bias. The literature would benefit from more studies incorporating other reports as well as behavioral measures.

Also, the measures of normal Big Five/FFM personality (particularly the BFI) do not fully account for trait narcissism. That is, to capture grandiose narcissism, one would have to administer the BFI and additional items about deceitfulness, greed, and immodesty. The HEXACO personality model has greater inclusion of narcissism-related content, but there has been far less research using this personality framework. Although there has been a growing literature suggesting that HEXACO personality (particularly Honesty-Humility) almost fully accounts for the common variance in the dark triad (Book et al., 2016; Book, Visser, & Volk, 2015; Lee & Ashton, 2005; Lee et al., 2013), there has been little focus on narcissism alone. Lee and Ashton (2005) noted that although Machiavellianism and subclinical psychopathy showed a great deal of overlap in their associations with HEXACO personality, narcissism was related to self-entitlement to a greater extent and exploitativeness to a lesser extent. Thus, there seems to be an opportunity for research using the HEXACO framework for assessment of narcissism, and an exploration of vulnerable narcissism seems particularly warranted.

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Physiological Reactivity and Neural Correlates of Trait Narcissism

23

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Abstract

Despite a predominant empirical focus on cognitive-emotional distinctions and problematic behaviors associated with narcissism, investigators are turning their attention toward understanding the physiological and neural mechanisms that underlie these characteristics. A majority of the research examining narcissistic physiological and neural activity focuses on grandiose narcissism measured with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), however, a growing number of studies are examining neurophysiological differences that distinguish dimensions of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Research to date illustrates that grandiose narcissism involves cardiovascular reactivity in response to aversive stimuli and achievement-related stressors that parallel reactivity associated with similar personality traits (e.g., competitiveness, dominance), exhibiting greater risk for cardiovascular disease. Additionally, grandiose narcissism is associated with acute and chronically elevated levels of cortisol as well as heightened testosterone reactivity and aggression. By contrast, vulnerable narcissism and exploitativeness/entitlement are

generally associated with heightened cardiovascular reactivity to interpersonal rejection. Research examining structural and functional brain differences suggests a potential link between narcissism and behaviors including impaired empathy and reactive aggression. Grandiose narcissism is associated with structural abnormalities in the fronto-striatal pathway whereas vulnerable narcissism is linked to reduced cortical volume and thickness in frontal brain regions. Functional neuroimaging studies report grandiose narcissism is associated with increased brain activation in response to social exclusion and abnormal resting-state brain activation between large-scale functional networks. Although research examining physiological and neural activity associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism is still limited, results from these studies provide compelling evidence that may aid in understanding and reducing narcissistic reactivity to everyday challenges.

Keywords

Psychophysiological · Cardiovascular reactivity · Cortisol · Testosterone · fMRI · Brain structure

Narcissism is associated with a grandiose, antagonistic, and reactive interpersonal style, including aggressive responses to ego threat (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2003), increased hostility (Kernis & Sun, 1994; Morf &

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Rhodewalt, 1993; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998), low empathy (Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman, 1992), and relationship difficulties (Campbell, 1999; Foster & Brunell, this volume). In addition to the well-established set of characteristic traits and behaviors associated with narcissism, research has increasingly focused on conceptualizing and distinguishing between dimensions of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissism is associated with dominance, extraversion, aggression, and high self-esteem, whereas vulnerable narcissism is associated with negative affect, insecure grandiosity, unstable self-esteem, and an inhibited interpersonal style (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). Although a majority of the studies reviewed in this chapter utilize the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) to measure grandiose narcissism, some studies have utilized other measures of grandiose and vulnerable traits. For purposes of clarity, the current review will note the specific measures and the dimensions of grandiose or vulnerable narcissism assessed in each investigation.

In addition to the recent empirical focus on identifying problematic behavioral manifestations of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, an increasing number of studies have examined physiological and neural mechanisms underlying narcissistic behavior. Compelling results from these studies suggest that neurobiological and psychophysiological methods may boost our current understanding of narcissistic traits and involve two lines of inquiry. The initial line of investigation examines chronic and reactive physiological differences associated with narcissism, illustrating that narcissistic traits may lead to negative consequences for physical health. The second line of research examines potential differences in brain structure and function that may underlie narcissistic behavior. As such, the intent of this review is to provide a synopsis of the physiological, neuroendocrine, and neural correlates of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Since this area of investigation remains in a relatively early stage of inquiry, the chapter concludes with a discussion of future directions for research.

One of the predominant questions in narcissism research is whether narcissistic traits are maladaptive. Behavioral studies have explored this question by investigating the relationship between narcissistic traits and adaptive characteristics such as high self-esteem, low anxiety, and extraversion (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro & Rusbult, 2004; Watson, Hickman, Morris, & Milliron, 1995) and maladaptive characteristics such as hostility, low empathy, and poor relationship outcomes (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; Watson et al., 1992). Other studies have demonstrated how narcissism parallels other forms of psychopathology in exhibiting defensiveness (Horvath & Morf, 2009; Weinberger, Schwartz, & Davidson, 1979; Wink, 1991), emotional volatility (Rhodewalt, Madrian & Cheney, 1998), and externalizing behaviors such as substance use (Mowlaie, Abolghasemi, & Aghababaei, 2016) and aggression (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Kauten, Barry, & Leachman, 2013; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). Psychophysiological studies may be beneficial in this regard, potentially highlighting whether narcissistic traits exhibit similarities between callous, hypo-reactive traits in psychopathy (Harpur, Hare, & Hakstian, 1989) and hyper-reactive personality traits linked to chronic stress and cardiovascular disease. Considering that physiological variables are less susceptible to motivational factors, utilizing biologically based research methods is advantageous for studying narcissistic individuals prone to self-enhancement biases.

Another important debate is whether narcissism involves unadulterated positive self-regard or deep-seated negative self-views. The latter perspective is referred to as the fragile-ego account or the mask model (Bosson et al., 2008; Gregg & Sedikides, 2010; Kernberg, 1976; Kohut, 1976). Despite mixed evidence in support of mask models in the behavioral literature, these theories have served as a foundation for additional study of the relationship between narcissism and physiological reactivity to adverse events and evaluative stress (Edelstein, Yim, & Quas, 2010; Kelsey, Ornduff, McCann, & Reiff, 2001; Sommer, Kirkland, Newman, Estrella, &

Andreassi, 2009). This research provides a glimpse into potential biological and affective mechanisms associated with narcissistic traits.

Physiological Reactivity in Trait Narcissism

An initial study focused on the hypothesis that narcissistic traits were associated with exaggerated physiological responses to stress (Kelsey et al., 2001), based on prior evidence that similar traits such as antagonism, dominance, and competitiveness are associated with increased cardiovascular reactivity and risk for disease (Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987; Smith, Limon, Gallo, & Ngu, 1996; Wright, Contrada, & Glass, 1985). Using the NPI, Kelsey, Ornduff, McCann, and Reiff (2001) examined the psychophysiological responses associated with grandiose narcissism by assessing cardiovascular reactivity and skin conductance response (SCR) during active coping tasks (involving avoidable aversive cues) and passive coping tasks (involving unavoidable aversive stimuli). Measures of skin conductance, heart rate, and cardiac pre-ejection period (PEP: the interval between myocardial contractile force and aortic opening which reflects sympathetic control on the heart) provided several noninvasive measures of sympathetic reactivity to stress during both of these tasks.

Results indicated that males with higher grandiose narcissism exhibited increased cardiovascular reactivity during the active coping task, including increased PEP shortening (increased sympathetic response on the heart), slower anticipatory PEP habituation (slower reduction in PEP over repeated trial exposure), and greater HR deceleration (Kelsey et al., 2001). These effects were apparent only when the active coping task was presented first, suggesting an increased sympathetic response and selective attention toward novel, aversive cues. In general, increased PEP reactivity suggests a stronger fight or flight response and preparation for action, which may underlie the characteristic pattern of anger, hostility, and retaliation in narcissism (Bushman &

Baumeister, 1998; Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008). Additionally, however, individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism reported lower state anxiety, lower overall SCR, and marginally greater SCR habituation, indicating that narcissism may also be associated with a hypo-reactive physiological profile similar to psychopathy (Patrick, 1994; Raine & Venables, 1984).

These results are similar in one respect to the findings for individuals with defensive or repressive coping styles, who often exhibit discrepancy between their self-report and physiological response to stressful situations (Buntrock & Reddy, 1992; King, Taylor, Albright, & Haskell, 1990). Considering that grandiose narcissistic individuals frequently utilize defensive strategies to maintain positive self-views, it is reasonable to expect discrepancies between self-reported and physiological reactivity in these individuals. However, there was also some evidence that grandiose narcissists exhibit discrepancy between different types of physiological responses, such as PEP reactivity and SCR.

Subsequent research examined whether narcissism is associated with greater susceptibility to stress when faced with evaluative challenges. Presumably, unrealistic self-views and defensive self-esteem regulation strategies are difficult to maintain for narcissistic individuals and may produce a heightened response to evaluation. Laboratory tasks used to examine evaluative stress typically measure elevations in physiological reactivity while participants perform cognitive tasks in front of observers (Kirschbaum, Pirke, & Hellhammer, 1993), making them particularly advantageous for examining narcissistic reactivity to evaluative stress (Kelsey, 1991). As such, Kelsey, Ornduff, Reiff, and Arthur (2002) examined SCR and PEP while female participants completed two stress tasks involving mental arithmetic and the Thematic Apperception Test (Murray, 1943). The authors used items derived from subscales of the Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI; Bell, 1995) to measure covert and overt narcissism, which closely align with vul-

nerable and grandiose narcissism, respectively. Egocentricity (used to index grandiose narcissism) was associated with heightened PEP activity, whereas alienation (used to index vulnerable narcissism) predicted diminished SCR response during both tasks. Individuals high on each dimension reported increased stress appraisals following both tasks. Results from this investigation provided the first evidence of unique physiological reactivity to evaluative stress among these two dimensions of narcissism.

Further investigating physiological reactions that may distinguish narcissism dimensions, Sommer and colleagues (2009) examined cardiovascular reactivity while participants imagined scenarios involving interpersonal acceptance or rejection. While grandiose narcissism (measured by the NPI) was marginally related to decreases in heart rate (HR) while responding to both scenarios, Exploitativeness/Entitlement (EE) subscale scores from the NPI were associated with elevated systolic blood pressure (SBP) in response to imagined rejection. Reflecting a combination of grandiose and vulnerable traits, elevated scores on the Margolis-Thomas scale (Margolis & Thomas, 1980) were associated with increased diastolic and systolic blood pressure and elevated HR recovery following imagined rejection. These findings illustrate that grandiose narcissism from the NPI was associated with somewhat diminished reactivity overall, whereas both MT narcissism and EE were associated with heightened reactivity to interpersonal rejection. These findings correspond to behavioral reports of stronger sensitivity to rejection in vulnerable narcissism and stronger sensitivity to achievement failure in grandiose narcissism (Besser & Priel, 2010). Correlations between EE and cardiovascular reactivity to rejection are consistent with elevated distrust, hostility, and aggression (Reidy et al., 2008; Ruiz, Smith, & Rhodewalt, 2001; Zeigler-Hill, Green, Arnau, Sisemore, & Myers, 2011).

Inconsistent findings regarding the link between narcissistic traits and cardiovascular reactivity to stress may be attributable to reliance on autonomic indices that are more sensitive to task engagement and effort than psychosocial or evaluative stress. To address this limitation,

researchers examined whether individuals with elevated levels of grandiose narcissism exhibited neuroendocrine stress responses in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) system. HPA activation triggers cortisol release and is elicited by acute laboratory stressors and chronic daily stress (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). Chronic dysregulation of the HPA axis may lead to negative consequences for physical and mental health (Chrousos & Gold, 1992). Assuming that narcissistic individuals are extremely sensitive to social evaluation, Edelstein, Yim, and Quas (2010) examined salivary cortisol following the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST; Kirschbaum et al., 1993) and a non-evaluative control task. Grandiose narcissism (measured by the NPI) was associated with higher cortisol responses and negative affect following the TSST specifically among male, but not female, participants. These results suggest males with grandiose narcissism are prone to experience acute psychological and physiological stress in evaluative contexts.

In order to determine whether narcissistic individuals experience ongoing physiological stress, other studies examine salivary cortisol levels in the absence of experimentally induced stressors. Although laboratory measurements may themselves elicit elevated physiological reactivity, basal cortisol levels may illustrate how narcissistic individuals respond to daily events. Reinhard, Konrath, Lopez, and Cameron (2012) found males with higher levels of grandiose narcissism (measured by the NPI) exhibited higher cortisol levels, but found no relationship between grandiose narcissism and cortisol among females. Exploitativeness/Entitlement subscale scores were also related to significantly higher levels of cortisol in males and marginally higher cortisol levels in females. These effects remained significant when controlling for self-reported stress, mood, and relationship status (Reinhard, Konrath, Lopez, & Cameron, 2012), indicating a relationship between basal cortisol levels and narcissism independent of acute evaluative stress. Null or inconsistent findings for females may be attributed to oral contraceptive use (Kirschbaum et al., 1993) and lower susceptibility to achievement-related stressors (Stroud, Salovey, & Epel, 2002).

Despite previous inconsistencies for females, one study found elevated cortisol and alpha-amylase in response to daily events in females with higher levels of grandiose narcissism (Cheng, Tracy, & Miller, 2013). Salivary alpha-amylase is frequently utilized in addition to cardiovascular measures of sympathetic nervous system activation, representing stress-related changes in norepinephrine (Chatterton, Vogelsong, Lu, Ellman, & Hudgens, 1996; Nater et al., 2005). Moreover, Cheng, Tracy, and Miller (2013) found that cortisol and alpha-amylase output increased when individuals experienced negative affect during days both variables were assessed, illustrating that elevated neuroendocrine responses are contingent upon everyday experiences of stress and negative affect. As previously suggested, individuals with high levels of grandiose narcissism may experience more reactivity to everyday events due to a constant struggle maintaining unrealistic positive self-views.

Utilizing physiological approaches may also provide an important link between narcissism dimensions and problematic behavior. To this end, Lobbestael, Baumeister, Fiebig, and Eckel (2014) examined the role of testosterone in the association between narcissism dimensions and aggression among males. Both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were associated with self-reported proactive and reactive aggression (Raine et al., 2006), whereas only grandiose narcissism was associated with behavioral aggression and elevated testosterone. Notably, these results highlight another physiological distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, with grandiose narcissism as a predictor of heightened testosterone reactivity and externalizing aggression.

Functional and Structural Brain Differences

Studies utilizing neuroimaging to examine structural and functional brain differences associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism have begun in the last few years. Important benefits to utilizing neuroimaging techniques include exam-

ining task-related differences in brain activation as well as measurement of structural and functional connections between theoretically relevant brain regions. Paralleling the psychophysiological effects outlined above, neuroimaging can demonstrate abnormal brain activation among those with high versus low levels of narcissistic traits. Additionally, it is possible that physiological markers of stress reactivity manifest due to differences at the neural level. It is critical and customary to interpret neuroimaging results with a degree of caution, given the perils of relying on correlational neuroimaging data to draw conclusions about complex behaviors (i.e., reverse inference: see Poldrack, 2006). Despite these precautions, a small group of studies has identified task-related and rest-state differences in brain activation, differences in brain volume, and structural connections associated with narcissism.

The first of these studies focused on neural mechanisms underlying deficient empathy in narcissism (Fan et al., 2011). This investigation used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to examine task-related differences in brain activation (BOLD signal) in male and female participants while they were instructed to empathize with images of emotional faces. Brain activity during the empathy task was compared to activity during a (non-empathy) task consisting of passive viewing of unidentifiable images. In contrast to individuals with high levels of vulnerable narcissism measured by Narcissism Inventory scores (NI: Deneke & Hilgenstock, 1989), individuals with low levels of vulnerable narcissism showed slightly higher activation in the right anterior insula (AI), dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), right premotor cortex, and posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) while empathizing (versus the control task). These findings suggest that low levels of vulnerable narcissism are associated with greater activation in brain regions typically associated with empathy such as the AI (Singer & Lamm, 2009). However, it is unclear if these data provide direct evidence of deficient neural activity in the AI for individuals with elevated levels of vulnerable narcissism.

Additional fMRI studies have examined whether narcissistic individuals demonstrate

changes in neural activity in response to social exclusion (Cascio, Konrath, & Falk, 2015; Chester & DeWall, 2015). Similar to behavioral studies, these investigations tested the notion that grandiose narcissism buffers excluded individuals from negative experiences (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). It is also possible that despite reporting lower distress from social exclusion, their heightened physiological reactivity indicates grandiose individuals exhibit more reactivity than they are willing to admit. Neuroimaging studies of social exclusion generally report increased activation in the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), subgenual ACC, and AI (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003) and are correlated with increased feelings of distress and social pain following exclusion. Assuming that grandiose individuals are more reactive to social exclusion, Cascio and colleagues (2015) examined neural activation in response to social exclusion in a sample of adolescent males. Increased grandiose narcissism (indexed by NPI scores) was related to increased activation in the dACC, AI, and subgenual ACC during exclusion, although there was no correlation between narcissism and self-reported distress. In a later study, Chester and DeWall (2015) examined whether dACC activation in response to exclusion would predict retaliatory aggression among narcissistic individuals. Indeed, males and females with elevated levels of grandiose narcissism (indexed by NPI-16 scores; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) and increased dACC activation exhibited retaliatory aggression in a subsequent task. Anxious attachment was also associated with a positive relationship between grandiose narcissism and dACC activation. Consistent with the threatened egotism model (Baumeister et al., 1996), findings from both studies suggest that increased neural activation in response to exclusion among individuals with elevated levels of grandiose narcissism may predict reactive aggression. Evidence of increased brain activation in regions implicated in social pain and distress also highlights the utility of using neuroimaging to show reactivity that may otherwise not be evident with behavioral measures.

Recent research has also examined whether grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are associated with structural differences in gray matter volume, white matter connections between brain regions, and functional connections between theoretically relevant neural networks. It is worth noting that neuroimaging research is moving away from examining changes in brain activation among discrete brain regions and toward more sophisticated assessments of large-scale neurocognitive network abnormalities in psychopathology (Friston, 2005; Menon, 2011). This paradigm shift is evident in studies of psychological disorders as well as personality traits (DeYoung et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2013; Omura, Constable, & Canli, 2005). Among the few neuroimaging studies, one study reports that sex moderates structural brain differences associated with narcissism. Examining over 300 participants, Yang et al. (2015) found females with higher levels of grandiose narcissism exhibited increased gray matter volume (GMV) in the right superior parietal lobe (rSPL) but no relationship between grandiose narcissism and brain volume in males. This study also examined rest-state functional connectivity (rsFC), which provides information as to which brain regions exhibit increased temporal correlations in the blood oxygen level-dependent (BOLD) signal at rest (Fox et al., 2005). In general, studies utilize rest-state paradigms to examine brain activation when participants are simply lying in the scanner without completing a specific task. Data from these studies typically reveal increased activation in brain regions included in the default mode network (DMN) such as the posterior cingulate, precuneus, and medial frontal gyrus (Buckner, Andrews-Hanna, & Schacter, 2008) presumed to be associated with self-referential processing (Gusnard, Akbudak, Shulman, & Raichle, 2001). By contrast, task-related activation typically involves increased activation among regions in the dorsal attention network (DAN) including the superior parietal lobe and frontal eye fields (Spreng, Sepulcre, Turner, Stevens, & Schacter, 2013). Yang et al. (2015) found females with higher levels of grandiose narcissism exhibited decreased rsFC between regions in the dorsal

attention network (DAN) and the DMN, while males with higher levels of grandiose narcissism exhibited increased rsFC between regions in these networks. Typically, the task-positive DAN and the internally directed DMN networks operate in an antagonistic manner (i.e., anticorrelations: Spreng et al., 2013). Yang et al. (2015) interpret the rsFC findings as more effective dynamic processing between these networks in females and imbalanced anticorrelation between the DAN and the DMN in males, suggesting sex-specific brain activity may underlie different self-regulatory styles of males and females with higher levels of grandiose narcissism.

Other studies have investigated whether altered structural connections between brain regions play a role in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. To that end, Chester, Lynam, Powell, and DeWall (2015) sought to determine whether reliance on external validation for positive self-regard in grandiose narcissism was associated with abnormal structural connections between regions underlying self-referential processing (medial PFC: D'Argembeau et al., 2012; Heatherton et al., 2006) and hedonic reward (ventral striatum: VS; Berridge & Kringelbach, 2013). The authors argued that individuals with elevated grandiose narcissism pursue external affirmation as a result of chronically blunted positive self-regard due to weakened structural integrity of the fronto-striatal (FS) pathway (Chester, Lynam, Powell, & DeWall, 2015). Consistent with previous reports that link FS structural connectivity with self-esteem (Chavez & Heatherton, 2015), these results confirmed that grandiose narcissism (indexed by NPI-16 scores) was negatively related to FS white matter integrity. Another study examined the relationships between cortical brain volume and thickness and vulnerable narcissism using the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI: Pincus et al., 2009) in a large undergraduate sample (Mao et al., 2016). PNI scores were inversely related to cortical thickness in the DLPFC and right inferior frontal gyrus and inversely related to cortical volume in the DLPFC, right postcentral gyrus, and left MPFC. The authors suggest diminished cortical thickness in DLPFC may play a role in defi-

cient emotion regulation, and decreased cortical volume in other prefrontal regions may underscore social cognition deficits in vulnerable narcissism.

Future Directions

Future research may benefit from addressing a few unresolved issues. Although physiological examinations demonstrate heightened reactivity for individuals with elevated grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in response to stress, it is unclear whether these findings all signify increased preparatory response, mobilization of effort, or negative emotional reactions. In order to elucidate the specific emotional experiences that accompany physiological reactivity to stress and ego threat, it would be beneficial to combine psychophysiological methods with self-reported emotions, facial action coding, or facial electromyography (EMG). Preliminary results suggest narcissism dimensions are related to unique cardiovascular and neuroendocrine responses to stress; therefore, future research should replicate effects for grandiose narcissism and continue to explore effects specific to vulnerable narcissism. Evidence of exaggerated physiological reactivity was often dependent on interpersonal evaluative contexts, so future work should focus on evaluative concerns in socially isolated conditions or manipulate this variable.

Previous studies report that interactive effects of cortisol and alpha-amylase responses may be useful in predicting externalizing behavior and aggression (Bauer, Quas, & Boyce, 2002; Centifanti, Kimonis, Frick, & Aucoin, 2013; Gordis, Granger, Susman, & Trickett, 2006), so it is possible that incongruent physiological responses in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are also a risk factor for externalizing behavior. As recently suggested (Yang et al., 2015), future studies should explore whether narcissistic traits involve abnormal interactions between self-referential and attention-related processes (Krusemark, Lee, & Newman, 2015). Future neuroimaging studies may be able to expand on the current findings by manipulating experiences of

ideal and actual self-states (Boone, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, & Braet, 2012; Strauman & Higgins, 1987) and by implementing inclusive experimental designs that examine ongoing cognitive and emotional processes in conjunction with brain activation. Given recent work highlighting the role of social stress in attenuating narcissistic aggression in adolescents (Kauten et al., 2013), future work should examine factors that attenuate physiological reactivity and aggression. Lastly, utilizing physiological and neuroscientific methods with a variety of populations, including at-risk adolescents and incarcerated adults, has potential to further our understanding of the role of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in maladaptive behavior.

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Abstract

Grandiose narcissism (characterized by an inflated sense of self) uniquely influences the encoding and retrieval of information important to one's identity including evaluative feedback, self-related traits, and life events. Depending on both the valence (positive or negative) and the agency (self- vs. other-focused) of the information or events, narcissists' memories may be more vivid, suppressed, or distorted. This chapter summarizes prior research on narcissism and memory as well as more recent studies focusing on the role of attention biases in the encoding of self-related traits and memories. Overall, studies support the agency model of narcissism's prediction of attention biases and memorial enhancement for positive-agentic (e.g., clever, talented) rather than positive-communal (e.g., cooperative, sympathetic) events or information. However, results are mixed for the attention to and encoding of negative-agentic traits/events (e.g., shameful, stupid) and may depend on the extent to which the information is ego-threatening as well as the subtype of narcissism (vulnerable or grandiose).

Keywords

Agency model of narcissism · Autobiographical memory · Self-reference effect · Mnemonic neglect · Attentional biases

Grandiose narcissism (characterized by an inflated sense of self) uniquely influences the encoding and retrieval of self-related traits and past events. As discussed further, depending on both the valence (positive or negative) and the agency (self- vs. other-focused) of the information or events, the memories of narcissists (i.e., those scoring higher on measures of grandiose narcissism unless otherwise noted) may be more vivid, suppressed, or distorted. Much of the prior research on narcissism and memory has focused on the memory of narcissists in response to evaluative feedback, as well as on memories related to the self as a participant in recent events, memory for self-descriptive traits, and autobiographical memory. More recent studies have focused on narcissists' attention biases to information that precede encoding.

Memory for Evaluative Feedback and Positive Expectations

Feedback about oneself must be retained in order to be able to more effectively handle future social or performance situations. Self-related feedback has important implications across many domains including for narcissistic leaders' decision-

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making successes or failures (or for patients meeting the clinical criteria for narcissistic personality disorder who possess rigid and maladaptive cognitive/behavioral patterns). For example, narcissists exhibited more self-serving attributions in their performance on an intelligence test with successes attributed to ability and failures attributed to task difficulty, whereas less narcissistic individuals exhibited the opposite pattern (Stucke, 2003). Such self-serving attributions would then be encoded in long-term episodic memory and retrieved when similar situations arise (e.g., my score on the last exam in this class was not due to my lack of ability or poor study skills but rather because my professor's exams are unreasonably difficult).

Narcissists' self-enhancement tendencies are exhibited by better memory for positive than negative feedback (Djikic, Chan, & Peterson, 2007; Djikic, Peterson, & Zelazo, 2005). Following the completion of several personality questionnaires, participants received a bogus profile consisting of 12 positive statements (e.g., "You are generally frank and sincere and not willing to manipulate others through flattery, craftiness, or deception.") and 12 negative versions (e.g., "You are sometimes crafty and deceptive and willing to manipulate others through flattery, secrecy, or dishonesty."). These 24 original statements were presented in a recognition memory task with 24 new similar decoy statements that closely resembled the original statements but were opposite in valence. Narcissists (measured as those having an egoistic bias) were more likely to recognize the original positive statements in comparison to the negative ones. This effect was somewhat reduced by the presence of a recording video camera aimed at the participants, which provided a social facilitation effect by improving their recognition accuracy of their original feedback (i.e., eliminating the memorial advantage for only the positive feedback; Djikic et al., 2007). Notably, the statements in the bogus personality profile contained a mixture of agentic (self-focused) and communal (other-focused) attributes. Given their agentic (or self) focus, narcissists may have found some of the more communal positive statements like "frank and sincere" to be less positive than agentic ones.

One rationale for narcissists' heightened memory for positive feedback is that grandiose narcissism predicts the expectation for such positive feedback in typical social interactions such as "eating lunch with a new friend" or "getting a haircut" (Hepper, Hart, Gregg, & Sedikides, 2011). In turn, people are better able to remember what has already been anticipated given that the same underlying brain regions are involved in both the simulation of future events (episodic foresight) and the recall of past events (episodic memory; Schacter, Addis, & Buckner, 2007). For instance, grandiose narcissists' positive expectations for an upcoming vacation generally predicted their positive evaluation of that vacation (Besser, Zeigler-Hill, Weinberg, & Pincus, 2016). However, this self-fulfilling prophecy for positive outcomes did not extend to those with the more vulnerable form of narcissism (characterized by contingent self-esteem, devaluing, and entitlement rage). Males (but not females) who had high levels of vulnerable narcissism recalled their vacations as being unsatisfying following what were perhaps unrealistically positive expectations prior to that vacation (Besser et al., 2016).

Memory Enhancement for the Positive-Agentic Self

According to the agency model of narcissism (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007), narcissists possess a self-schema that is positive, inflated, and agentic. In turn, this agency model predicts that narcissists' self-beliefs and self-related memories will be more agentic than communal and more positive than negative. Indeed, this prediction has been supported across studies using a variety of memory paradigms investigating self-related memory including: memory for one's own recent behavior (Gosling, John, Craik, & Robins, 1998; John & Robins, 1994), memories for traits following a self-reference task (Jones & Brunell, 2014), and autobiographical memories (Hart et al., 2011; Jones, Norville, & Wright, 2017; Ritchie, Walker, Marsh, Hart, & Skowronski, 2015; Sutin & Robins, 2005). Following a group discussion task, narcissists' self-reports of their desirable

actions during the discussion were more positively distorted and more agentic (e.g., took charge of things at the meeting) than communal (e.g., expressed agreement with another group member; Gosling et al., 1998). Similarly, following a self-reference task, narcissism reliably predicted greater recall of positive-agentic traits ($\beta = .19$; e.g., clever, attractive, cheerful) but not positive-communal ones (e.g., $\beta = -.09$, cooperative, kind, agreeable; Jones & Brunell, 2014). Critically, these effects were limited only to the self-reference task and did not occur following the other-reference task in which participants rated the extent to which traits described a famous other. In contrast to narcissism, self-esteem predicted greater recall of positive-communal ($\beta = .28$) but not positive-agentic ($\beta = -.10$) traits.

Consistent with the memory for self-related traits and recent events, grandiose narcissism enhances autobiographical memory for positive-agentic events in comparison to other types of events. In their descriptions of a nostalgic life event, narcissists included more agentic references (e.g., achieve, competitive, competent) than communal (e.g., charitable, cooperative, understanding) and were more likely to endorse agentic items on a nostalgic inventory (e.g., past successes/achievements; being able to focus on what I want) in comparison to communal items (e.g., reunions with family or friends; being part of a group or community; Hart et al., 2011). This focus on positive-agentic events was also found in an enhanced fading affect bias (FAB; i.e., the faster fading of negative affect than positive affect in autobiographical memories) during the recall of positive-agentic achievement memories (Ritchie et al., 2015). Moreover, the most narcissistic individuals exhibited a reverse FAB for positive-communal events (i.e., when they cooperated with others) such that their positive affect had faded more than their negative affect for these memories. In addition to the fading of an affect over time (or lack thereof), the particular positive or negative emotion is somewhat distinct for narcissists in comparison to those higher in self-esteem. Sutin and Robins (2005) measured the overall affect of undergraduates as they recalled positive and negative incidents of academic self-defining

memories and positive and negative incidents of romantic memories. Though both narcissism and self-esteem were related to the overall positive affect experienced during the recall of a positive academic memory and to a lesser extent for the more communal romantic memory, narcissists reported feeling “inspired” in the recall of their positive-agentic academic memory.

The enhanced affect or emotion during recall found in these studies is one aspect of memory phenomenology that may coincide with the recall of an autobiographical memory. In a recent model (Fitzgerald & Broadbridge, 2013), phenomenology consisted of four latent constructs including: *impact* (i.e., seeing the significance and consequences of an event), *recollection* (i.e., reliving the event, being able to see, hear, and feel the emotions of it), *rehearsal* (i.e., having thought or talked about the event), and *belief* (i.e., confidence about the accuracy of the event including time and spatial details of it). Using Fitzgerald and Broadbridge’s modified Autobiographical Memory Questionnaire (AMQ), based on their model, we (Jones, Norville, & Wright, 2017) assessed the extent to which narcissism and self-esteem predicted phenomenology across these four constructs for types of memories that systematically varied in agency and valence. We found that narcissism predicted higher phenomenology ratings across these four constructs for recalled positive-agentic autobiographical memories (i.e., clever, talented) but not for positive-communal ones (i.e., cooperative, sympathetic). In particular, the higher impact for the narcissists in recalling the positive-agentic memories corroborates Sutin and Robins’ (2005) finding that narcissists felt more “inspired” by their positive academic memory. Consistent with our earlier study (Jones & Brunell, 2014), self-esteem (but not narcissism) predicted higher recollection and belief ratings for the positive-communal memories. In Study 2, we additionally assessed retrieval times for the autobiographical memories and found that narcissism predicted faster retrieval times in recalling the talented and attractive positive-agentic memories. In contrast, self-esteem predicted faster retrieval times for the positive-communal romantic memory.

Collectively, these studies show memory enhancement for positive-agentive life events as opposed to positive-communal ones, particularly for those relating to more internal competence (e.g., an achievement, positive academic event, or a time when one felt clever or talented). Yet for the more external attribute of attractiveness, gender served as a moderator, with narcissism reliably predicting the phenomenology of the attractive memory for only the female participants (Jones et al., 2017). The limitation of this relationship to only women may be due in part to the stronger and more consistent prosocial and financial biases in favor of attractive women in comparison to attractive men (Maestripieri, Henry, & Nickels, 2017). Thus, the extent to which narcissism predicts the phenomenology of positive-agentive memories likely varies across demographic (gender, age) or other population subsets. Moreover, some positive-agentive attributes may be seen as more positive and/or more important and central to one's identity than others. Preliminary data suggest that narcissists at least view some positive-agentive traits as being more positive than other traits. For instance, narcissism (controlling for self-esteem) was reliably correlated with more positive valence ratings for talented ($r = .25, p < .01$) and clever ($r = .20, p < .05$) but not for attractive ($r = .10, p = .29$). Future studies could serve to further investigate the extent to which narcissism enhances the perceived valence, importance, and subsequent memory for positive-agentive traits that are related to mental competence and achievement (e.g., ambitious, clever, talented, successful) in comparison to more external vanity related traits (e.g., fashionable, polished, hot, fit).

Distortion, Diminishment, or Enhancement of Negative Self-Relevant Information

Narcissists possess a strong approach motivation for positive-agentive information but only a weak avoidance motivation for negative information (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Brennan, 2011; Foster & Trimm, 2008). In terms of memory, whereas narcissists are motivated to exhibit a

clear enhancement in the encoding of positive-agentive information, they are only weakly motivated to avoid negative information. Yet just as there are likely differences in the memorability and presumed importance of various types of positive attributes, memorial responsiveness to negative attributes also varies based on the agency of the negative information and on the extent to which that information is self-threatening.

Positive distortions in memory may occur in the face of negative feedback as a means to protect oneself from ego-threatening information – a phenomenon referred to as *mnemonic neglect* (Sedikides & Green, 2000, 2004, 2009). For example, male narcissists recalled more positive dating histories in contrast to non-narcissists following feedback in the form of a romantic rejection from a female confederate posing as a potential dating partner (Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002). Another possible response to ego-threat is to distance oneself from that information. One example of such distancing would be to see the recalled event from a third-person visual perspective as if an observer rather than from the more typical first-person visual perspective (i.e., seeing it through our own eyes as if re-experiencing the event). Across two studies, participants recalled a self-threatening negative-agentive memory about a time when they felt ashamed (Marchlewska & Cichocka, 2017). Narcissism predicted the third-person perspective for the self-threatening (shame) memory but did not for the recalled positive-agentive memory (*proud*, Study 1) nor for a negative control memory (*sad*, Study 2). In addition to positive distortion or distancing, a third possible reaction to ego-threatening negative-agentive memories is the continued processing of the event resulting in richer encoding. We (Jones et al., 2017) found that narcissism predicted *greater* rather than *lower* phenomenological ratings (impact, belief, and rehearsal) for the negative-agentive autobiographical memory *stupid* and a trend toward greater rehearsal for the *sloppy* autobiographical memory. The lack of mnemonic neglect for these negative-agentive memories could suggest that this sample of mostly female young adult narcissists may not have viewed *stupid* or *sloppy* as a central self-aspect and/or as self-threatening (both of which

are requirements for mnemonic neglect; Green & Sedikides, 2004). Alternatively, as will be discussed further in the next section, narcissists may have viewed these memories as self-threatening with the increased phenomenology reflecting a hypervigilance for these events (Horvath & Morf, 2009).

In contrast to the mixed findings for negative-agentic information, narcissists are not at all likely to be motivated to avoid negative-communal information (e.g., rude, insulting, dishonest). On the contrary, narcissism predicted higher self-descriptiveness ratings for such traits (Jones & Brunell, 2014; Study 1, $\beta = .22$, Study 2, $\beta = .18$). Thus, rather than an avoidance of such negative-communal information, narcissists may even favor it, though not nearly to the same extent as for positive-agentic information. Moreover, results for negative-communal memories further distinguish narcissism from self-esteem. In contrast to narcissists, those higher in self-esteem had lower self-descriptive ratings for negative-communal traits (Jones & Brunell, 2014; Study 2, $\beta = -.40$), and self-esteem predicted lower recall for these traits ($\beta = -.16$). Though narcissism was not related to the recall of either communal or agentic negative traits following the self-reference task in Jones and Brunell (2014), narcissism predicted greater phenomenological recollection of the recalled negative-communal autobiographical memories (i.e., rude, annoying, dishonest; Jones et al., 2017) and faster retrieval times in Study 2. Likewise, narcissism (but not self-esteem) was related to the *positive* affect felt during the recall of a *negative* romantic memory (Sutin & Robins, 2005).

Early Information Processing: Attention Biases

Recently, memory and narcissism studies have focused on the role of attention biases in the encoding of traits and memories (Gu, He, & Zhao, 2013; Horvath & Morf, 2009; Krusemark, Lee, & Newman, 2015). Attention control is required for the active maintenance of goal states as well as item representations in memory

(Unsworth & Engle, 2007). If the item representations of the incoming information (i.e., the presented traits) are consistent with the narcissist's positive-agentic self-schema, then greater attention would be further focused on these items, which would in turn enhance encoding (e.g., more phenomenological details). Indeed, results have shown a greater attention bias in a dot-probe task toward positive items (Gu et al., 2013; Krusemark et al., 2015). Narcissists' reaction times were faster than those for non-narcissists following probes (i.e., dots) that replaced positive-agentic success words (e.g., prodigy, outstanding, capable; Gu, He, & Zhao (2013). Similarly, Krusemark, Lee, and Newman (2015) found that incarcerated males who were higher in grandiose narcissism demonstrated greater attention for positive traits. However, the mixture of agentic (e.g., ambitious, clever, bright, brilliant) and communal (e.g., ethical, patient, polite, sincere) words may partially explain the lack of enhanced memory for these participants in the subsequent word recognition task.

If the presented traits are inconsistent with the self-enhancement motive/positive-agentic self-schema, then the narcissist may exhibit hypervigilance in attending to the trait and in turn richer encoding (Gu et al., 2013; Horvath & Morf, 2009; Krusemark et al., 2015). In a priming task consisting of negative-agentic traits reflecting worthlessness (e.g., stupid, incompetent, deficient) and neutral words (e.g., oval, violet, diagonal), the higher the initial activation was for the worthless traits, the more these words were recalled in a surprise recall task (Horvath & Morf, 2009). Likewise, in a dot-probe task both narcissists and non-narcissists exhibited attention bias for failure related words (e.g., stupid, incapable, loser; Gu et al., 2013). However, for the more negative-communal words related to rejection (e.g., rude, hostile, dislike), only the non-narcissists exhibited attention bias. Another possible response to negative information is to disengage attention, reflective of narcissists' weak avoidance motivation (Foster & Brennan, 2011). Horvath and Morf (2009) speculated that the narcissism subtype influences whether narcissists are hypervigilant or avoidant in their attention toward negative information, with a better

ability to disengage and avoid negative information for the grandiose than the vulnerable subtype. Supporting this speculation, vulnerable (but not grandiose) narcissism was associated with an attentional bias in a dot-probe task for a mixture of agentic (e.g., stupid, ignorant, weak) and communal (e.g., selfish, cruel, vulgar) negative words and with greater recognition memory for these words (Krusemark et al. 2015).

Conclusions and Additional Future Directions

One further avenue for future research is to investigate the extent to which communal narcissism (as opposed to the much more frequently studied grandiose narcissism measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, Raskin & Terry, 1988) predicts memory for positive-communal traits (e.g., cooperative, kind, generous). Communal narcissists have grandiose views of themselves on communal rather than agentic dimensions (e.g., “I am the most helpful person I know” as opposed to “I am the most intelligent person I know”; Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012). Communal narcissism may resemble self-esteem in predicting enhanced memory for positive-communal information (Jones & Brunell, 2014; Jones et al., 2017). However, communal narcissists share the same self-enhancement motive as do the agentic narcissists (Gebauer et al., 2012), which means they care more about *being seen as* helpful and a good listener rather than truly being one. This lack of authenticity may alternatively suggest that those higher in communal narcissism behave as the agentic narcissists with attention biases and enhanced memory for primarily the positive-agentic information.

In sum, studies support the agency model of narcissism’s prediction of attention biases and memorial enhancement for positive-agentic rather than positive-communal events or information. However, results are mixed for the attention to and encoding of negative-agentic traits/events (e.g., shameful, stupid, or sloppy) and may depend on the extent to which the information is

ego-threatening and the subtype of narcissism (vulnerable or grandiose). For negative-communal information, initial findings suggest an unabashed recognition of these traits as self-descriptive and even a memorial enhancement of them. Though for some negative-communal events such as romantic rejection (Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002), ego-threatening negative-agentic traits may be activated (e.g., unattractive, boring, idiot). But to better explore the influence of narcissism on both positive and negative self-related information, future studies should assess the extent to which the recalled trait or memory is self-threatening and central to their self-schema in addition to the perceived valence and agency of that information. The perceived valence, importance, or extent to which a trait is self-descriptive or self-threatening may differ between males and females or between generational cohorts. Thus, future studies could investigate how narcissism differentially influences the attention biases and encoding of some traits more for one demographic group than for another.

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Narcissism and Involvement in Risk-Taking Behaviors

25

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Abstract

Multiple studies investigated the effects of narcissism on risk-taking behaviors utilizing both self-report and behavioral measures. Most research focused on grandiose narcissism. Recently, research has also assessed vulnerable narcissism and relationships between the homogenous traits of narcissism and risk-taking behavior. Grandiose narcissism was linked with increased involvement in risky sexual behaviors, sexual aggression, aggressive driving, compulsive exercise, alcohol use and abuse, illicit drug use and abuse, compulsive buying behaviors, and gambling. Vulnerable narcissism was associated with aggressive driving and compulsive buying behaviors. The homogenous traits of narcissism, including grandiosity, exploitativeness, and entitlement, were associated with sexual aggression, involvement in high-risk sports, gambling, and unethical behaviors. With regard to performance on behavioral measures

designed to assess risk-taking behaviors, the relationship between narcissism and risk-taking is more mixed. The mechanisms underlying why narcissists take risks are also examined. Avenues for future study are presented.

Keywords

Risk-taking · Risky decision-making · Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Entitlement · Grandiosity · Exploitativeness

Narcissistic leaders in high-ranking positions, such as company CEOs, can engage in risky behaviors with the potential to affect themselves, the company, and investors. In a study following the 2008 banking industry collapse, researchers found that CEO narcissism affected the banks' decision-making (leading to greater high-risk decisions), in turn leading to slower recovery from the collapse (Buyl, Boone, & Wade, *in press*). Narcissism has been linked to increased involvement in various risk-taking behaviors. In general, risk-taking behaviors are actions that have some sort of positive gain but could also result in a negative outcome, be it in terms of psychological health, physical health, or even the health/safety of others (Leigh, 1999). Multiple activities are included in the broad category of risk-taking behaviors, including using various substances of

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abuse, aggression, risky sexual behaviors, involvement in competitive sports, aggressive driving, and unethical behaviors, among others.

Most research on narcissism and risk-taking behaviors has focused on grandiose narcissism, as measured by versions of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Unless otherwise specified, the reviewed data reflect grandiose narcissism as assessed with the NPI. However, more recent studies began to incorporate assessment of pathological narcissism as well as homogenous traits of narcissism (see Brunell & Buelow, this volume) to examine risk-taking behaviors. Several studies utilized the domain-specific risk-attitude scale (DOSPERT; Blais & Weber, 2006), a self-report measure wherein individuals report their recent level of involvement in five domains of risk-taking behaviors: ethical, financial, health/safety, recreational, and social (Weber, Blais, & Betz, 2002). Research shows more grandiose narcissistic individuals reported increased involvement in various risk-taking behaviors on the DOSPERT (Buelow & Brunell, 2014; Foster, Shenese, & Goff, 2009). Thus, an examination of risk-taking behaviors is warranted. In the next section, we break down the relationship between narcissism and specific risk-taking behaviors.

Narcissism and Risk-Taking Behaviors

Risky Sexual Behavior Grandiose narcissism is strongly associated with a variety of risky sexual behaviors. Participants high in narcissism self-reported a greater number of one-night stands (Adams, Luevano, & Jonason, 2014; Jonason, Luevano, & Adams, 2012), a greater number of sexual partners (Foster, Shrir, & Campbell, 2006; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Martin, Benotsch, Perschbacher Lance, & Green, 2013), and higher rates of unprotected sex (Martin et al., 2013). Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000) theorized that those high in narcissistic traits might view sexual relationships as a type of conquest, and this viewpoint was associated with

a higher “hookup” rate than among those low in narcissistic traits. It is possible that this different perspective on the meaning of sexual relationships could account for the consistent finding that narcissists engage in risky sexual behaviors.

In addition, narcissism has been linked with sexual aggression, which can be viewed as risky due to potential negative consequences of the behavior to others. Specifically, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists were more likely to self-report higher rates of sexually aggressive behaviors (Salekin, Rogers, & Sewell, 1996; Simmons, Lehmann, Cobb, & Fowler, 2005) and a greater history of incidents of sexual assault (Kosson, Kelly, & White, 1997; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2016). Furthermore, Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, and Baumeister (2003) found that male grandiose narcissists showed less empathy for rape victims and greater enjoyment of depictions of rape in movies. The authors theorized that reactance to consensual activity (that is then stopped) and subsequent feelings of rejection could account for increased sexual coercion among narcissists. Finally, to our knowledge, only Zeigler-Hill, Enjaian, and Essa (2013) investigated specific facets of narcissism –entitlement and grandiosity– in relation to sexual aggression. They found higher levels of sexual aggression among those endorsing higher levels of entitlement, as well as among those endorsing higher grandiosity. In keeping with Bushman et al. (2003), it is possible that sexual coercion and aggression among narcissists may reflect a sense that the sexual activity is deserved and minimizes empathy for the victim.

Risky Driving Behaviors Aggressive driving is another risk-taking behavior and includes such activities as driving over the speed limit, tailgating, and engaging in “road rage.” Little research to date investigated links between narcissism and aggressive driving behaviors. However, of those who have, a consistent finding was that individuals endorsing narcissistic characteristics, both grandiose and vulnerable, self-reported engaging in more aggressive driving behaviors than those

not endorsing narcissistic characteristics (Britt & Garrity, 2006; Malta, Blanchard, & Freidenberg, 2005; Schreer, 2002).

Aggression Engaging in aggressive behaviors can also be viewed as a risky decision with the potential for unknown but negative consequences for the aggressor and the victim, such as injury or criminal charges. The findings with sexual violence and aggressive driving are in partial agreement with the overall literature on narcissism and aggression more generally. Although this topic is covered in much greater detail elsewhere (Jones & Neria, this volume), the results will be briefly addressed here. Across children, adolescents, and adults, multiple studies have shown links between narcissism (both grandiose and vulnerable) and conduct problems, delinquency, and aggression (e.g., Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003; Barry, Grafeman, Adler, & Pickard, 2007; Barry & Kauten, 2014; Barry, Pickard, & Ansel, 2009; Burt, Donnellan, & Tackett, 2012; Fanti & Kimonis, 2012; Ruiz, Smith, & Rhodewalt, 2001). To the extent that suicide is viewed as aggression directed against the self, increased rates of suicidal ideation (Heisel, Links, Conn, van Reekum, & Flett, 2007) and number of suicide attempts (Ansell et al., 2015; Pincus et al., 2009) were also seen. However, not all research agreed on a link between narcissism and aggression. Cale and Lilienfeld (2006) argued that it is psychopathy, rather than narcissism, that is more related to aggression. On the contrary, in the realm of cyberbullying, single-timepoint (Reijntjes et al., 2016; Zerach, 2016b) and longitudinal (Fanti, Demetriou, & Hawa, 2012) studies found no relationship between perpetrating cyberbullying and grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. This may be due to the unique nature of cyberbullying, which allows for greater anonymity and freedom of expression (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). In sum, a clear link exists between narcissism and aggression (including bullying; Geel, Toprak, Goemans, Zwaanswijk, & Vedder, 2017) in general, but with the recent increase in rates of cyberbullying (Selkie, Fales,

& Moreno, 2016), additional research is needed in this domain.

Diet and Exercise Exercise and eating behaviors have the potential to be health-promoting but also health-impairing behaviors. Narcissism has been linked with both positive and negative elements of these activities. Specifically, grandiose narcissism was associated with higher levels of involvement in exercise (Davis, Karvinen, & McCreary, 2005; Hill, 2016; Jonason, Baughman, Carter, & Parker, 2015; MacLaren & Best, 2013; Spano, 2001) but also with compulsive exercise (Lichtenstein, Hinze, Emborg, Thomsen, & Hemmingsen, 2017). Exploitativeness was also associated with self-reported involvement in high-risk sports (Buelow & Brunell, 2014). Although these results could primarily be taken as a positive, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were also linked with increased risk of bulimia (Gordon & Dombeck, 2010) and disordered eating thoughts and behaviors (Dakanalis, Clerici, & Carra, 2015; Lehoux & Howe, 2007; Zerach, 2014). Taken together, any positive health benefits to the individual from increased exercise—even if the underlying reason for that exercise was vanity or inflated self-presentation—could be minimized by the negative health effects of poor dietary habits.

Alcohol and Other Substance Use The use of alcohol and other substances can be considered a risk-taking behavior due to potential legal and health consequences. Underage drinking or illegal drug use at any age could result in arrest or an accident, and overuse of substances can result in a substance use disorder diagnosis and potential negative health complications. To date, several studies found a significant, positive relationship between grandiose narcissism and alcohol use behaviors among college-aged individuals (Buelow & Brunell, 2014; Hill, 2016; Luhtanen & Crocker, 2005; MacLaren & Best, 2013), including both the number of total drinks and the number of binge-drinking episodes per week

(Luhtanen & Crocker, 2005). In terms of drug use, grandiose narcissism was also associated with increased marijuana use (Hill, 2016), higher overall drug use (Buelow & Brunell, 2014), and a higher total number of drugs used (Stenason & Vernon, 2016). In addition, grandiosity was associated with illicit drug use (Buelow & Brunell, 2014). However, narcissism was not associated with increased nicotine use. Hill (2016) found no relationship between grandiose narcissism and smoking status, while Hudek-Knezevic, Kardum, and Mehic (2016) instead found that narcissists smoked less than non-narcissists. In sum, it appears that individuals reporting greater grandiose narcissism are engaging in higher rates of alcohol and drug use behaviors overall.

Other Addictive Behaviors Narcissists engage in other behaviors with a potential for addiction. Higher rates of compulsive buying behaviors were reported in both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Rose, 2007; Zerach, 2016a). Addiction to online games occurred more frequently in those high in vulnerable narcissism (Kim, Namkoong, Ku, & Kim, 2008). Although not an addiction per se, overdisclosure—particularly with personally identifiable information—on social media sites has a potential for negative outcomes. Grandiose and vulnerable narcissists tended to overdisclose information on social media sites (Casale, Fioravanti, & Rugai, 2016; Hawk, ter Bogt, van den Eijnden, & Nelemans, 2015). A consistent link has emerged between narcissism and gambling, both everyday gambling and problematic or pathological gambling. Narcissists consistently engaged in higher levels of gambling behavior, specifically among individuals scoring high on self-report measures of grandiose narcissism (Biolcati, Passini, & Griffiths, 2015; Lakey, Rose, Campbell, & Goodie, 2008; Lesieur & Rosenthal, 1991; Rosenthal, 1986; Trombly & Zeigler-Hill, 2017). However, the picture is less clear among individuals diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), as evidence suggested both a relationship (Blaszczynski & Steel, 1998) and no relationship (Specker, Carlson, Edmonson,

Johnson, & Marcotte, 1996) between NPD and pathological gambling. Although not gambling behavior per se, narcissists also reported engaging in higher levels of financial risk taking (Buelow & Brunell, 2014; Foster, Misra, & Reidy, 2009; Johnson, Kuhn, Apostolou, & Hassell, 2013; Tang, Chen, & Sutarso, 2008)—but not of gambling with someone else’s money (Jones, 2014)—than non-narcissists. In Buelow and Brunell (2014), this effect was primarily driven by high levels of exploitativeness.

Unethical Behaviors Narcissists tend to engage in unethical behaviors, both in their personal lives and in the workplace. High rates of self-reported involvement in unethical behaviors were reported among individuals endorsing high levels of narcissistic characteristics (Duchon & Drake, 2009; Tamborski, Brown, & Chowning, 2012). In addition, narcissists endorsed involvement in dishonest and cheating behaviors (Brunell, Staats, Barden, & Hupp, 2011; Jones & Paulhus, 2010; Roeser et al., 2016), including making riskier decisions about how to spend money that belongs to someone else (Jones, 2013). Two facets of narcissism, grandiosity and exploitativeness, were associated with increased involvement in unethical behaviors (Buelow & Brunell, 2014). It is possible narcissists engage in higher rates of unethical behavior due to a grandiose sense of self—that they cannot be “caught.”

Why Do Narcissists Take Risks?

It is unclear precisely why narcissists engage in riskier behaviors than non-narcissists, though several promising theories exist. Narcissism was significantly associated with impulsivity (Crysel, Crosier, & Webster, 2013; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Jonason & Tost, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2011; Vazire & Funder, 2006), which itself was linked to involvement in risk-taking behaviors (e.g., Butler & Montgomery, 2004; Crone, van Duijvenvoorde, & Peper, 2016; Hosker-Field, Molnar, & Book, 2016). Impulsivity can result in an individual making a risky decision without

much thought beforehand, thus setting the individual up for potential negative consequences from the behavior. A second personality characteristic theorized as playing a significant role in the link between narcissism and risk-taking is behavioral activation/behavioral inhibition. The behavioral activation system (BAS) refers to approach behaviors and is associated with increased risk-seeking behavior, while the behavioral inhibition system (BIS) refers to avoidance behaviors and is associated with risk-avoidant behavior (BIS/BAS; Gray, 1970). In general, high levels of BAS and low levels of BIS were associated with increased involvement in risk-taking behaviors (Depue & Collins, 1999; Franken, 2002; Franken & Muris, 2006; Zisserson & Palfai, 2007). Narcissists also endorsed high levels of BAS and low levels of BIS (Foster, Shenese, et al., 2009; Foster & Trimm, 2008; MacLaren & Best, 2013; Stenason & Vernon, 2016). It is possible the approach behaviors to signals of reward (high BAS), coupled with the lack of avoidance behaviors to signals of potential consequences (low BIS) (Carver & White, 1994), lead to a lack of acknowledgment of potential risks when narcissists engage in risk-taking behaviors.

Foster, Shenese, et al. (2009) theorized three potential reasons for increased risk-taking behaviors: (1) that narcissists perceive greater benefits from risks, (2) that narcissists perceive lesser negative consequences from risks, and (3) a combination of these two reasons. Their study found that grandiose narcissists saw greater perceived benefits but not lesser perceived risks prior to making a decision (i.e., supporting the first reason), concluding that risk-taking behavior was due to a focus on potential rewards. Others have also shown that narcissists were motivated by potential rewards in general (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; Foster, Misra, et al., 2009; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Rose & Campbell, 2004). Utilizing delay discounting tasks, in which participants must decide between a smaller but immediate reward and a larger but delayed reward, narcissists exhibited a strong preference for the immediate versus delayed reward (Buelow & Brunell, 2014; Crysel et al., 2013), in keeping

with other research suggesting a present- versus future-time orientation (Jonason, Koenig, & Tost, 2010). Other research has shown support for the theory that narcissists see fewer perceived negative consequences, finding that individuals high in narcissism did not evaluate a situation as risky as those lower in narcissism (Hawk et al., 2015) and failed to perceive risks associated with their decisions (Ju, Ji, Lan, & You, 2017; Malesza & Ostaszewski, 2016). Narcissists also did not fear failure (Elliot & Thrash, 2001), but also often failed to learn from their mistakes (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004). Overall, narcissists may engage in riskier behaviors due to the potential for immediate gains at the expense of long-term negative outcomes, and any experience of negative outcomes may not be enough for the individual to learn a safer strategy in the future.

Narcissism and Risky Decision-Making

One concern that emerges from the research presented thus far is that assessment of risk-taking behavior relied heavily on self-report, both in the literature specific to narcissism and more generally. However, more recent research has begun utilizing objective measures to assess risky behaviors among narcissists, with a primary emphasis on risky decision-making. Most decisions involve some element of risk, and risky decision-making occurs when an individual continues to make risky decisions even in the face of known negative consequences (Bechara, 2007). Narcissists make risky decisions in the workplace (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), and the use of objective decision-making tasks can allow for assessment of narcissism's effects on decision-making in "real world" situations.

The most commonly used objective decision-making tasks are the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT; Bechara, Damasio, Damasio, & Anderson, 1994) and the Balloon Analogue Risk Task (BART; Lejuez et al., 2002). On the IGT, participants are tasked with maximizing their profit by making

selections from one of four decks of cards. Unknown to the participants, but learned through trial-and-error feedback, two of the decks are disadvantageous, providing high immediate rewards but even higher losses (resulting in long-term negative outcomes; Bechara et al., 1994). The other two decks are advantageous, providing lower immediate rewards but also lower losses, resulting in long-term positive outcomes. Individuals who engage in risky decision-making on this task continue to select from the disadvantageous decks even after the risks associated with them become apparent. On the BART, participants earn money by pumping up a balloon; however, they will lose the money they earned if the balloon pops before they can bank the earned money (Lejuez et al., 2002). Risky decision-making occurs on this task when individuals continue pumping up a balloon, resulting in an explosion and loss of earned income. Mixed results for narcissism were found with these tasks: both riskier performance among narcissists (Lakey et al., 2008; Malesza & Ostaszewski, 2016) and no relationship between narcissism and decision-making (Carre & Jones, 2016; Crysel et al., 2013) were found. These mixed findings are in contrast to the rather consistent pattern of riskier behavior among narcissists when utilizing self-report measures.

We recently published a more in-depth examination of narcissism and risky decision-making (Brunell & Buelow, 2017). Across three samples of undergraduate student participants, we examined performance on the IGT, BART, Columbia Card Task (CCT; Figner, Mackinlay, Wilkening, & Weber, 2009), and Game of Dice Task (GDT; Brand et al., 2005). We found few consistent, significant relationships among objective decision-making task performance and narcissism. For example, grandiose narcissism was related to riskier decisions on the BART in our first study, but this relationship was not replicated in our second study where instead pathological narcissism was associated with riskier BART performance. Few significant relationships emerged between IGT performance and narcissism; however entitlement was indicative of riskier decisions on this task. It is possible the finding with entitlement

was due in part to participants having focused on the satisfaction that comes with immediate gains rather than the building long-term negative consequences (Campbell, Bonacci, et al., 2004; Campbell, Goodie, et al., 2004), as well as exaggerated expectations about outcomes (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). We also found grandiosity was associated with riskier performance on the CCT. That we found few consistent relationships between narcissism and the IGT may reflect a difference between what narcissists self-report about themselves (e.g., I am a risk-taker) and what narcissists actually do in a particular situation. Support for this idea comes from Campbell, Goodie, et al. (2004), who found narcissists are overconfident in their decisions yet show no difference in task accuracy than non-narcissists. It might be that narcissists are “all talk,” in that they self-report engagement in high-risk behaviors yet fail to follow through on this boasting on behavioral measures.

Future Directions

To further investigate the relationship between narcissism, risk-taking behavior, and decision-making, several suggestions are offered. First, increasing competition in lab-based studies could allow for examination of whether narcissists take more risks when they are in a competitive- versus solo-play environment. The “thrill” of competition may draw out competitive behaviors in narcissists, leading to increased risk-taking behavior in order to “win.” To date, studies have focused on risky decision-making in an individual rather than competitive group setting. Similarly, future research should examine how risk-taking behavior changes when it occurs in a public versus private setting. Baumeister and Wallace (2002) found that narcissists, but not non-narcissists, had better task performance when there was an opportunity for self-enhancement and therefore more glory from successful performance. It is possible that increased risk-taking behavior among narcissists is due to the high potential for positive outcomes coupled with public recognition for this accomplishment, rather than just the

focus on positive over negative outcomes. Again, most studies to date have administered risk-taking questionnaires and decision-making tasks in a private setting, in which no recognition would be gained from responses to items. Although behavioral risk decision-making tasks have become more prominent in recent years, assessment of risk-taking behaviors still relies primarily on self-report of involvement. Researchers should develop non-self-report measures of risk-taking, such as behavioral measures, that could help explain the inconsistent findings to date between different studies of these behaviors. Finally, much of the research to date focused on grandiose rather than vulnerable narcissism, with some differences emerging between these two elements. Vulnerable narcissism is correlated with neuroticism (e.g., Miller et al., 2017), which may be combined to make individuals more cautious in their decisions, as the wrong choice could threaten an already vulnerable self-esteem process, or they might be riskier in their decisions, so as to subdue their low self-esteem (i.e., drinking alcohol to forget one's worries).

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How Do Narcissists Really Feel About Themselves? The Complex Connections Between Narcissism and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Narcissism and self-esteem are both characterized by positive forms of self-regard, and common sense would suggest that these two constructs should be strongly and positively related. However, research has demonstrated that the associations between narcissism and self-esteem are quite complex and that there are critical differences between the two constructs that contribute to this complexity. This chapter aims to highlight some of these intricate relationships and important conceptual differences with a focus on three specific areas. First, we outline key differences in the content of the positive self-views that are associated with each construct. For example, narcissistic self-views are, by definition, exaggerated and overblown, whereas the self-views of individuals with high self-esteem may or may not be accurate. Second, we discuss how various conceptualizations of narcissism (e.g., the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept [NARC] model) and self-esteem (e.g., fragile versus secure forms of high self-esteem) inform our understanding of their association with each other. Lastly, we

review proposed evolutionary origins of both constructs (e.g., sociometer and hierometer theories) that may shed light on the potential functions of narcissism and self-esteem in the social lives of humans.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Self-esteem · Implicit self-esteem · Psychodynamic mask model of narcissism · Self-esteem instability · Narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept · Sociometer · Hierometer

Narcissism is characterized by exaggerated feelings of grandiosity, vanity, self-absorption, and entitlement (e.g., Emmons, 1984; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Raskin & Terry, 1988).¹ Narcissistic individuals believe they are superior to others, feel that they are entitled to privileges and special treatment, and crave the respect and admiration of others. However, these grandiose self-views may be quite fragile, with narcissistic individuals being highly reactive to potential threats to their self-esteem (e.g., Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001;

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¹In this chapter we focus on the agentic, grandiose, non-pathological form of narcissism as assessed in the general population as opposed to communal (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012) or pathological forms of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Pincus et al., 2009).

Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Self-esteem can be defined as a global, affective evaluation of the self that can range from very positive (i.e., high self-esteem) to very negative (i.e., low self-esteem; Rosenberg, 1965). Intuitively, it would seem that narcissism and self-esteem should be strongly and positively related, as both constructs involve positive self-regard. Indeed, as highlighted by Brummelman and colleagues, psychologists have frequently described narcissism using terms such as “unrealistically high self-esteem,” “inflated self-esteem,” and “defensive high self-esteem” (Brummelman, Gürel, Thomaes, & Sedikides, [this volume](#); Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides, 2016). However, research has revealed that the associations between narcissism and self-esteem are quite complex, and there are critical differences between these two constructs (e.g., Bosson & Weaver, 2011; Brummelman et al., 2016; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). The purpose of the present chapter is to highlight the complex connections between narcissism and self-esteem. We chose to focus this review on three specific areas. First, we discuss proposed differences in the content of the positive self-views associated with both constructs. Next, we review how different conceptualizations of narcissism and self-esteem may inform our understanding of their relationship with each other. Lastly, we consider proposed evolutionary origins of both constructs and how those origins may further our understanding of the potential functions of narcissism and self-esteem in the social lives of humans.

Connections Between Narcissism and Self-Esteem: Content of Self-Views

Both narcissistic individuals and those with high self-esteem hold relatively positive views of themselves (e.g., Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). However, it is important to note that despite the conceptual similarities between narcissism and self-esteem, the correlation between these constructs is often rela-

tively weak and somewhat inconsistent across studies (i.e., it is often less than 0.30; Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). This weak association between narcissism and self-esteem may be due, at least in part, to the fact that individuals with high levels of self-esteem vary considerably in their levels of narcissism, whereas individuals with low self-esteem rarely report particularly high levels of narcissism (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

There are also important differences in the positive self-views that are adopted by narcissistic individuals and those held by individuals with high self-esteem. First, self-esteem is purely evaluative such that an individual’s level of self-esteem simply reflects how that person views oneself. In contrast, narcissism appears to possess motivational properties in addition to its evaluative elements such that narcissistic individuals not only hold extremely positive self-views, but they also *want* to think highly of themselves (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). The intense desire that narcissistic individuals have to feel good about themselves has led Baumeister and Vohs (2001) to suggest that they may actually be “addicted” to self-esteem. Second, the very definition of narcissism involves exaggerated self-views, whereas the self-views of individuals with high self-esteem may or may not be accurate. For example, narcissistic individuals often view themselves more positively than they are viewed by others (e.g., they rate themselves as being more intelligent and attractive than others see them as being; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994). However, narcissistic individuals do not inflate their self-views in every area. Rather, they tend to exaggerate their agentic qualities (e.g., intelligence) but not their communal traits (e.g., agreeableness; Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey, & Kernis, 2007; Campbell et al., 2002; Konrath, Bushman, & Grove, 2009). Third, Brummelman et al. (2016) recently proposed an important difference between the self-views of narcissistic individuals and those of individuals with high self-esteem. Brummelman et al. suggest that narcissistic individuals believe they are superior to others, whereas individuals with high self-esteem are simply satisfied with themselves and do not

necessarily feel that they are better than others (see Brummelman et al., [this volume](#) for an extended discussion).

Conceptualizations of Self-Esteem and Narcissism

Associations between self-esteem and narcissism are quite complex, which is due, in part, to various conceptualizations and expressions of both constructs. Importantly, researchers have demonstrated the value of considering aspects of self-esteem beyond its level (i.e., whether self-esteem level is high or low) and have highlighted distinctions between secure and fragile forms of self-esteem (see Kernis, 2003, 2005, for reviews). Of particular importance to the present chapter are distinctions between implicit and explicit forms of self-esteem, as well as stable and unstable forms of self-esteem. Researchers have also advanced multidimensional conceptualizations of narcissism (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2011; Back et al., 2013; Emmons, 1984, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Most recently, Back et al. (2013) proposed the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) which distinguishes between assertive (i.e., narcissistic admiration) and antagonistic (i.e., narcissistic rivalry) aspects of narcissism, which are involved in the maintenance of grandiose self-views through different strategies. We now turn to discussion of how these various conceptualizations of self-esteem and narcissism inform our understanding of the complex associations between the two constructs.

Implicit Self-Esteem and the Psychodynamic Mask Model of Narcissism

A frequent question that arises when considering the connection between narcissism and self-esteem is whether narcissistic individuals actually feel as good about themselves as it appears on the surface. That is, are the grandiose self-views of narcissistic individuals expressions of authentic

self-love or are these exceptionally positive self-views merely a façade that is used to hide deep-seated feelings of inferiority? The idea that the grandiose self-views expressed by narcissistic individuals are not entirely genuine has its origins in psychodynamic formulations of narcissism (e.g., Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1966) and has sometimes been referred to as the *psychodynamic mask model* of narcissism (e.g., Bosson et al., 2008; Southard, Noser, & Zeigler-Hill, 2014; Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2011 for reviews). Elements of this perspective can still be found in various contemporary views of narcissism such as the dynamic self-regulatory model of narcissism (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) as well as the diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder which specifies that the self-esteem of narcissistic individuals is “almost invariably very fragile” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 670).

The idea that narcissistic individuals harbor low self-esteem has been of considerable interest to researchers, but it has been exceptionally difficult to find a means for getting behind the grandiose façade that narcissistic individuals present to the world – if that is indeed what narcissistic individuals are actually doing. One potentially promising approach was the development of non-reactive tasks intended to capture *implicit* self-esteem (i.e., nonconscious feelings of self-worth; see Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2010, for a review), as opposed to *explicit* self-esteem (i.e., deliberative, conscious self-views; e.g., Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2011). Explicit self-esteem is typically assessed by simply asking individuals to rate their level of agreement with statements such as “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others” (Rosenberg, 1965). In contrast, measures of implicit self-esteem attempt to unobtrusively assess unconscious feelings of self-worth via automatic responses and measures that are less susceptible to socially desirable response biases. Although multiple measures have been developed to assess implicit self-esteem (see Bosson, Swann, & Penebaker, 2000 or Fazio & Olson, 2003, for reviews), one of the most widely used measures is the implicit association test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The IAT assesses participants’ reaction time in

distinguishing between *pleasant* (e.g., love, happy) and *unpleasant* (e.g., filth, hatred) words, as well as *self* (e.g., I, me) and *not-self* (i.e., you, them) words that are presented on a computer screen by pressing separate keys on a keyboard. During the critical trials of the procedure, respondents make both discriminations (pleasant vs. unpleasant, self vs. not-self) on alternate trials using only one pair of keys. In one phase, self and unpleasant words share a response key and not-self and pleasant words share the other response key. This phase should be relatively difficult for individuals with high implicit self-esteem because the self is being linked with unpleasant stimuli which should result in slower responses. In the other phase, self and pleasant words share a response key and not-self and unpleasant words share the other response key. This phase should be comparatively easier for individuals with high implicit self-esteem leading to faster responses. Scores are calculated by subtracting average response times during the phase when self and pleasant words share a key from the average response times during the phase when self and unpleasant words share a key.

If the grandiose self-views of narcissistic individuals are really masking implicit feelings of low self-worth, then those scoring high on measures of narcissism should be expected to self-report higher levels of explicit self-esteem and score lower on measures of implicit self-esteem. Initial studies involving implicit measures of self-esteem such as the IAT supported the idea that narcissistic individuals have hidden feelings of low self-worth by showing that they reported high levels of self-esteem as assessed via traditional self-report strategies, but possessed low levels of implicit self-esteem using these recently developed nonreactive measures (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). For example, using the IAT, Jordan et al. (2003) found that individuals with the combination of high explicit self-esteem and low implicit self-esteem reported the highest levels of narcissism (i.e., scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory; Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981), and a similar pattern was found by Zeigler-Hill (2006) using the IAT and another measure of

implicit self-esteem. However, despite the promise of these early studies, subsequent research has failed to consistently replicate this basic pattern (Bosson et al., 2008; Campbell et al., 2007; Gregg & Sedikides, 2010; see Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2011, for an extended discussion of this issue).

One reason for the inconsistent results regarding the associations between narcissism and implicit and explicit self-esteem may be the fact that measures of implicit self-esteem possess weak psychometric properties (see Bosson et al., 2000 or Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, 2010 for extended discussions). As a result, Myers and Zeigler-Hill (2012) attempted to clarify the extent to which narcissistic individuals actually like themselves by moving away from reliance on indicators of implicit self-esteem and instead employed a bogus pipeline technique. The bogus pipeline procedure is a laboratory technique that promotes honesty by convincing participants that the researchers will know if they attempt to lie through the use of physiological equipment (i.e., a lie detector). During Phase 1 of their study, Myers and Zeigler-Hill collected participants' self-reported levels of narcissism (i.e., NPI scores) and self-esteem (i.e., the State Self-esteem Scale; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) online and then in Phase 2 randomly assigned participants to either a bogus pipeline condition or a control condition. In the bogus pipeline condition, participants were connected to physiological equipment (i.e., galvanic skin response, automatic blood pressure monitor, and a Grass Model 78D polygraph) while seated in a recliner and told that the experimenter would know if they were lying. Then, participants read each item of the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) aloud and verbally provided their responses. The control condition was identical to the bogus pipeline condition except that participants were told they were only connected to the physiological equipment so the experimenter could gain practice with the equipment, and the experimenter clearly turned off all the physiological equipment before participants verbally completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. The results of this study were consistent

with the idea that narcissistic individuals do not actually feel as good about themselves as it appears on the surface because narcissistic individuals reported lower levels of self-esteem in the bogus pipeline condition than in the control condition. Although those results were initially quite promising, Brunell and Fisher (2014) used a similar bogus pipeline approach and failed to replicate this basic pattern. Taken together, the inconsistent results across these studies involving measures of implicit self-esteem and the bogus pipeline procedure have left researchers without a clear understanding of how narcissistic individuals truly feel about themselves (e.g., Kuchynka & Bosson, 2018; Jordan & Zeigler-Hill, 2013).

Self-Esteem Instability and Reactivity to Daily Events

Another approach to understanding the complex associations between narcissism and self-esteem has been to consider *self-esteem instability* (i.e., the extent to which moment-to-moment feelings of self-worth tend to fluctuate over time; Kernis, 2003). It would certainly appear that self-esteem instability should have considerable overlap with narcissism. For example, both narcissism and self-esteem instability are associated with similar strategies for self-enhancement and self-protection (see Jordan & Zeigler-Hill, 2013, for a review). Despite these apparent similarities, the connection between narcissism and self-esteem instability has been inconsistent such that these constructs have been found to be positively associated in some studies (e.g., Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) but not in others (e.g., Bosson et al., 2008; Webster, Kirkpatrick, Nezek, Smith, & Paddock, 2007; Zeigler-Hill, 2006; Zeigler-Hill, Chadha, & Osterman, 2008).

One possible explanation for the inconsistent associations between narcissism and self-esteem instability is that the self-esteem of narcissistic individuals is not generally unstable. Rather, the self-esteem of narcissistic individuals may only be reactive to specific types of events. Consistent with this possibility, narcissistic individuals tend

to be especially reactive to failures in their daily lives (e.g., doing poorly on a work task; Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2013; Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clark, 2010). For example, Zeigler-Hill et al. (2010) used a daily diary procedure to examine associations between narcissism, fluctuations in self-esteem, and daily social and achievement events. Their results indicated that the self-esteem of narcissistic individuals was especially reactive to negative achievement events (e.g., failing to meet a daily goal), but not positive achievement events (e.g., being complimented on one's abilities). It is possible that the heightened reactivity of narcissistic individuals to negative achievement-based events may be due to these experiences being especially likely to undermine the inflated self-views these individuals hold regarding their agentic characteristics (e.g., intelligence, competence), whereas positive achievement-based events simply confirm their grandiose self-views and expectations of success.

Conceptualization of Narcissism and Self-Esteem Instability

Many of the studies that have examined the connection between narcissism and self-esteem instability have been guided by a unidimensional view of narcissism that has been criticized for various reasons during recent years (e.g., psychometric concerns about the instruments used to assess narcissism; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009). One attempt to address these concerns was the development of the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013), which is a two-dimensional model of narcissism that distinguishes between *narcissistic admiration* (i.e., an agentic strategy characterized by assertive self-enhancement and self-promotion) and *narcissistic rivalry* (i.e., an antagonistic strategy characterized by self-protection and self-defense). Although research concerning the NARC model is still in its earliest stages, these distinct agentic and antagonistic forms of narcissism may provide some insight concerning the inconsistent associations

between narcissism and self-esteem instability that emerged in previous studies.

Geukes et al. (2017) examined whether narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry differed in their associations with self-esteem level and self-esteem instability across three studies. They reasoned that narcissistic admiration should be associated with higher and relatively stable self-esteem because admiration is characterized by a self-enhancing strategy involving self-praise, assertive actions, and social potency, whereas narcissistic rivalry should be associated with lower and more unstable self-esteem because rivalry is characterized by self-protective, defensive strategies that are likely to lead to social conflict. The results of Geukes et al. revealed that narcissistic admiration was consistently associated with higher levels of self-esteem, but its connections with self-esteem instability were inconsistent across three studies (i.e., a negative association emerged in one study, but there was no association in the other two studies). In contrast, narcissistic rivalry had a consistent positive association with self-esteem instability (i.e., unstable self-esteem), but its connection with self-esteem level was inconsistent across three studies (i.e., a negative association emerged in two studies, but there was no association in the other study).

Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) found results that were conceptually similar to those of Geukes et al. (2017) such that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with self-esteem level, whereas narcissistic rivalry was positively associated with self-esteem instability. In addition, Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) found that the daily self-esteem levels of individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration were particularly reactive to changes in their perceived levels of daily status (i.e., being respected and viewed as important). This finding suggests the intriguing possibility that the feelings of self-worth that are connected with the agentic form of narcissism may be intimately linked with status (i.e., the belief that one is respected and admired by others). Taken together, the results of Geukes et al. (2017) and Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) suggest that accounting for the multiple facets of narcissism – such as distinguishing between its agentic and antagonistic forms – may be important for gaining a more nuanced understanding of the connections that narcissism has with different aspects of self-esteem.

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Potential Evolutionary Origins of Narcissism and Self-Esteem

In order to better understand the complex associations between narcissism and self-esteem, it may be helpful to consider why these two constructs might exist in the first place. Studies have shown that both narcissism and self-esteem are moderately heritable (e.g., Neiss, Sedikides, & Stevenson, 2002; Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008) which suggests there may be some adaptive benefits associated with both constructs. One potential benefit associated with narcissism is that it promotes an alternative reproductive strategy that is focused on short-term mating opportunities (e.g., Holtzman, *this volume*; Holtzman & Strube, 2011). When more than one mating strategy exists in a population, the frequency with which each strategy is adopted has implications for its level of success (i.e., frequency-dependent selection) such that the strategy that is adopted less often will sometimes yield relatively large benefits (e.g., Buss, 2009). Since long-term pair-bonding is the primary mating strategy for humans, narcissistic individuals may experience heightened reproductive success by employing alternative short-term mating strategies. Consistent with this idea, narcissistic individuals report a preference for short-term mating strategies (e.g., Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009), are relatively promiscuous (e.g., Reise & Wright, 1996), and are less discerning than others when choosing short-term mating partners (e.g., Jonason, Valentine, Li, & Harbeson, 2011). These findings suggest the interesting possibility that – despite its association with an array of negative interpersonal outcomes (e.g., lack of empathy; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) – narcissism may persist in the population because of the reproductive benefits it provides.

Although narcissism may persist in the population due to its short-term reproductive benefits, self-esteem may have originated as a means for maintaining and enhancing social inclusion. According to sociometer theory (Leary, 1999; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), humans have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This drive to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships is believed to have evolved because the survival and reproductive fitness of early humans depended on belonging to a social group. Thus, our ancestors are thought to have evolved a psychological system (i.e., a sociometer) that monitors the extent to which an individual is valued and accepted by others that would have been adaptive given the likely devastating implications of being ostracized or rejected from their social groups (e.g., limited access to resources or potential mates). The “output” of the sociometer system is state self-esteem (i.e., an individual’s feelings of self-worth at a particular moment).

According to sociometer theory, state self-esteem is believed to rise and fall in conjunction with one’s perceptions of his or her relational value. That is, state self-esteem should increase in response to cues of social acceptance (e.g., praise, love) and decrease in response to cues of social rejection or reductions in relational value (e.g., criticism, failure; Leary, 1999). Consistent with this idea, studies have shown that participants tend to report lower state self-esteem after experiencing rejection (e.g., Leary, Cottrell, & Phillips, 2001; Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998; Leary et al., 1995; Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004), but this pattern has failed to emerge in some studies (e.g., Bernstein et al., 2013; Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009). Sociometer theory also argues that decreases in state self-esteem should motivate individuals to engage in compensatory, affiliative behaviors that are intended to reestablish social inclusion. Past studies have found support for this aspect of sociometer theory by showing that individuals who experience rejection are more interested in forming new relationships (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007) and conforming to group norms (Williams, Cheung, &

Choi, 2000). In addition, individuals with low levels of self-esteem tend to be very cautious, conservative, and restrained in their interactions with others which may be largely due to their desire to avoid rejection (e.g., Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007; Haupt & Leary, 1997; Murray, Rose, Bellavia, Holmes, & Kusche, 2002). Taken together, these findings suggest that self-esteem may have evolved as a means for helping humans navigate complex social environments.

Recently, Mahadevan, Gregg, Sedikides, and de Waal-Andrews (2016) proposed hierometer theory which argues that both self-esteem and narcissism evolved to help individuals navigate *status hierarchies*. Status hierarchies are pervasive among humans (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and, because there are benefits to being at the top of this hierarchy (e.g., greater reproductive success; von Rueden, Gurven, & Kaplan, 2011), humans likely evolved a psychological system to aid in navigating them. On a conceptual level, the theoretical underpinnings of hierometer theory are similar to those of sociometer theory. That is, they both suggest that self-regard helps individuals track their social value. However, whereas sociometer theory argues that state self-esteem tracks *relational* value (e.g., perceptions of acceptance, liking, and affiliation) and regulates affiliative behaviors aimed at increasing social inclusion, hierometer theory argues that both self-esteem and narcissism track *instrumental* value (e.g., perceptions of respect and admiration) and regulate assertive behavior aimed at gaining status. Previous studies have provided some initial support for hierometer theory. For example, Leary et al. (2001) found that self-esteem changes in accordance with feedback concerning status such that individuals who perceive themselves to be in a relatively dominant social position tend to report higher levels of self-esteem. In addition, Mahadevan et al. (2016) found that the combination of self-esteem and narcissism fully mediated the associations that status and inclusion had with assertiveness and affiliation, respectively. Further, Zeigler-Hill et al. (in press) found that state self-esteem increased on days when individuals perceived themselves as having higher levels of status even when statistically controlling for perceived

inclusion, which suggests that this hierometer process (i.e., state self-esteem changing in accordance with status) is distinct from the sociometer process (i.e., state self-esteem changing in accordance with relational value). Together, these studies provide preliminary evidence that supports the existence of the hierometer system.

Considering the current evidence for sociometer theory and hierometer theory, it seems that self-esteem may be entwined with both inclusion and status, whereas narcissism seems to be primarily associated with status (see Zeigler-Hill, McCabe, Vrabel, Raby, & Cronin, [this volume](#), for an extended discussion). The sociometer and hierometer systems likely evolved in humans because there are tremendous adaptive benefits for gaining social inclusion and successfully navigating social hierarchies. Thus, one possibility is that self-esteem and narcissism may have evolved to serve similar, but not completely identical, functions for humans.

Conclusion

In summary, the connections between narcissism and self-esteem are quite complex. Although narcissism is generally associated with higher levels of self-esteem, this connection is relatively weak and not as straightforward as one might expect (e.g., Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). There appear to be inherent differences in the content of the self-views possessed by narcissistic individuals and those with high self-esteem. There are also differing conceptualizations of the two constructs. For example, it has often been suggested that narcissistic individuals possess self-esteem that is inherently fragile, and advances in the measurement of implicit self-esteem seemed to be an initially promising avenue for testing this possibility. However, support for the idea that narcissistic grandiosity masks deep feelings of low self-worth has been inconsistent across studies (e.g., Bosson et al., 2008).

Recent research has further expanded conceptualizations of narcissism and found that the agentic aspects of the construct (i.e., narcissistic

admiration) tend to be associated with higher levels of self-esteem, whereas the antagonistic aspects of narcissism (i.e., narcissistic rivalry) tend to be associated with more unstable self-esteem (Geukes et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill et al., [in press](#)). It would be helpful for future studies to provide a more careful and thorough examination of the conditions under which different aspects of narcissism are associated with self-esteem. For example, Zeigler-Hill et al. ([in press](#)) found that the self-esteem of individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration tends to be highly reactive to perceived status but not perceived inclusion. This is consistent with the tendency for narcissistic individuals to care far more about being respected and admired than about being liked. These results might also help to clarify the potential evolutionary origins of self-esteem and narcissism, which current theorizing suggest are tied to social inclusion and the successful navigation of status hierarchies. Additional research examining the interconnections between narcissism, status, and self-esteem may help resolve the inconsistent results that have emerged concerning the fragile nature of narcissistic self-esteem. We hope that future research will provide a more nuanced understanding of the connections between narcissism and self-esteem because we believe these advancements will provide additional insights into the intrapsychic processes and interpersonal behaviors that characterize narcissistic individuals.

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How Does It Feel to Be a Narcissist? Narcissism and Emotions

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Abstract

Emotional processes are of key importance for the understanding of narcissism, in both its grandiose and its vulnerable forms. The current chapter provides an overview on the links between narcissism and emotionality. The two forms of narcissism differ distinctly in their hedonic tone, with vulnerable narcissism being characterized by negative emotionality and low well-being and grandiose narcissism being linked to positive emotionality and high well-being. Both forms are related to strong mood variability that is thought to stem from contingent self-esteem. Both forms are related to hubristic pride, but only vulnerable narcissism is linked to shame-proneness, envy, and schadenfreude. Both forms are characterized by outbursts of anger, but the underlying causes and the expression of anger differ between the two forms. Specifically, vulnerable narcissism is linked to uncontrollable narcissistic rage that stems from a fragile sense of

self and results in disproportionate and dysfunctional aggression. Grandiose narcissism, in contrast, goes along with instrumental aggression that serves the purpose of asserting one's dominance in the face of strong direct status threats. Vulnerable narcissism is related to deficits in emotion regulation, yet research has just begun to shed light on the regulation processes of grandiose narcissists. The chapter concludes with reflections on how recent theoretical and methodological developments might be employed to gain a fuller understanding of narcissists' emotional lives.

Keywords

Narcissism · Emotions · Subjective well-being · Hubristic and authentic pride · Shame · Envy · Schadenfreude · Narcissistic rage · Emotion regulation · Emotion contagion

The central theme of narcissism is self-importance, and its most essential features are a preoccupation with the self and an inflated sense of one's own importance and deservingness (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). Depending on whether narcissism takes on a grandiose or vulnerable form (Miller et al., 2011; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991), it can be associated with emotional experiences of different valence, strength, dynamic, and expression. In this

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chapter, we describe the common and universal as well as the more diverse aspects of emotional life specific to grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

General Emotionality and Subjective Well-Being

One likely determinant of narcissists' general emotionality is their orientation toward approach versus avoidance behavior. Approach orientation typically goes along with positive emotionality, and avoidance motivation is accompanied by negative emotionality (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Research has shown that grandiose narcissists are approach oriented and sensitive to rewards, whereas vulnerable narcissists are avoidance oriented and sensitive to threats (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Pincus et al., 2009). Accordingly, the two forms have remarkably diverse affective correlates. Grandiose narcissists tend to be in an energetic, upbeat, and optimistic mood (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004), whereas vulnerable narcissists tend to experience negative affect and anxiety (Tracy, Cheng, Martens, & Robins, 2011).

In a meta-analysis, Dufner, Gebauer, Sedikides, and Denissen (in press) found a low but positive average correlation ($r = 0.13$) between grandiose narcissism and a personal adjustment composite score consisting of high subjective well-being and low depression. Other research has reported negative correlations between grandiose narcissism and specific indicators of negative emotionality, such as sadness, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and neuroticism (e.g., Dufner et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2011; Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004). Thus, grandiose narcissists are typically happy and have been described as "successful narcissists" (Back & Morf, 2018). Sedikides et al. (2004) showed that high self-esteem mediated the link between grandiose narcissism and well-being, which indicates that grandiose narcissists are high in well-being mainly due to their high self-esteem. This implies, however, that any factor that lowers narcissists' self-esteem is also

likely to reduce their well-being. Zajenkowski and Czarna (2015) showed that grandiose narcissists' well-being might depend on their self-evaluation in an agentic domain. Specifically, when grandiose narcissists have low intellectual self-esteem, their well-being was *lower* than among people low in grandiose narcissism. Thus, grandiose narcissists are happy as long as they manage to maintain high agentic self-esteem.

Vulnerable narcissism, in contrast, is inversely associated with subjective well-being (Rose, 2002). It predicts a number of variables related to negative emotionality, such as anxiety, depression, and hostility (Miller et al., 2011), earning vulnerably narcissistic individuals the name "struggling narcissists" or even "failed narcissists" (Back & Morf, 2018; Campbell, Foster, & Brunell, 2004). Recently, Miller et al. (2017) have shown that vulnerable narcissism is almost entirely reducible to neuroticism (the rest being antagonism and hostility) which is a strong and negative predictor of subjective well-being (Diener & Lucas, 1999). All these findings suggest that vulnerable narcissism is associated with low psychological well-being.

Even though grandiose and vulnerable narcissism differ in their overall relations to well-being, they are both characterized by strong mood variability, which is thought to be due to their contingent self-esteem and sensitivity to social comparisons (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Geukes et al., 2017; Krizan & Bushman, 2011; Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). Grandiose narcissists' state self-esteem decreases substantially on days with more negative achievement events, leading to rapidly changing emotions (Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clark, 2010). Similarly, when confronted with shameful interpersonal experiences, such as relational rejections, vulnerable narcissists react in comparable ways (Besser & Priel, 2010; Sommer, Kirkland, Newman, Estrella, & Andreassi, 2009; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof, 2008). Hence, even though grandiose and vulnerable narcissists might be particularly sensitive to different types of self-esteem threats, they both react to these threats with strong mood variability.

Pride and Shame

The “authentic versus hubristic” model of pride by Tracy and Robins (2004, 2007a) emphasizes the role of emotional processes underlying narcissistic self-esteem. Narcissism, in both its grandiose and vulnerable versions, is characterized by a constant interplay of excessive pride and shame, two self-conscious emotions (Tracy et al., 2011). In the model proposed by Tracy, Cheng, Robins, and Trzesniewski (2009); Tracy et al. (2011), shame is a core affect in narcissism, and it is typically followed by a response of self-aggrandizement and pride, a mask of self-confidence covering an embarrassed face. However, many recent data question the central role of shame in narcissism, at least in its grandiose form. Therefore, below, we first present the original model described by Tracy et al. (2009, 2011), and further we point to some of its limitations.

Tracy and Robins (2004, 2007a) argued that pride has different facets, and only one of them is associated with narcissism, namely, hubristic pride. Tracy and Robins (2007b) suggested that authentic pride is based on real achievements and leads to the development of genuine self-esteem. Conversely, hubristic pride stems not from actual accomplishments, but from generalized, distorted positive views of the self. Narcissism, both in the grandiose and vulnerable version, is typically linked with hubristic pride (Tracy et al., 2009, 2011; Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a). Hubristic pride in narcissism is an emotional experience fueled by self-enhancement and an inauthentic sense of self. According to Tracy et al. (2009, 2011), positive views of the self are too essential for the narcissist to leave them to the whim of actual accomplishments, for these views are what prevents the individual from succumbing to the excessive and global shame. It has been suggested that narcissistic self-aggrandizement is a result of an internal conflict developed in early childhood when parents place unrealistic demands on a child and reject him/her when perfection is not achieved (Tracy et al., 2009). A child may then develop a dissociation between positive (explicit) and negative (implicit) self-

representations (Kohut, 1971). This process creates a ground for an interplay between shame and pride. Specifically, failures lead to overwhelming shame because they feed into the negative implicit self-representations. As a defense against excessive shame, narcissists harbor their positive explicit self-representations and idealize the explicit self, which manifests in stable, global attributions following success (“I did it because I am always great”). Thus, the positive, explicit self becomes an object of pride. To travesty William Blake’s words: “Pride is shame’s cloak.”

Narcissists regulate self-esteem by decreasing the likelihood of shame experience and, simultaneously, by increasing the likelihood of hubristic pride experience. They also try to maintain high self-esteem through external indicators of their self-worth (e.g., other people’s admiration, work success, etc.). All these processes and emotions serve regulatory functions in narcissism and lead to the development of contingent self-esteem (Tracy et al., 2009). Although the concept of hubristic pride as a response to chronic excessive shame assumes that these emotions are characteristic for both types of narcissism, recent studies cast doubt on this assumption. Evidence supporting the structural split in the self-representational system – an unstable situation of implicit feelings of shame and inadequacy coexisting with explicit feelings of grandiosity – has so far been mixed (Bosson, this volume; Horvath & Morf, 2009), at least in the case of grandiose narcissism. Krizan and Johar’s (2015) studies indicate that it is vulnerable, rather than grandiose, narcissism that is strongly associated with shame-proneness, again suggesting that grandiose narcissists are more “successful” in their self-regulatory efforts than their vulnerable counterparts (Campbell et al., 2004).

Envy and Anger

Envy is one of the most important emotions in the lives of vulnerable narcissists – they resent higher status peers and revel in the misfortune of others (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Nicholls & Stukas, 2011). Grandiose narcissism has a more complicated

association and is thus less predictive of envy and schadenfreude (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Lange, Crusius, & Hagemeyer, 2016; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Porter, Bhanwer, Woodworth, & Black, 2014). Its leadership/authority component protects grandiose narcissists from dispositional envy (Neufeld & Johnson, 2016), while entitlement and antagonism, common to both grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism, predict malicious envy (Lange et al., 2016; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016; Porter et al., 2014). Considering that envy, just like shame, is a painful emotion that individuals try to avoid, grandiose narcissists again appear to more successfully navigate their emotional landscapes.

Anger, rage, and aggression have been the crux of many theoretical models of narcissism, starting from early psychoanalytic to contemporary ones from social-personality psychology (e.g., Alexander, 1938; Freud, 1932; Jacobson, 1964; Krizan & Johar, 2015; Saul, 1947). However, the routes that lead vulnerable and grandiose narcissists to aggression might not be the same, as envisioned in different theories. According to the “authentic versus hubristic” model of pride (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2006), externalizing blame and experiencing anger might be a viable strategy for coping with chronic shame. Aggression is an appealing behavioral alternative to shamed individuals because it serves an ego-protective function and provides immediate relief from the pain of shame (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Aggressive responses in both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists might therefore represent a “shame-rage” spiral (Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 1987; Tracy et al., 2011).

However, some researchers believe that this particular dynamic only refers to vulnerable narcissists as their grandiose counterparts do not typically hold negative self-opinions of any sort, including implicit or unconscious, and hence are not prone to shame (Campbell et al., 2004). Recent theoretical and empirical work on narcissistic rage suggests that it is indeed narcissistic vulnerability rather than grandiosity that is a key source of narcissistic rage, as its necessary conditions include vulnerable sense of self, an explosive mixture of shame, hostility, and extreme

anger (Krizan & Johar, 2015). The resultant outburst of aggression is disproportionate, dysfunctional, and often misdirected.

Among grandiose narcissists, in contrast, aggression might rather be understood as an instrumental response to a threat to their position of dominance; it serves to directly defend and assert it and does not include the intermediary of shame (Campbell et al., 2004). Grandiose narcissists are prone to aggression when faced with strong direct threats to the self (such as public impeachments of one’s ability, intelligence, or social status), and their aggressive responses might rather be maneuvers aimed at restoring their superiority rather than outbursts of unrestrained, uncontrollable rage fuelled by shame and chronic anger (Barry et al., 2007; Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010). This view is known as the threatened egotism model, and it assumes that acts of grandiose narcissists are motivated by inflated self-esteem and self-entitlement (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). Narcissistically grandiose aggression might have a sadistic flavor. Altogether, grandiose narcissists’ aggressive responses to ego-threats are deliberate means of asserting superiority and dominance, rather than uncontrolled acts of rage characteristic of vulnerable narcissists (Krizan & Johar, 2015).

Emotion Regulation

As mentioned above, narcissistic self-esteem contingency and sensitivity to social comparison result in high affect volatility. There are both intra- and interpersonal causes of such volatility. Grandiose narcissists use other people to regulate their self-esteem, producing a typical dynamic of initial excitement, “seduction,” and later disappointment (Back et al., 2013; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Czarna, Leifeld, Śmieja, Dufner, & Salovey, 2016; Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Paulhus, 1998). In vulnerable narcissism, hypersensitivity and disappointment stemming from unmet entitled expectations lead to social withdrawal and

avoidance in a futile attempt to manage self-esteem. This brings about shame, depression, anger, and hostility and often culminates in outbursts of narcissistic rage (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Krizan & Johar, 2015). Altogether, narcissism, in both its forms, and with its self-esteem (dys) regulation, generates significant emotional instability (and interpersonal turmoil).

Difficulties in emotion regulation are more evident in vulnerable narcissism than in grandiose narcissism. For instance, Zhang, Wang, You, Lu, and Luo (2015) found that grandiose narcissism was negatively correlated with difficulties in emotion regulation, whereas vulnerable narcissism was substantially positively correlated with multiple indices of maladaptive emotion regulation, such as nonacceptance of one's own emotional responses, impulse control difficulties, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and a lack of emotional clarity. Another study indicated different gender-specific mediating paths via deficits within components of emotional intelligence that underlie the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and hostility (Zajenkowski, Czarna, Szymaniak, & Maciantowicz, *in preparation*). Specifically, it was found that emotion management mediates the relationship between vulnerable narcissism and hostility among men, whereas for women emotion facilitation acts as a mediator of the narcissism – hostility association.

Grandiose narcissism entails both costs and benefits in terms of emotion regulation. Even though in many studies grandiose narcissists have displayed substantial volatility in response to failure (e.g., Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998), there is evidence that they are also capable of high task persistence when no alternative paths to self-enhancement are available. In comparison to people low in grandiose narcissism, they report more positive emotions and resiliency in the face of failure (when no comparative feedback with competitors is provided; Wallace, Ready, & Weitenhagen, 2009). The fact that grandiose narcissists can maintain confidence and tolerate setbacks in pursuit of a goal but may quickly withdraw from challenging tasks if given an easier path to success actually suggests good self-

regulation. Their resilience to stress might, nevertheless, be illusory. Multiple studies indicate that even if narcissistic individuals deny that they are influenced by stress, grandiose narcissism comes with certain physiological cost, namely, increased reactivity to emotional distress, manifested in elevated output of stress-related biomarkers, and this seems particularly true for men. These physiological costs are detectable on hormonal, cardiovascular, and neurological levels (Cheng, Tracy, & Miller, 2013; Edelstein, Yim, & Quas, 2010; Kelsey, Ornduff, McCann, & Reiff, 2001; Reinhard, Konrath, Lopez, & Cameron, 2012; Sommer et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2015).

Some recent studies aimed to discover specific mechanisms underlying emotion regulation and emotion processing in narcissism. One of the studies focused on fading affect bias (FAB, the effect of differential affective fading associated with autobiographical memories such that positive affect fades slower than negative affect). The results showed that grandiose narcissists evince a FAB when they recall achievement-themed (agentic) autobiographical events and that they tend to show a reversed FAB (their positive affect fades faster than their negative affect) when they recall communal-themed events (Ritchie, Walker, Marsh, Hart, & Skowronski, 2015). Since FAB is an adaptive phenomenon representing effective emotion regulation, these findings reveal a disruption of emotion regulation in high grandiose narcissists. While grandiose narcissists excessively retain the positive affect associated with individual achievement and other agency-themed events, they also tend to deflect positive communal, cooperative experiences and memories and retain negative affect of life events involving interactions with other individuals. This mechanism might reinforce narcissists' grandiose agentic self-construal.

Czarna, Wróbel, Dufner, and Zeigler-Hill (2015) examined grandiose narcissists' susceptibility to emotional contagion, that is, the transfer of emotional states from one person to another. Given that narcissists have a strong self-focus and a tendency toward self-absorption (Campbell & Miller, 2011), it seemed likely that they would

pay less attention to the emotional states of other people. Two studies with experimentally induced affect showed that grandiose narcissists were less prone to emotional contagion than individuals low in grandiose narcissism (Czarna et al., 2015). Hence, grandiose narcissists were less likely to “catch the emotions” of others, a result corroborating their generally low empathy.

These results raise the question of what exactly underlies the effects. Are narcissists incapable or unwilling to engage in other people’s emotional states? Or perhaps both? So far, there is consistent evidence suggesting an important role of lacking motivation among grandiose narcissists for understanding others’ emotional states and needs (e.g., Aradhye & Vonk, 2014; Czarna, Czerniak, & Szmajke, 2014; Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Italiano, 2017). There is also mixed evidence regarding grandiose narcissists’ ability to accurately recognize and process emotion-related information. Some studies report deficits and biases (lower emotion recognition accuracy with response bias in patients with narcissistic personality disorder, Marissen, Deen, & Franken, 2012, and in high trait grandiose narcissism, Tardif, Fiset, & Blais, 2014, and discordant emotional reactions to expressions of emotions in high grandiose narcissism, Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012), while others report intact or even superior abilities (Konrath, Corneille, Bushman, & Luminet, 2014; Ritter et al., 2011). Research concerning the corresponding abilities and motivation in trait vulnerable narcissism has been scarce with some evidence indicating lower perspective taking skills among vulnerable narcissists (Aradhye & Vonk, 2014).

In conclusion, while vulnerable narcissists undoubtedly have multiple deficits in emotion regulation, it has been unclear whether this is also true for grandiose narcissists. So far a number of “specificities” (or perhaps “anomalies”) have been discovered in emotion regulation of the latter. That is, grandiose narcissists seem more impermeable to other people’s emotions than people lower in narcissism, and their affect related to autobiographical memories shows different dynamics depending on the content of the memories that is typical for low narcissists.

Grandiose narcissists have little motivation to capture and understand other people’s emotions, but whether they also lack skills to do it or not remains an open question. There is some physiological evidence indicating that they respond strongly to emotional distress, even though they deny such responsiveness when explicitly asked.

Future Directions

Owing to the important contributions from clinical and social-personality researchers, knowledge has accumulated about the emotional life of narcissists. We have shown that the emotional lives differ quite remarkably for grandiose versus vulnerable narcissists, with grandiose narcissists appearing, on the whole, more like “successful narcissists” and vulnerable narcissists appearing more like “failed narcissists” (Back & Morf, 2018; Campbell et al., 2004).

Yet, it might be necessary to make even more fine-grained distinctions. Theoretical developments such as emergence of new models (e.g., the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept – NARC, Back et al., 2013; the narcissism spectrum model, Krizan & Herlache, 2018) enable more detailed analyses. Research on NARC has shown that the admiration component of grandiose narcissism (which is indicating of assertative self-enhancement) is linked to positive emotionality, whereas the rivalry component of narcissism (which is indicative of antagonistic self-protection) is linked to negative emotionality (Back et al., 2013). Future research should take a more differentiated view at the emotions that are linked to the subcomponents of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. This way, a better understanding will be gained of the similarity and the differences between the two forms of narcissism.

Furthermore, more research should be dedicated to the question of whether deficient abilities or motivation accounts for narcissists’ low empathy. For instance, do narcissists show higher empathy or emotional contagion if it suits their ultimate goal to garner narcissistic supply (admiration, adoration)? Is their low sensitivity to other

people's emotional states a result of low motivation to attend to other people's internal states or perhaps a high motivation to maintain and secure own positive mood through "impermeability" to others' emotions? Do narcissists show deficits or biases in the ability to recognize emotions that could affect their reactions to others? Existing theories (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) provide a general conceptual outline of self-regulatory processes in narcissists, but a detailed coherent map of particular cognitive, perceptual, and emotional mechanisms underlying these processes is still to be drafted. More research on narcissists' emotion regulation is warranted.

When studying narcissists' emotionality, an important step forward would be to go beyond self-report measures. There is a wide variety of measurement methods, including physiological measures such as electromyography, and a wide range of stimuli of different complexity, starting from pictures and still photos and ending with dynamic stimuli that allow for exact timing and testing thresholds of emotion recognition, available to researchers. Also, virtual reality could be used in studies, enhancing participants' immersion in experimental situations.

Finally, once accumulating evidence allows for a fuller understanding of how different aspects and mechanisms of narcissists' self-regulatory systems function to produce the intra- or interpersonally problematic emotional expressions, we will hopefully be ready to propose effective interventions that will bring relief to narcissists themselves and their relationship partners.

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Understanding the Narcissistic Need for Perfection: The Most Dazzling, Perfect, and Comprehensive Review Ever

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Abstract

Over 100 years of theory, research, and clinical observations suggest perfectionism is a defining feature of the way narcissists' think, feel, and behave. Our chapter first offers a comprehensive review of how trait perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation relate to the two core themes of narcissism: narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability. We conclude that narcissistic grandiosity has unique positive relationships with self-oriented perfectionism (i.e., demanding perfection from the self), other-oriented perfectionism (i.e., demanding perfection from other people), and perfectionistic self-promotion (i.e., promoting one's supposed perfection) and a unique negative relationship with non-display of imperfection (i.e., concern over behavioral displays of imperfec-

tion). Likewise, we conclude that narcissistic vulnerability has unique negative relationships with socially prescribed perfectionism (i.e., perceiving others demand perfection), perfectionistic self-promotion, and non-display of imperfection. Next, we provide an overview of an emerging construct termed narcissistic perfectionism, using Armand Hammer's life as a case example. Overall, the literature reviewed suggests narcissistic perfectionism is a promising theory-driven and empirically supported construct. Additionally, our case history of Armand Hammer describes a man who believed he was perfect and justified in demanding and expecting perfection from his family, friends, and coworkers (i.e., a narcissistic perfectionist). Lastly, we highlight exciting and important areas for further inquiry on narcissistic perfectionism.

Keywords

Perfectionistic strivings · Perfectionistic concerns · Other-oriented perfectionism · Self-presentation · Narcissistic perfectionism · Armand Hammer

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I not only want to win the Nobel Prize. I also want Prince Charles to persuade the Queen to knight me
—Armand Hammer (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 281)

Introduction

Armand Hammer—the self-proclaimed “baking soda king” (Cook, 1996) and late chairman of Occidental Petroleum—was a narcissistic perfectionist. He strove to appear perfect and painstakingly promoted himself as a genius, humanitarian, and philanthropist (Blumay & Edwards, 1992). In Hammer’s words, “the only thing I’m going to allow people to remember about me is the fact that I’ve lived a life devoted to helping mankind, on a scale previously unheard of. After I’m gone, people are going to look back at my life and proclaim it a miracle” (Epstein, 1996, p. 391). However, Hammer was not a genius, nor was he a philanthropist or a humanitarian. Rather, Hammer was a “fraud, liar, cheat, thief, embezzler, foreign agent, charlatan, and snake-oil salesman” (Cook, 1996, p. 66) who “left a legacy of familial ruin and lawsuits” (Blumenthal, 1996). Hammer was also notoriously grandiose. For instance, Hammer famously remarked, “the brilliance of my mind can only be described as dazzling. Even I am impressed by it” (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 294). Likewise, Hammer demanded and expected perfection from his family, friends, and coworkers. As such, Hammer was perpetually disappointed with, and in unending conflict with, other people. In fact, Hammer’s former public relations director, Carl Blumay, alleged that “almost every employee who worked with Hammer for more than 5 years developed medical problems” (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 399).

As these anecdotes of Hammer attest, perfectionism coupled with narcissism is particularly pernicious (Pincus, Cain, & Wright, 2014). Even so, the perfectionism-narcissism link is under-recognized and misunderstood. Our chapter addresses this by describing a theory-driven, empirically supported, construct termed narcissistic perfectionism and uses Hammer’s life as a case example. To begin, we define perfectionism and narcissism.

Defining Perfectionism

Perfectionists strive for flawlessness, have high standards, and are overly critical of themselves and others. Perfectionism is also multidimen-

sional (Hewitt, Flett, Besser, Sherry, & McGee, 2003). Two higher-order factors underlie several lower-order perfectionism dimensions: perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns (Dunkley, Zuroff, & Blankstein, 2003; Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia, & Neubauer, 1993). Perfectionistic strivings encompass self-generated pressures to be perfect (self-oriented perfectionism; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), alongside ceaselessly pursuing lofty goals (personal standards; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Perfectionistic concerns comprise socially based pressures to be perfect (socially prescribed perfectionism; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), overly adverse reactions to faults (concern over mistakes; Frost et al., 1990), and uncertainties about performance abilities (doubts about actions; Frost et al., 1990). And although perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns overlap (Smith & Saklofske, 2017), they are still empirically distinct (Dunkley & Blankstein, 2000; Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

Indeed, research implicates perfectionistic concerns in numerous psychological problems, including depression, suicide, bulimia nervosa, and anxiety disorders (e.g., Cox, Clara, & Enns, 2009; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Mackinnon et al., 2011; Smith, Sherry, Rnic, et al., 2016; Smith et al., *in press*). As such, investigators rarely challenge the destructiveness of perfectionistic concerns. Conversely, for several decades, scholars have been debating the pros and the cons of demanding perfection of the self (e.g., Hamachek, 1978; Pacht, 1984). To illustrate, proponents of “adaptive perfectionism” note that perfectionistic strivings sometimes correlate positively with desirable outcomes (e.g., academic performance; Stoeber, 2012), especially after controlling for perfectionistic concerns (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Alternatively, other researchers maintain the benefits of perfectionistic strivings’ pale in comparison to perfectionistic strivings’ costs. That is, certainly a construct that leads people to think about suicide (Smith et al., 2018) and places people at risk for depression (Smith, Sherry, Rnic, et al., 2016), eating disorders (Castro-Fornieles et al., 2007), poor health (Molnar, Flett, Sadava, & Colautti, 2012), and early mortality (Fry & Debats, 2009) is far from one that should be

encouraged or is advisable. Moreover, a priori labeling perfectionistic strivings as *adaptive* is problematic as many people high on perfectionistic strivings also have a dysfunctional form of narcissism (Flett, Sherry, Hewitt, & Nepon, 2014; Ronningstam, 2011). Regardless, the constructs of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns are unable to encompass all forms of perfectionism—namely, other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation.

Other-oriented perfectionism refers to a tendency to demand perfectionism from other people (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Investigators initially overlooked other-oriented perfectionism, possibly because of inconsistent associations with markers of psychopathology (Nealis, Sherry, Sherry, Stewart, & Macneil, 2015). Nonetheless, research on other-oriented perfectionism is currently burgeoning (e.g., Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2017; Stoeber, 2014, 2015). And there are two major reasons why other-oriented perfectionism has garnered this newfound attention. First, though other-oriented perfectionists do not manifest high levels of stress, it is increasingly apparent they cause significant suffering and distress in those close to them (Hewitt, Flett, & Mikail, 1995; Nealis et al., 2015; Sherry, Mackinnon, & Gautreau, 2016; Smith et al., 2017). Second, other-oriented perfectionism has unique positive relationships with the Dark Triad of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissistic grandiosity (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015; Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016; Stoeber, 2014). Accordingly, an increased interest in these dark personality traits (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015) has thrust other-oriented perfectionism into the spotlight.

As regards perfectionistic self-presentation, whereas perfectionistic strivings, perfectionistic concerns, and other-oriented perfectionism can be distinguished by the source and the direction of perfectionistic expectations, perfectionistic self-presentation captures the public, social expression of perfectionism. Specifically, Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, et al. (2003) operationalized perfectionistic self-presentation as an interpersonal style characterized by an extreme preoccupation with displaying a public image of infallibility and

described three components: perfectionistic self-promotion (i.e., trying to seem perfect), nondisclosure of imperfection (i.e., not telling people about mistakes and imperfect aspects of the self), and non-display of imperfection (i.e., concealing mistakes and flaws on a behavioral level). Perfectionistic self-presentation's dimensions predict various markers of psychopathology beyond alternative forms of perfectionism (Hewitt, Flett, Besser, et al., 2003; Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, et al., 2003; Hewitt, Habke, Lee-Bagley, Sherry, & Flett, 2008).

Perfectionistic self-promotion and other-oriented perfectionism are also the two forms of perfectionism most relevant to narcissism (Flett et al., 2014; Smith, Sherry, Chen et al., 2016; Stoeber, 2014, 2015). Hence a complete understanding of perfectionism and narcissism requires consideration of not only perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns but also other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation. Similarly, a complete understanding of the perfectionism-narcissism link requires distinguishing between narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability (Besser & Priel, 2010; Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010).

Defining Narcissism

Ample evidence suggests narcissism is best understood as a multidimensional personality trait with two overarching themes: narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability (Cain et al., 2008; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991). Indeed, although narcissistic grandiosity and narcissistic vulnerability intersect in the tendency to interact with others in a cold, hostile, and antagonistic manner (Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012), there are important phenotypic differences in expression (Pincus et al., 2009). For instance, narcissistic grandiosity is tied to vindictiveness, manipulativeness, domineeringness, exhibitionism, aggression, and interpersonal dominance (Cain et al., 2008; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991). In contrast, narcissistic vulnerability is related to life dissatisfaction, anxiety, coldness, and social

avoidance (Cain et al., 2008; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991). For people high on narcissistic grandiosity, self-esteem dysregulation triggers aggression and envy; for people high on narcissistic vulnerability, self-esteem dysregulation triggers profound shame and a deep-seated sense of inadequacy (Besser & Priel, 2010; Cain et al., 2008; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Furthermore, narcissistic grandiosity is a stronger correlate of histrionic and antisocial personality disorders; and narcissistic vulnerability is a stronger correlate of borderline and avoidant personality disorders (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Lastly, from the perspective of the five-factor model (see Chap. 28), grandiose narcissism is positively related to extraversion and negatively related to agreeableness and neuroticism (Miller & Campbell, 2008). Conversely, narcissistic vulnerability is positively related to neuroticism and negatively related to extraversion and agreeableness (Hendin & Cheek, 1997).

Understanding the Narcissism-Perfectionism Link

Over 100 years of theory, research, and clinical observation suggests perfectionism is essential to understanding narcissists' style of thinking, behaving, and relating (Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2004; Freud, 1957; Horney, 1950; Ronningstam, 2010, 2011; Rothstein, 1999; Sorotzkin, 1985). Millon and Davis (2000) noted: "narcissists have a tough job because perfection is viewed as either all or nothing: If you are not perfect, you are imperfect, and if you are imperfect you are nothing" (p. 284). In addition, Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) theorized narcissists use perfectionism as a means of protecting and enhancing self-esteem. In support, narcissistic grandiosity has distinct positive relations with self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and perfectionistic self-promotion (Smith Sherry, Chen et al., 2016). Additionally, narcissistic grandiosity has a unique negative relationship with non-display of imperfection (Smith, Sherry, Chen et al., 2016).

Hence, empirical evidence and theoretical accounts suggest grandiose narcissists harshly impose perfectionistic demands onto others while concurrently experiencing perpetual dissatisfaction with other people's (so-called) imperfections (Beck et al., 2004; Ronningstam, 2010; Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016; Stoeber, Sherry, & Nealis, 2015). In fact, evidence suggests good enough is never good enough for grandiose narcissists (Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016). They experience other people as annoyingly defective—and their self-appointed job is to fix others' mistakes. Likewise, research indicates grandiose narcissists relentlessly strive for perfection and shamelessly present themselves as perfect, perhaps to confirm their inflated self-image (Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016; Sorotzkin, 1985). Even so, theory suggests grandiose narcissists' self-preoccupation and arrogance may lead to indifference regarding the cost of behaving imperfectly (Flett et al., 2014; Kernberg, 1984; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Sherry, Gralnick, Hewitt, Sherry, & Flett, 2014; Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016).

In contrast, narcissistic vulnerability shows unique positive relations with socially prescribed perfectionism, perfectionistic self-promotion, and non-display of imperfection (Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016). Thus, as with grandiose narcissists, for vulnerable narcissists, image is everything (Hewitt, Flett, Besser, et al., 2003; Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, et al., 2003). But, unlike grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists have a defensive and an insecure preoccupation with behaving imperfectly (Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016). Indeed, evidence suggests vulnerable narcissists expect and perceive criticism, judgment, and pressure from others and view the world as a threatening place where others' intentions are malevolent (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Pincus et al., 2009). In summary, most forms of perfectionism have distinct relationships with either narcissistic grandiosity (e.g., self-oriented perfectionism), narcissistic vulnerability (e.g., socially prescribed perfectionism), or both (e.g., perfectionistic self-promotion).

Nonetheless, other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-promotion are the two forms

of perfectionism most frequently discussed in theoretical accounts of narcissism (e.g., Beck et al., 2004; Ronningstam, 2010, 2011). For instance, Millon and Davis (2000) touched on other-oriented perfectionism when they noted narcissists “impose their self-created standards on others [and] demand that others submit to their way of doing things” (p. 719). Alternatively, Sorotzkin (1985) acknowledged perfectionistic self-promotion when he theorized narcissists strive “to look perfect more than to be perfect” (p. 91). Even so, other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-promotion are notably absent from empirical models of narcissism. Accordingly, Nealis et al. (2015) addressed this by formulating, testing, and supporting a constellation of narcissistic and perfectionistic traits termed narcissistic perfectionism.

Narcissistic Perfectionism

Narcissistic perfectionism is characterized by an outwardly directed need for perfection, alongside a grandiose self-image, interpersonal entitlement, and unreasonably high expectations for others (Flett et al., 2014; Nealis et al., 2015; Sherry et al., 2014). Extant evidence suggests narcissistic perfectionism is a psychometrically sound construct. Narcissistic perfectionism’s indicators (i.e., other-oriented perfectionism, grandiosity, entitlement, and high standards for others) reliably cluster across studies (Curran, Hill, & Williams, 2017; Nealis et al., 2015; Nealis, Sherry, Lee-Bagley, Stewart, & Macneil, 2016) and over measures (e.g., Smith, Saklofske, Stoeber, & Sherry, 2016). Narcissistic perfectionism is also highly stable (Nealis et al., 2015). In addition, the structure of narcissistic perfectionism replicates using both self- and informant reports (Nealis et al., 2016). Accordingly, research supports narcissistic perfectionism’s factorial validity, temporal stability, and convergent validity (Curran et al., 2017; Nealis et al., 2015, 2016; Smith, Saklofske et al., 2016).

Nealis et al. (2015) also demonstrated narcissistic perfectionism positively predicted daily derogation and daily conflict, even after control-

ling for perfectionistic concerns. Similarly, Nealis et al. (2016) found narcissistic perfectionism predicted anger above and beyond other-oriented perfectionism, entitlement rage, and pathological narcissism (Nealis et al., 2016). Hence, Nealis et al.’s (2015, 2016) findings imply narcissistic perfectionism is neither redundant with nor fully captured by similar perfectionism constructs (e.g., other-oriented perfectionism) or analogous narcissism constructs (e.g., entitlement rage).

Nealis et al.’s (2015, 2016) results also corroborate the often mentioned, but seldom tested, notion that narcissistic perfectionists have a prickly and a conflictual style of relating to others (e.g., Beck et al., 2004; Kohut, 1972). Theory suggests narcissistic perfectionists’ anger is triggered when they perceive that other people have fallen short of their lofty expectations, possibly because it threatens the positive sense of self they experience when other people live up to their loft standards (Beck et al., 2004; Kohut, 1972; Millon & Davis, 2000). Nonetheless, as an emerging construct, only one study has investigated narcissistic perfectionism’s developmental antecedents. Curran et al. (2017) reported a positive association between parental conditional regard and narcissistic perfectionism in a large sample of adolescents. Yet, clearly parental conditional regard is only one of a myriad of factors involved in the development of narcissistic perfectionism, and, as such, there remains much to learn.

So, how is narcissistic perfectionism assessed? There are two options. In line with Curran et al. (2017) and Nealis et al. (2015, 2016), narcissistic perfectionism can be assessed as a latent construct using subscales with various measures as indicators. For example, using structural equation modeling, narcissistic perfectionism can be evaluated using four subscales: Hewitt and Flett’s (1990) Other-Oriented Perfectionism Subscale, Hill et al.’s (2004) High Standards for Others Subscale, Jonason and Webster’s (2010) Narcissistic Grandiosity Subscale, and Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman’s (2004) Psychological Entitlement Scale. Or narcissistic perfectionism can be assessed using the Big Three Perfectionism Scale (BTPS; Smith,

Saklofske et al., 2016). Smith and colleagues (2016) developed the BTPS to answer Nealis et al.'s (2015) call for a "dedicated scale for narcissistic perfectionism...[to] allow more empirical research of this emerging construct and support future research in this area" (p. 23). The BTPS operationalizes narcissistic perfectionism following Nealis et al.'s (2015) model and is composed of four subscales: other-oriented perfectionism (e.g., "I expect those close to me to be perfect), hypercriticism (e.g., "I am highly critical of other people's imperfections), entitlement (e.g., "It bothers me when people don't notice how perfect I am"), and grandiosity (e.g., "Other people secretly admire my perfection"). Likewise, the BTPS is currently the only available self-report measure of narcissistic perfectionism. Moreover, a notable feature of the BTPS that clearly sets it apart from other self-report measures is that each item directly references either perfection (e.g., "I know that I am perfect") or highly related concepts such as criticism of other's mistakes (e.g., "I am highly critical of other people's imperfections").

Armand Hammer's Narcissistic Perfectionism

Narcissistic perfectionism is a defining feature of Armand Hammer's personality. From an early age, Hammer brashly promoted his so-called perfection (Cook, 1996). That is, he was more interested in appearing perfect than being perfect. For instance, Hammer claimed to have never failed at anything, whereas, in reality, several of Hammer's businesses ventures had failed (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 10). Likewise, according to at least one account (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 9), Hammer defensively concealed his Judaic heritage; following his brother's death, Hammer ordered his executives to refrain from attending his brother's funeral, lest they learn of his Jewish ancestry. Similarly, after being diagnosed with advanced cancer of the bone marrow, Hammer forced his doctors not to tell anyone, including his son (Epstein, 1996, p. 6).

Hammer also harshly imposed his perfectionistic demands onto others, experienced disappointment and dissatisfaction with others, and was in frequent conflicts with others. He would proudly proclaim, "Watch me crack the whip. Watch me get everyone hopping" (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 111). Yet, the more Hammer's employees produced, the more Hammer demanded (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 26). Likewise, Hammer held quixotically high expectations for his family. He told his son: "When I was a college student I made a million dollars on the side. I expect you to do the same" (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 86). Furthermore, other-oriented perfectionism fueled Hammer's anger. After an employee failed to do a task "his way," Hammer bellowed: "I'd like to see you put before a firing squad without a blindfold!" (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 183). Likewise, despite only owning 1% of Occidental Petroleum's shares, Hammer fired six top directors over 16 years (Gelman, Hughey, Tsuruoka, & McAlevy, 1984). Indeed, Hammer "summarily fired executives who resisted his orders and treated Occidental's directors...as nothing more than rubber stamps to validate his actions" (Epstein, 1996, p. 251). In Hammer's words, his employees were "all stupid" and did not "know what they're talking about" (Epstein, 1996, p. 362).

Grandiosity and entitlement also colored Hammer's life. He spent \$100 million dollars of shareholder money building a museum celebrating himself which *Newsweek* described as being "more like a mausoleum than a museum" (Epstein, 1996, p. 302). In the entrance to his museum, Hammer hung a seven-foot tall portrait of himself next to the Leonardo da Vinci drawings he had acquired and dubbed the "codex Hammer" (Epstein, 1996, p. 7). Likewise, despite a notable lack of qualifications, Hammer saw himself as a serious contender for the Nobel Peace Prize, but when confronted with the fact he did not qualify for a Nobel Prize, Hammer simply responded: "If necessary, I will make my own categories" (Epstein, 1996, p. 335). Moreover, although Hammer "lost" the Nobel to the 14th Dalia Lamia, his grandiose sense of self-

importance was unshakable. For instance, Hammer continued to spend one million dollars of company money each year to have a TV crew follow him around (Blumay & Edwards, 1992, p. 314) and even commissioned a film script to be written to celebrate his life (Cook, 1996).

Outstanding Questions and Future Directions

Narcissistic perfectionism is a more recent construct in the perfectionism literature. Hence, there are several exciting and important areas for future inquiries. Most importantly, we need a better understanding of narcissistic perfectionism's incremental validity. For instance, the explanatory power of narcissistic perfectionism beyond Machiavellianism and psychopathy is unclear. And, until such research is conducted, whether narcissistic perfectionism is deserving of a seat in "big dark tent of personality" is unclear (Marcus & Zeigler-Hill, 2015). Similarly, models and measures of narcissism abound, and research is needed to determine narcissistic perfectionism's pattern of convergence and divergence. In addition, research on the interpersonal consequences of narcissistic perfectionism would be timely, given mounting evidence that the recipients of perfectionistic demands suffer more than the source of perfectionistic demands (e.g., Smith et al., 2017). Likewise, although Smith, Saklofske, et al. (2016), Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al. (2016), Smith, Sherry, Rnic, et al. (2016) presented preliminary evidence suggesting the BTPS is a reliable and valid measure of perfectionism, further validation work is needed. Specifically, the temporal stability of the BTPS remains to be determined. Moreover, it is unclear if the BTPS is differentially related to grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. As well, a fuller understanding of the incremental validity of the BTPS is needed. Researchers might also consider examining the extent to which the BTPS predicts outcomes (e.g., prosocial vs. antisocial behaviors) beyond alternative measures of perfectionism and narcissism.

Most research on the perfectionism-narcissism link investigates trait perfectionism, with comparatively little attention given to perfectionistic self-presentation (Smith, Sherry, Chen, et al., 2016). Similarly, most research on perfectionism and narcissism uses Raskin and Terry's (1998) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Davis, Dionne, & Shuster, 2001; Davis, Karvinen, & McCreary, 2005; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Freudenstein et al., 2012; Hewitt et al., 2003; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Sherry et al., 2014; Trumpeter, Watson, & O'Leary, 2006). However, this is problematic as the NPI primarily assesses narcissistic grandiosity, not narcissistic vulnerability (Flett et al., 2014). As such, relative to perfectionism's relationship with narcissistic grandiosity, our understanding of perfectionism's relationship with narcissistic vulnerability is limited. Most research on the perfectionism-narcissism link is also cross-sectional, and a multi-wave longitudinal study is needed to test if perfectionism is an antecedent of, or a consequence of, narcissism. Similarly, most research on perfectionism and narcissism relies on self-reports (cf. Nealis et al., 2016). This is problematic as perfectionism and narcissism both involve self-presentational biases such as defensiveness (Sherry et al., 2013). Future research could advance the perfectionism-narcissism literature by moving beyond reliance on cross-sectional designs and augmenting self-reports with informant reports. Finally, given Morf and Rhodewalt's (2001) self-regulatory model, research comparing the intrapsychic processes underlying narcissistic grandiosity, narcissistic vulnerability, and perfectionism is needed.

Concluding Remarks

Building on theoretical accounts (e.g., Beck et al., 2004; Ronningstam, 2010, 2011) and empirical research (e.g., Nealis et al., 2015, 2016; Smith, Sherry, Chen et al., 2016), our chapter brings greater clarity and understanding to narcissism's relationship with perfectionism. Moreover, we suggest that narcissistic perfectionism (see Nealis et al., 2015) is a promising

theory-driven and empirically supported, emerging construct. Finally, our case history of Armand Hammer paints a picture of a man who believed he was perfect, superior to others, and justified in holding unrealistic expectations (i.e., a narcissistic perfectionist).

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What Do Narcissists Know About Themselves? Exploring the Bright Spots and Blind Spots of Narcissists' Self-Knowledge

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Abstract

How do narcissists perceive themselves and their effect on other people? This chapter explores if and when narcissists' self-perceptions and beliefs about their reputation are accurate. While narcissists tend to describe themselves in overly positive ways on some attributes, skills, and abilities, they also admit to being narcissistic, realize that other people experience them in less positive ways, and know that they lose the social status they crave over time. However, these insights are overshadowed by the fact that they seem to think that their darker attributes are character strengths that get them ahead. For example, while they admit to being narcissistic and realize that their popularity and status wanes over time, narcissists think that being arrogant, condescending, and hostile get them ahead. Thus, their blind spot might not be a failure to understand what they are like but rather how their personality undermines their goals. Implications for how narcissists might overcome the barriers to self-knowledge are discussed.

Keywords

Self-knowledge · Interpersonal perception · Metaperception · Self-perception · Social cognition · Self-enhancement

Most of us have met someone high in grandiose narcissism. Early on, this person's confidence, charisma, and humor drew us in, but eventually, we faced this person's self-centeredness, arrogance, selfishness, entitlement, and hostility. This caricature captures the interpersonal manifestation of grandiose narcissism, but how do narcissists experience themselves? The goal of the current chapter is to peer into the mind of narcissists to better understand how they perceive themselves and their effect on other people. Specifically, we explore whether narcissists' self-perceptions and beliefs about their reputation are tethered to reality. Importantly, grandiose narcissism is a dimensional construct, meaning everyone has narcissistic tendencies to some degree. Thus, when we refer to narcissists, we are referring to people high versus low in narcissism.

What Is Narcissism?

A basic assumption has been that narcissists see themselves in overly positive ways and fail to recognize their narcissistic tendencies (e.g., egotistical and conceited; Emmons, 1984, p. 297; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This blind spot in self-knowledge is partly driven by a need to maintain a grandiose sense of self. To fulfill this need, narcissists must use a myriad of strategies to maintain their positive regard, one of which is interpersonal feedback from others ide-

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ally in the form of status or admiration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Indeed, narcissists are more concerned about getting ahead than with getting along, which is why they prioritize agentic attributes (e.g., power, appearance, extraversion, intelligence) over communal attributes (caring, warm, closeness; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002).

To maintain their grandiosity, narcissists employ two strategies: admiration, which is designed to self-promote (e.g., strive for uniqueness), and rivalry, which is designed to self-protect (e.g., strive for supremacy; Back et al., 2013). The admiration strategy encompasses many positive aspects of narcissism such as dominance, confidence, and charm, whereas the rivalry strategy encompasses the negative aspects such as aggression, devaluing others, and antagonism. As outlined in our caricature, narcissists tend to employ admiration strategies when meeting people for the first time but employ rivalry strategies later on when they feel threatened, criticized, or less special (Back et al., 2013). Thus, in the early phase of acquaintanceship, people experience narcissists as confident, outgoing, charming, entertaining, funny, and attractive (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011; Paulhus, 1998) which is why narcissists tend to be popular, assume leadership roles, and are more attractive to potential mates in the early days of acquaintanceship (Brunell et al., 2008; Carlson & DesJardins, 2015; Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013; Kűfner, Nestler, & Back, 2013). However, their reputation and status wane over time, and people who know narcissists well describe them as less adjusted and more disagreeable, arrogant, aggressive, and hostile (Carlson & DesJardins, 2015; Carlson, Naumann, Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, Oltmanns, 2011; Leckelt, Kűfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Malkin, Zeigler-Hill, Barry, & Southard, 2013; Park & Colvin, 2014; Paulhus, 1998). In sum, narcissism is defined by grandiosity, and narcissists use both desirable (e.g., charm) and undesirable (e.g., antagonism) strategies to maintain their grandiosity.

What Do Narcissists Know About Themselves?

Do narcissists have self-knowledge of their personality, especially of their narcissistic tendencies, and do they realize how others experience them? One way to answer whether narcissists know their personality is to compare their self-perceptions to some objective criterion such as their actual performance (e.g., IQ tests, grades), behavior (e.g., amount of talking), or reputation among well-known acquaintances (Vazire & Carlson, 2010). By definition, narcissists likely see themselves too positively, but they might know that they have some fairly dark traits (e.g., antagonism). A second way to measure self-knowledge is to test whether narcissists understand how other people perceive them. Indeed, narcissists might see themselves in a positive light but realize that others do not share their rosy view. In the following sections, we explore narcissists' bright spots and blind spots for these two forms of self-knowledge as well as possible barriers to their self-knowledge.

Are Narcissists' Self-Perceptions Accurate?

Narcissists tend to lack self-knowledge of agentic attributes; specifically, relative to people lower in narcissism, people higher in narcissism tend to overestimate their skills more as well as attributes related to social dominance and competence (Campbell et al., 2002; Grijalva & Zhang, 2016). For example, when asked to predict academic performance (e.g., grades), people higher in narcissism tend to say they would do better than they actually do more so than the average person did (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Robins & Beer, 2001). Similar self-enhancement effects have been observed for objective tests of creativity, intelligence, and attractiveness (Bleske-Rechek, Remiker, & Baker, 2008; Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994; Goncalo, Flynn, & Kim, 2010; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). When comparing their self-perceptions of their behavior to fairly objective measures (i.e., coders' rat-

ings), narcissists tend to overestimate their contributions or abilities in group discussions (e.g., claiming that they changed group members' minds and took charge of the meeting more than they really did; John & Robins, 1994; Gosling, John, Craik, & Robins, 1998). Finally, narcissists' self-perceptions of agentic attributes tend to be more positive than their reputation among people who know them well (e.g., friends, classmates, coworkers; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011). For example, in workplace contexts, narcissists tend to describe themselves as high in leadership abilities, but coworkers' impressions of leadership are weakly or negatively associated with narcissism (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006), and among peers, narcissists' self-views are also more positive than the impressions they make on traits such as intelligence, attractiveness, being funny, and likeable (Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011). In sum, when narcissists' self-views on agentic traits are compared to fairly objective indicators, their perceptions tend to be too positive, and while most people self-enhance to some degree, narcissists seem to do it more.

In contrast to agentic traits, narcissists' perceptions of their communal attributes, which include traits such as agreeableness and morality, seem to be quite accurate. Notably, narcissists are less communal. In social dilemma games, where short-term gains for the self are pitted against long-term gains for the group, narcissists take more at the detriment of their groups (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005), narcissists will sometimes cheat or sabotage others to get ahead (Domash & Balter, 1979), and people who know narcissists well describe them as less agreeable and warm (Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011; Paulhus, 1998). Interestingly, narcissists seem to realize that they are low on communal orientation (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, and morality; Paulhus & John, 1998) and do not tend to think they are better than others on attributes related to caring for others (Campbell et al., 2002). Importantly, narcissists also seem to be quite aware of their narcissistic tendencies. Specifically, they describe themselves and are described by others as more arrogant and condescending, as exaggerating

their abilities, bragging, criticizing, and arguing with others (Back et al., 2013; Carlson, 2013; Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Egan & McCorkindale, 2007; Muris, Merckelbach, Otgaar, & Meijer, 2017; Paulhus, 1998). In sum, when narcissists' self-views of communal attributes are compared to what others say about them, their perceptions seem to be fairly accurate.

When it comes to assessing the accuracy of self-perceptions, narcissists are too positive about agentic "getting ahead" traits but are more accurate about communal "getting along" traits. While it seems as though narcissists have self-knowledge of their darker, rivalry strategies, this insight might not reflect a genuine understanding of their condition. Rather than confessing that they have fairly negative traits, it appears that narcissists might actually be bragging when they admit to being narcissistic and low on communal attributes. Narcissists seem to believe that self-promotion is the best strategy for making a good impression (Hart, Adams, & Burton, 2016) and that narcissistic behavior gets people ahead (Carlson, 2013; Carlson & Desjardins, 2015). For example, when asked to indicate which behaviors were likely to garner high social status, the average person included being trustworthy, confident, likeable, intelligent, and building up others' strengths, but the strongest associations with narcissism included highlighting others' weaknesses, being attractive, dominant, competitive, and arrogant (Carlson & Desjardins, 2015). Thus, rather than admitting to character flaws, narcissists seem to be reporting character strengths when they say they are narcissistic and less communal. For this reason, we conclude that narcissists' insight into the darker aspects of their personality does not reflect a genuine understanding of their condition, but rather, another form of self-enhancement.

Do Narcissists Know How Other People Perceive Them?

Rather than ask if narcissists' self-perceptions map onto reality, a different but perhaps equally

important question is whether narcissists know how other people experience them. On one hand, narcissists “probably misunderstand how they are perceived” (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, p. 183), probably by assuming that others see their greatness. On the other hand, it is plausible that narcissists realize that others do not see the best in them, which is why they can be hostile. However, determining if narcissists know the impressions they make is not simple, because narcissists have a very dynamic reputation. As discussed above, narcissists tend to make positive impressions that fade over time, which means they must track a moving target when guessing how others experience them. Interestingly, despite making positive first impressions, narcissists are actually seen as narcissistic early on. For example, people can accurately perceive narcissistic traits from watching a person’s conversation for only 30 s (Friedman, Oltmanns, & Turkheimer, 2007), from a person’s Facebook page (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008), or a photograph of them (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). Given that narcissists make mixed impressions over time, we explore whether narcissists know that others see them as narcissistic, if they know that their reputation wanes over time, and if they realize that others do not share their positive self-views.

Do narcissists realize that others see them as narcissistic? When asked to guess how people from a variety of contexts perceive them on narcissistic traits, narcissists correctly expect that Facebook observers, acquaintances, friends, and coworkers will view them as high in narcissistic traits (e.g., arrogance, lack of empathy) and as engaging in narcissistic behaviors (e.g., bragging, critical, condescending; Carlson, 2013; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011; Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011; Lukowitsky & Pincus, 2013). Narcissists also tend to assume they are seen as more narcissistic than they really are online, in first impressions, and among friends (Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011). Given that they value their narcissism, we believe this pattern reflects another instance of grandiosity.

Do narcissists realize that their reputation wanes over time? Interestingly, narcissists realize that people they meet in first impression contexts tend to see them in more positive ways (e.g., extraverted and attractive) than their friends see them (e.g., less agreeable and more impulsive, arrogant; Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011). Likewise, a longitudinal study that tracked classmates over the course of a semester showed that narcissists realized their peers saw them in less positive ways over time (e.g., lower in agreeableness; Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011) and that narcissists realize that they lose their initial high social status over time as well (Carlson & DesJardins, 2015). However, while narcissists realize that their reputation wanes over time, they still tend to overestimate the positivity of the impressions they make overall. For example, while narcissists know they lose status over time, narcissists still tend to overestimate their status over time (Carlson & DesJardins, 2015). Likewise, narcissists erroneously assume that friends see them as funny, attractive, adjusted, and conscientious when they do not necessarily see them in this way (Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011; Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011) and tend to overestimate how intelligent, attractive, outgoing, and adjusted they appear to be to their friends (Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011). All in all, narcissists seem to have some insight into the fact that they tend to make better impressions on people they just meet than on people who know them well, and they seem to realize that their popularity wanes over time. Despite this insight, they tend to assume they are seen in more positive ways than they really are.

Do narcissists realize that others see them differently from how they see themselves? Narcissists’ beliefs about how others perceive them are a stronger predictor of what people actually think of them than are their self-views, suggesting that narcissists have some insight into the fact that others do not necessarily share their self-views (Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Lukowitsky & Pincus, 2013). Going further, narcissists’ beliefs about how Facebook observers, new

acquaintances, and friends perceive them are less positive than are their self-perceptions for traits such as extraversion, well-being, intelligence, and likeability (Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011). Likewise, after engaging in a group task, narcissists' self-perceptions of their performance were too high, but their beliefs about how their peers might perceive their performance were less positive than their self-views (Robins & Beer, 2001). Thus, narcissists seem to have some insight into the fact that others do not necessarily see them as positively as they see themselves. Interestingly, narcissists see themselves as more narcissistic than they think others see them as well (Maples-Keller & Miller, 2016). However, given that they value narcissism, this might be another way in which they self-enhance.

Barriers to Self-Knowledge

Narcissists are not completely deluded about their condition, but they do see themselves in an overly positive light, especially for agentic attributes. How are narcissists able to hold onto their overly positive self-views? In general, there are two barriers to self-knowledge: informational barriers, which are factors that prevent people from receiving information (e.g., lack of feedback), and motivational barriers, which are factors that influence the way people seek out or process cues (e.g., motivation to self-enhance; Vazire, 2010). Narcissists might get less feedback because people are afraid to confront their hostility, but arguably the main barrier to self-knowledge is motivational.

One of the main ways narcissists' motivation to self-enhance affects their self-perceptions is by leading them to seek out information that maintains their grandiosity. For example, narcissists engage in more social comparisons (Krizan & Bushman, 2011), especially downward comparisons to bolster their self-image (Goncalves & Campbell, 2014). They also enjoy receiving feedback and tend to interpret neutral feedback in positive terms. For example, one study explored how people respond to feedback about their performance during a group task, specifically by

allowing them to view a videotape of the interaction. While most people's self-perceptions of their performance declined after seeing themselves, narcissists' self-perceptions of their performance increased, and they reported enjoying the opportunity to see themselves perform (Robins & John, 1997).

When narcissists receive direct feedback, they find ways to filter the information in a desirable way. For example, when given feedback about their performance on a task (e.g., creativity task), narcissists will attribute their successes to their abilities more than their failures (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000), and they tend to take individual credit for their success but privately blame situational factors for failure (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). When narcissists receive negative feedback, they question the assessor or the method of evaluation or even blame others for their failures (Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake, 1996).

These motivational strategies have important implications for their interpersonal behavior. Recall that narcissists have some insight into the fact that their reputation wanes over time. Because narcissists use social contexts to maintain their self-image, they are motivated to seek out short-term relationships where they thrive in order to see themselves in a desirable light. This likely explains why they move from one social context to the next (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). In sum, narcissists are able to hold onto their overly positive self-views by strategically selecting feedback from their environments.

Summary and Implications

Do narcissists have self-knowledge of their personality and how others experience them? Our review suggests that narcissists' self-knowledge is mixed. On one hand, if we asked narcissists to describe themselves and how others experience them, they would provide overly positive perceptions of their agentic attributes (e.g., extraversion, openness) and skills and abilities (e.g., leadership). On the other hand, they would admit

to being narcissistic and less communal, they would realize that other people experience them in less positive ways over time, and they would have some insight into the fact that others do not share their overly positive self-views. Yet, while narcissists seem to be aware of the darker aspects of their personality, their self-knowledge is overshadowed by the fact that they seem to think that their darker attributes are character strengths that get them ahead. While some of their characteristics (e.g., confidence) do get them ahead in the short run, it is the aspects of their personality that they seem to value that ultimately leads to their downfall.

One of the main implications of these findings is that changing a narcissist's behavior will likely involve changing the way this individual thinks about narcissism. Specifically, narcissists already know that they are narcissistic, but what they fail to realize is how their behavior interferes with their ability to hold onto social status they crave. Indeed, it is unclear if narcissists experience negative consequences of their self-enhancement and poor self-knowledge. Narcissists report high levels of adjustment (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988), while other people tend to experience the negative interpersonal consequences of poor self-knowledge more than the self (e.g., poor relationship quality; Carlson, 2016; Kurt & Paulhus, 2008). Yet, there is also some evidence that narcissists do sometimes report more psychological distress, perhaps once they are less able to find new social contexts (Miller, Campbell, & Pilkonis, 2007). Hopefully, future work will explore if improving narcissists' insight into the effects of their narcissism will allow them to adopt more adaptive strategies for attaining high self-esteem.

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Narcissists' Perceptions of Narcissistic Behavior

30

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Abstract

Do narcissists view their narcissistic reputations and behavior as a curse or a blessing? Herein, we reviewed studies that have addressed narcissists' (a) awareness of their narcissistic reputation and behavior, (b) evaluations of their narcissistic traits and behavior, (c) perspective on their prototypical narcissistic action as strategic (i.e., a pattern of behavior designed to accomplish goals) vs. impulse-driven, and (d) evaluation of other narcissists. Our review suggested that narcissists are generally aware that they are more "narcissistic," view their own prototypical narcissistic traits and behaviors as both rather beneficial and highly strategic, and are more tolerant of other people that behave narcissistically. Perhaps this constellation of findings suggests that "narcissism" possesses subjective logic and can be understood in terms of straightforward normative models of human behavior (e.g., people act "narcissistically" because they think "narcissistic" images lead to more favorable life outcomes). We conclude by discussing areas for future research in this vein.

Keywords

Social perception · Self-awareness · Self-presentation · Reputation · Social desirability

· Impression formation · Beliefs · Self-regulation · Goals

Narcissists¹ have a strong desire to be admired yet tend to be more offensive, rude, antagonistic/hostile, vain, selfish, arrogant, and manipulative than non-narcissists (Adams, Florell, Burton, & Hart, 2014; Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). On the surface, this constellation of apparently negative traits seems odd—even ironic—to characterize a person who is presumably intent on being admired. This paradox raises the question of what narcissists are doing, or more critically what they *think* they are doing, when they behave narcissistically. It seems possible that narcissists recognize the error of their ways and might regard their prototypical narcissistic behavior as a curse. For example, Vazire and Funder (2006)

¹We note two features about how narcissism was operationalized for this chapter. First, although narcissism may come in at least two varieties—grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Wink, 1991)—when using the term "narcissism" or "narcissist," we are referring to its grandiose form. Grandiose narcissism more closely approximates definitions of narcissistic personality disorder (Miller & Campbell, 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988) and has received far greater research attention, particularly in reference to the subject of this chapter. Second, our review focuses on studies of narcissism as a dimensional personality trait (in nonclinical samples) rather than as a clinical diagnosis. To this point, our use of the term "narcissist" is mere shorthand for individuals that score high on grandiose narcissism measures.

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showed that narcissists admit to being impulsive and suggested narcissistic action reflects this weakness. Baumeister and Vohs (2001) suggested that narcissists' boasting and pretentious displays reflect an "addiction" to self-esteem. Perhaps narcissists, like many addicts, come to view their narcissistic behavior as compelled, uncontrollable, a weakness, and a source of shame and cause of personal hardship (e.g., job loss, poor relationship outcomes). Or perhaps narcissists simply lack self-insight and are unaware that they behave narcissistically. Indeed, some theorists have described narcissists' interpersonal style as "tone-deaf" (Wallace, 2011), and other theorists have suggested narcissists' displays are for self-gratification and are not designed to create desired audience reactions (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

Alternatively, none of these ideas might accurately depict what narcissists think about narcissism. In fact, narcissists might be highly aware of their narcissistic reputations and perceive their narcissistic behavior as largely under their control and—in some ways—adaptive. From the perspective of self-presentation theory (Schlenker, 1980, 2003), human behavior is designed to project *subjectively* desired identity images to audiences. Even apparently irrational and self-defeating patterns of human behavior including mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia; Braginsky, Braginsky, & Ring, 1969) and other aberrant behavior (e.g., antisocial behavior; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994) have been traced to strategic attempts to project subjectively desired identities. It is worth noting that self-reports of narcissism, such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), contain items (e.g., "modesty does not become me") that require insight into one's own narcissistic traits and that individuals that tend to score higher on such measures are happier, more satisfied with their lives, higher in self-esteem, and less likely to suffer from negative social emotions such as social anxiety, fear of evaluation, or depression (Hart, Adams, & Tortoriello, 2017; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). These adaptive associations in conjunction with an apparent self-awareness of

their narcissism imply that narcissists might view their narcissistic qualities as an asset and under their control.

Here, we will review a collection of findings that shed light on narcissists' perspective on prototypical narcissistic traits and behaviors. First, we will review studies that have assessed whether narcissists are (a) aware of their higher standing on narcissistic traits and their narcissistic reputation, (b) hold different evaluations of narcissistic traits, and (c) perceive their prototypical narcissistic action (e.g., bragging, aggression, risky behavior, sexual infidelity) as goal-directed (e.g., strategic and tactical) or largely outside of their control (analogous to a curse or an addiction). Second, we will review studies that have examined how narcissists perceive *others'* narcissism. Indeed, narcissists' reactions toward others' narcissistic action can provide additional insight into how they *truly* regard narcissism and prototypical narcissistic action. For example, although it is possible that narcissists might conceal their negative reactions toward their *own* narcissistic qualities to maintain self-esteem, such concealment seems less likely when evaluating someone else's narcissistic qualities.

Narcissists' Awareness of Their Narcissism, Attitudes Toward Narcissistic Traits, and Perceived Control over and Utility of Narcissistic Action

Research suggests that narcissists seem aware of their narcissistic reputation and acknowledge possessing narcissistic traits (Carlson, 2013; Hart & Adams, 2014; Raskin & Terry, 1988). For example, in Carlson, Vazire, and Oltmanns (2011), participants rated their own reputation and personality traits and then indicated their perception of how a new acquaintance (met during the study session) and an old acquaintance (someone they knew well) would rate their reputation and personality traits. Results revealed that narcissists not only rated themselves higher in prototypical narcissistic traits (i.e., arrogant, power-oriented, braggart) but also indicated that

both new and old acquaintances would rate them higher on those traits (Carlson et al., 2011). A different study revealed that narcissists indicated enhanced agreement with the statement “I am a narcissist” (Konrath, Meier, & Bushman, 2014).

Other work has addressed narcissists' evaluation of their narcissistic traits. This work suggests narcissists have a more favorable view of narcissism and might aspire toward establishing narcissistic traits. For example, in Carlson (2013), after participants rated themselves on various personality traits including narcissistic traits, they subsequently rated their perception of each trait's social and personal desirability along with the degree that each trait represented their ideal self. Carlson (2013) reasoned that if narcissists have insight into their narcissism, they will not only acknowledge their narcissistic traits but also (a) rate them as ideal traits to possess and (b) acknowledge that their traits are desirable for the self (but not necessarily for others). Consistent with Carlson et al. (2011), narcissists rated themselves higher in narcissistic traits; narcissists also rated narcissistic traits as more desirable for the self (but not necessarily for others) and indicated that their ideal self would possess more narcissistic traits. Likewise, Raskin and Terry (1988) showed that narcissists rated their ideal self as more narcissistic as well as more competitive, aggressive, autocratic, and antagonistic. Furthermore, Raskin, Novacek, and Hogan (1991) showed that narcissists', relative to non-narcissists', self-esteem seems more strongly based in prototypical narcissistic traits (e.g., dominance, grandiosity, hostility).

Evidence is also emerging that narcissists view prototypical narcissistic behaviors as goal-directed action that makes favorable impressions. Hart, Adams, and Burton (2016) addressed whether narcissists' bragging and showy displays might, in part, follow from greater endorsement of the notion that self-promotion begets positive impressions from audiences. The researchers speculated that because narcissists prize agentic traits (capability, power, persistence), they might assume (egocentrically) that these traits are prized by others and, in turn, endorse self-promotion—which entails highlighting one's

agentic traits—as a more effective means to win favor. To address this issue, participants indicated the extent to which they believed agentic traits and self-promotion make positive impressions and then reported how frequently they engage in self-promotion. A latent path model revealed that narcissists believed agentic traits are more prized by others, and this belief predicted enhanced endorsement of self-promotion (bragging and showing off) as instrumental to winning favor, which, in turn, predicted more frequent use of self-promotion behavior. A different study suggested a similar conclusion using experimental methods (Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, & Harms, 2013). In this study, participants completed a simulated job interview and were either motivated to make a favorable impression because they believed the interviewer was an expert or demotivated because they believed the interviewer was a novice. The interviews were taped and coded for instances of participants' self-promotion. Interestingly, participants' narcissism related to enhanced self-promotion when motivation to make a good impression was high (expert-interviewer condition) but related to *reduced* self-promotion when motivation was low (novice-interviewer condition). Hence, narcissists engage in self-promotion only when sufficiently motivated to make a winning impression, which suggests that they perceive their self-promotion—a key feature of narcissism—as a means to make a good impression.

Additional research suggests that narcissists perceive their provoked aggression as instrumental rather than reactive. In Adams and Hart (2016), narcissists self-reported that they desired to project an image of “toughness” in the face of provocation, and this enhanced desire mediated effects of narcissism on self-report indices of provoked aggression. Other work suggests that narcissists perceive their provoked aggression as originating from goals to assert dominance and strength over an opponent rather than as arising from anger or negative feelings (Hart, Adams, & Tortoriello, 2017; Krizan & Johar, 2015). Furthermore, Ferriday, Vartanian, and Mandel (2011) showed that narcissists' provoked aggression is only enhanced under conditions of public

provocation. Participants imagined receiving either positive or negative personal feedback in a private or public setting. After, participants imagined completing a task in which they could deliver blasts of noise to the person that provided the feedback as part of an experimental task. Results revealed that narcissism predicted enhanced aggression (louder noise blasts for longer durations) toward the feedback provider only when the feedback was negative *and* delivered in public. Presumably, because narcissists' aggression is for appearances (e.g., looking "tough" to others), they only react with aggression to public displays of disrespect.

Other research suggests that narcissists view their "impulsive/risky behavior" as an asset that is, ironically, controlled (Hart, Richardson, Tortoriello, & Tullett, 2017). Indeed, because power implies personal freedom and reduced fear of censure or risk (Korda, 1975), narcissists might assume that power can be exuded by appearing as if one is not curtailing impulses or urges (i.e., projecting the image: "I do what I want when I want because I am a boss!"). Hart, Richardson, et al. (2017) had participants complete an index of power motivation, indicate their desire to project a low-self-control image (e.g., wanting to be viewed as "unfiltered," "fearless," and "self-indulgent"), and then self-report how frequently they intentionally acted in ways that would project this low self-control image to audiences. Narcissists (vs. non-narcissists) indicated (a) an enhanced desire to project a low-self-control image and (b) more frequently intentionally acting in ways to project a low-self-control image. Moreover, narcissists' enhanced power motivation contributed to their enhanced desire to project a low-self-control image and their more frequent staging of ostensible low self-control.

From the perspective of narcissists, then, perhaps a great deal of their narcissistic behavior is a tactical, rational approach to presenting a desired image of the self. Such a possibility was addressed in a recent set of studies (Hart, Adams, Burton, & Tortoriello, 2017). In one study, participants completed the Self-Presentation Tactics Scale (SPTS; Lee, Quigley, Nesler, Corbett, &

Tedeschi, 1999), which measures tactical self-presentation behavior including (among others) self-enhancement, entitlement, intimidation, ingratiation, and "blasting" (speaking negatively about apparent rivals). Prior to completing the SPTS, participants read a description of each tactic and rated its utility for making a desired impression. Narcissism related to heightened use of tactics such as self-enhancement, entitlement, intimidation, ingratiation, and blasting and to enhanced perceptions of these tactics' utility. Hence, the bragging, the entitlement, the glib charm, and the antagonism that largely define "narcissistic" behavior are, from the perspective of the narcissist, tactical choices that support images of power, confidence, competence, influence, and toughness. Indeed, other work suggests narcissists' flouting of etiquette rules appears to be a strategy to attract attention (Adams et al., 2014), and narcissists' enhanced jealousy induction in mates is a means to demonstrate their mate value and gain power in romantic relationships (Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson, & Tullett, 2017).

Do Narcissists Identify a Silver Lining in Others' Narcissism?

If narcissists *truly* have a more favorable view of narcissistic traits and have a greater appreciation for the utility and strategy behind narcissistic behavior, then, in theory, they should show greater tolerance for others' off-putting narcissistic traits and behaviors. Hart and Adams (2014) had participants rate how much they liked off-putting narcissistic traits (arrogant, rude, aggressive) and non-narcissistic traits (gentle, cooperative, caring) in *others*. Although non-narcissistic traits were markedly preferred over narcissistic traits, narcissism related to enhanced liking of narcissistic traits and reduced liking of non-narcissistic traits. In a different study, Lamkin, Maples-Keller, and Miller (2017) showed that narcissism related to enhanced liking of antagonism and disinhibition in others, two traits symptomatic of narcissistic personalities. Wallace, Grotzinger, Howard, and Parkhill

(2015) assessed participants' impressions of individuals who made a series of narcissistic or non-narcissistic statements. Participants showed a marked preference for individuals who made non-narcissistic statements, but narcissism related to more positive impressions in the narcissistic-statement condition and more negative impressions in the non-narcissistic statement condition. But, it appears that narcissists are not more tolerant of others' "bad" behavior that is not prototypically narcissistic (Wallace, Scheiner, & Grotzinger, 2016). Hence, it is possible that narcissists are selectively tolerant of "bad" behavior that is narcissistic.

Perhaps narcissists might see others' narcissistic behaviors in a more positive light. For example, if exposed to someone boasting, narcissists might see a person acting *confidently*, whereas a non-narcissist might see a person acting *egotistically*. To test this idea, Burton et al. (2017) exposed participants to brief video clips of trained narcissistic and non-narcissistic actors. In the video clips, actors consistently responded to interview questions in ways that implied either high (the narcissistic condition) or low (the non-narcissistic condition) levels of "grandiose exhibitionism," "entitlement/exploitativeness," and leadership/authority beliefs. After watching the clips, participants completed a measure of liking for the actor and a measure of how they perceived the actor's behavior. Specifically, they completed a series of scales that offered an opportunity to describe the actor's behavior in euphemistic (e.g., confident, assertive, authentic) or negative (e.g., arrogant, aggressive, rude) terms. In the narcissistic actor condition, narcissism related to enhanced use of euphemistic terms to describe the actor's behavior and enhanced liking; in the non-narcissistic actor condition, however, narcissism related to reduced use of euphemistic terms and reduced liking. In sum, narcissists seemed more likely to perceive others' spontaneous acts of narcissism as conveying positive (vs. negative) personality qualities.

Notably, patterns consistent with this "narcissistic tolerance" also appear when analyzing narcissists' social networks. In the context of romantic relationships, some evidence suggests

narcissists pursue mates with narcissistic traits (e.g., Campbell, 1999; Keller et al., 2014; Lamkin, Campbell, vanDellen, & Miller, 2015; see also, Grosz, Dufner, Back, & Denissen, 2015). Other work has explored the characteristics which narcissists deem desirable in friendships. In Jonason and Schmitt (2012), narcissists indicated a multitude of reasons to pursue friendships, some of which implied a preference for narcissistic friends. In addition to seeking similarity in interests, narcissists appeared to seek friends who are strong, intelligent, physically attractive, and high in social status. Also, when modeled with other Dark Triad traits (Machiavellianism and psychopathy), narcissism negatively related to desiring a "kind" friend (a non-narcissistic trait).

Future Research

Future research might examine whether the findings we reviewed involving grandiose narcissism apply to vulnerable narcissism. On the one hand, similar to their grandiose counterparts, vulnerable narcissists might evaluate narcissistic traits more positively (in the self and others) and sometimes see their narcissistic actions as rational choices. Indeed, grandiose and vulnerable narcissists alike possess narcissistic reputations (Wink, 1991), consider themselves "narcissists" (Konrath et al., 2014), and strategically self-present narcissistic traits (e.g., entitlement; Hart, Adams, Burton, et al., 2017). On the other hand, unlike grandiose narcissists, vulnerable narcissists possess reduced self-esteem (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003), which suggests they might loath their social identities. Also, vulnerable narcissists do not appear to pursue narcissists as romantic partners (Lamkin et al., 2015) and do not rate traits such as antagonism or reduced inhibition more positively (Lamkin et al., 2017). Hence, it remains unclear whether vulnerable narcissists might view their (or others') narcissism as beneficial or useful as grandiose narcissists do. Given calls to integrate both grandiose and vulnerable subtypes in theorizing (e.g., Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Hart, Adams, & Tortoriello, 2017;

Krizan & Herlache, 2017; Miller et al., 2011), we believe vulnerable narcissists' perspective on narcissism warrants future research attention.

Future research might examine possible reasons why narcissists perceive narcissistic action (or narcissistic traits) as more useful and desirable. In addition to anticipating that some narcissistic actions might elicit more favorable audience reactions (Hart et al., 2016), narcissistic actions might appear more useful in light of narcissists' enhanced competitive drive. For example, given (grandiose and vulnerable) narcissists' highly competitive nature (Luchner, Houston, Walker, & Houston, 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988), prototypical narcissistic actions might be viewed as useful tactics to gain a competitive edge. Indeed, in the arena of competitive sport, boasting, antagonism, intimidation, and hypersensitivity (e.g., having "a chip on one's shoulder")—apparently key features of "narcissism"—are normative strategies to win matches (Rainey & Granito, 2010). Presumably, if narcissists felt less competitive, the apparent utility of (and engagement in) narcissistic action would decline.

To date, research has considered narcissists' beliefs regarding the utility or desirability of narcissistic qualities, but additional beliefs about narcissistic qualities remain unexamined. Insofar as narcissism is sometimes a rational choice (Hart, Adams, Burton, et al., 2017; Hart et al., 2016), narcissism could be guided by beliefs regarding the normativity of and one's ability to execute narcissistic behavior (e.g., self-promotion, intimidation; e.g., Ajzen, 1991). Perhaps, then, narcissists (vs. non-narcissists) might presume narcissism is more prevalent or normative. This seems plausible given the apparent composition of narcissists' social networks (e.g., disagreeable and narcissistic; Lamkin, Clifton, Campbell, & Miller, 2014) and that prevalence estimates are heavily influenced by one's own behavior (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). It is also possible that narcissists (vs. non-narcissists) might feel more efficacious about executing (bold) narcissistic behavior. In fact, in addition to being high in general self-efficacy (Brookes, 2015), narcissists possess affordances such as acting abilities, (superficial) charm, strong/intimidating bodies, good looks, and a well-groomed

appearance that might improve their ability to effectively self-promote, antagonize others, flirt, ingratiate, and intimidate others. In sum, there remains a need to better understand how narcissists perceive narcissism in terms of normative decision criteria (e.g., Ajzen, 1991), and such insights will help researchers develop more accurate theories of narcissism and possibly suggest practical advice to change narcissistic behaviors.

Conclusion

From an outsider's perspective, narcissists' behavior might often seem maladaptive and puzzling. After all, how could a group so bent on being admired also be inclined toward apparently dishonorable behavior? But some of this mystery starts to unravel when we consider narcissists' perspective on their narcissism. Narcissists view prototypical narcissistic traits more favorably and prototypical narcissistic actions as more useful and desirable. Indeed, although traits like humility and agreeableness are features of non-narcissism that engender positive impressions and social adjustment (Carnegie, 1936), narcissistic behaviors can, when used appropriately, be instrumental in appearing capable, powerful, resilient, confident, and adept at winning competitions (Jones & Pittman, 1982). In this light, narcissists view their narcissistic behavior as tactical, tolerable, and useful for projecting the agentic images they particularly desire.

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Narcissistic Consumption

31

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Abstract

This chapter is about conspicuous consumption and narcissists' proneness to it. We distinguish, in particular, between two kinds of consumer goods, luxury and mundane. Luxury goods are flashy, expensive, impractical, and often overfunctional (complicated to use). Mundane goods, on the other hand, are common looking, affordable, practical, and functional. Consumers may purchase luxury products for symbolic reasons, such as the satisfaction of self-motives, whereas they may purchase mundane products for utilitarian reasons, such as maximizing product profitability and product price ("best value for money"). Evidence indicates that narcissists prefer symbolic over mundane products (e.g., hair conditioners, mobile phones, MP3 players, sunglasses). We argue that they do so for at least four interrelated reasons. The *first* pertains to positive distinctiveness, such as the desire for individuation (being unique or different) and elevation (feeling privileged or of higher social rank). The *second* reason is materialism: symbolic product purchasing

indicates financial success, wealth accumulation, and power. The *third* reason is the pursuit of meaning in life: symbolic purchasing contributes to perceptions of life as significant, purposeful, and coherent. The *fourth* and final reason is sexual signaling: symbolic product purchasing tends to increase the consumer's sexual appeal. We ask whether the narcissistic consumer can be "rehabilitated" via a self-affirmation manipulation. We conclude by highlighting the need for a more in-depth examination of the four reasons for narcissistic symbolic product purchasing and also for clarifying whether the same reasons apply to other forms of narcissism, such as vulnerable narcissism.

Keywords

Consumption · Luxury · Positive distinctiveness · Materialism · Meaning · Sexual signaling

In 1899, Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" to describe the parading of luxury goods (e.g., corsets, silver spoons) as markers of social rank or status. Luxury goods, also known as brand names, are far more available and accessible today. But not all mortals have a craving for them. The ones who do may qualify as narcissists.

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We begin in this chapter by classifying consumer goods as luxury versus mundane. We then discuss initial evidence showing that narcissists prefer luxury over mundane products and theorize about the reasons for doing so. Subsequently, we review empirical evidence linking reasons for narcissistic consumer preferences and conclude with a consideration of promising research paths.

Consumer Goods: Luxury Versus Mundane

Consumer goods vary on several dimensions, one of which is of particular relevance. On the low end of this dimension, products are affordable (inexpensive), practical (easy to use), functional (deliver just what they are supposed to deliver), and common looking (plain or prototypical). We term such products *mundane*. On the high end of the dimension, products are unaffordable (expensive), impractical (complicated to apply), over-functional (deliver their key use but include many others uses), and uncommon looking (glamorous or flashy). We term such products *luxury*.

Consumers may purchase mundane products for utilitarian reasons, exemplified with the catchphrase “best value for money.” Here, consumers engage in cost-benefit analysis, arriving at a rational choice that maximizes product profitability and product price (Deaton & Muellbauer, 1980; Zinkhan, 1992). They purchase mundane products in an effort to cope optimally with the pressures of daily life. In contrast, consumers may purchase luxury products for symbolic reasons. William James (1890) was the first to observe that products or, more generally, material possessions can define, and indeed become an extension of, the self: “A man’s Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, . . . his lands, and yacht and bank-account” (p. 291). Sartre (1943/1958) similarly remarked that, “The totality of my possessions reflects the totality of my being. I am what I have” (p. 591). Theory and research have been kind to James’

and Sartre’s insights. For example, products or possessions are often internalized to be part of one’s self-definition (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 2011) and are often used to express one’s self attributes (Dunning, 2007; Kressman et al., 2006). In all, luxury products serve self-motives, and this is where narcissism comes into play (Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007).

Do Narcissists Prefer Luxury Products over Mundane Products?

In preliminary work, we attempted to establish “proof of concept,” namely, that narcissists (grandiose narcissists, to be exact) prefer luxury over mundane products (Sedikides, Cisek, & Hart, 2011; see also Cisek et al., 2014). After responding to the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), participants completed a booklet presenting them with examples (both pictorial and descriptive) of four types of products: hair conditioners, mobile phones, MP3 players, and sunglasses. One example reflected a luxury version, the other a mundane version. Participants viewed the photographs, read the descriptions, and chose the product they intended to buy. We computed a cumulative luxury product score by summing the number of relevant choices that participants made (range = 0–4) and entered that score in a regression analysis. Narcissism positively predicted the number of luxury products chosen for purchase. Narcissists seem to prefer luxury (over mundane) goods.

This proof of concept is reinforced by converging evidence. For example, narcissists tend to wear expensive and stylish clothes, with female narcissists being more likely to wear makeup, have plucked eyebrows, and show cleavage and male narcissists being unlikely to wear glasses (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). Narcissists, then, “take better care of themselves” (Holtzman & Strube, 2010, p. 136), and, as a consequence, they are seen as more attractive by others (Holtzman & Strube, 2010).

Why Would Narcissists Prefer Luxury Products?

We emphasize four key reasons why narcissists prefer luxury over mundane products: positive distinctiveness, materialism, meaning, and sexual signaling. We also review evidence for each reason.

Positive Distinctiveness

Positive distinctiveness refers to the intertwined motives of individuation (conveying that one is unique or different; Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) and elevation (conveying that one's social rank is higher or privileged; Frank, 1985; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008). These motives are observable across individuals. For starters, scarce goods are alluring (Brock, 1968; Inman, Peter, & Raghurir, 1997).

Individuation has been shown to be a driving force of narcissistic consumer preferences, as illustrated by Lee, Gregg, and Park (2013; see also Lee & Seidle, 2012). Narcissists were particularly likely to purchase products that were unconventional and would help them look different from others or personalize them (Study 1). Also, narcissists, when deciding between free accessories, were more likely to choose a luxury product (i.e., leather case) over a gift coupon, given that the leather case was of limited edition and could be engraved with their name (Study 2). In addition, narcissists were especially likely to express preferences for a customized and distinct shirt to purchase it and to pay more for it (Study 3). Finally, narcissists were particularly eager to like a watch and purchase it by paying a higher price for it, when it was described as limited edition rather than as abundantly available (Study 4). More recently, De Bellis, Sprott, Herrmann, Bierhoff, and Rohmann (2016) also demonstrated that narcissists prefer more unique products and, further, that state narcissism can be primed via marketing communications to influence product uniqueness.

Elevation has also been shown to be a driving force of narcissistic consumer preferences;

Naderi and Paswan (2016) manipulated contextual features of the shopping environment (i.e., high or low product prices, prestigious or non-prestigious retail store) and examined resulting purchase intentions. Narcissists manifested stronger purchase intentions than non-narcissists when a high-priced product was sold at a prestigious retail store. Narcissists were presumably attracted by the status signals of product price and store image combined.

Materialism

Narcissists appear to desire material possessions (Cohen & Cohen, 1996), aspire to financial success (Roberts & Robins, 2000), and prioritize the acquisition of wealth (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). They are also prone to compulsive buying (Rose, 2007). Narcissists, then, are materialistic. There is some evidence that materialistic persons tend to purchase luxury products, for appearance and status reasons (Kressman et al., 2006; Richins, 1994). We (Hart, Cisek, & Sedikides, 2017) hypothesized that, if narcissists are materialistic, they will also manifest stronger preferences for luxury than mundane products. The data were consistent with this hypothesis. Across three studies, we showed that materialism mediated the relation between grandiose narcissism and preference for luxury items. That is, narcissism (assessed with the NPI) positively predicted materialism (assessed with the Material Values Scale; Richins & Dawson, 1992), which in turn positively predicted a preference for luxury over mundane products.

We describe this research in more detail. In Study 1, participants (university students) completed a consumer decision task. Specifically, they were presented with pictorial and descriptive information for seven pairs of products (one luxury, one mundane): mobile phone, sunglasses, hair conditioner, MP3 player, coffee machine, desk lamp, and laptop. For each pair, participants viewed the photographs, read the descriptions, and chose the product that they intended to buy. We computed a cumulative luxury product score by summing the number of luxury choices that

participants made (range = 0–7). Narcissism, via materialism, positively predicted the number of luxury products chosen for purchase. In Study 2, we tested the replicability of these findings using a large and diverse online sample. Participants completed a consumer decision task similar to Study 1. The task featured ten pairs of product choices: bike, watch, toaster, suitcase, sound system, coffee machine, exercise equipment, satellite navigation system, mobile phone, and MP4 player. Participants were also offered the opportunity to request additional information (pictorial and descriptive) about the luxury and mundane products before choosing which product they intended to buy. Again, narcissism positively predicted the number of luxury products chosen for purchase, and it did so via materialism. In Study 3, another online study, participants reported and rated products that they already owned. Higher narcissism predicted owning more luxury (e.g., fashionable) products, purchasing new products even when the old ones worked well, and characterizing the accessories they own as luxury rather than mundane. All these effects were mediated by materialism. Similar findings were reported in a recent investigation by Pilch and Górnik-Durose (2017). Narcissism positively predicted materialism, which in turn positively predicted preferences for luxury products (i.e., how important it is to possess the newest or most well-known type of products).

Meaning

Meaning in life is the sense that one's existence is significant (i.e., has value), purposeful (i.e., has goals), and coherent (i.e., has predictability) (King, Heintzelman, & Ward, 2016). The pursuit of meaning is a central human concern (Frankl, 2006; Sartre, 1943/1958). Meaning can be derived from many domains, such as personal growth (O'Connor & Chamberlain, 2000), interpersonal relationships (Lambert et al., 2013), and investment in one's culture (Routledge et al., 2010). More generally, there is consensus that

meaning is derived from pursuing intrinsic goals rather than extrinsic goals (Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007); in fact, the pursuit of extrinsic goals is thought to undercut meaning (Kashdan & Breen, 2007; Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009). Intrinsic goals are internally motivated and satiate psychological needs such as belongingness (e.g., maintaining relationships, contributing to one's group or community). Extrinsic goals, on the other hand, are externally motivated and satiate self-serving needs such as positive evaluations or rewards (e.g., fame, money, luxury goods).

As we mentioned above, narcissism is positively linked to desire for material possessions, aspirations of financial success, and prioritization of extrinsic pursuits (Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Roberts & Robins, 2000). By contrast, narcissism is negatively linked to desire for intrinsic pursuits, such as fostering interpersonal bonds or helping others; in a similar vein, narcissists engage in activities likely to confer admiration and approval rather than personal mastery (Baumeister & Wallace, 2012; Morf, Weir, & Davidov, 2000). Narcissists, then, are likely to derive meaning from extrinsic pursuits (Sedikides, Hart, Cisek, & Routledge, 2013).

This hypothesis was put to the test by Abeyta, Routledge, and Sedikides (2017). In Study 1, narcissism was positively related to meaning ascribed to the pursuit of extrinsic goals, but not to meaning ascribed to the pursuit of intrinsic goals. Study 2 involved an experimental manipulation. After assessing narcissism (with the NPI), first-year undergraduate students viewed information that emphasized either the extrinsic (financial) benefits of university education or the intrinsic (personal fulfillment) benefits of university education and then reported the presence of meaning in their lives. Narcissism was positively associated with meaning when the extrinsic (but not intrinsic) value of university education was rendered salient. More important, emphasizing the extrinsic (vs. intrinsic) value of university education increased meaning among high (relative to low) narcissists.

Sexual Signaling

According to the social signaling explanation, conspicuous consumption serves as a sexual signaling system (Lycett & Dunbar, 2000; Sundie et al., 2011). For example, men are more likely to use conspicuous consumption when they adopt a short-term rather than a long-term mating strategy. Just as the peacock uses his long, extravagant, and beautiful tail to entice his peahen (Darwin, 1872), males may use their possessions to display their economic resources and desirability as a mating partner.

Sundie et al. (2011) demonstrated that women perceive men who conspicuously consume as being interested in short-term rather than in long-term mating. Furthermore, conspicuous purchasing enhanced men's desirability as a short-term mate, but not as a long-term mate. We would link these findings to narcissism. Narcissists manifest restricted socio-sexuality, that is, they engage in more casual sex and have more sexual partners (Foster, Shriram, & Campbell, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2017). Also, they boast romantic success in short-term contexts (e.g., attracting potential sexual partners or dating; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Wurst et al., 2017) but suffer romantic setbacks in long-term contexts (Wurst et al., 2017). Although narcissists find it easy to start relationships (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992), they are less committed to current partners and are less interested in staying with them (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Wurst et al., 2017). In all, a further reason why narcissists indicate such strong preferences for luxury over mundane goods may be their proclivity to use luxury goods in order to improve their short-term mating appeal.

Lingering Issues

In reviewing positive distinctiveness, materialism, meaning, and sexual signaling as explanations for narcissistic consumption, we assumed that preferences for luxury products serve to bolster an already inflated narcissistic self. This is so for grandiose narcissists. Recently, however, the construct of grandiose narcissism has been bro-

ken down into two facets: admiration and rivalry (Back et al., 2013). Narcissistic admiration maintains or elevates the narcissistic self via agentic self-enhancement, whereas narcissistic rivalry maintains or elevates the narcissistic self via antagonistic self-protection. It is likely that preference for luxury (over mundane) products will be stronger among persons high on narcissistic admiration than high on narcissistic rivalry.

Another form of narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, is also relevant. Vulnerable narcissism is marked not only by self-absorption and entitlement (as is grandiose narcissism) but also by hypersensitivity to criticism, shame, emotional reactivity, and distrust (Miller et al., 2011). Vulnerable narcissists may also be driven to conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1934) but for a different reason than grandiose narcissism. In particular, conspicuous consumption may compensate for vulnerable narcissists' presumed inner fragility. Indirect evidence for this proposition was reported by Pilch and Górnik-Durose (2017; see also Hart et al., 2017, Study 3), who found that vulnerable narcissism predicted preferences for luxury products, and these preferences were mediated by materialism. More direct evidence indeed points to a positive link between inner fragility (i.e., self-doubt, inadequacy, insecurity) and materialism. For example, insecurity, either reported in one's dreams (Kasser & Kasser, 2001) or as an outcome of death cognition activation (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000), is related to materialism. Also, self-doubt predicts materialism, and manipulation of self-doubt (through memorization of such words as "doubtful," "uncertain," and "insecure") leads to higher level of materialism compared to a control condition (memorization of such words as "inside," "unicorn," and "double") (Chang & Arkin, 2002). Finally, persons expressing inadequacy in a given domain (e.g., tennis) are especially likely to own materialistic displays (e.g., brand-name clothing) that underpin the domain-relevant identity (i.e., tennis players; Braun & Wicklund, 1989). In all, inner fragility is positively associated with, and evokes, materialism, while materialistic displays can restore self-worth among persons high on inner fragility. In fact, it is possible that materialistic

value acts as a buffer against not only psychological pain but also physical pain (Cisek, Hart, & Sedikides, 2008).

As we discussed, narcissism is related to materialism (and, through it, to conspicuous consumption). Materialism is negatively associated with subjective well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Nevertheless, grandiose narcissism is positively linked to subjective well-being (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). A reason for this link might have to do with grandiose narcissists deriving meaning from extrinsic pursuits (including the purchase of luxury good), as meaning is a key predictor of psychological well-being (Reker, Peacock, & Wong, 1987; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). This is a possibility worth testing.

Can narcissistic conspicuous consumption be rehabilitated? Feeling threatened (via an experimental manipulation) increases willingness to pay for unique, rare, and scarce products (i.e., photographs, computers, pens; Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv, 2009, Studies 1–2; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010, Study 1), while lower self-esteem among lower-income participants mediates willingness to pay for a high-end car (Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010, Study 3). However, preferences for luxury products are eliminated or reduced following affirmation of one's important values or thinking about ownership of a high-status good (Gao et al., 2009, Study 3; Sivanathan & Pettit, 2010, Studies 2 and 4). It is worth exploring, then, whether self-affirmation is likely to attenuate narcissists' preferences for luxury goods over mundane goods.

In Conclusion

Narcissists are unlikely to opt for the ordinary and pedestrian. They will seek the exclusive, flashy, and scarce. The preference of grandiose narcissists for luxury (over mundane) products is due to at least four reasons: positive distinctiveness, materialism, meaning, and sexual signaling. Future research will do well to localize these reasons in different facets of grandiose narcissism, such as admiration versus rivalry. The preference

of vulnerable narcissists for luxury products is due to at least one reason: inner fragility. Future research will need to document this reason using more rigorous designs.

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The Narcissistic Pursuit of Status

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Abstract

This chapter considers the factors that motivate narcissistic individuals to pursue external validation. Narcissistic individuals pursue external validation through various strategies (e.g., appearance enhancement, social media use), but we focus primarily on the desire for status because we believe it may be especially helpful for understanding the intrapsychic processes and interpersonal behaviors that characterize narcissistic individuals. We argue that the narcissistic concern for status may help us understand why the self-presentational goals of narcissistic individuals often focus on issues surrounding self-promotion or intimidation rather than affiliation. The lack of concern that narcissistic individuals have for affiliation suggests that their self-promotional efforts are not regulated by typical concerns about also being liked which may shed light on the reasons they engage in interpersonal behaviors that others tend to find irritating and aversive (e.g., being selfish or arrogant). We conclude by suggesting that the desire for

status may be a fundamental aspect of narcissism that has the potential to provide additional insights into the cognitive processes and interpersonal behaviors that characterize narcissistic individuals rather than simply being one of the ways in which narcissistic individuals go about regulating their feelings of self-worth.

Keywords

Status · Affiliation · Communion · Agency · Dominance-prestige model · Dominance · Prestige

Grandiose narcissism refers to a set of personality traits and processes that are centered around an extremely positive – yet potentially fragile – self-concept (see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, for a review). The fragile nature of this grandiose self-concept is thought to lead individuals with narcissistic tendencies to pursue external validation in order to maintain their inflated self-perceptions (see Wallace, 2011, for a competing view of narcissistic self-enhancement). The external validation pursued by narcissistic individuals often takes the form of seeking the attention of others and attempting to improve their positions within their social groups. For example, narcissistic individuals try to capture the attention of others through a wide variety of strategies that include

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enhancing their appearance (e.g., Holtzman & Strube, 2010; Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008), pursuing fame (e.g., Southard & Zeigler-Hill, 2016; Young & Pinsky, 2006), and strategically using social media (e.g., Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Further, narcissistic individuals attempt to elevate their positions within their social environments through strategies such as bragging (Buss & Chiodo, 1991), displaying wealth and material goods (Piff, 2014; Sedikides, Gregg, Cisek, & Hart, 2007), affiliating with high-status individuals (Campbell, 1999), and pursuing leadership positions (Brunell et al., 2008; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015). The purpose of the present chapter is to consider the factors that motivate narcissistic individuals to pursue external validation. We will focus primarily on the desire for status because we believe that this may be especially helpful for understanding the intrapsychic processes and interpersonal behaviors that characterize narcissistic individuals.

Status and Affiliation

The connections between personality processes and social behaviors have attracted a great deal of theoretical and empirical attention (e.g., Carson, 1969; Leary, 1957; Sullivan, 1953). Two basic dimensions have consistently emerged from research concerning social behavior such that the first dimension captures issues pertaining to *status* (i.e., the tendency to display power, mastery, and self-assertion rather than weakness, failure, and submission) and the second dimension captures *affiliation* (i.e., the tendency to engage in behaviors connected with intimacy, union, and solidarity rather than remoteness, hostility, and separation; Wiggins & Pincus, 1992). Status refers to a vertical or hierarchical form of social organization such that individuals with higher levels of status are able to influence the thoughts and behaviors of other individuals who possess lower levels of status (e.g., Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015; Blau, 1964). In contrast, affiliation captures a horizontal or nonhierarchical aspect of social organization that reflects the

degree to which individuals are accepted and liked by others (e.g., Leary, Jongman-Sereno, & Diebels, 2014).

The basic idea that status and affiliation play vital roles in social behavior has been acknowledged by various theories across numerous disciplines (see Hogan & Blickle, *in press*, for a review). For example, the interpersonal circumplex (e.g., Leary, 1957; Wiggins, 1979) provides a comprehensive model of social behavior using the orthogonal axes of *agency* (status) and *communio* (affiliation). Adler (1939) referred to *superiority striving* (status) and *social interest* (affiliation). Hogan's (1982) socioanalytic theory introduced the ideas of *getting ahead* (status) and *getting along* (affiliation). Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2008) proposed that social perceptions largely depend on *competence* (status) and *warmth* (affiliation). Wojciszke, Abele, and Barylka (2009) suggested that interpersonal attitudes largely consist of *respect* (status) and *liking* (affiliation). In evolutionary psychology, Buss (2015) has argued for the importance of *navigating status hierarchies* (status) as well as *forming coalitions and alliances* (affiliation). In anthropology, Redfield (1960) observed that social groups depend on members *getting a living* (status) and *living together* (affiliation). In sociology, Parsons and Bales (1955) argued that human groups depend on the completion of tasks related to *group survival* (status) and *socio-emotional tasks* (affiliation). McAdams (1988) found that the stories people develop about their own identities center around two basic themes that he referred to as *power* (status) and *intimacy* (affiliation). Foa and Foa (1980) developed social exchange theory, which argues that the exchange of *status* (status) and *love* (affiliation) is at the core of all social interactions. Taken together, these various theoretical approaches suggest that issues pertaining to status and affiliation play central roles in guiding human social behavior.

Although status and affiliation appear to be fundamental social motives (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; Baumeister & Leary, 1995), individuals may still differ in the degree to which they emphasize the pursuit of status and affiliation in their own lives (e.g., Neel, Kenrick, White, &

Neuberg, 2016). For example, some individuals may be more concerned with status than they are with affiliation. Although status and affiliation are often correlated such that individuals with higher levels of status are often liked by others (Anderson et al., 2015), this is not always the case (e.g., an individual can be liked but have low status within a group). In fact, there is sometimes a trade-off between status and affiliation such that it may be difficult for an individual to completely satisfy both of these motivations simultaneously (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2008; Hogan & Blicke, *in press*). For example, a business owner who behaves in a highly professional manner when interacting with his/her employees may be respected and admired by his/her employees (high status), but she may not be especially liked by them (low affiliation). In contrast, a new employee who desperately tries to befriend his co-workers may be well liked by them (high affiliation), but he/she may fail to earn their respect (low status). Individuals with narcissistic personality features tend to resolve the potential trade-off between status and affiliation by focusing their efforts on the attainment of status and demonstrating relatively little concern about affiliation (e.g., Campbell, 1999; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Raskin & Novacek, 1991; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991a, 1991b). To put it another way, narcissistic individuals tend to care a great deal about climbing the status hierarchy, but they are not terribly concerned about whether people like them.

The Desire for Status

Status hierarchies are pervasive across human social groups due, at least in part, to the benefits these hierarchies provide for both individuals and the larger social groups to which they belong (see Anderson et al., 2015, for a review). For example, hierarchical social structures are relatively easy for individuals to understand (Zitek & Tiedens, 2012), and groups tend to perform better on tasks requiring cooperation when they have a hierarchical structure (Halevy, Chou, Galinsky, & Murnighan, 2012). However, it is important to

recognize that status hierarchies do not benefit everyone equally. Rather, this sort of vertical social structure tends to provide far more advantages for individuals near the top of the hierarchy than it does for individuals closer to the bottom (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As a result, it seems likely that individuals with high levels of status would have experienced considerable survival and reproductive benefits throughout the course of human evolution (e.g., greater access to scarce resources, heightened attractiveness as a potential mate; Barkow, 1975; Buss, 2008; Ellis, 1995; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; see Anderson et al., 2015, for a review).

The concern that narcissistic individuals display regarding their status may explain why their self-presentational goals often focus on self-promotion (being perceived as competent) or intimidation (being perceived as a potential threat) rather than ingratiation (being perceived as likeable; Leary, Bednarski, Hammon, & Duncan, 1997). This lack of concern for affiliation means that the self-promotional efforts of narcissistic individuals are not held in check by typical concerns about also being liked which may help explain why they engage in various behaviors that others tend to find irritating and aversive (e.g., being selfish or arrogant; Leary et al., 2014; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Further, this indifference to affiliation may also contribute to narcissistic individuals having difficulty maintaining positive relationships with others despite their initial charm and attractiveness as interaction partners (e.g., Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Paulhus, 1998). The fact that narcissistic individuals enter social situations with the goal of gaining status rather than being liked may help us understand many of their self-defeating interpersonal behaviors. That is, the interpersonal strategies that narcissistic individuals employ (e.g., frequent self-promotion) are intended to elicit the respect and admiration of others, but these strategies are often unsuccessful because they tend to unintentionally alienate and frustrate those individuals who could actually grant them status (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This cycle of paradoxical and counterproductive interpersonal behaviors results in narcissistic individuals having a great deal of

difficulty achieving and maintaining the level of status they crave so desperately.

The strong desire for status that characterizes narcissistic individuals can be observed through various aspects of their behavior including their self-reported desires (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2017), responses to projective tests (Carroll, 1987), fantasies (Raskin & Novacek, 1991), and descriptions of sexual behavior (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006). This desire for status is so intense that it seems to shape much of their social lives. For example, narcissistic individuals are far more likely than other individuals to engage in the self-serving bias (e.g., take credit for success and blame others for failure) even when they are working with close others (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). The desire for status also has implications for the romantic lives of narcissistic individuals by leading them to select partners who are likely to enhance their status (Campbell, 1999) and employ a game-playing romantic style (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). Taken together, these results suggest that narcissistic individuals try to use their relationships to elevate their own social position rather than being concerned about developing truly intimate connections with other people.

In addition to showing a strong desire to elevate their own positions within their social groups, narcissistic individuals tend to show support for hierarchical structures in general (Zitek & Jordan, 2016). This support for hierarchical structures is consistent with the observation that individuals who are near the top of the hierarchy – or who believe they will soon be near the top of the hierarchy – are more likely to favor hierarchical structures (Lee, Pratto, & Johnson, 2011). Even if narcissistic individuals are not currently near the top of status hierarchy, their overly positive self-views may lead them to believe that they will soon ascend the status hierarchy. For example, narcissistic individuals believe they are more intelligent and attractive than others (Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994), inflate their self-ratings of their own performance (John & Robins, 1994), tend to be overconfident (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004), make overly

optimistic predictions for their future performance (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998), and believe they are unique and special (Emmons, 1984). The overly positive self-views that are held by narcissistic individuals tend to be focused on agentic qualities and domains that are relevant to the acquisition of status (e.g., Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002). Zitek and Jordan (2016) provide a compelling argument that narcissistic individuals may show such strong support for hierarchical structures for the simple reason that they think doing so will be beneficial for them (i.e., they are either already toward the top of the hierarchy or believe they will be at some point in the future).

The Pursuit of Status

Despite the fact that hierarchical structures are ubiquitous in human social groups, we have a relatively limited understanding of these systems. For example, there is still a great deal of debate concerning how individuals go about the task of navigating social hierarchies. There are two competing perspectives regarding the strategies that individuals employ to pursue status (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kindstone, & Henrich, 2013). One perspective argues that *conflict* is instrumental to the navigation of social hierarchies with individuals utilizing coercive tactics (e.g., intimidation, aggression) and manipulation in order to improve their status and gain influence over others (Buss & Duntley, 2006; Griskevicius et al., 2009; Mazur, 1973). The second perspective focuses on issues surrounding *competence* and argues that individuals who have instrumental value (e.g., possess useful skills, characteristics, abilities, or knowledge) will be granted status by others (Anderson et al., 2015; Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Blau, 1964; Fiske, 2010; Goldhamer & Shils, 1939; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Henrich and his colleagues (e.g., Cheng et al., 2013; Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001) developed the dominance-prestige model in an attempt to integrate the conflict-based and

competence-based perspectives concerning status. This model suggests that both perspectives capture strategies that individuals may use for navigating status hierarchies. That is, according to the dominance-prestige model, there are two distinct pathways for gaining status in social groups: *dominance-based* strategies and *prestige-based* strategies. Dominance-based strategies are conflict-oriented because they involve the use of intimidation, coercion, aggression, and the induction of fear to influence status. In contrast, prestige-based strategies are competence-oriented because they involve individuals being granted status following demonstrations of their desirable skills and proficiencies (i.e., displaying their instrumental value). This model argues that humans have relied on dominance-based strategies throughout most of our evolutionary history but that we have more recently come to also value prestige-based strategies (see Henrich & Gil-White, 2001, for an extended discussion).

Grandiose narcissism has been shown to be linked with dominance-based and prestige-based strategies for attaining status. For example, Zeigler-Hill et al. (2017) found that both narcissistic admiration (assertive self-enhancement and self-promotion) and narcissistic rivalry (antagonistic self-protection and self-defense) from the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept model (Back et al., 2013) were positively associated with the use of dominance-based strategies for gaining status. However, these two facets of grandiose narcissism had opposing associations with prestige-based strategies such that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with this approach to attaining status, whereas narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with this approach. Additional research is necessary to gain a clearer and more nuanced understanding of the connections that different conceptualizations of narcissism have with these strategies for pursuing status. For example, are there additional moderators that play a role in whether narcissistic individuals decide to employ dominance-based strategies in their pursuit of status (e.g., being physically larger or stronger than potential rivals, already having greater control over valuable resources)? In addition, it would be helpful

to develop a better understanding of the consequences that narcissistic individuals experience when they are successful – or unsuccessful – in their attempts to attain status. For example, Zeigler-Hill et al. (2017) found that the state self-esteem of individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration is particularly responsive to their perceived level of status such that they report especially high levels of state self-esteem on days when they perceive others as respecting and admiring them. This pattern is consistent with recent work suggesting that one function of self-esteem may be to serve as a *hierometer* by tracking current levels of status (Mahadevan, Gregg, Sedikides, & De Waal-Andrews, 2016).

Conclusion

In summary, narcissistic individuals have an especially strong desire for status, demonstrate support for the existence of status hierarchies, view themselves as having status or believe that they will have status in the future, and are willing to engage in various strategies to attain status. Despite this desire for status, narcissism has complex associations with the attainment of status because some narcissistic qualities promote status attainment (e.g., self-confidence), whereas other narcissistic qualities hinder – or even completely undermine – the attainment of status (e.g., selfishness, the tendency to be increasingly disliked by others over time). This has led to a view of narcissism as being something akin to a “mixed blessing” in terms of status attainment (e.g., Anderson & Cowan, 2014; Cheng et al., 2010; Paulhus, 1998; Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006).

Although recent research has shown that narcissistic individuals are willing to employ a variety of strategies to pursue status (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2017), it would be helpful for future studies to examine the conditions under which narcissistic individuals prefer to employ specific strategies. For example, it is possible that narcissistic individuals show a general preference for utilizing prestige-based strategies and are only likely to resort to dominance-based strategies when

they are unsuccessful in their efforts to gain prestige. However, it is also possible that narcissistic individuals actually enjoy exerting their power over others by using dominance-based strategies. In addition, future research concerning the interplay between narcissism, status, and self-esteem may help resolve the inconsistent results that have emerged concerning the fragile nature of narcissistic self-esteem (e.g., Bosson et al., 2008; see Southard, Vrabel, McCabe, & Zeigler-Hill, this volume, for a review). This direction for future research is potentially important because Leary et al. (2014) argue that status provides a less consistent sense of value across situations than is the case for affiliation. This suggests the intriguing possibility that the tendency for narcissistic individuals to care more about gaining respect and admiration than being liked by others may contribute to their constant need for external validation and heightened reactivity to negative events. That is, narcissistic individuals appear to pursue status in order to affirm their value, but their extreme focus on status may paradoxically create an escalating pattern in which their increasingly desperate pursuit of status makes it even more difficult for them to feel a lasting sense of being valuable. We believe the desire for status may be a fundamental aspect of narcissism that has the potential to shed light on some of the intrapsychic processes and interpersonal behaviors that characterize narcissistic individuals rather than simply being one of the ways in which narcissistic individuals go about regulating their feelings of self-worth.

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Part V

Interpersonal Processes and Narcissism



Early Impressions of Grandiose Narcissists: A Dual-Pathway Perspective

33

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Abstract

Getting-to-know situations are complex social contexts both for narcissists (who love to present themselves but are not inherently interested in others) and their social partners (who are fascinated but also turned off by narcissists). In this chapter, we give an empirical and conceptual overview on the early impressions grandiose narcissists make. We first summarize the existing empirical findings on the association between narcissism and personality impressions as well as liking at zero- and short-term acquaintance. This research indicates that narcissists tend to impress others despite the fact that others are able to accurately detect their narcissistic characteristics. We then present a dual-pathway framework that organizes these findings and specifies the moderating conditions of more or less positive first impressions of narcissists. The agentic pathway includes the tendency to behave dominant and expressive, which leads to being seen as assertive, which is evaluated positively and, thus, fosters popularity. The antagonistic pathway includes arrogant and combative behavior, which leads to being seen as aggressive, which is evaluated negatively and, thus, fosters unpopularity. Depending on which of

the two pathways is triggered more in a given situation, at a given acquaintance level, and by a given facet of narcissism, a more or less positive/negative association between narcissism and popularity can result. Initial empirical investigations of unfolding laboratory group interactions underline the validity and utility of the dual-pathway perspective. We close with a number of suggestions for future research that applies the dual-pathway perspective across samples, contexts, and designs.

Keywords

Narcissism · Interpersonal perceptions · Zero acquaintance · Dual pathway · Personality processes

In Ovid's poetry from more than 2000 years ago, Narcissus is described as someone who attracts attention and is desired as a social partner ("Legions of lusty men and beves of girls desired him." *Metamorphoses*, Book III, Narcissus and Echo). In many writings about narcissism, narcissists are described as "charming and socially facile" (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, p. 177) or as "enjoyable to work with initially" (Young & Pinsky, 2006, p. 470). Indeed, getting-to-know situations are made for narcissists. These situations offer an opportunity to self-present and impress others, satisfying narcissists' motivation for admiration and

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glory rather than mutual liking (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Hart, Adams, & Burton, 2016; Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Getting-to-know contexts are also a complex playing field for narcissists, because they are not inherently interested in others and tend to react more sensitive to (imagined) signs of critique (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Geukes et al., 2017; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). So what exactly do early impressions of narcissists look like in reality (i.e., in empirical research)? And how do they emerge? Are they consistent across different social contexts? And how lasting are they? In the following, we first summarize the variety of existing empirical findings on the association between narcissism and personality impressions as well as liking at zero- and short-term acquaintance. We then present a dual-pathway framework that organizes these findings and specifies the moderating conditions of more or less positive first impressions of narcissists. We close with a number of suggestions for future research that build on our dual-pathway perspective.

Previous Findings: A Mixed Blessing

A first line of research has analyzed the personality impressions narcissists make (see Carlson, Naumann, & Vazire, 2011 for an overview). These studies showed that first impressions of narcissists across a wide range of contexts including email addresses (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2008), Facebook pages (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008), photographs (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008), or direct interactions (Back et al., 2013; Carlson, Naumann, et al. 2011; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Paulhus, 1998) capture key defining features of narcissism. In some studies, results indicated more extraverted, agentic impression outcomes (e.g. being perceived as entertaining, assertive, sociable, self-confident), while other studies found more disagreeable, antagonistic impression outcomes (e.g., being perceived as aggressive, untrustworthy, arrogant, hostile), and still others showed that narcissists evoked both kinds of nar-

cissistic impressions (Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2013). Consequently, when unacquainted perceivers are directly asked about target's narcissism, these narcissism judgments tend to be somewhat accurate (Back et al., 2013; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Vazire et al., 2008).

A second line of research investigated how positively versus negatively narcissists are evaluated during early social encounters, that is, narcissists' popularity at zero- and short-term acquaintance. In accordance, with Ovid's description of Narcissus' charm, a number of studies indicated that narcissism is positively related to initial judgments of likability (i.e., a higher popularity). In one early study, Paulhus (1998) investigated meetings of college work groups from early acquaintance onward for 7 consecutive weeks. While narcissism was related to being disliked at the end of the study, it was related to being liked initially after the first meeting. Also, students with higher levels of narcissism were evaluated as more open, competent, and well-adjusted by their peers. Back, Schmukle, and Egloff (2010) analyzed the effect of student's narcissism on their popularity at zero acquaintance—when they first met their fellow students and before any direct interaction had taken place. At the start of an introductory session for psychology freshmen, students introduced themselves individually in front of the whole cohort of fellow students for a couple of seconds and were immediately evaluated by all others. Again, narcissism was positively related to being liked. To understand the processes explaining the initial popularity of narcissists, a Brunswikian lens model framework (Back & Nestler, 2016; Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2011; Nestler & Back, 2013) was applied. This framework specifies the directly observable cues (such as physical appearance and behavior) that mediate the association between targets' not directly observable latent traits (such as narcissism) and impressions evoked in observers of targets (such as liking judgments). In line with this framework, narcissist's initial popularity could be explained by individual differences in specific appearances and behaviors: narcissists were liked more, *because* they dressed fancier (e.g., fashionable

dress, stylish hair) and showed a charming facial expression (i.e. looked more self-assured and friendly) and self-assured body movements (e.g., straight posture, smooth movements)—all of which led to positive liking judgments. Positive associations between narcissism and being liked were also found in other self-presentational and dyadic small-talk contexts (Carlson, Vazire, et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2011; see Kүfner et al., 2013, for an overview).

Interestingly, narcissism has been shown to lead to similar positive early impressions in the domains of romantic relationships (see Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006, and Wurst et al., 2017 for overviews) and leadership (see Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011, and Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015, for overviews). Despite the fact that narcissism evokes problems in long-term committed relationships such as lower emotional intimacy, love, and trust and higher conflict frequency and intensity, it is related to romantic success in short-term contexts such as physical and sexual attraction, mate appeal, and dating. Similarly, despite having mixed effects on leadership effectiveness (articulation of change-oriented goals and the facilitation of work group creativity but also risky, exploitative, and unethical behaviors), narcissism is related to leadership emergence (i.e., narcissists are more likely to be chosen as leaders).

There are, however, also a couple of studies that revealed no or even negative effects of narcissism on initial evaluations, such as in ambiguous decision-making tasks (Rauthmann, 2012), get-to-know-you conversations in small groups (Carlson, Naumann, et al., 2011), and intimacy-creating dyadic conversations after ego threat (Heatherton & Vohs, 2000) (see Kүfner et al., 2013, for an overview). Thus, initial impressions of narcissists not only contain positive aspects pointing to a certain charm and self-assuredness but also negative aspects such as arrogance and lack of trust. How to make sense of these mixed findings regarding early personality and liking impressions of narcissists? What explains the curious course of impression formation from very first to subsequent and later impressions narcissist make?

Making Sense of the Impressions Narcissists Make: A Dual-Pathway Model

In order to resolve these seemingly opposite effects, we propose a dual-pathway account that describes two behavioral process pathways mediating the effects of narcissism on resulting impressions. This model has proven useful in sorting existing findings and to derive novel predictions regarding the factors that moderate the narcissism-impression links (see Kүfner et al., 2013, and Leckelt, Kүfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015, for details).

Two Behavioral Pathways to Popularity: Distinct Behavioral Expression, Impression Formation, and Evaluation Processes

Personality traits like narcissism are not directly observable and, therefore, cannot have a direct effect on impressions that are evoked in social partners (Back, Baumert et al., 2011). Instead, for traits to have an influence on judgments in others, they need to be expressed in observable behaviors. These behaviors have to be detected and utilized to form an impression (Back & Nestler, 2016; Back et al., 2011; Funder, 1999; Nestler & Back, 2013). In the case of judgments of likeability, this also involves an evaluation process (Leckelt et al., 2015). That is, for narcissists to be (dis)liked, a sequential behavioral pathway consisting of behavioral expression, impression formation, and evaluation processes has to be completed: they have to express certain behaviors that are observable and are used by perceivers to form a personality impression that is evaluated more or less positively (or negatively).

According to the dual-pathway model of narcissists' popularity (Kүfner et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015) and in line with recent two-dimensional conceptualizations of grandiose narcissism (Back et al., 2013), there are two such pathways that need to be distinguished, an agentic and an antagonistic pathway (see Fig. 33.1; the effects of social contexts will be discussed in the next part of this chap-

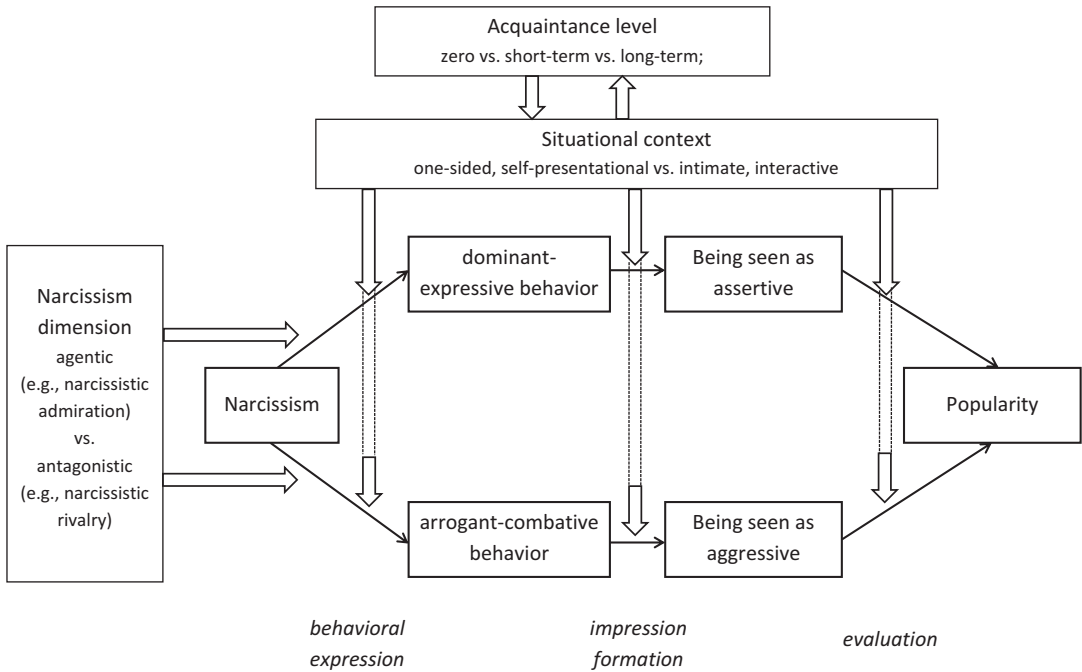


Fig. 33.1 A dual-pathway model of grandiose narcissism and early interpersonal impressions

ter). On the one hand, grandiose narcissism relates to the tendency to behave dominant and expressive. This behavioral expression, in turn, leads to the impression of being assertive in social partners, which is evaluated positively and, thus, fosters popularity. This first series of processes constitutes the agentic pathway. On the other hand, grandiose narcissism relates to arrogant and combative behavior. This behavioral expression, in turn, leads to the impression of being aggressive, which is evaluated negatively and, thus, fosters unpopularity. This second series of processes constitutes the antagonistic pathway.

Depending on which of the two pathways is stronger in a situation, a positive (agentic pathway is stronger), a negative (antagonistic pathway is stronger), or no (both pathways cancel each other out) association between narcissism and popularity can result. These dual-pathway dynamics have now been replicated in several laboratory samples with real-life interactions in small groups of young adults that involved narcissism reports, independently coded actual behavior, as well as round-robin ratings of personality impressions and liking evaluations (Küfner et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015). The

dual-pathway model does not only help to explain in a fine-grained process-oriented way *how* a given effect of narcissism on personality impressions and subsequent liking evaluations emerged; it also allows delineating *moderating effects* of contextual and personal variables. We will now focus on three particularly relevant moderators: the social context, the acquaintance level, and the dimension of narcissism being investigated.

Effects of the Social Context

Previous research has shown that the impressions narcissists evoke are not uniform but vary depending on the context they are investigated in. According to the dual-pathway model, the influence of social context should be driven by effects on the one and/or the other pathway (see Fig. 33.1). The stronger a social context (a) evokes or allows to express charming, self-assured behavior (behavioral expression process stage), (b) makes this behavior salient as an indicator of assertiveness (impression formation process stage), and (c) the more it emphasizes the value of assertiveness (evaluation process stage),

the stronger the positive associations between narcissism and popularity should be (agentic pathway). In contrast, the stronger a social context evokes or allows differences in arrogant and combative behaviors, makes arrogant and combative behavior salient as an indicator of aggressiveness, and emphasizes the value of communion and trustworthiness (antagonistic pathway), the more negative associations between narcissism and popularity should result.

Following this perspective, the degree to which a situation is a one-sided self-presentation (triggering the agentic pathway) versus an intimate interaction (triggering the antagonistic pathway) should be a particularly relevant aspect of the situational context. The mixed findings of previous research can be understood as a consequence of each study realizing a different social context that was more or less self-presentational versus interactive (and increasingly intimate) and thus triggered the two pathways to different degrees. In line with this logic, previous studies that found a positive effect of narcissism on popularity were characterized by a rather self-presentational context, whereas previous studies that showed a negative effect were characterized by a more intimate and interactive context (see Küfner et al., 2013, for an overview).

More direct evidence for the moderating effect of the interactive context on the dual-pathway dynamics stems from a series of laboratory studies in which the two behavioral pathways were directly observed and the situational context was varied. Küfner et al. (2013) focused on a group discussion that involved self-presentational as well as more intimate, interactive aspects. In this mixed situation, the agentic and the antagonistic pathways were both evident but canceled each other out (replicated in two samples): narcissists behaved more dominantly and expressively, which made them seen as more assertive and, thereby, more popular. But at the same time, they behaved in a more arrogant and combative way, which made them seen as aggressive and thereby unpopular. Leckelt et al. (2015) provided another replication of this pattern of effects in a similar mixed situation. In addition, however, by applying a number of further situational contexts, they showed that the

pattern of associations systematically changes in line with the dual-pathway model. In a pure self-presentational context, differences in arrogant behaviors were not observable, making the antagonistic pathway ineffective—resulting in more positive effects of narcissism (carried via the agentic pathway). Finally, in a more intimate, interactional context (e.g., discussing moral dilemma or each other's positive and negative personality characteristics), uncommunal perceptions (e.g., being seen as aggressive or untrustworthy) were evaluated increasingly more negative, while being seen as assertive was evaluated less (but still) positively.

Acquaintance Effects

According to Campbell and Campbell's (2009) contextual reinforcement model, narcissism is beneficial in early stages of acquaintance (the "emerging zone"), but as the level of acquaintance increases (the "enduring zone"), narcissism becomes detrimental. Applied to the personality and liking impressions of narcissists, and from the perspective of the dual-pathway model, this moderating role of the acquaintance level directly follows from the abovementioned effects of situational contexts. With an increase in acquaintance level, the typical situational affordances also change (see Fig. 33.1). Zero-acquaintance situations are typically more superficial and one-sided and allow narcissists to break the ice by their agentic self-presentational style. Also, there are few reasons and chances to display aggression and arrogance. As people get to know each other, however, situations get more intimate and potentially controversial. The consideration of each other's views, dealing with negative feedback, and a modest interaction style become increasingly important; all of which narcissists are not particularly prone to. In a nutshell, narcissists' popularity declines over time because getting acquainted goes along with a shift from self-presentation to intimate interaction and, therefore, an increased triggering of the antagonistic as opposed to the agentic pathway. These temporal dynamics and the underlying behavioral process pathways have recently been confirmed

in a longitudinal laboratory study designed to mimic the natural acquaintance process (Leckelt et al., 2015). In their study, Leckelt and colleagues related narcissism to observed behaviors, interpersonal perceptions of interaction partners, and popularity among group members. Groups interacted in 1-hour-long weekly sessions over the course of 3 weeks where each session was designed to mimic the getting-acquainted process (ranging from self-introduction in week 1 to team work tasks in week 2 and to controversial discussions in week 3). This way, the behavioral, perceptual, and evaluative processes of narcissists' initially greater but in the long-run declining popularity were revealed.

Effects of the acquaintance level on the narcissism-popularity association can, therefore, be understood as a consequence of changing social context which differentially affects the two narcissistic pathways. In addition, the social contexts can also influence what level of acquaintance is attainable; i.e., the context can influence whether people are able to get to know each other well. Please also note that acquaintance level and context only typically go hand in hand in a probabilistic sense (i.e. they are positively correlated, which explains why context features can explain typical acquaintance effects on the narcissism-popularity relation), but they don't necessarily need to. The effects on narcissistic process dynamics should always be driven by defined context features, meaning that the antagonistic pathway could be triggered in short-term acquaintance if an immediate intimate and controversial situation is created (e.g., a stressful job interview; freshman being thrown into a political discussion), and the agentic pathway could have a stronger effect than usual within well acquaintances in more superficial self-presentational contexts (e.g., an important meeting at work with the CEO present, having a karaoke party with friends).

Effects of Dimensions of Grandiose Narcissism

Both of the pathways described above can be differentially aligned to dimensions of grandiose narcissism (see Fig. 33.1). Recent research on the

structure and correlates of narcissism (Back et al., 2013; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2016) converges in that grandiose narcissism is thought to entail aspects that can be sorted into more agentic (e.g., grandiosity, dominance, leadership) and more antagonistic dimensions (e.g., arrogance, exploitativeness, devaluation of others). The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) provides a conceptual framework for these distinct dimensions of grandiose narcissism as being rooted in different social strategies to maintain a grandiose self: the tendency to attain social admiration by means of self-promotion (assertive self-enhancement) and the tendency to prevent social failure by means of self-defense (antagonistic self-protection). These motivational dynamics are thought to result in distinct behavioral dynamics termed *narcissistic admiration* and *narcissistic rivalry*. Admiration reflects the agentic pathway, while rivalry reflects the antagonistic pathway. In line with the dual-pathway approach and the NARC, measures of admiration indeed predicted narcissists' popularity at first sight (via dominant, expressive behaviors and being seen as assertive), while rivalry predicted its decline over time by an increase in arrogant, combative behaviors and being seen as aggressive/untrustworthy (Leckelt et al., 2015).

Similarly, in the romantic context, Wurst et al. (2017) showed that the short-term romantic appeal associated with narcissism is primarily attributable to agentic narcissism (i.e. narcissistic admiration), whereas the long-term romantic problems associated with narcissism are primarily attributable to antagonistic narcissism (i.e. narcissistic rivalry).

Future Directions: Further Applications of the Dual-Pathway Model Across Samples, Contexts, and Designs

It is our hope that the dual-pathway approach helps to systemize previous findings on early impressions of narcissists and also outlines some conceptual and methodological guidance for future research on this complex issue. Future

research should try to apply and replicate the complex effects and behavioral dynamics of grandiose narcissism across a wider range of populations, contexts, and designs.

While the dual-pathway model is well supported in the domain of nonromantic peer relations among educated young adults, it should be tested with samples of different age, sociodemographic, and cultural backgrounds. Similarly, fine-grained process analyses should also be applied to the domains of romantic relationships and leadership contexts. In both domains, there is evidence for positive initial impressions of narcissists (i.e., narcissism is related to dating success and leadership emergence) and more problematic outcomes later on (i.e., narcissism is related to relationship and work conflict). We predict that the outlined sequential agentic and antagonistic pathways will help to further disentangle the effects of grandiose narcissism across situational contexts in these domains as well.

Previous research on early impressions of narcissists that incorporated behavioral processes has been conducted in predefined laboratory contexts. This methodological approach has several advantages such as a better control over the social situation, the environment, and number of interaction partners. It also comes along, however, with certain drawbacks, such as limited knowledge regarding the psychological relevance participants ascribe to the situation and concerning the frequency with which participants select into situations with similar environmental features and interaction partners in their real-life. At the same time, field investigations come with their own challenges, for example, when it comes to the direct assessment of behavior (e.g., via experience-sampled interaction partner reports or smartphone sensing) and the disentangling of effects due to narcissists' selection of situations and partners from effects of their behavior within a given situation. Optimally, future research should try to combine laboratory and field-based studies and try to assess the relevant process dynamics in both (see Wrzus & Mehl, 2015).

By investigating different samples in the contexts of peer, romantic, and work-related impressions across laboratory and field designs that

allow to measure the involved behavioral processes and to differentiate between situational contexts and narcissism dimensions, future research guided by a dual-pathway approach will reveal further exciting findings about the curious and consequential impressions narcissists make.

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Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

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Joshua D. Foster and Amy B. Brunell

Abstract

The term “narcissism” is etymologically rooted in Greek mythology and specifically a story of unrequited love, jealousy, and revenge. To some degree, what is old is new in terms of how narcissism is depicted in the romantic relationships empirical literature. That is, narcissism is mostly understood to be a predictor of relationship damaging behaviors and thoughts. However, unlike the mythological tale of Narcissus and Echo, things do not always end in tragedy when narcissism and romance intertwine. Indeed, there are some, more or less, positive findings in this literature. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of empirical findings showing the positive and negative sides of narcissism and relationships. In particular, this chapter focuses on grandiose narcissism, a type of narcissism characterized by generally positive and grandiose self-perceptions. In addition to reviewing the literature on narcissism and relationships, the chapter concludes by offering suggestions, both topical and methodological, for future research directions.

Keywords

Interpersonal attraction · Intimate partner violence · Sociosexual orientation · Infidelity · Jealousy · Mate poaching · Psychopathy

Introduction

The story of narcissism and romantic relationships is as old as the term “narcissism” itself. Greek mythology gives us the story of Narcissus, the most eligible bachelor in all the land, and Echo, the nymph who pined away for him (Bulfinch, 1913). As often happens in Greek mythology, things did not end well for either character. Narcissus, having spurned Echo’s affections one too many times, was cursed by Nemesis to fall hopelessly in love with the next person he saw. Sadly, for Narcissus, the next person he saw was a reflection of himself in a drinking pond. Paralyzed by his own beauty, Narcissus died of exposure, and in the place of his corpse bloomed the Narcissus flower. Echo did not fare any better. Having had affairs with several prominent gods, and more generally being overly talkative, she was cursed in an equally ironic manner to spend eternity in a cave, helplessly repeating anything she heard.

Contemporary usage of the term “narcissism” has many meanings. The term will be used in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, to refer to

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grandiose narcissism. As the name implies, grandiose narcissism is most prominently characterized by a grandiose self-concept. Grandiose narcissists think they are better and more powerful than others. Grandiose narcissism is most commonly contrasted with vulnerable narcissism, which is a type of narcissism characterized by high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-esteem (Miller, Lynam, Vize et al., 2017; Weiss & Miller, this volume). Narcissistic personality disorder, depending on one's theoretical viewpoint, is either primarily grandiose narcissism coupled with dysfunction or a combination of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. (Readers interested in these distinctions are encouraged to consult these sources: Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017; Miller & Maples, 2011; Pincus & Roche, 2011).

Narcissism has been described as a “mixed blessing” because it is correlated with both positive and negative outcomes (Paulhus, 1998). Most often, the positive correlates of narcissism are *intrapersonal* in nature. That is, narcissists think and feel positively about themselves. For example, narcissists tend to score high on measures of happiness and self-esteem and low on measures of anxiety and depression (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). Most of the negative correlates are *interpersonal* in nature. For example, narcissists possess callous attitudes toward others and are prone to aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Lynam, 2011). Recent research suggests that the positive intrapersonal features of narcissism may be captured best by the lower half of the grandiose narcissism continuum (i.e., relatively low levels of grandiose narcissism), whereas negative interpersonal features are captured best by the upper half of the continuum (Foster, Shiverdecker, & Turner, 2016).

Narcissism, as it pertains to romantic relationships, is also linked to ambivalent outcomes. For example, romantic relationships involving narcissists are often enjoyable early on but tend to sour as they progress to long-term committed relationships (Foster & Twenge, 2011). Additionally, narcissists derive a variety of intrapersonal benefits from their romantic relation-

ships (e.g., Krizan & Bushman, 2011). Their partners, however, tend to derive much fewer of these benefits and endure significantly more costs (e.g., Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson, & Tullett, 2017).

The remainder of this chapter will be spent reviewing pertinent literature on narcissism and romantic relationships. There is quite a bit of research in this area and it is not easy to organize. What we will attempt to do is to organize it into relational and intrapersonal outcomes that are more or less positive versus those that are more decidedly negative. After reviewing these findings, we will conclude the chapter with suggestions for future research in this area.

The (More or Less) Positive Side of Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

Narcissists are socially outgoing, confident, and charming (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010; Miller & Campbell, 2008). They dress in eye-catching ways, make good first impressions on others, and are considered attractive upon first meeting (Back et al., 2010; Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013; Holtzman & Strube, 2010, 2013; Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). These qualities would presumably help narcissists establish romantic relationships with others. Romantic relationships are beneficial in a variety of ways to mental and physical health (Loving & Slatcher, 2013; Sedikides, Oliver, & Campbell, 1994). If narcissists have easier times establishing them, this would appear to be a major advantage of being narcissistic.

If narcissists can more easily establish romantic relationships, they would presumably have more of them than less narcissistic people. Some research suggests that narcissists have more romantic relationships than others; however, these studies tend to focus on short-term sexual relationships. For example, several studies show that narcissists report sexual attitudes and behaviors consistent with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation (i.e., they are willing to

engage in and desire sex outside of the confines of committed relationships), including larger numbers of reported sexual partners (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006; Reise & Wright, 1996; Schmitt et al., 2017; Webster & Bryan, 2007).

The fact that these studies rely on self-report leaves open the obvious question as to whether narcissists are biased in their reporting of number of sexual partners. These studies also leave open the question of whether narcissists establish long-term romantic relationships as easily as they purportedly establish short-term relationships. To our knowledge, no studies have looked at this directly. There are reasons, however, to think that narcissists do not. Narcissists appear to be less motivated than others to establish long-term romantic relationships. For example, they report being romantically repulsed by signals that others want to form close, emotionally intimate relationships (Campbell, 1999). Furthermore, even if narcissists were to be motivated to form long-term relationships, they may possess qualities and act in ways that make them less attractive to individuals looking for long-term relationships (Sundie et al., 2011; Van Tongeren, Davis, & Hook, 2014).

If narcissists are “only” good at establishing short-term sexual relationships, is there really any benefit to being narcissistic as it pertains to romantic relationships? It might be true that narcissists miss out on benefits, such as emotional intimacy and mutual support. It is not clear, however, that narcissists would consider these to be benefits in the first place, given their highly individualistic nature (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). Some evidence also suggests that engagement in short-term sexual relationships (e.g., one-night stands) is linked to psychological problems, such as depression and low self-esteem, but other studies suggest no link (Bersamin et al., 2014; Eisenberg, Ackard, Resnick, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009). Recent research suggests that more emphasis needs to be placed on the individual and context to understand when short-term sexual relationships are harmful, benign, or beneficial. For example, people who engage in casual sex autonomously do not appear to experience

psychological problems associated with their sexual activity, and people with unrestricted sociosexuality (such as narcissists) may derive psychological benefits from casual sex (Vrangalova, 2015; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014). In short, there are reasons to believe that narcissists derive benefits from their romantic relationships, even if they are mostly short-term sexual relationships.

Even if narcissists are not particularly good at establishing and maintaining long-term romantic relationships, they do indeed form these relationships. Furthermore, although, narcissism is linked primarily to negative outcomes in long-term relationships, there are some instances when their long-term relationships function well. Most of these instances, perhaps not surprisingly, occur when narcissists are getting their needs met by their relationships/partners. For example, Foster (2008) demonstrated that narcissists, although generally less committed to their romantic relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Foster et al., 2006), can be strongly committed when they feel highly satisfied with them. Seidman (2016) further demonstrated that narcissists tend to be most satisfied with their romantic relationships when they perceive their partners as meeting their agentic standards, such as attractiveness and status.

The Negative Side of Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

Despite what was reported above, research generally suggests that long-term relationships involving narcissists, whether dating relationships or marriages, tend to be unsatisfying and become more unsatisfying over time. Ye, Lam, Ma, and Ng (2016), for example, found that both narcissists and their partners report being relatively unsatisfied with their relationships, an effect that was stronger for men than women. Other research, in contrast, has highlighted the role of female narcissism. Among newlyweds, narcissism in wives (but not husbands) was associated with increases in marital problems and decreases in marital satisfaction over time

(Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell, & Karney, 2016).

There are a few suggestions as to why relationships involving narcissists are less satisfying. Ye et al. (2016) suggests that narcissists underestimate the extent to which their negative behaviors cause their partners' unhappiness. In general, narcissists engage in more frequent negative communication. For example, among dating couples, narcissistic women are more likely to engage in angry and hostile communication even when discussing seemingly "safe" topics, such as a hypothetical vacation (Lamkin, Lavner, & Shaffer, 2017). Narcissists also react more negatively to criticism, rejection, and failure (Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2003)—a tendency that is especially likely to show itself during conflict discussions. When discussing conflict, narcissists are more likely to use criticism, name-calling, and insults (Peterson & DeHart, 2014). Moreover, after experiencing conflict, narcissists report less commitment to their relationships. Likewise, they tend to induce jealousy in their partners as a means of acquiring power and control in their relationships (Tortoriello et al., 2017). This finding is consistent with additional research showing that those who score higher on the entitlement/exploitativeness factor of the NPI show greater interest in alternative relationship partners following recall of negative relationship events (Myers, Zeigler-Hill, & Barry, 2013).

Relationships with narcissists also tend to be more stressful than average. Narcissists often "play games" with their romantic partners, for example, by keeping them guessing about their level of interest (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Rohmann, Neumann, Herner, & Bierhoff, 2012). Narcissism is also linked to increased rates of romantic infidelity (Brunell & Campbell, 2011; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Campbell, Foster, et al., 2002). Both these penchants are likely to cause stress (e.g., anxiety and jealousy) in the partners of narcissists. Somewhat ironically, narcissists themselves report elevated levels of romantic jealousy in their relationships (Chin, Atkinson, Raheb, Harris, & Vernon, 2016).

One possible explanation for this finding is that narcissists use their own behavior as basis for making predictions about their partners' behaviors. If narcissists are likely to cheat themselves, they might expect their partners to cheat as well. Narcissists may also have valid reason to be jealous; for example, research on mate poaching (i.e., attracting away someone else's romantic partner) suggests that, while narcissism is linked to increased self-reports of perpetuated mate poaching (Brunell, Robison, Deems, & Okdie, 2018; Jonason, Li, & Buss, 2010; Kardum, Hudek-Knezevic, Schmitt, & Grundler, 2015), it is also linked to increased reports of being the victim of mate poaching (Jonason et al., 2010).

More disturbingly, narcissism has been tied to sexual entitlement and coercion. Narcissistic men tend to hold more rape supportive beliefs (Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003) and feel more entitled to sex as reciprocation for acts of generosity, such as paying for an expensive date (Jones & Olderbak, 2014). Narcissistic men and women both report increased use of sexual coercion (Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2015; Ryan, Weikel, & Sprechini, 2008). In one study, participants were asked if they had ever used a range of tactics to get their partners to have sex with them after the partner rebuffed their initial sexual advance. These tactics included continued persistence (e.g., kissing the person), manipulation (e.g., questioning partner's sexuality), exploitation (e.g., getting partner drunk), and physical threats or force. Results showed that narcissism predicted more common use of these tactics by both men and women, although the effects were generally larger for men (Blinkhorn et al., 2015).

Finally, narcissists report being more accepting of intimate partner violence (IPV; Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2016) and are prone to aggression in general (Bushman & Thomaes, 2011). It would be reasonable, therefore, to assume that narcissism would be linked to elevated levels of intimate partner violence. Research supporting this conclusion, with specific regard to grandiose narcissism, is inconsistent. Most of the research on narcissism and IPV focuses on pathological

variants of narcissism, such as NPD (Larson, Vaughn, Salas-Wright, & Delisi, 2015). Although there is considerable overlap between NPD and grandiose narcissism (Miller, Hoffman, Campbell, & Pilkonis, 2008), there are only a few studies on IPV that use measures that are purpose-built to capture grandiose narcissism. One of these is Ryan et al. (2008), who found descriptively positive, but weak and nonsignificant, correlations between the exploitativeness/entitlement facet of grandiose narcissism and self-reported physical assault by men and women in their romantic relationships. Another study showed a similarly weak but statistically significant positive correlation between narcissism and IPV (Kiire, 2017). However, this study further showed that the link between narcissism and IPV was fully accounted for by narcissism's association with the personality trait psychopathy. Thus, it was not clear whether the correlation between narcissism and IPV was spurious. A third study that combined retrospective and prospective methods found a moderately strong and significant positive correlation between narcissism and IPV-perpetration when it was assessed retrospectively, but a nonsignificant correlation when it was assessed prospectively (Caiozzo, Houston, & Grych, 2016). In contrast, these researchers found that callous-unemotional traits—traits that are found in psychopathy—predicted IPV both retrospectively and prospectively. In general, these studies suggest that grandiose narcissism may be related to IPV, but more research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Recommendations for Research on Narcissism and Romantic Relationships

As our review shows, research on narcissism and romantic relationships is extremely active. The existing research tells us a lot about how narcissists approach romantic relationships, how they behave in romantic relationships, and how individuals who are romantically linked to narcissists are affected. Nevertheless, as with most topics covered in this book, the research

that has been conducted to date raises more questions than it answers.

There are a few things that researchers could do to improve the study of narcissism and romantic relationships. The first is to employ a more diverse set of measures of narcissism. Most of the studies reviewed in this chapter used the NPI exclusively to measure narcissism. No doubt, the NPI will go down in history as a major impetus of research on narcissism. In the not too distant past, the NPI was the only available method of efficient measurement of grandiose narcissism. But times have changed, and researchers now have a variety of measures to choose from, many of which have more desirable psychometric qualities than the NPI (see Foster et al., this volume, for review of grandiose narcissism measures). Using a wider variety of measures will help us get away from the “grandiose narcissism = NPI” mentality that has pervaded the empirical literature on grandiose narcissism. Additionally, using several measures of grandiose narcissism in studies will permit the use of more sophisticated data analyses, such as structural equation modeling (SEM) and latent profile analysis. SEM, in particular, has the advantage of being able to isolate measurement error from statistical models, resulting in purer tests of theoretical propositions.

Researchers should also try whenever possible to assess narcissism and relational variables in both romantic partners. Almost all of our knowledge on narcissism and relationships comes from the perspective of the narcissists. Consequently, we know much more about how narcissists experience their relationships than we do about their partners. Focusing on narcissists and not their partners is likely to cause a variety of misconceptions. For example, what causes relationships involving narcissists to end? If we ask narcissists, we may get one answer (e.g., they found someone new); if we ask their partners, we may get something completely different (e.g., they grew tired of not getting their emotional needs met). Likewise, there is conflicting evidence over the extent to which narcissists pair up with other narcissists (i.e., homophily; Lamkin, Campbell, vanDellen, & Miller, 2015; Lavner et al., 2016).

Some of our assumptions regarding how the romantic partners of narcissists experience their relationships would almost certainly be changed if we discovered that they tend to be narcissistic themselves.

It would also be beneficial if researchers employed more behavioral measures and direct observational methods (e.g., videotaped interactions) as opposed to self-report. Narcissists are prone to overly positive self-presentation (Hart, Adams, Burton, & Tortoriello, 2017), and their self-reports of behavior are likely to be biased in meaningful ways. Putting narcissists to the test in laboratory studies that employ measures of actual behavior would be useful in terms of distinguishing fact from narcissistic self-delusion. It is true, however, that many of the findings relevant to narcissism and relationships are not amenable to behavioral measure or direct observation. It was noted earlier that narcissists self-report higher numbers of sexual partners, but it is unknown to what extent these self-reports are biased. Research suggests that retrospective self-reports of sexual behavior may produce upwardly biased estimates of frequency (Gillmore, Leigh, Hoppe, & Morrison, 2010) and number of sexual partners, especially by men (Wiederman, 1997). It is possible that narcissism exacerbates this bias. Although directly observing the sexual behavior of narcissistic participants would be, ahem, ethically and practically challenging, the use of daily diary measures would likely yield more valid estimates than more distal retrospective measures.

We recognize that these recommendations have been called for numerous times in previous papers. No doubt, some of the hesitancy to incorporate these recommendations into research programs stems from the burden they create. The latter two recommendations (i.e., inclusion of narcissists' romantic partners, use of non-self-report measures) are more difficult to implement than the first (i.e., use multiple measures of narcissism). However, the advancement of statistical techniques, such as dyadic data analysis (Ledermann & Kenny, 2017), and technology, such as online diary data collection (Glick, Winer, & Golden, 2013), have made it easier than ever before to do all three.

Although the literature on narcissism and relationships is large and diverse, there are a number of topics that have emerged as important and understudied, meriting increased empirical attention in the future. When writing this chapter, we were surprised at how tentative the link between narcissism and relational aggression (e.g., IPV, sexual coercion/assault) is. There are many reasons to hypothesize such a link, including the fact that narcissism has been found to be reliably linked to self-report and laboratory-based measures of aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman & Thomaes, 2011; Reidy, Foster, & Zeichner, 2010; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008). It may be that, for reasons unknown, narcissism is less reliably associated with opposite-sex directed aggression (i.e., the type of aggression most commonly captured in studies on IPV and sexual aggression) than same-sex directed aggression (i.e., the type of aggression most commonly captured in studies on general aggression). It is also true that IPV and sexual aggression are often considered to be particularly heinous forms of aggression, which may make it difficult to reliably measure them in studies (i.e., estimates of these types of aggression would be affected by potentially strong response biases that vary across individuals in unknown and unmeasured ways). This type of unreliability may attenuate the size of the associations involving narcissism, making them more difficult to reliably detect. Future research in this domain would thus benefit from the use of large samples (i.e., to offset deflated effect sizes) and improved measures of aggression to more reliably estimate associations between narcissism and IPV/sexual aggression.

Lastly, although the focus of this chapter was on grandiose narcissism and relationships, a growing body of literature is focusing on the vulnerable side of narcissism and how vulnerable and grandiose narcissism are similar and different. Very little research has examined how vulnerable narcissism operates in the context of close relationships. Given that vulnerable narcissists report lower self-esteem and higher attachment anxiety (e.g., Rohmann et al., 2012), we would expect that vulnerable narcissism

would be associated with outcomes in relationships. For example, recent research shows that vulnerable narcissists try to make their partners jealous to gain power in the relationship but also as a means of punishing their partners and testing the relationship, among other motives (Tortoriello et al., 2017). Yet, as far as we can tell, no research has examined associations between vulnerable narcissism and relational variables like commitment and satisfaction. Preliminary evidence from one of our labs suggests that vulnerable narcissists, like their grandiose counterparts, tend to report less commitment to their relationships. However, unlike grandiose narcissism, whose commitment is largely driven down by their attentiveness to relational alternatives, such as alternative dating partners (Campbell & Foster, 2002), vulnerable narcissism's association with low commitment appears to stem primarily from dissatisfaction they experience in their relationships (Foster, 2017). There are a tremendous number of ways that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism may contrast in terms of their links to relational attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. All of these provide fertile ground for future empirical research.

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Abstract

There are various theoretical reasons to expect narcissistic qualities to predict own and partner infidelity. Nevertheless, as we review here, research has been inconsistent in documenting such links, with some studies providing evidence suggesting a link between narcissism and infidelity and other studies failing to document significant associations. As we also review, subsequent research has documented more consistent links between narcissistic qualities and infidelity using a measure of sexual narcissism that assesses the extent to which narcissistic qualities are activated by the sexual domain. These latter findings suggest that the inconsistent associations that emerge using global assessments of narcissism may emerge because such assessments are too coarse and thus fail to capture important nuance important to the link between narcissistic qualities and infidelity. Future research may clarify such links even further by examining the role of partner narcissism, the facets of narcissism, the specific mechanisms through which such links emerge, and the various moderators of these links.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Infidelity · Sexual narcissism · Sexuality · Relationship maintenance

Long-term relationships are difficult to maintain. Dissolution rates in numerous industrialized countries, for example, indicate marital dissolution rates are currently between 30% and 50% (Amato & James, 2010; Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). According to interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), there are two primary predictors of relationship commitment and thus eventual dissolution: satisfaction with the relationship and alternatives to the relationship. Indeed, in line with the second of these, infidelity has been noted as the most common predictor of relationship dissolution across 160 societies (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Betzig, 1989). For this and other reasons, infidelity is associated with increased psychological distress for both partners in the primary relationship (e.g., Allen et al., 2005; Cano & O'Leary, 2000; Shackelford, 2001).

Given these consequences, it is unfortunate that infidelity is quite common. Estimates suggest that between 20% and 25% of married men and women engage in extramarital sex over the course of their relationships (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Fincham & May, 2017; Greeley,

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1994; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Wiederman, 1997). Identifying psychological characteristics associated with committing infidelity may help interventions to better help couples at risk for experiencing infidelity.

Narcissism

Although there are numerous dispositional and situational variables that likely determine who is most at risk for infidelity and when (for review, see Fincham & May, 2017), there are several reasons to expect qualities associated mostly with the grandiose form of narcissism to account for some of this variance. First, not only are people high in narcissism more oriented toward sexual relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Hurlbert, Apt, Gasar, Wilson, & Murphy, 1994; Wryobeck & Wiederman, 1999), they are more unrestricted in their sociosexuality (Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Webster & Bryan, 2007), which is an orientation toward more permissive attitudes toward casual sex (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) that is itself associated with an increased self-reported likelihood of infidelity (e.g., Mattingly et al., 2011). Second, narcissism is negatively associated with relationship commitment (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006), which is negatively associated with infidelity (DeWall et al., 2011; Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999). Third, people high in narcissism are characterized by low levels of empathy (e.g., Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984) and high levels of exploitativeness (e.g., Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991), a combination of qualities that may lead people high in narcissism to feel freer and more effective in their quests to gain alternative sexual partners.

Empirical work provides some evidence of a link between mostly grandiose forms of narcissism and infidelity, though support varies considerably from study to study. Providing suggestive evidence for such a link, Buss and Shackelford (1997) reported that narcissism was positively associated with married men's and women's self-reported probability of committing an infidelity.

In other research, Campbell, Foster, and Finkel (2002, Study 4) reported that participants were more likely to report that a prior more narcissistic partner (compared to a non-narcissistic partner) had perpetrated an infidelity. Three other studies provide more direct evidence for a link between narcissism and infidelity. Hunyady, Josephs, and Jost (2008) reported that people higher in narcissism were more likely to report having committed an infidelity and that narcissism was positively associated with the number of prior infidelities reported. Conceptually replicating these findings among women, Brewer, Hunt, James, and Abell (2015) reported that women high in narcissism reported a greater likelihood of having committed an infidelity in a prior relationship. Atkins, Yi, Baucom, and Christensen (2005) used a sample of clients in marital therapy to demonstrate that reports of narcissism were positively associated with whether they reported having committed an infidelity in their current relationship.

Nevertheless, other work has failed to provide evidence supporting a link between narcissism and infidelity. For instance, Wiederman and Hurd (1999) reported no significant associations between infidelity and the entitlement and exploitativeness subscales of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Likewise, Jones and Weiser (2014) reported that, although narcissism was significantly correlated with an increased probability of infidelity among men at the bivariate level, narcissism was not significantly correlated with infidelity among women and the association between narcissism and infidelity among men was reduced to nonsignificance when psychopathy and Machiavellianism were controlled. It is important to note, however, that some authors have questioned the construct validity of measures of narcissism once these other two components of the "dark triad" have been partialled out (Sleep, Lynam, Hyatt, & Miller, 2017). Wreford (2012) also reported no significant association between narcissism and the average of four items assessing infidelity: kissing, engaging in oral sex, manually stimulating, or having sex with someone other than the partner. Finally, two more analyses of four longitudinal studies of newlywed couples

provide no evidence that narcissism predicts infidelity. In one of these analyses, McNulty and Widman (2014) demonstrated that reports on the NPI were not associated with whether people committed an infidelity over the first several years or marriage. In a second analyses of two different longitudinal studies, Altgelt, Reyes, French, Meltzer, and McNulty (2018) noted that reports of the NPI were not associated with husbands' or wives' own infidelity over the first 2 years of marriage.

The Importance of Domain-Specific Measurements of Personality: Sexual Narcissism

One way to reconcile these inconsistencies comes from recognizing and understanding inconsistencies in the link between personality and behavior—that is, it is well-known that a range of personality traits are inconsistently associated with behavior across a host of domains (for reviews of such inconsistencies, see Bem & Allen, 1974; Epstein, 1979; Mischel & Peake, 1982). Mischel and Shoda (1995) helped reconcile such inconsistencies by noting that (a) not all situations activate those components of the personality system and (b) personality only predicts behaviors in situations that do activate the components of the personality system. In a similar manner, sexual situations may not reliably activate the narcissistic personality components in all people high in narcissism, and the extent to which they do may determine whether narcissism predicts infidelity. If so, researchers may demonstrate more consistent links between narcissism and infidelity by using measures that assess the extent to which narcissistic qualities are activated in sexual domains.

Recent empirical research provides evidence that domain-specific measures of sexual narcissism predict infidelity more consistently than do more global assessments. Using the same two data sets in which they failed to find links between globally assessed narcissism and infidelity, McNulty and Widman (2014) used Widman and McNulty's (2010) measure of *sexual narcissism*,

the Sexual Narcissism Scale (SNS), to show that narcissism did predict infidelity when it was assessed specific to the sexual domain. Specifically, the SNS captures the extent to which people report entitlement, exploitation, sense of skill, and empathy in the sexual domain. For example, people report the extent to which they “will do whatever it takes” to have sex (exploitation), are “entitled to sex on a regular basis” (entitlement), are “an exceptional sexual partner” (sense of skill), and tend to be unconcerned with “the feelings of [their] sexual partners” (low empathy). Although the NPI, a global measure of narcissism, was unrelated to infidelity in these samples, the measure of sexual narcissism was positively associated with the probability of infidelity. Further, subsequent analyses revealed that all four facets of sexual narcissism were at least marginally predictive of infidelity in at least one of the samples.

Moving Forward

Several specific steps are critical to developing a more complete understanding of the role of narcissistic qualities and infidelity moving forward. First, research may benefit from examining the role of partner narcissism in infidelity. Just as there is theoretical reason to expect own narcissism to predict infidelity, there is theoretical reason to expect partner narcissism to predict infidelity. Most notably, people high in narcissism engage in a more game-playing love style (Campbell et al., 2002). Indeed, people high in narcissism tend to focus their communications on themselves and their needs, rather than the needs of their partners (Vangelisti, Knapp, & Daly, 1990), which may leave their partners feeling disconnected and seek intimacy with others. At least three studies have examined the link between partner narcissistic qualities and infidelity. First, in addition to demonstrating that people higher in narcissism were themselves more likely to report having committed an infidelity in the past, Hunyady et al. (2008) demonstrated that people higher in narcissism were also more likely to report that their partners had committed an infidelity. Second, whereas

Altgelt et al. (2018) reported no association between own narcissism and infidelity in their two studies of marriage, they also reported that husbands with partners high (versus low) in narcissism were more likely to engage in an infidelity; husbands' narcissism was not associated with wives' infidelity, and this sex difference was significant. Finally, McNulty and Widman (2014) demonstrated that several facets of partner sexual narcissism were associated with infidelity in their two longitudinal studies. Specifically, individuals were more likely to report an infidelity when their partners were high in their sense of sexual skill, high in sexual entitlement, or high in sexual empathy. Future research may benefit by continuing to address the role of partner's narcissistic qualities and infidelity.

Second, research may benefit from a focus on the specific facets of both partners' narcissism that may be associated with infidelity. Infidelity is a complex behavior, and understanding it from the perspective of coarse psychological traits, such as general narcissism, is difficult. As reported throughout this handbook, narcissism is comprised of a variety of processes, any of which may be more or less strongly associated with infidelity and, even in different directions, for a variety of reasons. The fact that the NPI is not directly associated with narcissism in several studies does not mean that narcissistic qualities are unrelated to infidelity. Indeed, when those qualities tended to be activated in the sexual domain, they were predictive of infidelity. But even work on the more-domain-specific SNS shows the inconsistencies that can emerge in the link between each of the facets and infidelity. McNulty and Widman (2014) reported that partner sexual narcissism was not associated with infidelity on average because only two of the facets were positively linked to infidelity whereas low empathy was *negatively* associated with infidelity. Likewise, in research on sexual and marital satisfaction (McNulty & Widman, 2013), sexual entitlement, sexual exploitation, and low sexual empathy were all negatively associated with sexual and/or marital satisfaction, whereas sense of sexual skill was positively associated with these outcomes. In sum, research on the link between narcissism and

infidelity may provide the most complete account by examining the specific facets of narcissism and the extent to which they are activated in the sexual domain.

Relatedly, research may benefit from examining even the specific psychological processes through which narcissistic qualities are linked to infidelity. Through which psychological processes are narcissistic qualities and linked to infidelity? Existing theory and research provide some insights. For example, consistent with the idea that the partners of people higher in narcissism are more likely to engage in infidelity because those partners do not fulfill their needs (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002; Altgelt et al., 2018) found that the association between partner narcissism and infidelity was eliminated when own marital satisfaction was controlled. However, mediational analyses provided no evidence of mediation. Future research may benefit from using high-powered studies to examine the extent to which own and partner narcissistic qualities account for links between those qualities and infidelity. Research may also benefit from examining the extent to which more basic psychological processes account for any links between narcissistic qualities and infidelity. For example, McNulty, Meltzer, Makhanova, and Maner (2018) recently demonstrated that people who were just milliseconds slower to avert their gaze from attractive alternatives and people who evaluated such alternatives more positively were more likely to perpetrate in infidelity over the first several years of marriage. Given their proclivities toward sex and short-term sexual encounters (Brunell & Cambell, 2011; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Hurlbert et al., 1994; Jonason et al., 2009; Webster & Bryan, 2007; Wryobeck & Wiederman, 1999), it may be that people higher in narcissism may be less likely to avert their gaze and devalue such alternatives. Future research may benefit from examining this and other specific mechanisms through which narcissistic qualities predict infidelity.

Finally, research may benefit from examining the role of the broader context in such people's relationships are embedded. When and under what circumstances are narcissistic qualities and their

mechanisms linked to infidelity? All interpersonal processes operate within a broader context that has implications for how those processes relate to various outcomes (see McNulty & Fincham, 2012; McNulty, 2016). For example, Finkel et al. (2012) provided evidence that the extent to which trait aggressiveness was associated with aggressive responding within a relationship depended on self-regulatory resources and situational instigators. Specifically, even people who were more aggressive on average were only more aggressive in their relationships when they faced instigating situations and lacked the resources to otherwise regulate their behavior. There are several models that suggest the interpersonal implications of narcissism are similarly contextual (e.g., Baumeister, Catanese, & Wallace, 2002; Zayas, Shoda, & Ayduk, 2002). For example, Baumeister et al. (2002) argued that the link between narcissism and aggression depends on rejection; it may be when they are rejected that people higher in narcissism are more likely to transgress against others. According to this model, it may be in response to rejections, perhaps especially sexual rejections, that people higher in narcissistic qualities engage in infidelities. Future research may benefit from examining this idea as well. Indeed, recent research showing that men low in relational power are particularly likely to take aggressive steps to restore their manhood when they are situationally threatened (see Overall, Hammond, McNulty, & Finkel, 2016) suggests perceived power and attempts to restore status may be relevant factors, at least among men.

Conclusion

There are various theoretical reasons to expect narcissistic qualities to predict own and partner infidelity. Nevertheless, research has been inconsistent in documenting such links, with some studies providing evidence in support of them and others failing to document such associations. Subsequent research has documented more consistent links between narcissistic qualities and infidelity using a measure of sexual narcissism that assesses the extent to which narcissistic qual-

ities are activated by the sexual domain, suggesting the inconsistent associations that emerge using global assessments of narcissism may emerge because such assessments are too coarse and thus fail to capture important nuance important to the link between narcissistic qualities and infidelity. Future research may clarify such links even further by examining the role of partner narcissism, the facets of narcissism, the specific mechanisms through which such links emerge, and the various moderators of these links.

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Understanding and Mitigating Narcissists' Low Empathy

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Abstract

In this chapter we examine the argument and evidence that a lack of empathy may lie at the core of narcissists' chronic interpersonal inadequacies. Empathy is a key ingredient in facilitating smooth social interactions and maintaining interpersonal harmony. Empathy is linked with the promotion of prosocial and mitigation of antisocial behavior. We review the research showing that narcissism is inversely related to a whole host of empathy measures. This relationship pertains to both cognitive (e.g., understanding and considering another person's viewpoint) and affective (e.g., vicariously experiencing another's emotional state) forms of empathy. We argue that without taking another's perspective and feeling their emotions, narcissists have no reason to curb their antisocial behavior or participate in prosocial acts. We delineate the negative consequences of narcissists' low empathy for those around them and society at large. Such

empirical evidence has determined low empathy to be a mechanism underlying narcissists' displays of aggression, bullying, and criminality, as well as an increased propensity to engage in poor parenting practices and inability to maintain long-term relationships. On a positive note, we review the literature which suggests that narcissists are capable of being empathic. Thus change is possible. With this in mind, we discuss the ways in which narcissists' low empathy may be mitigated.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Empathy · Interpersonal · Antisocial behavior · Prosocial behavior · Motivation · Perspective-taking · Intervention

Individuals high in grandiose narcissism prioritize agency (reflecting dominance and superiority) over communion (reflecting lack of caring or concern for others; Campbell & Foster, 2007). For these individuals (hereafter referred to as "narcissists"), getting ahead is more important than getting along (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992). Consequently, narcissism is linked with high intrapersonal functioning (e.g., high self-esteem; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004; for a distinction between narcissism and self-esteem, see Brummelman, Gürel,

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Thomaes, & Sedikides, this volume) and poor interpersonal functioning. As an example of the latter, despite making positive first impressions, narcissists are disliked over time (Paulhus, 1998). Likewise, they are successful at pursuing short-term, but not long-term, romantic relationships (Wurst et al., 2016). More generally, they engage in antisocial behaviors, as demonstrated by their proclivity to commit aggressive acts (Barry, Kauten, & Lui, 2014) and increased likelihood of committing white-collar crimes (Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender, & Klein, 2006).

Lack of empathy may lie at the core of narcissists' chronic interpersonal inadequacies (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Watson & Morris, 1991). Empathy—vicariously experiencing another's perspective or emotions—is a key ingredient in relationship formation, in fostering smooth social interactions, and in promoting prosocial behavior and mitigating antisocial behavior (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988; Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003). Without taking another's perspective and feeling their emotions, narcissists may have little compelling reason to engage in prosocial deeds or curtail their antisociality. Below we consider the link between narcissism and empathy, the consequences of narcissists' low empathy for those around them and society at large, and ways in which their low empathy may be mitigated. Research on narcissism and empathy is timely given that narcissism levels are rising (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), whereas empathy levels are declining (Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011).

Narcissism and Empathy

Narcissism is inversely related to a host of empathy measures (Ehrenberg, Hunter, & Elterman, 1996; Ghorbani, Watson, Hamzavy, & Weathington, 2010; Gurtman, 1992; Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Hepper, Hart, Meek, Cisek, & Sedikides, 2014; Jonason, Lyons, Bethell, & Ross, 2013; Vonk, Zeigler-Hill, Mayhew, & Mercer, 2013; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984; Watson & Morris, 1991). Although defini-

tions of empathy vary, consensus points to empathy being multidimensional and having both cognitive and affective components (Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003). Cognitive empathy entails understanding and considering another person's viewpoint (Batson & Ahmad, 2009; Davis, 1983). Despite recent evidence suggesting that narcissists perform well on some theory of mind tests (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012), they typically report low cognitive empathy (Ehrenberg et al., 1996; Gurtman, 1992; Hepper, Hart, Meek, et al., 2014; Vonk et al., 2013; Watson & Morris, 1991). The socially maladaptive components of narcissism also predict poor identification of others' emotions in images and short video clips, partly due to alexithymia (i.e., intrapersonal difficulties with emotional understanding; Hepper & Hart, 2017). Affective empathy entails vicariously experiencing and feeling moved by another's emotions or distress (Davis, 1983; Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003). Narcissists report low affective empathy (Ehrenberg et al., 1996; Gurtman, 1992; Hepper, Hart, Meek, et al., 2014; Vonk et al., 2013; Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012; Watson et al., 1984; Watson & Morris, 1991). A recent meta-analysis (Urbonaviciute, Hepper, & Cropley, 2017) supports overall negative associations between sub-clinical grandiose narcissism and both cognitive ($r = -0.078, p < 0.001$) and affective ($r = -0.118, p < 0.001$) empathy. These effect sizes indicate a deficit, but not the absence of empathy, in narcissists. Low empathy may not be insurmountable, as we will discuss later.

Consequences of Narcissists' Low Empathy

Because empathy plays a critical role in facilitating social functioning and maintaining interpersonal harmony, narcissists' relative lack of empathy is likely to have consequences. Evidence reveals favorable outcomes associated with higher cognitive and/or affective empathy and unfavorable outcomes associated with lower empathy. These benefits pertain to social behavior at individual, dyadic, group, and societal levels. First, empathy elicits altruism and helping

(Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). People higher in affective empathy report more volunteering behaviors per month, as well as more instances of giving money to a homeless person and donating to charity in the last year (Unger & Thumulari, 1997; Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010). Second, empathy forestalls aggression, bullying, delinquency, and antisocial behavior (Ireland, 1999; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). High empathy inhibits harmful behaviors, because imagining the harm that one might cause deters antisociality (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). Criminal offenders, for example, score lower on empathy than non-offenders (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004). Third, empathy fosters interpersonal engagement, smooth social interactions, and social bonding (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Davis, 1983; Davis & Oathout, 1987). Perspective-taking ability, in particular, facilitates social coordination by allowing one to anticipate the behavior and reactions of others. Moreover, empathy helps to maintain interpersonal relationships when they are under threat (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Finally, empathy can improve intergroup attitudes and relations (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). For example, perspective-taking decreases stereotyping, prejudice, and social aggression (Galinsky & Ku, 2004) while increasing interest in intergroup contact (Crisp & Turner, 2012). In all, empathy is crucial for prosocial behavior, fostering and maintaining social bonds, as well as lessening difficulties associated with group living.

The literature supports our proposition that narcissists' low empathy underlies (at least in part) their interpersonal deficits, thus accounting for their propensity to engage in antisocial behavior (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005) and their failure to be enduringly likable (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Paulhus, 1998). In the realm of antisocial behavior, low cognitive empathy and ensuing low affective empathy mediated the link between young men's narcissism and likelihood of imprisonment (Hepper, Hart, Meek, et al., 2014). Also, low empathy mediated narcissistic aggression among youth who had dropped out of

school (Barry et al., 2014). In school settings (Hart, Hepper, & Sargeant, 2014) and workplace (Hart & Hepper, 2017) settings, narcissism positively predicted indirect and direct forms of bullying via low empathy and a high need for power. Moreover, narcissists' lack of interpersonal forgiveness following a transgression was mediated partly by low empathy (Fatfouta, Gerlach, Schröder-Abé, & Merkl, 2015; see also Leunissen, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2017). In research on narcissists' athletic coaching style, narcissism positively predicted controlling coaching behaviors and negatively predicted autonomy-supported coaching behaviors, also via low empathy (Matosic et al., 2017). Even in a family context, low empathy and subsequently low responsive caregiving mediated the link between narcissistic parents and their (a) decreased propensity to engage in optimal forms of parenting (authoritative) as well as (b) increased propensity to engage in non-optimal parenting behaviors (authoritarian and permissive; Hart, Bush-Evans, Hepper, & Hickman, 2017).

Finally, in a direct test of whether low empathy underscores a narcissist's inability to be enduringly likeable, Hart, Hepper, Cheung, and Sedikides (2017) illustrated that narcissists' low empathy is visible to interaction partners (strangers) leading to lower liking. In this study, participants ($N = 84$ students) came to the laboratory in pairs of strangers. After a brief getting-acquainted conversation, each participant in turn disclosed a personal negative experience to the other. Each participant rated their empathy for the other person and perceptions of the other's empathy for them. Participants high in the narcissistic attributes of entitlement and exploitativeness reported lower empathy for their partner ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.03$), and—crucially—their partners perceived lower affective empathy emanating from them ($\beta = -0.35$, $p = 0.04$). Despite relying on an initial interaction (when narcissists are typically still liked; Paulhus, 1998), this study used a scenario in which empathy would be the normative response. These preliminary results are consistent with the idea that narcissists' low empathy impacts their social interactions and relationships.

We are in the process of testing whether low empathy also underlies the dissatisfaction experienced by narcissists' long-term romantic partners and narcissists' propensity to game-play with and cheat on romantic partners (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002).

Taken together, narcissists' low empathy has been demonstrated across a wide range of social contexts, and its consequences may undermine their social behavior and relationships. Nevertheless, the extant research has been primarily concerned with correlational studies involving dispositional empathy measures.

Narcissists Can Be Empathic

Hepper, Hart, and Sedikides (2014) conducted the first experimental investigations on grandiose narcissism and empathy. Narcissists displayed low self-reported empathy for a specific target in an empathy-evoking situation. Also, when narcissists encountered another's suffering, they did not manifest increased heart rate (a physiological indicator of empathy; Anastassiou-Hadjicharalambous & Warden, 2007). Hence, narcissists may not automatically process others' experiences via the neural-cognitive networks involved in processing self-related information (Lamm, Decety, & Singer, 2011). Given that narcissists are not physiologically "moved" by another's suffering and do not automatically experience empathy, they may not be motivated to communicate sympathetically, offer help, or inhibit antisocial behavior (Hein, Lamm, Brodbeck, & Singer, 2011; Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Welsh, & Fox, 1995). Crucially, although narcissists displayed low empathy across a range of scenarios, they were capable of showing self-reported and physiological signs of empathy when explicitly instructed to perspective-take (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). For example, narcissists who were instructed to take the perspective of an empathic target (a video of a woman talking about her experiences of domestic abuse or an audio recording of a university student describing her relationship breakup) by imagining how the target was feeling reported

greater empathy and manifested more physiological signs of empathy compared to a control group who received no instructions. The reason for narcissists' low empathy is not inability; hence, their default behavior can be altered.

If narcissists are capable of empathy, why do they not display it? The answer can inform interventions. Narcissists may be relatively less skilled or resourced and therefore need to exert more effort in order to empathize. This warrants empirical testing. At the same time, contemporary theoretical models emphasize the role of motivation in underpinning narcissists' behavior (Morf, Hovath, & Torchetti, 2011; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Motivation might explain narcissists' low empathy. First, their low communal orientation may imply that they lack motivation to consider others' views and feelings. However, the narcissism-empathy association holds above and beyond low agreeableness (Hart, Bush-Evans, et al., 2017), and so this cannot be the whole story. Second, narcissists may be motivated to avoid empathizing, because this allows them to fulfill their key goal of self-enhancement (Hepper, Gramzow, & Sedikides, 2010). Low empathy may feed into narcissists' self-enhancement needs via three pathways: by making them feel distinctive (as it annuls the cognitive self-other merging characteristic of empathy; Myers & Hodges, 2012), by protecting the self from threat (as it offsets imagining oneself in the same situation and vicariously experiencing the other's pain; Decety & Lamm, 2011), and by exploiting others (as it reduces awareness of the social consequences of one's actions). We are currently testing these possibilities. Crucially, if narcissists' low empathy reflects motivation, we ought to be able to render empathy more appealing to them and motivate them to show it.

Potential for Intervention

Given the integral role of empathy in promoting prosocial behavior and inhibiting antisocial behavior, nurturing it is often a focus of interventions (Davis & Begovic, 2014) that aim to reduce bullying (Whitney, Rivers, Smith, & Sharp, 1994)

or prevent criminal re-offending (Day, Casey, & Gerace, 2010). Interventions could help counteract narcissists' antisocial proclivities and interpersonal difficulties. However, existing interventions are typically generic (rather than targeted at individuals with certain characteristics) and rely on teaching empathy techniques (which assumes lack of skill rather than motivation). To maximize success, an intervention should address an individual's idiosyncratic deficit(s). Because narcissists can be empathic, a researcher should tailor intervention content to address narcissists' motivations in order to make empathy appealing to them in the long term.

Techniques designed to improve empathy skills may not be particularly successful among narcissists. They have the skills; they just do not use them. For example, mindfulness techniques—believed to cultivate empathy—actually reduce mind-reading ability among narcissists (Ridderinkhof, de Bruin, Brummelman, & Bögels, 2017). Also, if narcissists' low empathy is driven by motivation, simple perspective-taking instructions (as per Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014), although successful in the short term, may not result in prolonged change. Without the motivation to be empathic, narcissists will be resistant to behavioral change.

Accordingly, understanding the motivations that drive a narcissist can help inform ways to make empathy enduringly appealing. Can narcissists be motivated intrinsically to take another's perspective—and thereby show empathy? One promising direction focuses on improving narcissists' low communion. For example, priming communal concepts or having a partner who fosters communal attributes can increase narcissists' commitment to relationships (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009), and priming interdependent self-construals can reduce narcissistic tendencies (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014). If narcissists' low communality is a reason for their low empathy motivation, such techniques might raise empathy. However, this approach relies on altering narcissists' fundamental personality structure, which may be challenging.

An alternative direction capitalizes on narcissists' high agency. We are currently testing whether it is possible to increase narcissists' empathy by presenting it as appealing to their agentic motivational needs. That is, framing perspective-taking as a desirable (agency-relevant) skill may make it rewarding to narcissists, thus serving self-enhancement instead of impeding it. This should then activate the underlying neural processes (Lamm et al., 2011) and trigger affective empathy (Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003). Relevant research has indicated that agentic motivation can alter narcissists' prosocial behavior: Narcissists exhibit behavioral mimicry, if an interaction partner is presented as high (but not low) status (Ashton-James & Levordashka, 2013). Further, narcissists report engaging in prosocial behavior (e.g., helping, volunteering) when it fulfills self-serving functions such as furthering their career (Brunell, Tumblin, & Buelow, 2014) or is publicly visible (attracting admiration) but not anonymous (Konrath, Ho, & Zarins, 2016). Thus, narcissists may modify their emotional responses to others when motivation calls for it: If empathizing with another person becomes beneficial to narcissists' goals, they may show empathy.

We are currently testing this proposition. That is, we are reframing empathy to feed into, instead of undermine, their narcissistic ego and in doing so making empathy desirable. To illustrate, we present the benefits of engaging in perspective-taking in an agentic context (perspective-taking is linked to business success), a communal context (perspective-taking is linked to relational success), or neither (perspective-taking is linked with better spatial awareness skills). Then, we measure changes in narcissists' self-reported and automatic (physiological) empathic reactions toward an empathic target both in-the-moment and over time. Although such an intervention would not make narcissists empathic for altruistic reasons, motivating narcissists to respond empathically could decrease the antisocial behaviors they enact and interpersonal difficulties they experience. Over time, such practice may become habitual. Knowledge of how to motivate narcissists to empathize could be used in tailored

interventions in educational (e.g., anti-bullying), organizational (e.g., promoting citizenship behaviors), forensic (e.g., preventing recidivism), relationship (e.g., couples therapy), or parenting (e.g., antenatal education) settings.

What's Next?

Several issues remain unresolved. To begin, when narcissists perspective-take, do they interpret the target's thoughts and feelings accurately? Some level of empathic accuracy is required to respond appropriately to the other's needs. The jury is out on whether narcissists' theory of mind is impaired (Vonk et al., 2013) or not (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). Relatedly, although much of the empathy literature has been concerned with global narcissism, some studies find that low empathy is more closely predicted by maladaptive (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness) than benign (e.g., superiority, authority) aspects of narcissism (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Hepper, Hart, Meek, et al., 2014; Watson & Morris, 1991; Wurst et al., 2016). Similarly, maladaptive (but not benign) narcissistic aspects may impair accuracy of mind reading, as suggested by recent emotion identification results (Hepper & Hart, 2017). The distinction between components of narcissism is a promising line of inquiry.

Also, when narcissists are motivated or induced to experience empathy, what "flavor" of empathy do they feel? Affective responses to others' pain may focus on compassion for the other (i.e., empathic concern) or anxiety about one's own threatened pain including ability to handle the situation at hand (i.e., personal distress; Davis, 1983). Empathic concern is more likely to prompt prosocial behavior, whereas personal distress may prioritize self-soothing or withdrawal (Decety & Lamm, 2011). The self-focus inherent in narcissism and their increased autonomic arousal observed during perspective-taking (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014) hint that narcissists may be at risk of a personal distress response. It will be vital to tease empathic con-

cern and personal distress apart and consider how to turn narcissistic focus on the other's needs rather than their own. A more detailed assessment of the behavioral consequences of narcissists' low empathy (and of any intervention) would also be crucial.

Furthermore, the literature on narcissism and empathy has been overly concerned with grandiose narcissism. Research on vulnerable narcissism and empathy is sparse. A recent meta-analysis (Urbonaviciute et al., 2017) identified only seven studies assessing vulnerable narcissism's association with affective empathy and only five with cognitive empathy. This limited evidence yielded a significantly negative meta-analytic association for cognitive empathy ($r = -0.167$, $p < 0.001$), and not for affective empathy ($r = -0.05$, $p = 0.125$), but more research is needed. Finally, it will be informative to distinguish effects of narcissism from conceptually related individual differences such as psychopathy, Machiavellianism (as part of the Dark Triad; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and borderline personality disorder (Miller et al., 2010).

Coda

Rising levels of narcissism, in addition to declining levels of empathy, should be cause for concern. Research has started to delineate the negative consequences of narcissists' low empathy, including an increased propensity to engage in poor parenting practices, aggression, bullying, and criminality. Narcissists' low empathy also befalls their inability to maintain long-term relationships. Is it possible to curtail these adverse behaviors and improve their relational prospects? We argue that reframing empathy as an agentic rather than a communal characteristic will likely increase empathy's appeal to narcissists and promote its use. Understanding what makes a narcissist tick and how to trigger a more empathic response from them may improve the quality of life for narcissists and those around them, promoting a culture of harmony in an increasingly narcissistic world.

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Narcissism and Friendships

37

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Abstract

Researchers have gained a lot of knowledge about the impact of narcissism in social relationships. Surprisingly however, there was little attention to its manifestations and correlations within friendships. Hence, we approach this topic within the current chapter. The first part summarizes the relatively sparse state of research that examined the impact of narcissism in friendships: On the one hand, research (e.g., on romantic relationships) supports that narcissism is beneficial for the formation of a relationship but detrimental for its maintenance. On the other hand, narcissists exhibit behaviors that might also be beneficial for friendship maintenance (e.g., through their approach motivation). However, it is still unclear to what extent current findings from research on relationships in general are generalizable to friendships in particular. Therefore, we propose ideas for the study of narcissism and friendships in the second part of this chapter. Here, we focus on the idea that long-term friends might change their evaluation of the

narcissists' behavior over time. For example, a friends' judgment about narcissistic *bragging* might develop from being entertaining at first to being self-centered and, finally, to being indifferent. We end the chapter with suggestions for future research on narcissism within friendships that direct the attention to questions about how conflicts are solved and what goals or rewards both friends follow.

Keywords

Friendship · Friendship formation · Friendship maintenance · Friendship dissolution · Contextual reinforcement model

Although the body of literature on narcissism¹ is growing constantly, researchers have paid very little attention to its manifestations and associations within friendships. In this chapter, we aim at piquing researchers' interests in this gap. Therefore, we approach this topic in two parts: First, we summarize the current state of research, which, in fact, does not offer easy predictions for the impact of narcissism in friendships. Second,

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¹The terms “narcissism” and “narcissist” are used from now on as an abbreviation for people with higher scores on measures for assessing subclinical narcissism. The term “non-narcissist” is applied to people who score lower on narcissism scales. Furthermore, we refer to grandiose rather than vulnerable forms of narcissism.

we present a proposal that may guide research on narcissism's influence on the development of friendships.

Current State of Research

Friendship development can be distinguished into three stages (Fehr, 1996, 2012; Harris & Vazire, 2016): friendship formation, friendship maintenance, and friendship dissolution. At each stage the importance of relationship variables such as *support*, *reciprocity of liking*, *self-disclosure*, or *conflict* varies (Fehr, 2012). Thus, the benefits and costs for both partners vary depending on the friendship stage they are in. The contextual reinforcement model of narcissism (Campbell & Campbell, 2009) is based on a similar idea. The authors suggest that the benefits outweigh the costs for both the narcissist and the narcissists' interaction partner in the *emerging zone* (formation stage). However, in the *enduring zone* (maintenance stage), the costs rise for the narcissist but rise even stronger for the partner. The costs for the partner include, for example, low emotional support provided by the narcissist (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006). Costs for the narcissists, for example, could be less positive feedback or even criticism. Therefore, Campbell and Campbell (2009) suggest that narcissists have a high likelihood to cyclically return to the initial phase of social interactions, while interaction partners eventually leave the relationship due to high costs (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Although there is some evidence supporting this assumption in the field of romantic relationships and leadership, we believe that too little is known about the role of narcissism in friendships. In comparison to romantic relationships, friendships offer more potential for narcissists to act out their agentic orientation. For example, friendships are less intense or passionate, binding, exclusive, mutual, and committed, and they afford less investment than romantic relationships (see Harris & Vazire, 2016 for a summarizing comparison). In comparison to leader-follower relations, friendships are less risky in that narcissistic behaviors or

failures do not have a globally damaging impact (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Hence, friendships might have less social costs but provide more freedom than other social relationships. Given that people vary a lot in their attachment styles to parents, romantic partners, or friends (Deci & Ryan, 2000), being less committed to romantic partners (Campbell & Foster, 2002) must not necessarily mean being less committed to friends. Many studies examined samples which (among others) included friends of narcissists, and these friendships lasted on average between 2 and 13 years (Gore & Widiger, 2016; Maaß, Lämmle, Bensch, & Ziegler, 2016; Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). Hence, it seems at least possible that narcissists maintain long-term friendships. Maybe this is *just because of* the less binding nature of friendships. If this were true, one might wonder which factors influence friendships with narcissists. More precisely, which person and situation variables (see also Maaß, Luedkte, & Ziegler, submitted) promote or restrain friendship development?

In the following, we summarize direct and indirect findings that highlight the role narcissism plays or might play within friendships. Based on the narcissism literature, it seems that this trait can be a mixed blessing for each step during friendship development (see also Paulhus, 1998 for a similar view).

Friendship Formation

People more likely want to become friends with others when those others are physically attractive (Langlois et al., 2000), have good social skills (McEwan & Guerrero, 2010), or are similar to them (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Luckily for narcissists, they possess a series of these features that help them to get into contact with others: Not only are narcissists perceived as funnier, more extraverted, charming, and popular (Back, Schmuckle, & Egloff, 2010; Paulhus, 1998), new acquaintances also perceive them as being more attractive (Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Dufner, Rauthmann, Czarna, & Denissen, 2013; Holtzman & Strube, 2010).

Thus, narcissism might raise interaction partners' desire to become friends with them.

Nonetheless, one might wonder to what extent extraversion drives the good impressions of narcissists because both constructs are moderately correlated (e.g., $r = 0.49$, Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008). Furthermore, the association between extraversion and being liked weakens over time (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009) as does the association between narcissism and popularity (Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015). Hence, it should be noted that the empirical overlap between narcissism, liking, and extraversion has often not been sufficiently controlled for.

Friendship Maintenance

There are important strategies to keep a friendship going: self-disclosure, emotional or practical support, commitment, and spending time together (Fehr, 2012). To our knowledge, there is no direct research examining these strategies within friendships with respect to narcissism. However, research on narcissism in general and within romantic relationships in particular gives hints to what extent narcissists might employ such strategies in friendships as well.

Support On the one hand, one could assume that narcissists probably do not provide much emotional or practical support for their friends because they are prone to show little empathy (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014) and “are less likely to ‘catch the emotions’ of others” (Czarna, Wróbel, Dufner, & Zeigler-Hill, 2015, p. 1). Also, they avoid romantic partners who are caring and offer the potential for intimacy (Campbell, 1999). Instead, they focus on “others who possess traits that can personally benefit them (e.g., physical attractiveness) rather than those that may benefit the relationship (e.g., being emotionally intimate)” (Foster et al., 2006, p. 383). Clearly, such behavior is unlikely to benefit a friendship in the long term.

On the other hand, Hepper et al. (2014) found that narcissists *are* empathetic when asked to

take the perspective of a suffering person. Could this finding mean that, after all, narcissists *could* care and comfort their friend when she/he suffers? In addition, Jordan, Giacomini, and Kopp (2014) present first evidence that inducing values of care reduces narcissistic expressions and increases communal states as well as empathy. Also, research (Foster, Misra, & Reidy, 2009; Hermann, Teutemacher, & Lehtman, 2015) showed that narcissists concentrate as much as others on preventing negative events in their friendships (e.g., not insulting each other). They are highly approach-motivated which, in turn, leads to approach goals in friendships (e.g., deepening the relationship). Thus, there is evidence for the idea that narcissists support their friends.

Spending Time Together It is likely that narcissists like to spend time with others because of the moderately high association between narcissism and gregariousness, $r = 0.34$ (Miller, Gaughan, Pryor, Kamen, & Campbell, 2009) and the general social opportunity for admiration. Indeed, correlative studies showed that narcissists are approach-oriented toward having fun (Foster et al., 2009) and that they prefer friends who, among other features, are sociable, help with meeting potential mates, and have similar interests (Jonason & Schmitt, 2012). Also, narcissists spend more time of their daily lives in a group, talking about friends (Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010).

Nevertheless, the positive association between narcissism and sensation seeking (Emmons, 1981; Vize, Lynam, Collison, & Miller, 2016) and boredom (Wink & Donahue, 1997) might be beneficial for the narcissists' friends in the short but not the long term. This is in line with the idea of the contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009): the friend of a narcissist experiences several benefits and few costs in the short term but numerous costs in the long run, such as the expectation that mutual time together must be exciting. Hence, to maintain the friendship, both friends and narcissists would have to similarly like new activities.

Self-disclosure In general, the act of voluntarily sharing personal information with someone does not seem to be related to certain personality traits (Collins & Miller, 1994). In fact, in one study on social network behaviors, narcissism and self-disclosure were not significantly related (e.g., Wang & Stefanone, 2013).

Nonetheless, self-disclosure and narcissism might be indirectly connected through liking: People who self-disclose tend to be liked more (Miller, Cooke, Tsang, & Morgan, 1992), and narcissists disclose to self-promote (Maaß & Ziegler, 2017). However, narcissists might disclose agentic information only. For example, on online social networks, they post more status updates about their accomplishments and pictures of themselves (e.g., McKinney, Kelly, & Duran, 2012). Also, narcissists have been found to self-present favorably even when modesty would be socially more approving (Collins & Stukas, 2008; Morf, Ansara, & Shia, 2001). In addition, narcissism is related to more disagreeableness, for example, to more anger and swear words (Holtzman et al., 2010). Nonetheless, they also exhibit more social language (e.g., references to friends) which might point to a communal focus (Holtzman et al., 2010).

In sum, it is still unclear to what extent narcissists self-disclose to friends and what information they share and thus whether their friendships are more superficial than those of non-narcissists.

Commitment Compared to romantic relationships, there is less pressure for people to maintain (damaged) friendships in the long term, since friendships tend to be less binding and exclusive (Harris & Vazire, 2016). Thus, it is especially interesting what rewards and costs narcissists perceive in friendships and how these contribute to their commitment level. Campbell and Foster (2002) found the general tendency that narcissists are less committed to their romantic partners because they believe to have better relationship alternatives and also pay more attention to these alternatives. Wurst et al. (2016) provided a more detailed picture of the relationship between narcissism and commitment: Narcissists who are

high on rivalry (antagonistic self-protection) are less committed to their romantic partners, while there are no significant correlations for narcissists high on admiration (assertive self-enhancement). As the rules of friendship are slightly different than the rules of romantic relationships because exclusivity in friendships is not expected, it remains unclear to what extent these findings are transferable to friendships.

To sum up, when it comes to helpful strategies to maintain friendships, narcissistic behavior and its effects are hard to predict based on the current literature. Thus, it should be researched why narcissists fail to attract people's liking in some situations and are successful in others (Paulhus, 1998).

Friendship Dissolution

It is likely that friends are repelled by the antagonistic behavior of narcissists after some time (Leckelt et al., 2015; Paulhus, 1998), which according to the contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009) eventually makes the narcissists' friend leave the friendship. Even close others describe their narcissistic acquaintance as someone who wants to be the center of attention, brags, overestimates his/her abilities, thinks too much of him-/herself, is negativistic or self-defensive, and accuses others for their own failures (Park & Colvin, 2014; Vazire et al., 2008). Hence, the detrimental aspects of narcissism might indeed make friends want to end their relationship with narcissists.

Nonetheless, it is just as likely that narcissists turn their backs on their friends. Narcissists report experiencing more negative interactions (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) and perceive more transgressions (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003) and feelings of hostility toward close others, and they reduce closeness to friends when they perform worse than them (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Nicholls & Stukas, 2011). Therefore, the contextual reinforcement model might be true in that narcissists are more interested in forming

new acquaintances, which potentially offer admiration, status, or excitement, and end friendships that do not meet these requirements anymore.

Who Is Willing to Be Friends with Narcissists?

When thinking about all the mixed aspects of narcissism within friendships that we described above, one might wonder: Who is willing to befriend narcissists at all? In our own study (Maaß et al., 2016), we compared the personality profiles of two best friends whose friendship lasted for at least 2 years. We showed that the similarity of friends in narcissism predicted similarity across all Big Five domains. We argued that homophily (see also Lamkin, Campbell, vanDellen, & Miller, 2015) might have important advantages for narcissists in friendships. For example, interactional problems might be reduced when both friends share the same deviating aspects of agreeableness because both would accept the other's selfish lifestyle and focus on own benefits (see Cuperman & Ickes, 2009, for opposing arguments). Furthermore, extraversion might help in the organization of one's leisure time, conscientiousness might reinforce a shared preference for competition, less neuroticism would reduce anxieties and emotional problems, and less openness would help defend the narcissistic in-group of the two best friends against ideas from the outside. In line with this reasoning, there is evidence that narcissists not only know that they behave narcissistically but that they also see these traits as desirable or worth striving for and that they accept these qualities in others more than non-narcissists (Carlson, 2012; Carlson et al., 2011; Hart & Adams, 2014). In conclusion, because being friends with narcissists seems to be a mixed blessing, it could be that only similar friends can maintain such a friendship.

A Framework for Future Research

Our proposed framework for future research is displayed in Fig. 37.1. It is based on the idea that person and situation factors are responsible for

the expression of less or more narcissistic behaviors in a situation (Maaß et al., *submitted*). Thereby we assume that narcissists can show both self-promotion and self-defensive behavior at the same time (see also Holtzman et al., 2010).² Hence, a first step would include the analyses of factors that promote or impede self-promotion, self-defense, and satisfaction with the friend at each stage of friendship development. For example, a person factor might be the similarity between two friends which offers many advantages in a series of friendship contexts (Maaß et al., 2016). Also, the extent to which narcissists express higher admiration but lower rivalry levels at the trait level (Back et al., 2013) might be relevant because it might be generally easier for non-narcissistic friends to deal with lower rivalry-expressing narcissists (Wurst et al., 2016). Situation factors might be, for example, the perceived valence of a conversation, conflict, or activity (e.g., as being admired or respected) with the friend. An interaction with a friend that would be perceived as negative by the narcissist might trigger even more self-promotion or self-defensive behavior (i.e., more entitlement; Maaß et al., *submitted*). That, in turn, might strain the friendship.

In a second step, researchers could focus on the impact of such mechanisms (e.g., "suddenly" expressing more entitlement) on the friend (e.g., feeling irritated or angry) but also the impact of the friends' reaction (e.g., disagreeing with the narcissist) on the narcissist (e.g., feeling aggressive). The concentration on dyadic perspectives with respect to person and situation aspects is necessary to understand the influence of narcissism over time. Hence, we propose a dynamic phase framework that focuses on the interplay between narcissists and their friends at the global level of friendship development.

²Most results that we presented so far referred to the conceptualization of agentic narcissism as assessed with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979). However, recent conceptualizations also include antagonistic aspects (Back et al., 2013). In the following we refer to grandiose narcissism including both aspects.

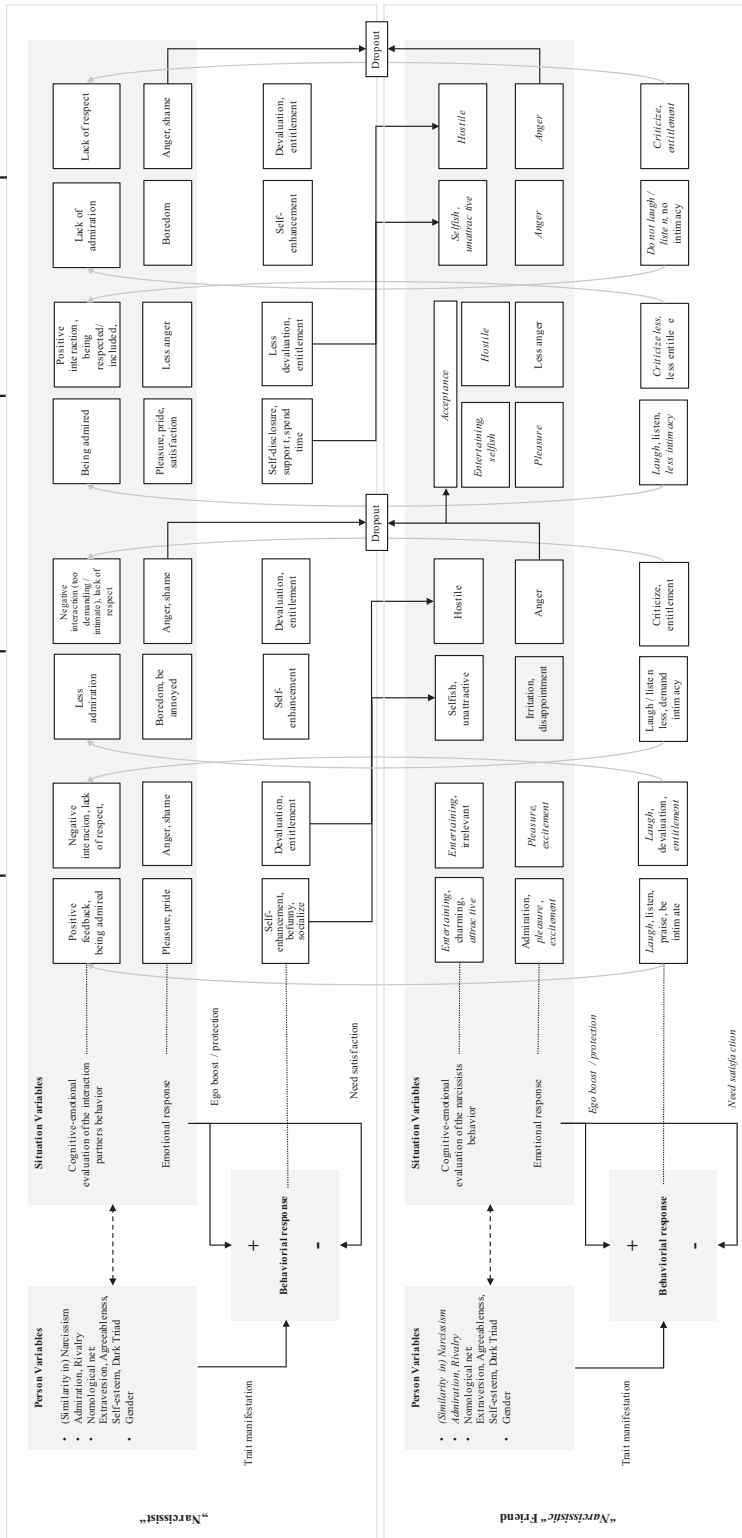


Fig. 37.1 Application of the Narcissism in Situations Framework (NARCIS; Maaß et al., in prep.) to the development of friendships with narcissists. It considers person and situation variables that increase or decrease narcissistic behavior in a particular situation. Within each friendship phase, there might be typical situational responses for the narcissist and the according friend who can be both "non-narcissistic" and "narcissistic." The descriptions in italics represent responses that both non-narcissistic and narcissistic friends might show (e.g., accept the narcissists' personality in the maintenance phase). Situation-invariant person factors (e.g.,

the general trait level of narcissism, gender) might influence to what extent self-promotion (e.g., being charming, self-enhancement) or self-defense (e.g., devalue others, entitlement) is expressed within friendly interactions. However, situation factors like the cognitive-emotional evaluation of the friend's behavior (e.g., as being admired or being criticized) might as well lead to higher or lower narcissistic behaviors through the mechanisms of ego boost, ego protection, or need satisfaction

Dynamic Phases of Friendships with Narcissists

As Fig. 37.1 illustrates, future research should be interested in the perception, interpretation, and response of the interaction partner (i.e., unacquainted person, acquaintance, short-term and long-term friend). There is evidence that narcissists do not change their behaviors much over time but that the interaction partners are the ones who change their evaluation of such behaviors, for example, narcissists' dominant or aggressive behaviors are perceived less positively and more negatively over time (Leckelt et al., 2015; see also Holtzman et al., 2010). Long-term friends might have passed through several cognitive-emotional stages before knowing how to deal with the paradoxical narcissistic behavior and reaching the maintenance phase. Other acquaintances might turn away from the narcissists at a much earlier stage (i.e., drop out), as suggested by the contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009).

Formation At zero-acquaintance, interaction partners might concentrate on the attractive features of narcissists. As displayed in Fig. 37.1, the interaction with narcissists might activate certain cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of the (potential) friend within the specific situation. For example, the friend might evaluate the narcissist's self-enhancement (e.g., talk about own achievements) and hostility (e.g., complain about stupid mistakes of others) as either entertaining ("he/she tells really funny anecdotes") or irrelevant ("as long as he/she does not complain about me, I don't care"). In turn, the friend might experience feelings of admiration, pleasure, or excitement. On the one hand, laughing, listening ("what happened then?"), praising ("you were right"), and the wish for more intimacy could be the behavioral consequences. On the other hand, the friend could also adjust his/her own entitlement level to the narcissist's degree to increase liking (e.g., also complain about others' incompetence). Highly narcissistic acquaintances (see descriptions in italics in Fig. 37.1) might be especially likely to judge the narcissist as entertaining and

attractive but might also express entitlement themselves.

However, in everyday life, the friend might realize that the unpleasant behaviors are not "just funny anecdotes" but an integral part of the narcissist's personality (see also Park & Colvin, 2014; Paulhus, 1998). The friend then might judge self-promotion as selfish ("it's always about him/her") and entitlement as hostile ("he/she seems not to like people") and might feel irritated, disappointed, or angry. Consequently, they might pay less attention ("he/she always tells the same story") or criticize the narcissist ("you never ask what I want or how I feel"). That might be the point where most interaction partners might refrain from narcissists (i.e., "drop out" in Fig. 37.1). It is also possible that narcissists drop out at this point because they are annoyed by the claims, criticism, or intimacy, or bored because their friends no longer provide admiration. However, if their friends are similarly narcissistic, this might prevent such early dissolution.

Maintenance One challenge for potential friends of narcissists might be either to stay in the friendship or move on from it: Some may perceive the costs to be too high and, thus, leave the friendship, while others might adjust to and/or accept the whole narcissistic personality including the costs. Those individuals might perceive both the entertaining and the selfish-hostile sides ("he/she is pretty funny but if something does not go his/her way..."; cf. Fig. 37.1). They might have found a way to cope with it by avoiding demands ("I don't expect him/her to come to my birthday but if he/she does, it will be awesome"), intimacy ("I'd rather talk to someone else about my problems"), or criticism ("I just let him/her talk"), and thus, they might experience less anger. Because friendships are less binding and exclusive, coping might be a lot easier than within romantic relationships. For example, in case of a fight, one could simply meet other friends, or just not get in touch with the narcissist for some time. Acceptance seems to be especially easy for narcissistic friends (Hart & Adams, 2014). For non-narcissistic friends, the stages of disappointment

and acceptance/adjustment could be repeated several times within an existing friendship (i.e., they are dynamic phases). Nonetheless, as described above, narcissists might also be able to behave in a way that enhances satisfaction within the friendship in some situations (e.g., spend time together, support, self-disclose) because they experience more positive interactions with their friends. This, in turn, might even reduce their narcissistic expressions in the short term because they might feel socially included and respected by others (Maaß et al., [submitted](#)).

Dissolution It remains an open question for future research how and when the friendships of narcissists end. Our own study (Maaß et al., 2016) showed that it might be beneficial when narcissists are friends with others who have a similar personality. However, one could also speculate that especially agreeable and self-confident persons would continue a friendship in case of conflict because they tend to be more forgiving (McCullough, 2001). Nonetheless, it could also be that the friend would eventually resign if the narcissist openly and over a longer period turns his/her rivalry against the friend because rivalry affects forgiveness and modesty (Back et al., 2013) and anger might not be prevented any longer (“he/she does not care about me at all”; see Fig. 37.1).

Summary and Outlook

The current state of literature contains little knowledge about the impact of narcissism on friendships. According to the contextual reinforcement model (Campbell & Campbell, 2009), narcissism is beneficial for the formation of a relationship but detrimental for its maintenance and eventually leads to dissolution. There is some support for these assumptions from research on romantic relationships (e.g., Wurst et al., 2016). However, whether that is transferable to friendships remains unanswered. There are also good arguments that narcissists exhibit behaviors that in fact might enhance friendship maintenance

(e.g., through their approach motivation). We propose a framework for the study of narcissism in friendships (Fig. 37.1) including the idea that narcissists reveal their potentially problematic behavior in every situation but that the friends might change their evaluation of this behavior over the course of the friendship. Bragging, for instance, might be seen as entertaining at first, then as self-centered and impairing, and later as self-centered but indifferent. All in all, future research should especially enlighten how conflicts are solved and what goals or rewards both friends follow. For that, more longitudinal studies, self- and other reports, and observer ratings of direct interactions between friends are needed.

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New Directions in Narcissistic Aggression: The Role of the Self-concept on Group-Based Aggression

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Abstract

Narcissism is a construct that has been studied in the context of aggression. Narcissistic aggression typically emerges following ego-provocations, suggesting that the narcissistic ego is sensitive to insults. However, what defines a narcissistic ego may vary across individuals. Some may define themselves through agentic and individualistic qualities, whereas others define themselves through a communal framework or group identity. Thus, how narcissistic individuals define themselves may impact which ego-relevant domains become sensitive, and those domains may be relevant in predicting different forms (e.g., group-based vs. interpersonal) of aggression. Here, we review the literature on three types of narcissism: individual, collective, and communal. We argue that, although previously dismissed, narcissism is a critical component in terrorism ideology, when it takes on a communal or “sacred” form. If the central focus of a narcissistic identity is the sacred values of a group, rather than agentic individualism, then perceptions of insult toward those sacred values should elicit aggression. This aggression

should be especially pronounced in the narcissistic individual, possibly taking the form of terrorism. Indeed, emerging research has demonstrated that overconfidence in one’s religious knowledge is linked with support for religious terrorism. In summary, narcissism may take on different forms depending on the definition of the narcissistic individual’s ego. Thus, depending on how narcissistic individuals define themselves, such individuals may pose group-based vs. interpersonal threats, following provocations in those respective domains.

Keywords

Entitlement · Communal narcissism · Collective narcissism · Identity fusion · Religious extremism · Terrorism · Dark triad · Ego-provocation · Group identification · Ego

Among the different personality traits associated with dispositional aggressive tendencies, narcissism has been studied fairly extensively. The general consensus is that individuals high on measures of subclinical grandiose narcissism generally require a provocation in order to elicit an aggressive response (Bettencourt et al., 2006). However, not all provocations will elicit an aggressive response from narcissistic individu-

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als. Narcissistic individuals are extraordinarily ego-focused and spend most of their time cultivating social praise (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). As a result, provocations that seemingly insult (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), deprive (Bushman, Bonacci, Van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003), or ostracize (Twenge & Campbell, 2003) narcissistic individuals tend to be the strongest in eliciting aggression. These provocations (heretofore referred to as “ego-provocations”) share a common theme of threatening the narcissistic individual’s perceived identity of superiority (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Only ego-provocations elicit an aggressive response from narcissistic individuals; other types of provocations (e.g., direct aggression) do not seem to elicit the same aggressive response (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

Although it may seem intuitively clear what constitutes an “ego-provocation,” it is less clear what constitutes a narcissistic ego. Traditionally, the construct of narcissism has been considered from an individualistic perspective, which tends to assume that narcissistic individuals must perceive themselves as highly individualistic as well. However, individuals define themselves in different ways, through their achievements, associations, affiliations, culture, and other experiences throughout life. Furthermore, contemporary research has diverged from the traditional conception of narcissism to define a typology that revolves around the manner by which a narcissist perceives him or herself (e.g., as an individual, a victim, a community member, or a group member).

In this chapter we will first briefly explore the consequences of ego-provocation on narcissistic aggression in the traditional sense. From there, we will expand this scope to introduce three other conceptions of narcissism and discuss the manner by which they are related and distinguished through differential self-perceptions. In total, three conceptions of narcissism will be discussed; they are grandiose (agentic), communal, and collective narcissism. From there, we will discuss the importance of distinguishing these three conceptions of narcissism when researching group conflict, intergroup aggression, and religious vio-

lence. Finally, we will discuss the consequences of narcissistic overconfidence in group-based situations, with a special focus on religion.

Individual Differences in Aggression: Interpersonal Consequences

Narcissism is unique with respect to aggression. Among other aggressive personality traits, narcissism is the best predictor of aggression under ego-provocation. This pattern emerges in spite of the overlap that exists between narcissism and other manipulative personality constructs (e.g., psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and sadism) that have been referred to in tandem as the “Dark Tetrad” (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Međedović, & Petrović, 2015; see also Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013; Chabrol, Van Leeuwen, Rodgers, & Séjourné, 2009; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Paulhus, 2014). Although psychopathy and sadism have emerged as the most overtly aggressive of these traits across most situations (e.g., Buckels et al., 2013), narcissism is unique in that it is associated with responding aggressively to the widest array of ego-provocations. For example, those high in other dark traits do not react aggressively to ostracism (McDonald & Donnellan, 2012) or insult (Jones & Paulhus, 2010).

Further, although psychopathy is associated with direct sexual coercion, narcissism is associated with sexual coaxing intentions when imagining a refusal from a date (Jones & Olderbak, 2014). In sum, there are several components to narcissism that make them particularly susceptible to ego-provocation above and beyond other dark personalities. Emmons (1987) made the argument that the most toxic facet associated with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1981) was exploitative/entitlement. Because narcissistic individuals feel entitled to unrealistic privileges, treatment, and status, for example, they are more likely to meet with frustration whenever these lofty expectations are not met (Campbell et al., 2004). Thus, because their entitlement and

expectations are so high, the narcissistic individual is often frustrated and reactively aggressive about how they are “treated unfairly” (e.g., Berkowitz, 1989).

Empirical research has demonstrated a link between exploitative/entitlement and direct aggression without provocation (Locke, 2009; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008) and dispositional aggressive tendencies (Reidy, Foster, & Martinez, 2010). However, when compared head-to-head with other dark personalities, narcissism is not the primary predictor of unprovoked aggression (Buckels et al., 2013). Thus, these findings may need to be qualified by narcissism’s association with other dark personality traits (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Psychopathy, in particular, is an aggressive personality trait that shares some common features with narcissism, such as callous affect and manipulative tendencies (Jones & Figueredo, 2013). Because of their shared callousness, narcissists and psychopaths are unlikely to be upset at the idea of harming someone else. However, the motivation to do harm may stem from a variety of reasons that are unrelated to provocation, including (but not limited to) instrumental gain, pleasure, immediate gratification, sex, or just for fun. Aside from conditions of ego-provocation, psychopathy (Reidy, Zeichner, & Martinez, 2008) and sadism (Buckels et al., 2013) are actually the most aggressive traits.

Building on the findings of unprovoked aggression, the Dark Tetrad are also predictors of dispositional aggressive tendencies (Paulhus, Curtis, & Jones, 2018). In an exploratory study investigating the relationship between narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and dispositional aggression using structural equations modeling (SEM), Jones and Neria (2015) found unique relationships among the dark triad traits with respect to different aspects of aggression according to Buss and Perry (1992). Jones and Neria (2015) found that narcissism, as a unified construct, was not uniquely related to aggression, be it physical, verbal, anger, or hostility. Rather, narcissism was uniquely and *negatively* related to hostility, which may stem from the idea that

narcissistic individuals believe that others love them by default – superseding any dispositional aggression or suspicion. Nevertheless, at the facet level, there were differences within narcissism such that grandiosity led to high levels of hostility and entitlement led to low levels of hostility. Thus, narcissism (as operationalized by the NPI) appears to be heterogeneous when it comes to hostile attributions (cf., Li et al., 2016).

In sum, given the entitlement and grandiosity associated with narcissism, which logically align with aggression under conditions of challenge or threat, it is unlikely that narcissistic individuals—*ceteris paribus*—will be hostile. However, although narcissists may not be immediately hostile, they do have a hair trigger that leads them to become aggressive (Jones, & Paulhus, 2010; cf., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Additionally, narcissists have an inflated sense of entitlement that is likely to lead them to feel highly frustrated when they do not get what they believe they deserve (Emmons, 1987).

More contemporary research investigating the underlying facets of trait narcissism have broken grounds by cleverly introducing the concept of perspective-taking to a trait that embodies self-centeredness. Hepper, Hart, and Sedikides (2014) found that perspective-taking enhanced empathetic responding among those high in narcissism. Thus, the self-centered nature of the narcissistic character appears to be the primary reason narcissistic individuals do not display empathy. This sole focus on the self leads to other interesting findings (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002). For example, Locke (2009) found that narcissism was associated with associating desirable and uniquely human characteristics to the self and ascribing dehumanizing characteristics to others. However, forcing narcissistic individuals to take the perspective of someone else elicits empathetic responses.

In sum, narcissistic individuals appear to be callous primarily because they are too self-centered to notice others. They tend to have grandiose identities and an entitled sense of self, both of which lead to aggression in response to any form of ego-provocation. They tend to

dehumanize others and have a disregard for anyone else's well-being, findings that are consistent with other dark personality traits related to narcissism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Group-Based Conflict, Is Narcissism Relevant?

We have established that narcissistic aggression is reactive in nature and seems to stem from an intense preoccupation with the self that generates frustration and aggression when other's needs or wants disrupt this preoccupation. At first blush, the idea that narcissism might play a role in group-based aggression seems antithetical to the construct. However, if we look a bit closer at how narcissistic individuals choose to define their self-concepts, we may understand a bit more about what types of aggression in which the narcissistic individual is likely to engage and how that might help define a clearer typology of narcissism. Narcissism, as defined by the NPI (Raskin & Hall, 1981), is focused on agentic accomplishments and a highly individualistic sense of self. Thus, the first question that needs to be answered in this line of research is how the grandiosity and entitlement inherent to narcissism are expressed based on other coexisting factors; the second pertains to what exactly makes up a narcissistic individual's self-concept.

There are, however, factors that moderate narcissistic entitlement, for example, that the presence or absence of self-esteem and neuroticism moderates how entitlement will be expressed among narcissistic individuals. In fact, Krizan & Herlache (2018; see also Krizan, this volume) argued that, although the common element of narcissism is entitlement, this entitlement may take the form of hubris (grandiose) or vulnerability (vulnerable), or both. Thus, although vulnerable narcissism is associated with low self-esteem, that low self-esteem manifests as anger, resentment, and shame (Pincus, Cain, & Wright, 2014).

Expressions of grandiose narcissistic entitlement may also take communal forms. For example, Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, and Maio (2012) argue that the communal form of narcissism is similar in that it is associated with entitle-

ment, arrogance, and exploitativeness. However, the grandiosity of the individual is derived from an exaggerated sense of communal value. In this way, communal narcissism is associated with an exaggerated sense of a prosocial self.

Narcissistic entitlement may also take on a group form, such as in collective narcissism. Collective narcissism is where an individual has a superior group identity and derives a superior sense of self from that group identification (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009). To be clear, those high in *collective narcissism* consider themselves superior because of their group affiliation, whereas those high in communal narcissism derive their superior identity from their prosocial value within a group.

These key distinctions have opened up new areas of research and domains of aggression that were previously thought to be unrelated to narcissism. Individuals high in narcissism may be a proud member of an elite group or regarded as a high status member of a particular community. As such, their self-worth or search for superior sense of self may heavily involve such groups, group members, or affiliations. Further, such groups (e.g., religious affiliation, military involvement, nationality, ethnic group) may become intricately tied to narcissistic individuals' egos. For narcissistic individuals who define themselves completely or partially through these group affiliations, defense of that group should lead to aggression when the group is threatened. One process that describes this fusion of self and group is identity fusion. In brief, identity fusion is a concept defined by Swann Jr, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, and Bastian (2012) as a merging of group and self-identity such that the two cannot be disentangled. It is different than (but correlated with) identification and predicts a host of self-sacrificial behaviors in favor of group enhancement.

An obvious example of identity fusion and extreme group behavior comes from religious terrorism. However, the concept of narcissism has been widely disregarded in the field of terrorism studies (e.g., Sageman, 2004). Notwithstanding, narcissism as a construct has not been updated in the terrorism studies field since it was first defined according to the

psychodynamic perspective. We argue, therefore, that narcissism should be reintroduced and explored as a potential contributor to terroristic violence. The more a collectively narcissistic individual views their religion or religious community as an extension of themselves, the more violent that individual will become when the group is threatened, criticized, challenged, deprived, ignored, or insulted.

Perhaps the most relevant example of narcissistic piety in the form of communal narcissism form was the terrorist leader, Osama bin Laden. In his book *Understanding Terror Networks*, Sageman (2004) discusses bin Laden at length and concludes that bin Laden's consistent shows of devotion to his religion mean that he could not possibly be a narcissist. However, there are reasons to believe that bin Laden had an inflated sense of righteousness, self-concept, and moral entitlement that derived through his superior sense of righteousness, which is theoretically tied to communal narcissism (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012). In his dissertation, Neria (2017) articulates in detail how bin Laden actually fits a quintessential pattern of a communal narcissist as described by Gebauer et al. (2012). Below are some observations drawn from that dissertation.

The most obvious starting point to begin a discussion on bin Laden is the way in which he pushed to be regarded not only as a terrorist leader but as a religious leader as well. He held several prestigious titles that denoted him as a religious scholar and authority, and according to accounts, not only did bin Laden encourage the use of these titles, he made efforts to represent himself as being on the level of companions to the prophet Muhammed (Figchel, 2007). Further, bin Laden flaunted his religious knowledge in self-aggrandizing ways, such as speaking in archaic dialects only traditionally used for reciting religious texts. Finally, bin Laden adorned himself with specific garments meant to depict him as a holy figure (Miliora, 2004) as well as a militant one, which is extremely uncommon among Muslim terrorist leaders (e.g., Ranstorp, 2007). To be clear, overt agentic grandiosity would not be consistent with the

prototypical devout religious extremist—as Sageman (2004) asserts; however, it is not contraindicative of the common feature of entitlement that is endemic to narcissism in general. To quote Neria (2017), “By cultivating an impossibly high image of himself in staged photographs and by insisting on speaking using a dialect of Arabic that tends to be restricted to religious text, bin Laden postured himself as more than an ideal member of the Muslim community but a divinely inspired leader—such displays would be perfectly descriptive of *communal narcissism*” (Neria, 2017; pg. 26, emphasis in original).

In many ways, religious piety may lend itself to a “holier than thou” identity, which would be aggrandizing depending on how one defined their self-concept. Thus, at a broader level, we argue that it is not just interpersonal conflicts that are predicted through ego-provocation of a narcissistic individual. Global, moral, and group-based conflicts can be exacerbated via narcissism (especially via narcissistic leadership) as well. Because the self-concept of a narcissistic individual may include group membership or affiliation, the narcissistic individual will protect and defend the sacred values of the group in the same way he/she would defend her/his own ego. Further, the self-concept/group overlap may exacerbate the perceived sacrosanct nature of the group and the “sacred” values that the group espouses (Tetlock, 2003). Because of their charisma, charm, and thirst for power, it is also likely that narcissistic individuals, with a fused group identity, will gravitate toward leadership positions in those groups. This gravitation would come from their sense of moral certainty, charm, charisma, and the need to be at the center of events. Take for example moral certainty (Skitka, 2010). There is hubris associated with an individual being so confident in God's wishes, and their interpretation of scripture may be that God would want people to be murdered and that it is one's sacred duty to ensure that these acts get carried out.

Apprehension about any association between narcissism and religious groups, which are

supposed to promote humility and sacrifice for the greater good, is perfectly understandable. However, religion offers unique opportunities for individuals to be admired through their communal works, pious devotion, and religious deeds (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010). For example, research on religion has shown that individuals may use group affiliation to search for a boost in the likelihood of agentic praise. Further, individuals have used narcissism in a communal form to find ways to cultivate agentic praise from others (Gebauer et al., 2012). Thus, the way agentic narcissism and the quest for self-praise manifest may shift upon identity fusion with a particular group. In the case of religion, narcissistic individuals may become more communally focused, but their mission is still the same: self-praise. Thus, to the degree that one uses religion to boost their image in the eyes of others, that individual would lash out at the notion that they may not be humble, holy, or devout. Further, the idea that one's religion or beliefs are not pure, sacred, respected, absolute, or righteous may similarly elicit aggression.

Recent research has only begun empirically investigating these issues, and it is our hope that this chapter will incite more. For example, Jones, Neria, Helm, Sahlan, and Carré (2017) have found that overconfidence with respect to one's religious knowledge may actually be a driving force in predicting religious violence. Religious overconfidence and its link to communal narcissism is actually an idea that was developed by two separate research groups in isolation. For example, Gebauer, Sedikides, and Schrade (2017) found that claiming to know Christian passages that do not exist has unique consequences with respect to communal narcissism and ego-enhancing functions. Similarly, Jones and colleagues (2017) were focused on the relationship that religious overclaiming had to violence and support for violence in the name of God. In a series of studies linking narcissism to religious and secular overclaiming, Neria (2017) found that *communal* but not *agentic* narcissism was associated with elevated risk for religious overclaiming and supporting violence in the name of

God. Thus, individuals who feel a superior sense of group contribution may be dangerous at a group level.

Summary and Conclusions

There is a strong link between ego-provocation and aggression among individuals high in narcissism. There are several components, especially within grandiose and subclinical narcissism, that lead to such aggression in response to ego-provocation including entitlement and grandiosity. To date, the focus of these inquiries has been at the interpersonal level. Further, these inquiries have only considered narcissism in its agentic form. However, we encourage expanding this scope and argue for future research to investigate more forms of narcissism, including vulnerable, communal, and collective when investigating aggression—and especially group aggression. We maintain that, to the degree the narcissistic individual is identified with a particular group, and that group is part of the narcissistic individual's self-concept, the narcissistic individual will lash out at perceived group threats as vehemently as though it were a personal assault.

Empirical evidence has supported these assertions, finding that communal forms of narcissism are linked with overclaiming religious knowledge. This religious knowledge overclaiming is then, in turn, related to violence in the name of God. Thus, it may be time to expand the scope of the harm narcissism may do to society. Interpersonally, the link is clear. However, globally, narcissism may exacerbate already strong tensions between groups. In particular, individuals high in narcissism may have a similarly sensitive hair trigger when it comes to group threats, as well as personal threats, when they find themselves strongly tied to a particular group. From this perspective, it seems relatively easy to understand how, then, tensions would escalate to destructive levels.

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Narcissism's Relationship with Envy: It's Complicated

39

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Abstract

This chapter introduces envy, a puzzling, apparently self-damaging emotion, and examines its complex, paradoxical relationship with narcissism. Our review of the literature suggests that clarifying this relationship requires distinguishing between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, malicious and benign forms of envy, and exploring dimensions of narcissistic admiration and rivalry. Throughout the chapter we highlight key developments in, and future directions for, conceptualizing, eliciting, and assessing envy and narcissism.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Envy · Benign envy · Malicious envy

Envy is so shameful a passion that we can never dare to acknowledge it. La Rochefoucauld (1643; cited in Silver & Sabini, 1978, p. 108)

The above maxim identifies a central dilemma facing those who study envy: if people are reluctant to admit to envy, how can one study it? This problem is especially acute with grandiose narcissists whose pretensions to superiority make them loathe to admit to the deficiencies or inferiority that acknowledging envy implies. And yet, paradoxically, they may also be more susceptible to it. Despite this intriguing question, the relationship of narcissism and envy has received little empirical attention until relatively recently. In this chapter, we review efforts to conceptualize and demonstrate envy's complex relationship with narcissism and conclude by summarizing what has been learned, what unresolved questions remain, and the most promising directions for future research.

Envy: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Research

Envy is a puzzling emotion. It is a widespread human frailty that is recognized across cultures and history (e.g., Hill & Buss, 2008; Lindhold, 2008), yet it is not immediately obvious what adaptive function it serves. Indeed, it seems to garner widespread repudiation and has a loathsome, corrosive character that appears to slowly

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envelop its host. Included as one of the seven deadly sins, it is unique in offering the sinner no pleasure (Silver & Sabini, 1978).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1991) defines envy as “entail(ing) feelings of displeasure and ill will at the superiority of another person in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable; to regard with discontent another’s possession of some superior advantage which one would like to have for oneself” (p. 523). Often confused with jealousy, envy can be distinguished by a focus on one’s current lack (versus a narrower fear of the potential loss of a significant relationship) and affective components including inferiority, longing, resentment, and ill will (versus anxiety, suspiciousness, and anger; Parrott & Smith, 1993). Envy has been conceptualized and assessed as both a dispositional trait (a propensity toward more frequent and intense envy) and an episodic state (in-the-moment feelings of envy; Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle, & Kim, 1999). Several dispositional measures exist, with two of the earliest being the unpublished York Enviousness Scale (YES; Gold, 1996), which utilizes 20 subtly worded items that do not contain the word envy that is intended to minimize socially desirable responding, and the Dispositional Envy Scale (DES; Smith et al., 1999), a more concise, 8-item scale that explicitly references envy in several items and has enjoyed wider use. Episodic envy has been more commonly assessed in research studies than dispositional envy. While at least one published scale exists (Episodic Envy Scale; Cohen-Charash, 2009), most studies have used composite scales that separately assess core features of envy (e.g., ill will, inferiority) and/or single-item measures of “envy.”

Research on envy has revealed several factors that affect the intensity with which it is experienced. Envy tends to be more potent when the comparison occurs in an important, self-relevant domain, the envied individual is similar to oneself or their relationship is close (vs. peripheral), and one’s standing relative to others is easily and objectively determined (Alicke & Zell, 2008). Envy intensity also increases by actively imagining an alternative situation in

which one was able to obtain the envied possession (van de Ven & Zeelenberg, 2015). Social comparison situations vary in the degree of envy they elicit. Stronger envy emerges from comparisons involving status and prestige, success in attracting potential dating partners, and attractiveness, with some evident sex differences across comparison domains (DelPriore, Hill, & Buss, 2012).

Envy and Narcissism

Envy has long been regarded as a symptom of narcissistic personality organization across clinical writings (e.g., Kernberg, 1975) and diagnostic nomenclature (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, 2013). Kernberg (1975), for instance, suggested that narcissists experience envy when their sense of superiority is called into question by others’ success or happiness. Considering their dependence on superiority, self-aggrandizement, and self-promotion (e.g., Horvath & Morf, 2010; Morf, Torchetti, & Schürch, 2011), the implied inferiority within envy should be highly threatening to narcissists. Indeed, narcissism (as assessed by the NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) is linked to hostility toward advantaged others (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004) and interpersonal aggression following insult (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), suggesting exaggerated reactivity to social comparison threats and a potential link to envy. However, the initial empirical test of the narcissism-envy relationship (Gold, 1996) indicated that dispositional envy (as measured by the YES) was uncorrelated with the NPI total score and its factors.

Although Gold’s (1996) finding challenges the long-held notion of a link between narcissism and envy, researchers have continued to probe the hypothesized link by broadening the conceptualization and measurement of narcissism and envy. A growing body of research has supported the distinction between expressions of grandiose narcissism of the sort captured by the NPI and a second, vulnerable phenotypic expression (cf. Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008).

These expressions share core features such as entitlement and interpersonal antagonism (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003) but diverge in several important respects across domains of personality, interpersonal behavior, and psychopathology (Miller et al., 2011). Indeed, vulnerable narcissism's unrelentingly maladaptive character (e.g., Miller et al., 2011) may potentially accentuate envy reactions, perhaps by making upward social comparisons more likely or impactful, relative to grandiose narcissism.

Two subsequent studies have provided strong support for a vulnerable narcissism-envy link. Krizan and Johar (2012) provided the first comprehensive test of narcissism-envy relations. They reported that vulnerable narcissism (primarily measured by the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale [HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 1997]) was consistently positively associated with dispositional envy (DES) across student and community samples (Study 1) and across self- and peer ratings (Study 2). In contrast, grandiose narcissism (primarily measured by the NPI) was weakly and negatively associated with dispositional envy (Studies 1–2). Moreover, self-rated vulnerable narcissism was linked to stronger episodic envy across four of five assessed affective components of envy (inferiority, depressive, subjective injustice and hostile feelings, but not ill will) for a recalled instance of envy (Study 2); self-rated grandiose narcissism, in contrast, was only associated with stronger feelings of ill will. This divergent pattern was replicated in vulnerable and grandiose narcissists' responses to a fictional high-status (enviable) peer (Study 3). Vulnerable (but not grandiose) narcissism was also linked to both dispositional and episodic *schadenfreude*, a sense of malicious pleasure in response to another's misfortune, and this effect was mediated by envy.

Neufeld and Johnson (2016) proposed and tested an integrated framework whereby aspects of narcissism may facilitate episodic envy via stronger dispositional envy and/or perceptions of relative deprivation that one lacks something they feel they ought to possess. In an effort to disentangle the contributions to envy of adaptive and maladaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism,

separate leadership/authority and grandiose exhibitionism facets of the NPI (Ackerman et al., 2011) were assessed alongside dispositional entitlement (Psychological Entitlement Scale; Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004), a core symptom characteristic of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Across both studies and consistent with Krizan and Johar's (2012) findings, vulnerable narcissism (assessed by the HSNS and supplemented by factors from the Pathological Narcissism Inventory [PNI; Pincus et al., 2009] in Study 2) was consistently linked to stronger dispositional envy (DES) and indirectly promoted stronger episodic envy (Episodic Envy Scale) toward an advantaged peer via dispositional envy and, in turn, relative deprivation. Entitlement was a significant indirect predictor of stronger envy feelings via relative deprivation, suggesting that narcissists' sense of frustrated entitlements may be one important route whereby narcissism may lead to envy. However, other aspects unique to narcissistic grandiosity were not linked to stronger dispositional or episodic envy; if anything, the adaptive leadership/authority facet appeared to be mildly protective against envy feelings (indirectly via dispositional envy), although this result was not consistently observed across both studies.

Taken together, both studies clearly establish a strong link between vulnerable narcissism and envy. They do not, however, support a grandiose narcissism-envy link despite the aforementioned theoretical and diagnostic claims. The final verdict on grandiose narcissism and envy may not yet be in, however. Lange, Crusius, and Hagemeyer (2016) provide novel evidence of a robust grandiose narcissism-envy relationship. To do this, the authors introduced a distinct form of envy (benign) and adopted a relatively new approach to measuring narcissism, the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013). As these are key differences in their approach from past research, we briefly describe and comment on them.

Lange et al. (2016) distinguish between malicious envy, implied in all references to

envy thus far, and benign envy. While both types of envy are understood to involve the lack of a desired object and some degree of frustration, relative to malicious envy, benign envy involves greater liking and admiration for an advantaged other and motivation to *level up* and improve one's outcomes to close the social comparison gap (vs. motivation to *pull down* advantaged others; van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). Although the legitimacy of benign envy was initially questioned as a hostility-free form more akin to admiration (e.g., Smith & Kim, 2007), this distinction has historical credence as a separate, lesser expression of envy (Oxford English Dictionary, 1991) and is reflected in certain languages that have words for both malicious and benign envy, such as Dutch (van de Ven et al., 2009) and German (Crusius & Lange, 2014). Accumulating evidence has supported benign envy's distinctiveness from malicious envy (e.g., Falcon, 2015) insofar as they are elicited by different situational cues (authentic vs. hubristic pride displays; Lange & Crusius, 2015a), involve distinct attentional patterns (Crusius & Lange, 2014), and are linked to unique cognitive and behavioral consequences (e.g., van de Ven et al., 2015; Lange & Crusius, 2015b). Benign envy has typically been measured episodically via single or composite item scales, although the recently published Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS; Lange & Crusius, 2015b) provides a means of assessing dispositional forms of both envy types.

Lange et al. (2016) also diverge from past research on the narcissism-envy link with regard to their measurement of narcissism, opting to use the NARQ. The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) framework, as introduced by Back et al. (2013) and on which the NARQ is based, proposes that narcissists attempt to maintain a grandiose self via an approach-oriented tendency toward assertive self-enhancement or a defense-oriented tendency toward antagonistic self-protection. These motivational dynamics underlie dimensions of

narcissistic admiration and rivalry, respectively, and promote distinct behavioral tendencies and social outcomes (i.e., social potency vs. social conflict; see Back, this volume). Lange et al. (2016) contend that grandiose narcissists are indeed envious, although with a significant caveat: that maladaptive aspects of grandiose narcissism involving narcissistic rivalry are distinctly related to malicious envy, whereas the adaptive aspects involving narcissistic admiration are linked to benign envy. These authors suggest that prior research has been unable to establish a link because of a mismatch between the primarily grandiose content in measures of narcissism, more closely linked to narcissistic admiration than rivalry, and measurement of malicious (but not benign) envy.

Results from Lange et al. (2016) indicated that narcissistic rivalry was linked to stronger dispositional malicious envy (Study 1), and episodic malicious envy for a retrospective or in situ comparison (Studies 2 and 3). Conversely, narcissistic admiration was predictive of stronger benign envy in dispositional (Study 1) as well as episodic (Studies 2 and 3) forms. Their results suggest that the linkage between narcissistic rivalry and malicious envy is fairly robust, operating both directly and via appraisals that an envied individual was less deserving of his/her advantage (Study 4). Narcissistic rivalry and admiration were also linked to divergent self- and peer-rated social interaction outcomes, namely, social conflict (e.g., aggressiveness and unpopularity) and social potency (e.g., admiration and praise; Study 5).

Conclusions and Future Research on Narcissism and Envy

In this section we first distill a number of important lessons from the existing research that should be considered when examining the relationship between narcissism and envy. We then identify important unanswered questions that may be prioritized in future research.

Summary of Key Developments in Narcissism and Envy Research

Recent advances in our understanding of the narcissism-envy relationship are closely tied to developments in the conceptualization and measurement of both narcissism and envy, complicating cross-study comparisons. First, it is clear that traditional self-report measures of grandiose narcissism (i.e., the NPI) and envy (e.g., the DES) do not find a substantial, replicable narcissism – malicious envy link; if anything, the relationship appears to be generally weak and negative (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016). Second, it is equally clear that measures of vulnerable, pathological narcissism (e.g., HSNS, PNI) demonstrate a robust relationship with dispositional and episodic envy. Third, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism share a common basis in entitlement, which has a partial relationship with envy, and this is where a unifying link with envy may be found. In particular, narcissists' exaggerated sense of entitlement may indirectly contribute to stronger malicious envy reactions when their heightened expectancies are frustrated. In light of evidence of a link between vulnerable narcissism and rage (Krizan & Johar, 2015), an important area for further research is how feelings of envy might mediate rage reactions among vulnerable narcissists.

A second lesson from the literature is that newer conceptualizations and measures of narcissism (i.e., the NARQ) and envy (i.e., benign vs. malicious envy) suggest that a substantial and rich relationship between grandiose narcissism and envy exists at both a dispositional and episodic level. While a potential vulnerable narcissism-benign envy link has yet to be examined, we are skeptical that any positive relationship exists given that vulnerable narcissism's interpersonal characteristics (e.g., coldness, hostility, and low communion; Miller, Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012) may make feelings of admiration unlikely. Nonetheless, the NARC's broader focus on motivational and behavioral dynamics offers a useful lens for understanding how grandiose

narcissism may foster envy. More research is needed, however, to clarify how well the NARQ and measures of benign envy map onto conceptualizations of their respective constructs, and what accounts for the stronger narcissism-envy relationships they obtain. We explore one possible idea at the end of this chapter. Another key question involves how narcissistic rivalry relates to vulnerable narcissism.

In reviewing the broader literature on envy, we observed that many studies have relied on one of two methodologically limited paradigms to capture envy: either retrospective autobiographical accounts of envy or, when envy was elicited in situ (almost invariably using undergraduate research subjects), by using an upward comparison to a hypothetical advantaged student. Both are sensible approaches although they have significant drawbacks. The former relies on one's recall for a socially undesirable emotion for which individuals may lack awareness (e.g., Smith & Kim, 2007), whereas the latter focuses on a narrow comparison domain and does not involve a genuine rival. As noted earlier, research on envy-eliciting events suggests that there are other situations beyond academia that may evoke envy even more intensely. These include situations based on status and prestige, attractiveness to potential romantic partners, or attractiveness (primarily for women; DelPriore et al., 2012). These domains are likely to be particularly important and useful for narcissistic individuals in their self-promotional pursuits (e.g., Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008). In a related vein, the use of trained confederates who (perhaps ostensibly) possess enviable advantages to elicit and study this emotion in the laboratory (e.g., Neufeld & Johnson, 2016) as well as efforts to study real-world experiences of envy (such as diary studies or peer ratings) may enhance the strength and ecological validity of envy research. These strategies may be particularly important when assessing the efficacy of potential envy-reducing interventions – an untouched area ripe for research.

Researchers have been understandably preoccupied with evaluating and understanding whether and how narcissists may envy others. However, there is an equally intriguing set of

questions about whether and how narcissists themselves may be either the actual or fantasized targets of others' envy. Insofar as narcissists seek to portray themselves as superior to others as possessing attributes (wealth, power, status, beauty) that others might envy, it is reasonable to ask how often or in what ways they are successful in inducing envy in others. Some indirect evidence suggests that eliciting others' envy may be a very important goal for narcissists. Trait self-enhancers – operationalized as high scorers on the NPI and the self-deceptive enhancement questionnaire – were described by fellow members of a small discussion group with descriptors like “tends to brag” and “overestimates abilities” (Paulhus, 1998). If so, it might not be enough for a committed narcissist to simply flaunt his or her perceived superiority and win the benign admiration of others; true success might only be felt when he or she senses malicious envy and rancor from others (cf. Leach, Spears, & Manstead, 2015, who found that actively causing another's downfall can be more pleasurable than merely observing it).

An important related question concerns how the impact of narcissists' efforts to induce envy may change over time across multiple interactions. Consider, for instance, that on first meeting, trait self-enhancers tend to be perceived positively (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010) even though their narcissism is recognized (Vazire et al., 2008). This positive initial impact appears to be replaced after further acquaintance with the more negative view noted by Paulhus (1998), conceivably because of their self-enhancement efforts. Back et al. (2010) have suggested that narcissists' desire for this initial burst of admiration (or envy?) may reward a pattern of continually seeking new acquaintances and discarding familiar ones as their own charm wears off. Narcissists' preoccupation with inducing others' envy and their efforts to achieve this goal (e.g., rubbing others' faces in their success) may plausibly contribute to their declining social image over time. Related questions concern the extent to which narcissists possess insight into their envy-inducing motives and their interpersonal effects, as well as how

they respond to other narcissists' efforts to induce their envy through superiority displays. Understanding narcissists' motivation to elicit others' envy will help solidify knowledge of the unfolding dynamics of narcissists' relationships.

Given the socially undesirable nature of envy, there is an important and underutilized role for observer ratings of envy. Important basic questions concern what elements of envy can be reliably agreed upon by observers. Initial work by Silver and Sabini (1978) suggested that observers are sensitive to at least some behavioral aspects exhibited by potentially envious individuals (using videotape footage of actors' interactions), affecting the likelihood of envy being ascribed as a motive. This raises interesting questions about what aspects of the target's behavior (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, expressions of hostility, coolness) are employed by observers to infer envy and whether these observer judgments are reliable and valid. Evidence showing that observers accurately detect narcissism in others (Back et al., 2013; Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2008; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Friedman, Oltmanns, & Turkheimer, 2007; Holtzman, 2011; Vazire et al., 2008) and are able to discriminate between those high in narcissistic admiration versus rivalry (Back et al., 2013) suggests that observers may also be able to detect envy or the desire to be envied among narcissists. More extensive use of round-robin designs may help answer these questions.

Finally, we end on a conceptual note by observing that whereas the Oxford English Dictionary (1991) definition does not identify perceived inferiority as part of envy, envy researchers (e.g., Hoogland, Thielke, & Smith, 2016; Lange & Crusius, 2015a, 2015b) assign inferiority a central role in their conceptualization of malicious and benign envy. Curiously, however, the BeMaS does not explicitly assess inferiority feelings, unlike the DES, which does. This raises the question of whether grandiose narcissists' willingness to acknowledge envy depends upon the salience of felt inferiority in the measure of envy. More broadly, future research may wish to better understand how inferiority

feelings function in envy. Notwithstanding the conceptual and measurement challenges inherent in researching the narcissism-envy link, we see ample reason for optimism that efforts to better understand the relationship of these two fascinating phenomena will accelerate and deepen our knowledge of both.

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Abstract

There is a large literature on narcissism and antisocial behaviors such as aggression, but this chapter examines the smaller emerging literature on narcissism and prosocial behavior, or *actions intended to benefit others*. We find that narcissistic people self-report more prosocial behavior but are actually less prosocial on more objective measures (peer report, behavioral). In terms of types and motivations for helping, narcissistic people appear to be strategic in their helping decisions: they are more likely to help in public or to receive a benefit, and they are less likely to help for altruistic reasons. We identify several situational factors that influence the relationship between narcissism and prosocial behavior and identify gaps in the literature that warrant future research.

Keywords

Prosocial behavior · Extended Agency Model · Volunteering · Helping · Giving · Charitable donations · Organizational citizenship behavior

There are different types of narcissism, and the current chapter primarily reviews the relationship between *grandiose* narcissism and prosocial behavior. Unless specified otherwise, the term *narcissism* refers to *grandiose narcissism*, which is a personality trait that involves inflated self-esteem, a need for admiration, and low empathy (Miller & Campbell, 2008). A large body of research examines narcissism and interpersonal relationships. For example, although narcissistic people make positive first impressions (Paulhus, 1998), they have trouble with longer-term relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Paulhus, 1998). In addition, narcissistic people tend to behave aggressively, especially after being insulted or rejected (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006).

Yet, there is comparatively little research on narcissism and *prosocial behavior*, or *actions intended to benefit others* (Batson & Powell, 2003). Perhaps scholars assume that narcissists' lower empathy (Hepper, Hart, & Sedikides, 2014; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984), which is a key predictor of prosocial behavior (Batson, 2011; Fengqin & Zhaohui, 2016), implies that they will behave less prosocially overall. Or, they may assume that more antisocial behavior among narcissistic people implies less prosocial behavior. However, there are many motivations for prosocial behavior, some more altruistic and some more egoistic (Batson, 2011; Batson & Powell, 2003). We posit that more

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narcissistic people may perform prosocial acts strategically, for example, to improve their reputations or to receive something in return.

The extended agency model can guide predictions about narcissism and prosocial behavior (Campbell & Foster, 2007). In this model, more narcissistic people are seen as being especially motivated by rewards from *agentic* experiences, for example, those involving high status and power. They are also less motivated by rewards from *communal* sources, such as close relationships with others. This combination of high agency and low communion leads narcissistic people to seek power, status, success, and attention, in order to gain *narcissistic esteem* (e.g., feelings of pride, self-esteem, and dominance), while simultaneously avoiding developing deep caring social relationships.

Thus, when narcissistic people behave prosocially, we posit that they may do so only after strategically attending to the potential costs and benefits, rather than making more emotionally driven or automatic decisions (Zaki & Mitchell, 2013). Narcissistic people could strategically adjust the cost-benefit ratio of giving by *lowering the cost* side of the equation. For example, they may engage in prosocial activities that are easy and quick and involve one-time commitments. So-called slacktivism acts such as sharing messages or liking posts on social media are perfect examples of this (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014).

They could also *increase the benefit* side of the equation by only helping when benefits or rewards to themselves are obvious. Different kinds of benefits or rewards that can accrue from acting prosocially include *tangible benefits*, such as free stickers or other small gifts often given by charities to increase donation behavior (Newman & Shen, 2012). However, there can also be *intangible* benefits, such as an increased reputation, receiving attention, or increasing recipients' sense of obligation to return favors. Overall, although many people give to and help others because they care about fulfilling others' needs (an *altruistic* motivation), the extended agency model suggests that narcissistic people may be less intrinsically motivated by such concerns.

Summary of Key Advancements: What Do We Know?

We next review the research literature to date on grandiose narcissism and prosocial behavior, interpreting it in light of the extended agency model. Some prosocial behavior occurs within the context of *formal*, organizational settings such as nonprofit organizations (e.g., donating money, volunteering) or workplaces (e.g., organizational citizenship behaviors). Others are more *informal* and occur as part of our daily lives while interacting with friends, relatives, and even strangers. Across these contexts, prosocial behaviors can range from more spontaneous to more planned acts, more casual to more serious acts, more direct versus more indirect acts, and more emotional versus more practical types of support (McGuire, 1994; Pearce & Amato, 1980; Smithson & Amato, 1982). Although research on narcissism and prosocial behavior is only in its infancy, it already has wide coverage across formal and informal prosocial behaviors and across a number of these other dimensions.

Formal Prosocial Behaviors

Volunteering for Nonprofit Organizations

In 2015, 24.9% of Americans donated their time to nonprofit organizations (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2017). Although narcissism is unrelated to the propensity to volunteer (Kauten & Barry, 2016; Konrath, Ho, & Zarins, 2016), this may be because people volunteer for many reasons, some of which are more altruistic and some of which involve receiving personal benefits (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary et al., 1998). Theoretically, narcissistic people should have less altruistic, and more self-oriented, reasons for volunteering.

However, there are some inconsistent results. Of three known studies on this topic, two found that narcissistic adults have less *altruistic* motives for volunteering (Brunell, Tumblyn, & Buelow, 2014; Konrath et al., 2016). However, another

study found no such relationship among college students (Brunell et al., 2014, Study 2). Of the three studies, two found that narcissistic people volunteer because it's important to others, a *social* motive for volunteering (Brunell et al., 2014). Two studies also found a positive association between narcissism and volunteering to enhance one's *career* (Brunell et al., 2014). There have been inconsistent relationships between narcissism and two other motives: desiring to learn more (*understanding* motive) and desiring to protect oneself (*protective* motive; Brunell et al., 2014; Konrath et al., 2016). And oddly, no study has found that narcissists volunteer to enhance their self-esteem (*enhancement* motive).

Overall, the results generally support the extended agency model, which would predict that narcissism is associated with less altruistic and more self-focused motives for volunteering. However, the inconsistent results warrant further research attention.

Charitable Donations

Americans donated \$373.25 billion to charity in 2015 (O'Brien, 2017). Yet there is only one known study on the topic of narcissism and charitable donations (Konrath et al., 2016). In line with our theorizing about narcissism and "slacktivism," this study found that during a social media campaign to raise funds for ALS (the "ice bucket challenge"), narcissistic people were more likely to post a video of themselves pouring ice water on their heads and were less likely to actually make a donation to the cause. We think this is because posting a video online allowed narcissistic people to get attention, without the actual cost of the donation.

This area is rich for future studies. For example, since narcissistic people struggle to feel empathy (Hepper et al., 2014), would they be less likely to donate to basic needs charities, such as homeless shelters or food banks? Would they be more likely to make *designated gifts* that are under their control versus *unrestricted gifts*, in which the organization can use the money how-

ever it's most needed? Would they be more likely to donate to charities in the presence of tangible (e.g., free gifts with donation) or intangible (e.g., in public or having name listed on website) benefits? Finally, would they respond differently to different types of charitable appeals? We would expect that narcissists would be more likely to donate when the appeal was framed in terms of how it could benefit themselves rather than others (Willer, Wimer, & Owens, 2015).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Organizational citizenship behavior is prosocial behavior in the workplace that surpasses organizational requirements, such as staying late, helping coworkers, and being actively involved (Organ, 1988). Fewer studies investigate the relationship between narcissism and organizational citizenship behavior, compared to those investigating counterproductive work behavior.

Overall, narcissistic individuals perform fewer organizational citizenship behaviors (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Min, 2013; Qureshi, Ashfaq, ul Hassan, & Imdadullah, 2015; Yildiz & Öncer, 2012), perhaps because they score lower in organizational trust (Yildiz & Öncer, 2012). Yet, there is a disconnect between self-ratings and objective ratings. One study found that supervisors rated narcissistic people as *less* likely to perform organizational citizenship behaviors, while narcissistic people self-reported being *more* likely to perform them (Judge et al., 2006).

In addition, the relationship between narcissism and organizational citizenship behaviors may depend upon impression management motives (Qureshi et al., 2015). For instance, one study found that when impression management motives were salient, the negative relationship between narcissism and organizational citizenship behaviors became positive (Qureshi et al., 2015). In other words, in line with the extended agency model, narcissistic employees may perform organizational citizenship behaviors to make a favorable impression in the workplace.

Discrepancies Between Self-Reported and Observer-Reported Prosocial Behavior

Some research examines the relationship between narcissism and combined measures of formal and informal prosocial behaviors. Most of these studies find that narcissism is associated with more *self-reported* prosocial behavior (Barry, Lui, & Anderson, 2017; Kauten & Barry, 2014, 2016; Konrath et al., 2016; Zuo, Wang, Xu, Wang, & Zhao, 2016). However, one study finds the opposite pattern (Naderi & Strutton, 2014), and another study finds no association (Jonason, Li, & Teicher, 2010).

Yet in *peer-report* studies, narcissism is uncorrelated with prosocial behavior (Barry et al., 2017; Kauten & Barry, 2014, 2016), which suggests a self-enhancement bias. To further complicate the picture, the parents of more narcissistic children report that their children engage in more prosocial behavior (Kauten & Barry, 2016). Future research should try to reconcile these inconsistent findings by conducting additional research or a meta-analytic integration.

Informal Prosocial Behaviors

Informal prosocial behaviors occur outside of organizational contexts, within other daily life settings. Overall, narcissistic people tend to behave less prosocially in interactions with *strangers*. For example, in a series of hypothetical decisions, narcissistic people allocated more money to themselves and less to others (Jonason et al., 2010). In a dictator game using real money, narcissistic people gave less money, even when others could punish such ungenerous behavior (Böckler, Sharifi, Kanske, Dziobek, & Singer, 2017). Narcissism is also associated with fewer pro-environmental behaviors and values (Naderi & Strutton, 2014) and taking more natural resources in common dilemma games (Brunell et al., 2013; Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). However, one study found no relationship between narcissism and the willingness to help

by participating in future studies (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015).

There is very little research on narcissism and prosocial behavior with *friends, coworkers, romantic partners, and relatives*. One study examined why narcissistic people give gifts in romantic relationships (Hyun, Park, & Park, 2016), uncovering three key motivations: intrinsic (e.g., “*Because I love my partner,*”), maintenance (e.g., “*Because I want my partner to treat me well,*”), and power (e.g., “*Because I want to impress others.*”) This study found that there was no relationship between narcissism and intrinsically motivated giving but that narcissistic people give gifts in order to maintain their relationships and to impress others. Another study found that more narcissistically exploitative people felt less obligation to return favors to others who had helped them in the past (Brunell et al., 2013). Taken together, these studies confirm the extended agency model by finding that communal concerns are not very motivating to narcissistic people when giving to known others.

Situational Factors Affect the Link Between Narcissism and Prosocial Behavior

The relationship between narcissism and prosocial behavior may depend upon situational factors. For example, the Prosocial Tendencies Scale (Carlo & Randall, 2002) assesses self-reported tendencies to help in a variety of different contexts, such as in public, anonymously, when asked, in emotional situations, in dire situations, and for opportunistic reasons (i.e., to receive something in return). In line with the extended agency model, narcissism is consistently associated with performing prosocial behaviors in public (Anderson & Costello, 2009; Eberly-Lewis & Coetzee, 2015; Konrath et al., 2016; Moran, 2016), and it is also associated with more opportunistic helping (Eberly-Lewis & Coetzee, 2015; Konrath et al., 2016). Yet, narcissism is unrelated to helping anonymously, in response to direct requests, in emotional situations, or when in dire need.

Some studies directly manipulate situational variables to examine how these factors might influence the relationship between narcissism and prosocial outcomes. For example, one study examined whether two factors differentially affected the relationship between narcissism and empathic responses after a stranger experienced a breakup (Hepper et al., 2014). Researchers varied the *severity of the person's need* (either mild or severe) and the extent to which the situation was *in the person's control* (high or low control). As would be expected from prior research (Hepper et al., 2014; Watson et al., 1984; Zhou, Zhou, & Zhang, 2010), narcissists had less empathic responses overall. However, this effect was especially strong in situations of *mild need* that were *in the person's control*. Perhaps narcissistic people see these people as less deserving of empathy, either because of low perceived need or because of high perceived blame.

Another study examined whether narcissistic people could increase their empathic responding when instructed to do so (Hepper et al., 2014). Less narcissistic people felt empathy for a victim of domestic violence, whether or not they were asked to imagine her perspective. However, more narcissistic people only reported feeling empathy for her when they were asked to imagine her perspective. This implies that empathy does not come naturally for more narcissistic people, which might partially explain why their prosocial behavior is not typically driven by altruism. However, it is *possible* for them to empathize when directly asked.

In addition, narcissistic people seem to differentially respond to the degree of social pressure within a situation (Lannin, Gyll, Krizan, Madon, & Cornish, 2014). More narcissistic people are *less* likely to help when directly asked (high social pressure), perhaps as a show of interpersonal domination. However, narcissism is unrelated to the tendency to help when under low social pressure. Although this may seem inconsistent with research finding that narcissism is associated with increased public helping, there is a difference between helping when someone is watching and helping when someone has asked. Future research should attempt to disentangle

these results by examining how narcissistic people behave when being observed versus when being directly asked to help.

Different Types of Narcissism

Although this chapter focuses on grandiose (or overt) narcissism, other types of narcissism have received less attention in this literature.

Communal Narcissism

Both grandiose and communal narcissists are motivated by power, self-esteem, and entitlement (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio, 2012). However, communal narcissists have inflated views of their communal capacities, for example, seeing themselves as being the most helpful or caring person (see Gebauer & Sedikides, this volume, for review). Very little research focuses on communal narcissism and prosocial behavior. One study found that communal narcissists saw themselves as being helpful, warm, and trustworthy, but peers rated them lower on these attributes (Gebauer et al., 2012). Another found that communal narcissistic adolescents self-reported more *anonymous* prosocial behaviors but not more *public* prosocial behaviors (Moran, 2016). Thus, in their self-reported behaviors at least, they appear to be more communal. However, the relationship between communal narcissism and prosocial behavior depends upon whether their need for power has been satisfied (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015). Communal narcissists are actually *less* likely to help when their power and status feel secure. However, they are *more* likely to help when their power and status feel insecure.

Vulnerable/Covert Narcissism

Both grandiose and vulnerable (or covert) narcissists have high self-focus and a need for admiration; however, vulnerable narcissists experience feelings of insecurity, contingent self-esteem, and worries about evaluation (Miller et al., 2011;

Weiss & Miller, this volume; Wink, 1991). The research findings on vulnerable narcissism and prosocial behavior are mixed. Some studies find that vulnerable narcissists are more prosocial (Barry et al., 2017), others find the opposite (Min, 2013; Zhou et al., 2010), and others find no relationship, whether helping in private or public (Kauten & Barry, 2016; Moran, 2016) or when rated by observers (Barry et al., 2017; Kauten & Barry, 2016). Clearly, more research is needed, but one study demonstrates how social pressure may matter. Vulnerable narcissists are *less* likely to help when under *low* social pressure (Lannin et al., 2014). However, when directly asked (high social pressure), there is no relationship between vulnerable narcissism and helping. Perhaps vulnerable narcissists feel uncomfortable directly refusing to help but are okay with saying no in less direct situations.

Summary

Prior research suggests that (grandiose) narcissistic people are less likely to self-enhance on communal aspects of the self, compared to agentic ones (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Paulhus & John, 1998). However, in our review, we found that narcissistic people *self-reported* more prosocial behavior while *actually behaving* less prosocially. We also find that *peers* do not see them as especially prosocial. So narcissistic people may be motivated to exaggerate their prosocial behavior at times, a question that warrants further understanding. However, in line with the extended agency model, narcissistic people do not report having purely altruistic reasons for giving and helping. Instead, research supports the idea that narcissistic people are prosocial in a strategic way: they are more likely to help in public or in order to receive some sort of benefit or reward, and they are less likely to volunteer for altruistic reasons. Research has also uncovered several relevant situational variables that influence the relationship between narcissism and prosocial behavior. In terms of other types of narcissism, more research is needed to better understand why, and under which conditions,

communal and vulnerable narcissists behave more prosocially.

Future Directions

Future research needs a more systematic approach that identifies situations in which narcissistic people are more or less likely to behave prosocially. Since the majority of research to date is on American adolescents and college students, this work should also be extended to broader populations. We recommend that scholars be guided by the extended agency model and, in particular, our application of that model in terms of the salience of the costs and benefits of prosocial behavior among narcissistic people.

To date, most research on this topic is correlational, which is not surprising given that narcissism is a trait. However, it is currently unknown how narcissism *causally* influences prosocial behavior. Thus, we recommend experiments that manipulate state narcissism levels (i.e., temporary self-focused states) to determine how narcissism affects prosocial behaviors across different situations. Related to this, some of the best studies to date vary situational variables and examine how narcissistic people react (e.g., Hepper et al., 2014). We recommend that future researchers continue to do so in order to determine key precipitating conditions for prosocial behavior among narcissistic people. It might be fruitful to directly examine to what extent narcissistic people rationally attend to the costs and benefits of prosocial behavior versus taking a more intuitive, automatic approach to helping others (Zaki & Mitchell, 2013).

The literature currently includes wide coverage of different types of prosocial behaviors (McGuire, 1994; Pearce & Amato, 1980; Smithson & Amato, 1982). However, the majority of the research involves recipients who are strangers, rather than known others. Among strangers, there is very limited research on the topics of charitable donations and more serious helping (e.g., emergency). Among known others, there is no known research on the topic of narcissism and more intensive

caregiving behaviors, either with loved ones (e.g., caring for infants or sick relatives) or with strangers (e.g., providing care as part of one's profession).

Research on narcissism and prosocial behavior is in its early stages, with many exciting potential future directions. For now, based on the results of this review, we would advise people that they should pay attention to narcissists' actions, rather than their words, and that when narcissistic people do behave prosocially, it might be judicious to question their motives.

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Grandiose Narcissism and Religiosity

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Abstract

This chapter reviews the modest literature on the relationship between grandiose narcissism and various aspects of religiosity. Current evidence suggests that grandiose narcissists tend to be less humble, less forgiving, less apologetic, and less empathetic but report similar levels of religiosity, including frequency of church attendance and prayer, as non-narcissists (contrary to conventional wisdom that religiosity should inhibit narcissism). Grandiose narcissism is associated with extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation toward religion, with more conflict and anger in one's spiritual life, and with more self-serving spiritual beliefs. Moreover, compared to those low in grandiose narcissism, they are less moved by their own wrongdoing to seek God and may not be as positively affected by certain spiritual practices (e.g., meditation). We suggest future directions for research and conclude that future research will benefit from examining different forms of narcissism, as well as the individual facets that underlying this multidimensional personality trait.

Keywords

Religion · Spirituality · Intrinsic orientation · Extrinsic orientation · Spiritual practices · Paranormal beliefs · Meditation

Researchers generally agree that grandiose narcissism includes an inflated sense of self, entitlement, lack of interest in relationships and intimacy, and the use of interpersonal strategies that are self-enhancing (Campbell & Green, 2008; Morf, Torchetti, & Schürch, 2011). Grandiose narcissists are frequently in a bind; they disregard the needs of others but require their admiration to maintain their inflated egos. The personality traits that characterize narcissism would thus appear to be inimical to traditional conceptions of religion which extol humility, service to others, compassion, and charity. The role of narcissism in personal religiosity thus suggests itself as a promising area for academic research. Fairly straightforward research questions arise: Do individuals high in narcissism seek support or validation from a Supreme Being? Are they prone to using religion to advance their personal status? Are those high in narcissism more or less interested in prayer, meditation, and other religious practices? Does narcissism affect susceptibility to certain emotions traditionally associated with religion (e.g., guilt, humility, or gratitude)? Does involvement in religion reduce narcissistic tendencies?

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Even as the popular Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979) approaches its fortieth birthday, there have been relatively few empirical investigations of the relationship between grandiose narcissism and personal religiosity. This chapter reviews empirical studies on grandiose narcissism and religious identity, motivation, orientation, and practices. It concludes by making suggestions for future research.

Narcissism and Religious Identity, Motivation, and Orientation

Insofar as grandiose narcissism is comprised of self-enhancing rather than other-oriented traits, it would seem inimical to many core functions of religion. Evolutionary psychologists, among others, have persuasively argued that religion emerges from humanity's genetically evolved prosocial tendencies (Norenzayan et al., 2014). Both religious beliefs and rituals perform the important cultural function of prompting individuals to forego their immediate self-interests and serve the long-term interests of the group (Haidt, 2003; Wilson, 1975). Consistent with this idea, individuals higher in grandiose narcissism are less likely to perceive sacredness (in theistic or nontheistic terms; Doehring et al., 2009). Grandiose narcissism is also negatively related to various faith-related traits such as humility (Sandage, Paine, & Hill, 2015), forgiveness (Fatfouta & Schröder-Abé, 2017; Strelan, 2007), and the tendency to apologize (Howell, Dopko, Turowski, & Buro, 2011). The self-focused traits constitutive of narcissism may mitigate against (or be reduced by) the acquisition of the self-diminishing or other-regarding traits we traditionally associate with religion. This is also consistent with the negative relation between narcissism and measure of both affective and cognitive empathy, core traits, and motivations underlying prosocial behavior (see Chap. 36 by Hart, Hepper, & Sedikides, this volume).

If publicly professing religious belief and engaging in religious ritual are principal means for displaying personal loyalty to the group (Haidt, 2012), it follows that most people would

view nonreligious or atheistic individuals as narcissistic because they put self-interest before the good of the group. Consistent with this analysis, Dubendorff and Luchner (2017) found people ascribed more narcissistic traits to an atheistic person than religious (and control) individuals. Hermann and Fuller (2017), however, directly examined whether nonreligious individuals are indeed higher in trait narcissism, by asking a large online sample to identify as traditionally religious, spiritual but not religious, or nonreligious and complete the NPI. Contrary to conventional wisdom, they found that nonreligious Americans are *lower* in grandiose narcissism than religious/spiritual Americans, particularly on Emmons' (1984) self-absorption and self-admiration subscale. Thus, although people believe nonreligious people to be narcissistic, the reverse appears to be true. On the whole, it appears grandiose narcissists are less likely to possess traits and mind-sets typically ascribed to religious individuals, but at the same time, they are also less likely to identify as nonreligious.

To further muddy the picture, studies examining continuous (rather than nominal) measures of religiosity indicate there may be little or no relationship with grandiose narcissism. Although little research systematically examines religiosity and grandiose narcissism, a few papers have reported correlations on these variables. For example, Gebauer, Sedikides, and Schrade (2017) collected several large samples in Germany, the UK, and the USA and found the NPI was unrelated to a four-item self-report of individual religiosity that included ratings of church attendance and prayer, belief in God, and "religious" as a personal descriptor. Similarly, Hermann and Fuller (2017) found no correlation between total NPI scores and short self-reports of traditional religiosity (e.g., "I am a religiously oriented person;" "I trust church leaders for religious guidance.") but a small positive correlation with the superiority/arrogance subscale. Conservatively then, we can assume that grandiose narcissists are equally likely to be religious as nonreligious but may show somewhat greater religiosity depending upon the facet of narcissism examined and how religiosity is operationalized. Regardless, the

findings as a whole are highly inconsistent with the idea that church memberships are declining due to societal increases in narcissism (see Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2007) or the notion promoted by some religious proponents that religiosity reduces narcissism at the individual level.

Although the overall link between narcissism and traditional religiosity is ambiguous, studies find that grandiose narcissists are, in fact, more likely to endorse belief systems that include other kinds of supernatural phenomena, like the paranormal. Tobacyk and Mitchell (1987) found small, positive correlations between the NPI and beliefs in the psi phenomenon, witchcraft, spiritualism, and precognition. Roe and Morgan (2002) found a similar correlation with paranormal beliefs using the same measures but found larger, positive correlations with beliefs in psychokinesis and extrasensory perception. In an attempt to reconcile the two studies' findings, Roe and Morgan speculated that grandiose narcissists may embrace items that include a direct claim of personal abilities (e.g., "I am convinced that I am psychic") but balk at similar items without such claims (e.g., "Some psychics can accurately predict the future") like those used by Tobacyk and Mitchell. Hermann and Fuller (2017) also found a similar, moderate, positive correlation between the NPI and mystical beliefs. Much like other inflated self-beliefs, grandiose narcissists may endorse such beliefs because they reflect a sense of superior and exclusive knowledge or insight (e.g., conspiracy theories, Cichocka, Marchlewska, & de Zavala, 2016) more than the merits of the belief.

Although the evidence is limited and mixed regarding grandiose narcissism's relation to religiosity, there is consistent evidence that grandiose narcissists lack intrinsic religious motivation. Allport and Ross (1967) were the first to distinguish between intrinsic orientation to religion, which refers to internalized motivations in which religion is viewed as an end in itself, and extrinsic orientation, which reflects an orientation to religion as a means to social approval, personal benefit, or other worldly ends. Subsequent research has found that intrinsic religiosity is

positively correlated and extrinsic religiosity is negatively correlated with psychological well-being (e.g., Dezutter, Soenens, & Hutsebaut, 2006; Maltby & Day, 2000; Osborne, Milojev, & Sibley, 2016). Watson, Morris, Hood, and Biderman (1990) found the NPI negatively correlated with intrinsic religiosity but positively with extrinsic religiosity. They also noted that extrinsic religiosity was especially associated with Emmons' exploitativeness/entitlement subscale, a subscale related to maladaptive functioning and interpersonal problems. They also found that intrinsic religiosity, however, is especially associated with leadership/authority subscale, a facet associated with adaptive functioning and well-being (Ackerman et al., 2011; Emmons, 1987; Schmitt et al., 2017). Watson, Jones, and Morris (2004) replicated this pattern, while Łowicki and Zajenkowski (2017) more recently replicated only the negative correlations with intrinsic motivation using the narcissism subscale from a 12-item dark triad measure. Together, these studies suggest that, among those who are religious, grandiose narcissists' religious orientation is similar to their approach to their interpersonal relationships, exhibiting less authentic interest than instrumental motivation. It also highlights the multidimensional nature of grandiose narcissism and the need to account for this when examining religious motivation.

There is also evidence that grandiose narcissists' ambivalence about interpersonal intimacy generalizes to spirituality in other ways. Grubbs and colleagues (for a review, Chap. 42 by Grubbs, Stauner, Wilt, & Exline, this volume) found that psychological entitlement, a central feature of grandiose narcissism, is positively related to a spiritual conflict. In a series of studies, trait entitlement, the tendency to demand unmerited special treatment, predicted anger at God (Grubbs, Exline, & Campbell, 2013) and spiritual struggles (Grubbs, Wilt, Stauner, Exline, & Pargament, 2016), even when controlling for other personality factors like the Big Five traits. People often describe struggle with the divine in the same terms they use to describe interpersonal struggles (Exline, Park, Smyth, & Carey, 2011), and these findings also reflect trait

entitlement as a sub-facet of narcissism that is predictive of a variety of interpersonal difficulties (e.g., Moeller, Crocker, & Bushman, 2009; Rose & Anastasio, 2014).

Narcissism and Religious Practices

Given that religious narcissists are less intrinsically religious and have a more tumultuous spiritual life, it may not be surprising that the link between grandiose narcissism and engaging in religious practices is similarly complicated. Only a few studies have examined if grandiose narcissists are more or less likely to attend religious services, a common element of all religions. The Gebauer et al. (2017) study suggests no correlation between the grandiose narcissism and church attendance but did find a positive correlation with communal narcissism (grandiosity and entitlement in communal domains; see Chap. 7 by Gebauer & Sedekides, this volume). Hermann and Fuller (2017) asked a separate question about frequency of church attendance and found a small positive correlation with the NPI. Additional analyses revealed, however, that this positive correlation was only exhibited among those identifying as “spiritual but not religious.” The authors suggest the correlation among this group may reflect grandiose narcissists’ tendency toward extrinsic religiosity and that this link with church attendance may be stronger among those who perceive it as optional.

Prayer also has a complex relationship with grandiose narcissism. Although no study has principally examined whether the NPI is related to how often people pray, Gebauer et al.’s (2017) data suggests a null relationship given that their religiosity measure included a prayer item. Unpublished analyses from studies (Hermann, Simpson, Lehtman, & Fuller, 2015; Simpson, Hermann, Lehtman, & Fuller, 2016) have also yielded no correlation in either undergraduate or online samples. In a small Dutch sample, Zondag and van Uden (2011) also found no relationship between frequency of prayer and grandiose narcissism. Vulnerable narcissism, a form of narcissism that shares entitlement and interpersonal

antagonism with grandiose narcissism, but is associated with low self-esteem and introversion (Miller et al., 2011), was also uncorrelated with the frequency of prayer. Yet vulnerable narcissism was positively related to engaging in religious, petitionary, and psychological (highly emotional) prayer, while grandiose narcissism was only positively related to meditative prayer. On the whole, it appears that those high in grandiose narcissism are no more or less likely to pray than those low but may differ in the purpose of their prayers. One intriguing possibility is that grandiose narcissists favor practices that enhance mood or sharpen the mind (e.g., meditative), but more evidence is needed.

Research also indicates that grandiose narcissists are not motivated by emotional experiences that may prompt others to pray. In a study examining whether guilt motivates prayer, Hermann et al. (2015) had participants either write about a time they felt guilty for their behavior or a recent interaction with a store clerk and afterward report their interest in praying. Overall, participants reported more interest in praying after the guilt essay, but there was no effect on those high in grandiose narcissism. Simpson et al. (2016) examined the impact of a relationship transgression on interest in prayer. Their participants imagined a scenario in which they either violated the trust of a good friend by sharing damaging confidential information or a similar scenario without the transgression. In contrast to Hermann et al.’s findings, participants had a tendency to be *less* likely to pray after a transgression, but this was more likely to be true among those high in grandiose narcissism, while those low in narcissism were unaffected. The authors reconciled the studies’ findings suggesting that people may have a tendency to avoid God immediately after a transgression (as with the scenario), but more likely when reflecting on a past transgression for which they still feel remorse. Regardless, the studies together suggest that grandiose narcissists show no signs of interest seeking the divine after negative emotional experiences.

Zondag and van Uden (2010) also investigated how narcissism is related to religious strategies for coping with adversity. In another small Dutch

sample, they found that vulnerable narcissism was related to all forms of coping: negatively to self-directed coping (solving problems without God), but positively to all other forms, collaborative (seeking solutions with God), deferring (seeking God's solutions), and receptive (passively allowing solutions to materialize). Surprisingly, they found that grandiose narcissism was only positively related to the receptive coping style and unrelated to the others.

If the literature on narcissism's links to church attendance and prayer is small, the literature on meditative practices is even smaller. In the only study of its kind, Ridderinkhof, de Bruin, Brummelman, and Bögels (2017) investigated the impact of a brief mindfulness manipulation on empathy and prosocial behavior. Participants engaged in a 5-min breathing mindfulness, bodily relaxation, or mind-wandering exercise and then completed measures of empathy, mind reading (identifying emotions from eye photos), and prosocial behavior. The mindfulness exercise did not produce any of the expected increases in empathy. It did, however, decrease mind reading accuracy among grandiose narcissists while increasing the accuracy of non-narcissists. These findings suggest that certain spiritual practices may backfire in unexpected ways among grandiose narcissists but should be viewed as preliminary. Taken together, the scant evidence shows little to indicate that grandiose narcissists are more or less likely to engage religious and spiritual practices, but it does appear that prayer and meditation function differently for them. More research is needed, but one theme that emerges from the literature is that grandiose narcissists may be less likely to seek or receive comfort from religious practices.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Although the literature is modest in scope, we can tentatively characterize grandiose narcissists' religiosity. Grandiose narcissists tend to be less humble, less forgiving, less apologetic, and less empathetic but report similar levels of religiosity (including frequency of church attendance and prayer) as non-narcissists. Narcissism is

associated with extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivations toward religion, viewing religion as a means of achieving nonreligious needs and interests. Those individuals high in grandiose narcissists who are religious tend to experience more conflict and anger in their spiritual lives, report more self-serving spiritual beliefs, and demonstrate less intrinsic motivation for religious involvement. Moreover, compared to those low in grandiose narcissism, they are less moved by their own wrongdoing to seek God and may not be as positively affected by meditation.

The weak relationship between measures of religiosity and higher narcissism among those who identify as religious or spiritual casts doubt on the general idea that religiosity is a buffer against the development of narcissistic traits (Hermann & Fuller, 2017; see also Gebauer et al., 2017). It is likely that specific kinds of religious involvement (e.g., acts of charity, service to others, contemplative reflection) mitigate narcissism among those who are socialized to value them. However, other aspects of religious life (e.g., teachings that emphasize moral/spiritual superiority to other groups, charismatic evangelism) may foster and attract those high in grandiose narcissism.

The portrait of grandiose narcissists' religious life as conflicted and unresponsive is consistent with their general interpersonal style. For example, they also exhibit less intrinsic and exhibit more extrinsic motivation in their romantic relationships, preferring partners that make them look good (Campbell, 1999) but lacking in commitment to them (Campbell & Foster, 2002). If this approach applies more broadly to their religious life, they may also show less commitment to religious communities (e.g., church hopping) and more sporadic involvement in those communities. Grandiose narcissists' sense of superiority, fondness for public success (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002), and preference to give to charity in public (Konrath, Ho, & Zarins, 2016) suggest that they may be particularly drawn to religious communities that offer opportunities for public worship and/or service. A promising avenue for future research might entail translating key findings in interpersonal domains to relevant religious settings.

Although no consistent pattern emerged regarding which facets of grandiose narcissism were more associated religious tendencies and behaviors, it is clear that future studies need to attend to this issue. It strikes us as eminently reasonable to assume that belief in one's leadership abilities, an inflated sense of superiority, and entitlement should all be differentially related to diverse aspects of religious life. Given the NPI's less-than-ideal psychometric properties (for a summary, see Chap. 13 by Ackerman, Correti, & Carson, this volume), using scales with stronger reliability and clearer factor structures (e.g., Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012) or unidimensional scales tapping specific subtraits (see Chap 14 by Brunell & Buelow, this volume) may help clarify the relationships between these important constructs but also produce more replicable findings.

Investigations of the relationship between narcissism and religion have thus far focused almost exclusively on Western religions, especially Christianity. Future research will need to include consideration of other religious and cultural traditions. Christianity has historically appealed to individuals desiring to maintain and even enhance their sense of self and meaning in life even in the face of such existential threats as guilt or death. Although it seems likely that these motivations apply to Islam, Judaism, and other religions, the role of narcissism in these traditions has been almost completely ignored. Likewise, expanding the scope of research to include religious traditions such as Buddhism that overtly champion strategies of self-dissolution might provide new perspectives not only on the relationship between narcissism and religion but perhaps even the etiology of narcissism itself.

The literature on vulnerable narcissism and religiosity is especially limited, but existing studies suggest it will be a profitable line of inquiry. Given that trait entitlement is also a feature of vulnerable narcissism and that it is also positively related to attachment anxiety (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Smolewska & Dion, 2005), it seems likely that vulnerable narcissism would be strongly associated with fraught relationships with God. Zondag and van Uden's (2010, 2011)

findings similarly indicate that religious vulnerable narcissists may feel more dependent upon God for help and emotional support. One recent study also showed an intriguing positive correlation between vulnerable narcissism (and other vulnerable dark traits) and religious fundamentalism (Unterrainer et al., 2016), suggesting that vulnerable narcissists may be drawn to highly structured religious belief systems to compensate for the lack of agency and control they perceive in their personal lives (see Chap. 3 by Hanson-Brown, this volume). Additional studies are needed to establish the reliability of these findings but should prove fruitful in understanding a more dependent orientation toward the divine.

Another important direction for future research will likely be investigating how communal narcissism is related to religious behavior. Gebauer and his colleagues (Chap. 3 by Gebauer & Sedekides, this volume) have convincingly argued that grandiose narcissism comes in two varieties: agentic, which emphasizes self-enhancement and entitlement in competence domains, and communal, which emphasizes the same in interpersonal and moral domains. Gebauer et al. (2017) found positive correlations between communal narcissism with measures of global religiosity and intrinsic religiosity among Christians. This not only indicates that the self-enhancement bias is alive and well in Christianity but also suggests that this variable may be highly relevant to all manner of religious behavior. For example, there are a few small studies that have examined narcissism among clergy (e.g., Cooper, Pullig, & Dickens, 2016; Zondag, 2004), and measures of communal narcissism should also be highly relevant among this population (for a related discussion, see Chap. 38 by Jones & Neria, this volume).

Given that Western societies have become less traditionally religious over the past few decades (Pew Research Center, 2015) and narcissism has become more prevalent over the same period (Twenge & Foster, 2008; for a review, see Chap. 20 by Grubbs & Riley, this volume), it seems highly likely that individual differences in personal religiosity will continue to attract the attention of both personality and social psychologists

in the foreseeable future. We hope that recent advancements in our understanding of the different forms of narcissism, and more emphasis on experimental methodologies, will help to shed new light on religious life in the Western world and beyond.

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Narcissism and Spirituality: Intersections of Self, Superiority, and the Search for the Sacred

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Abstract

Narcissism and narcissistic traits are known to affect various aspects of human functioning, with such traits often being associated with problematic outcomes in social, professional, and interpersonal domains. Another area in which narcissism seems to have some negative consequences is in spiritual functioning. Oftentimes, individuals, regardless of narcissistic traits, may experience difficulties in religious and spiritual functioning, known as religious and spiritual struggles. Although research in this domain is still burgeoning, recent research suggests that narcissism and narcissistic traits—especially trait entitlement—are associated with difficulties in religious and spiritual functioning such as religious and spiritual struggles. The present chapter reviews existing literature related to narcissism and religious and spiritual functioning, with a specific focus on how religious and spiritual struggles are associated with such traits. Links between narcissism and specific struggles (i.e., struggles with deity such

as anger at God; interpersonal religious and spiritual struggles, such as conflicts over religion) are explored, and directions for future research are posited.

Keywords

Spiritual struggle · Religion · Entitlement · Anger at God · Humility

The evidence is clear: Narcissism has risen significantly among recent generations (Twenge & Foster, 2010), particularly in the Western world (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). Scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Keith Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), pronoun usage in popular literature (Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012), and even the lyrics of popular songs (DeWall, Pond, Campbell, & Twenge, 2011) all point to steady and meaningful increases in narcissism over recent decades. This evidence is so convincing that even those critical of the general hypothesis that narcissism is rising (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008) admit that aspects of narcissism—entitlement in particular—have risen somewhat. As such, it is reasonable to contend that understanding narcissism's various influences on human functioning is more important now than ever.

Narcissism—generally thought of as a multifaceted trait characterized by grandiosity, inflated

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entitlement, vanity, and exploitative tendencies (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008)—has profound influences on a variety of social relationships (e.g., Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Research has linked narcissism to higher levels of aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2003), infidelity (McNulty & Widman, 2014), and anger (Stucke & Sporer, 2002). Notably, the majority of these costs have been attributed to one specific facet of narcissism: trait entitlement (for a review, see Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Building on these findings, the purpose of the present work is to review another domain in which narcissism and trait entitlement might predict relational struggles: religious and spiritual life. To accomplish this goal, we seek to briefly define and describe religious and spiritual struggles, explore conceptually why narcissism might be related to such struggles, and examine prior work demonstrating associations between these domains. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our review and future directions for research in this domain.

Religious and Spiritual Struggle

Religion and spirituality (hereafter, R/S), though theoretically distinct constructs (e.g., Hill & Pargament, 2008), are highly related aspects of human functioning that both involve implicitly and explicitly relational components (Mahoney, 2010). These components may include social identity (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010), corporate practices (Sosis & Ruffle, 2003), and relational expressions (Desrosiers, Kelley, & Miller, 2011; Mahoney, 2013). Additionally, beyond just interpersonal relationships, both R/S often involve relationships with some sort of supernatural agent in which individuals believe themselves to be connected to a higher being (Beck & McDonald, 2004) or to others and the universe in general (Piedmont, 1999).

Oftentimes, the relational aspects of R/S are seen as the driving factors in the benefits that individuals may experience from their belief sys-

tems. Members of tightly knit religious communities often report a greater sense of purpose, deeper feelings of belonging, and generally higher levels of well-being than the general population (Ellison, 1991; Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Additionally, religious communities may more easily provide interpersonal connection than secular or nonreligious community groups (Lim & Putnam, 2010). Moving beyond peer relationships, religious individuals often describe interacting with a deity in relational terms to cope with difficulties or struggles in life (Beck, 2006a, 2006b; Hall & Edwards, 2002; Pargament et al., 1988) and to seek guidance in various life situations (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Laurin, Schumann, & Holmes, 2014; Pargament et al., 1990). In short, the relational aspects of R/S are often sources of great benefit to individuals, particularly in times of difficulty. However, these relational aspects of R/S may also present individuals with difficulties, known as religious and spiritual struggles (Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, & Yali, 2014).

Broadly speaking, R/S struggles refer to conflicts or problems focused on religious or spiritual aspects of life (Exline, 2013). Anger at God, fear of demonic forces, conflicts with religious people, guilt or shame about moral failings, a lack of clear purpose in life, and distress about religious doubts are all different examples of such struggles (Exline et al., 2014), although many more examples also exist (e.g., Homolka, 2017). Among this variety of R/S struggles, struggles with deity—*divine struggles*—may be of particular interest when considering how the relational aspects of R/S may present opportunities for difficulty.

People often report understanding God in relational terms (Beck & McDonald, 2004); and many religious believers, particularly those from monotheistic traditions, report dynamic and changing interactions with a deity that map well onto human relationships (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Divine struggles arise when people perceive conflict or distress in their perceived relationship with a deity or when they experience negative emotions (anger, disappointment, fear) focused on a deity (Exline et al., 2014). Given these factors, divine struggles often tend to be

relational in nature, being described in terms of interpersonal processes and emotions (Exline, Park, Smyth, & Carey, 2011).

Importantly, divine struggles associate with a wide range of negative outcomes (see Exline, 2013, for a review) such as suicidality (Exline, Yali, & Sanderson, 2000; Rosmarin, Bigda-Peyton, Öngur, Pargament, & Björqvinnsson, 2013), depression (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Krause, & Ironson, 2015), anxiety (Wilt, Grubbs, Lindberg, Exline, & Pargament, 2017), and poorer recovery from both illness (for a review, see Exline, 2013) and trauma (Harris et al., 2008, 2012). Given these concerning outcomes, a growing body of research is dedicated to identifying predictors of such struggles. A number of studies have explicitly focused on environmental factors, noting that significant life stressors may predict divine struggles (e.g., Currier, Smith, & Kuhlman, 2017; Exline et al., 2011; Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). Other studies have focused on the role of personality in predicting R/S struggles (e.g., Ano & Pargament, 2013; Grubbs, Wilt, Stauner, Exline, & Pargament, 2016). Among such studies, narcissistic tendencies—particularly trait entitlement—have garnered some attention.

Narcissism, Entitlement, and Religious/Spiritual Struggles

The relational impacts of narcissism and entitlement are well-documented, with recent research concluding that many of these costs are likely the result of trait entitlement (e.g., Brown et al., 2009; Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Entitlement—with its attitudes of unmerited deservingness and crass demandingness (see Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004)—predicts interpersonal conflict (Moeller, Crocker, & Bushman, 2009), unforgiveness (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004), sexual aggression (Baumeister, Catanese, & Wallace, 2002), and a host of other negative relational outcomes. The links between narcissism, entitlement, and struggles in interpersonal relationships suggest that high levels of narcissistic traits may

be risk factors for relational struggle, which could manifest in numerous R/S struggles. Given the relational components of R/S—particularly one's perceived relationship with the divine—narcissism and entitlement's noxious roles may be relevant to divine struggles.

Regarding divine struggles generally, trait entitlement has demonstrated a cross-sectional, positive, predictive relationship. In diverse samples of undergraduates, as well as adult samples, psychological entitlement consistently predicts divine struggles (Grubbs et al., 2016). Furthermore, these predictive relationships are independent of certain covariates (e.g., Big Five factors), as well as low self-esteem, which is a robust predictor of divine struggles (Grubbs et al., 2016).

Psychological entitlement also correlates positively with generalized anger and disappointment focused on God, above and beyond other personality factors (Wood et al., 2010). Similarly, in both undergraduate and adult samples, trait entitlement predicts both generalized anger at God and anger at God in response to suffering (Grubbs, Exline, & Campbell, 2013). These findings persist above and beyond the role of basic personality structure (i.e., the Big Five) and trait anger, strongly suggesting that entitlement plays a unique role in divine struggles (Grubbs et al., 2013). Further work has found that trait entitlement predicts both generalized and suffering-specific anger at God above and beyond the predictive role of religiousness more broadly (a known predictor of such struggles; Exline et al., 2011), social desirability, and humility (Grubbs & Exline, 2014).

Moving beyond anger at God specifically, there are also established links between entitlement and religious fear and guilt, which relates to fear of God's condemnation or disapproval, excessive guilt about personal transgressions, or concern that one has committed sins too great to be forgiven (Exline et al., 2000). In cross-sectional analyses, entitlement positively predicts religious fear and guilt, and this link persists even when other potential predictors are controlled (e.g., agreeableness, religiousness, humility, social desirability; Grubbs & Exline, 2014).

There is also some very preliminary evidence suggesting that narcissistic traits may be related to R/S struggles such as demonic struggles (feeling attacked or sabotaged by evil spirits) and interpersonal struggles (feeling in conflict with either religious others or others about religious topics; Grubbs et al., 2016). Specifically, across four samples involving over 5000 participants, small (e.g., aggregate $r = 0.13\text{--}0.19$) but significant associations were consistently observed between psychological entitlement and those variables. Given that these associations were small and only cross-sectional in nature, definitive conclusions are not possible. However, such associations do suggest that narcissistic traits may be related to additional R/S struggles beyond the well-documented links between such traits and divine R/S struggles.

Domain-Specific Manifestations of Narcissism and Entitlement

Prior literature has focused on the manner in which entitlement and narcissism might be expressed in specific life domains. For example, a number of studies have examined academic entitlement, which refers to a range of behaviors and attitudes among students who generally expect academic rewards (e.g., good grades) without commensurate effort (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Not surprisingly, academic entitlement predicts a number of academic struggles, including unmet expectations, academic dishonesty, and disrespect toward instructors (Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011). Similarly, romantic entitlement (Tolmacz & Mikulincer, 2011) and sexual narcissism and entitlement (McNulty & Widman, 2013) have been well-documented as domain-specific manifestations of narcissism and entitlement more broadly, both of which associate with various relational and sexual struggles. Similar understandings of domain-specific entitlement and narcissism may also apply to R/S aspects of people's lives.

Recent work has validated a domain-specific form of trait entitlement known as divine entitlement (Grubbs, Exline, Pargament, Campbell, &

Twenge, 2017). This construct refers to feelings of privilege, demandingness, and deservingness in one's perceived relationship with a deity (Grubbs, 2016). People with higher levels of divine entitlement are more likely to report attitudes such as, "People like me deserve extra blessings from God," and "I insist on getting what I want out of my spiritual life." More simply, divine entitlement is characterized by the idea, "God owes me" (Grubbs et al., 2017).

Developed and validated in diverse samples, divine entitlement demonstrates a strong relationship with trait entitlement more generally ($r = 0.51\text{--}0.63$; Grubbs et al., 2017). Furthermore, divine entitlement fully mediates the previously discussed relationship between trait entitlement and divine struggles more generally (Grubbs et al., 2017) and demonstrates convincing and sizable indirect effects on psychological distress more generally, through divine struggles. In short, divine entitlement is a robust, cross-sectional predictor of divine struggles, and through that relationship, it is also a robust predictor of psychological distress in general.

Beyond divine entitlement, there is also a theory of spiritual grandiosity (e.g., Hall & Edwards, 1996, 2002). Related to narcissism more generally, spiritual grandiosity is a domain-restricted form of narcissistic grandiosity characterized by a sense of superiority and vanity in one's perceived relationship with a deity (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Spiritually grandiose people often report feeling as if their perceived relationship with God is special or unique in comparison to other religious adherents. They may also report having a special ability to influence or even manipulate God through prayer or report that they are more special to God than other believers might be. In short, spiritual grandiosity is characterized by a vain and self-centered conception of one's own unique and special connection with a deity (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Such an inflated self-view is not without consequence, as some work (reviewed next) indicates that spiritual grandiosity may also be related to R/S struggles in the form of disordered or pathological attachments to a deity.

Much like human attachment, attachment to God may also become conflicted, problematic, or

pathological (Beck & McDonald, 2004). In this way, dysfunctional attachments to God may also become forms of divine struggle. As would be expected, disordered interpersonal attachment styles often predict disordered attachments to God (e.g., Sandage, Jankowski, Crabtree, & Schweer, 2015). However, with this understanding in mind, it is notable that spiritual grandiosity seems to influence the relationship between disordered attachment in general and disordered attachment to God (Sandage et al., 2015). At higher levels of spiritual grandiosity, spiritual instability more fully accounts for the link between anxious adult attachment and anxious God attachment. In technical terms, such an effect is referred to as moderated mediation; specifically, spiritual grandiosity positively moderates the mediating effect of spiritual instability on the relationship between anxious adult attachment and anxious God attachment. This suggests that spiritual grandiosity might be a compensation for the distress associated with spiritual instability (Sandage et al., 2015).

Finally, there has also been some conjecture that narcissistic traits may express themselves uniquely in the form of moral superiority (Shults & Sandage, 2006). This tendency is thought to be particularly likely among members of excessively scrupulous faith traditions for whom the maintenance and expression of moral purity or spiritual integrity are especially important (Shults & Sandage, 2006). Although such ideas have not been extensively tested to date, they do represent an area of potential interest, particularly in light of the burgeoning body of literature on domain-specific manifestations of narcissism.

Summary and Implications

Consistent with the larger body of research on narcissism and entitlement, the present review suggests that the social costs of these traits may very well extend to R/S domains. Across a body of diverse samples, entitlement consistently emerges as a robust predictor of R/S struggles with the divine. More narcissistic and entitled individuals report more anger at God in general,

more anger at God in response to difficult life circumstances, more disappointment with God, and greater fears that God might be displeased with them.

Importantly, the body of research reviewed here points to the conclusion that the potential influences of narcissism and entitlement should not only be studied in the interpersonal domain. R/S functioning tends to be one of the most important domains of people's well-being (Hill & Pargament, 2003), and even those who deny any specific religious affiliation may report that spirituality or a perceived relationship with a deity is important in their daily lives (Lim, MacGregor, & Putnam, 2010). As such, it is reasonable to conclude that, for a large percentage of adults, having a fulfilling or meaningful religious or spiritual life is part of total well-being (Cohen, 2002). Given this importance, the potential negative impacts of narcissism and entitlement on such functioning warrant further examination.

Although prior literature and the present review have primarily focused on the possibility that entitlement and narcissism are promoting greater experiences of anger at God and divine struggle more generally, it is also plausible that, for some individuals, both increased divine struggle and increased entitlement—particularly divine entitlement—may be the result of feeling unjustly victimized by a deity. Such a possibility is distinctly raised by literature suggesting that feelings of victimization or unfair treatment actually reinforce or promote entitled beliefs (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010). When individuals reflect upon times that they were victimized or felt as if they were unfairly treated, they are likely to report greater feelings of entitlement and to conduct themselves in selfish or demanding ways (Zitek et al., 2010). This response can be seen as a defensive preservation of self-image and gives way to the notion of a self-sustaining cycle of struggle and entitlement.

Perhaps the most theoretically useful conceptualization of the relationships between narcissism/entitlement and divine struggle can be extrapolated from prior works on the self-sustaining nature of these traits. Specifically, a number of theoretical works have consistently

pointed out that narcissism (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and entitlement (e.g., Grubbs & Exline, 2016) often follow cyclical, self-sustaining patterns. With entitlement specifically, this pattern involves a cyclical experience of exaggerated entitled demands being met with disappointments, which are then interpreted as injustices or threats to ego, resulting in volatile reactions that serve to bolster the ego (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). A similar pattern may be occurring in the specific relationships between narcissism, entitlement, and R/S struggles. Entitled expectations and demands in one's spiritual life are likely to be frequently unmet, leading to disappointment. In the wake of such disappointment, struggles—particularly divine struggles, such as anger at God—may arise and may then be used as part of a defensive enhancement of ego that results in the reinforcement of entitled beliefs. Future research that explicitly tests such recursive links is needed.

Finally, although the links between facets of narcissism (e.g., entitlement) and specific divine struggles are very clear, it is likely that narcissism is associated with religious functioning in other ways as well. More nuanced approaches to studying the overlaps in these domains are needed. It is likely that aspects of narcissism, such as narcissistic antagonism (e.g., Miller & Campbell, 2008), are related to the experience of interpersonal R/S struggles (i.e., conflicts with others about religion; Exline et al., 2014). Similarly, the well-documented tendencies for more narcissistic individuals to blame others for their shortcomings (Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Stucke, 2003) may be related to a greater willingness to blame supernatural agents for misfortune. These possibilities suggest that more nuanced assessments of both R/S struggles and narcissism may prove fruitful in future research. Prior works examining associations between narcissism and religion have relied primarily on measures of entitlement (e.g., the Psychological Entitlement Scale; Campbell et al., 2004; Narcissistic Personality Inventory—Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale), with some work examining domain-specific manifestations (e.g., spiritual grandiosity, Hall &

Edwards, 2002; divine entitlement, Grubbs et al., 2017). Future work would be well-suited to examine narcissism more broadly, including particularly problematic manifestations of narcissism, as measured by scales such as the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (Pincus et al., 2009) or the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory (Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, & Widiger, 2012).

Conclusion

Narcissism and entitlement are known to be associated with a wide range of social difficulties, and the present review highlights several ways in which those associations may extend to R/S functioning. Narcissism and entitlement are associated with greater anger at God, greater disappointment with God, greater fear of divine disapproval, and greater feelings of conflict with God. These traits may also be expressed in domain-specific ways in the form of divine entitlement or spiritual grandiosity. Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of understanding narcissistic traits as predictors of divine struggles. Furthermore, given the well-established negative links between divine struggles and psychosocial well-being, these findings also point to another avenue by which narcissistic traits may lead to personal difficulties.

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Narcissism and Leadership: A Perfect Match?

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Abstract

At first glance, narcissism and leadership might appear like a perfect match. Narcissistic individuals have many prototypical (leader-like) characteristics (such as confidence, dominance, and extraversion); they create positive first impressions in social contexts, and they actively seek positions of power. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that they tend to frequently emerge as leaders in groups. While this has been consistently found in research, it is less well known what kind of impact narcissistic leaders have on those they lead. In this chapter, I will discuss theory and research showing how (grandiose) narcissistic individuals attain leadership positions as well as what happens after they have reached these positions of power. I will discuss how narcissistic leaders possess both positive (such as charisma, extraversion, confidence, and a bold vision) and negative characteristics (such as lack of empathy, aggression, a tendency to exploit others, and egocentrism) and address how they can influence their followers, organizations, and society at large in both a positive and negative way. I will conclude this chapter with a short discussion about possible future

research directions. Here, I will highlight the importance of contextual factors in determining the impact of narcissistic leaders and thus advocate the importance for future research to not ask *whether* narcissistic leaders are effective but rather to ask *when* they are effective.

Keywords

Leadership · Leader emergence · Leadership effectiveness · Prototypical leader characteristics · Role of context

Narcissism and leadership: it appears to be a perfect match. The unwavering confidence, extraversion, dominance and high self-esteem, all prominent characteristics of narcissists, are also characteristics often associated with leadership. In addition, narcissists' own conviction in their leadership capabilities, their desire for status, power, and a platform to show off their superior abilities, draws them to such elevated positions. It is thus not surprising that many world leaders and CEOs have been ascribed with narcissistic characteristics (Deluga, 1997; Glad, 2002; Maccoby, 2000). Examples of these leaders range from dictators such as Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein (Glad, 2002) to business leaders such as Steve Jobs and Kenneth Lay of Enron (Kramer, 2003; Robins & Paulhus, 2001) and political leaders such as Donald Trump

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(Visser, Book, & Volk, 2017). What is disconcerting is that narcissistic leaders have many negative characteristics which might not be evident at first but which will become more evident over time. Examples of these include lack of empathy, aggression, manipulativeness, egocentrism, and a strong sense of entitlement. In this chapter, I will discuss if narcissistic individuals are an asset or a liability to the people they lead. First, I will discuss theory and research showing how narcissistic individuals attain leadership positions. Next, I will review work showing what happens once these individuals are in such positions. I will conclude this chapter with a short discussion of future research directions. I should note that the focus in this chapter will be on the grandiose rather than vulnerable dimension of narcissism. Grandiose narcissism is characterized by more externalizing features such as confidence, dominance, and extraversion. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism, or depressive narcissism, is characterized by more internalizing features such as introversion, low self-esteem, and high emotional distress (Miller et al., 2011, 2018). Given the overlap between grandiose narcissistic characteristics and prototypical leadership characteristics, such as confidence, dominance, and extraversion, grandiose narcissism is more relevant when examining leadership. For instance, a study on US presidents found that presidents had higher grandiose but not higher vulnerable narcissism than the general population (Watts et al., 2013). Moreover, grandiose but not vulnerable narcissism was related to several leadership effectiveness indicators.

Leader Emergence

Prior research has consistently shown that narcissistic individuals tend to emerge as leaders (Brunell et al., 2008; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011). In other words, if there is a group of individuals and one of them has many narcissistic characteristics, this person will most likely be chosen as the group's leader. One reason for this might be that with

their confident demeanor, their dominance, and their seeming authority, narcissistic individuals seem to personify a prototypical leader. Implicit leadership theory (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1991; Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994) describes how people recognize others as leaders. According to this theory, observers match the leader's behavior against their own implicit schema of what a leader should be like. The greater the overlap between their schema (i.e., leader prototype) and a person's behavior or assumed characteristics, the more likely others will perceive this person as an effective leader. Characteristics that have been consistently associated with prototypical leaders include confidence, dominance, high self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, intelligence, extraversion, and empathy (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2006; Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006; Smith & Foti, 1998).

With the exception of empathy, there is great overlap between the characteristics of narcissism and a prototypical leader, which helps explain why narcissists might be perceived as competent and emerge as leaders. In addition, narcissists' ability to engender positive impressions in interpersonal contexts, at least in the short term or with unacquainted others (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011; Leckelt, Kufner, Nestler, & Back, 2015; Miller, Price, & Campbell, 2012; Ong, Roberts, Arthur, Woodman, & Akehurst, 2016), could be another key to why they tend to rise in the ranks. Narcissists' charm, enthusiasm, humor, dominance, and confidence (Back et al., 2010; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017) may bias assessors to rate them more favorably and enable narcissistic individuals to ascend to high-power positions. Indeed, acting dominantly enhances perceptions of competence regardless of actual competence, and thereby leads to attainment of influence in a group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). Furthermore, although narcissism is not related to objective intelligence (Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994), narcissistic individuals believe they are more intelligent, and this overconfidence may enhance the illusion that this is true (Murphy

et al., 2015). Paulhus (1998) found, for example, that at first acquaintance, narcissists seemed to be perceived as intelligent by their fellow group members (see also Carlson et al., 2011).

In addition to being perceived by others as being leadership worthy, narcissistic individuals are also likely to actively seek leadership positions themselves. They show a dislike of subordinate positions (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016), unless it presents opportunities to climb the hierarchical ladder (Zitek & Jordan, 2016), and among the many competencies that narcissistic individuals rate themselves overly positively on is leadership (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Grijalva et al., 2015). Moreover, narcissists' ceaseless pursuit of admiration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) leads them to seek social contexts that enable them to show off their superiority (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). The leadership role thus provides them with an alluring stage from which they can receive the adulation they seek.

Thus, narcissists attain positions of power because, firstly, they are driven by a desire to become a leader, and secondly, they are being hoisted there by others who see them as quintessential leaders. In the next section, I will describe theory and research examining what happens once highly narcissistic individuals attain leadership: What kind of impact do such leaders have on those they lead?

Leadership Effectiveness

Because narcissists possess both positive as well as negative characteristics, narcissism in leaders has often been touted a mixed blessing (Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Narcissists are decisive, show persistence in the face of failure (Wallace, Ready, & Weitenhagen, 2009), and increase performance in response to critique (Nevicka, Baas, & Ten Velden, 2016). They work well in contexts which provide opportunities to showcase their abilities, such as those characterized as having high pressure, being challenging,

and having an evaluative audience (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Put differently, they seem to be well-suited for a leadership function.

Indeed, narcissistic leaders tend to communicate bold visions and are seen as charismatic (Deluga, 1997; Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010; Maccoby, 2000; Post, 1993). This, in turn, may motivate their followers and inspire them to work toward a common (organizational) goal. Moreover, narcissistic leaders promote radical innovations (Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013) and decrease experienced insecurity among followers in uncertain contexts (e.g., during economic crises; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, & Ten Velden, 2013). A study on US presidents further found that narcissism predicted better crisis management, public persuasiveness, and the ability to push through an agenda and initiate legislation (Watts et al., 2013).

On the negative side, however, narcissists' unrealistic optimism, their overconfidence in their own abilities, self-serving behavior, impulsiveness, and their sense of entitlement and superiority can have potentially disastrous consequences for groups or organizations they lead (Judge et al., 2009). Narcissists have been found to use resources for their own gain at a long-term cost to others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005), which could end up hurting their organizations. Furthermore, narcissists tend to only listen to information they want to hear, believe that their ideas and solutions are the best (Maccoby, 2000), and disregard other people's advice (Kausel, Culbertson, Leiva, Slaughter, & Jackson, 2015). Research on the influence of narcissistic leaders in decision-making teams found that narcissistic leaders were inclined to dominate the discussion and reduce information sharing among their followers, which led to reduced team performance (Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011).

Narcissists' tendency to ignore expert advice and their need for glory and adulation might also lead narcissistic leaders to pursue unrealistic projects and risky investments or even display unethical and deviant work behavior. Indeed, narcissistic CEOs made riskier investment decisions

which generated greater volatility in organizational performance (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Moreover, narcissism has been linked to white-collar crime (Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender, & Klein, 2006) and engagement in counterproductive work behavior (Penney & Spector, 2002), such as theft, sabotage, interpersonal aggression, and work slowdowns. Importantly, power seems to exacerbate narcissists' overconfidence (Macenczak, Campbell, Henley, & Campbell, 2016), which implies that the higher narcissists climb in hierarchy, the more toxic their negative characteristics might become. Finally, narcissists' lack of empathy and their tendency to attribute failures to others while taking credit for successes (Stucke, 2003) could lead narcissistic leaders to abuse their power and bully their followers, thereby compromising follower well-being (Tepper, 2000). For instance, narcissists have been repeatedly found to show aggressive reactions toward criticism or anything they perceive as a threat to their ego (e.g., Barry, Chaplin, & Grafeman, 2006; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), even showing displaced aggressive responses toward innocent others (Martinez, Zeichner, Reidy, & Miller, 2008). Finally, the same research which found narcissism in presidents to be related to a number of positive outcomes also found narcissism to be related to negative outcomes such as congressional impeachment resolutions and unethical behavior (Watts et al., 2013).

It is this combination of dark and bright sides of narcissism that has led researchers to wrestle with the question of whether narcissistic leaders would be an objectively desirable or an undesirable addition to groups and organizations (e.g., Campbell et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). To complicate matters, past research on how followers subjectively perceive narcissistic leaders shows inconsistent findings. For example, some studies showed that narcissistic leaders were evaluated negatively on task and relational leadership behaviors (Martin, Côté, & Woodruff, 2016), while others show that they are evaluated more positively in terms of transformational leadership or their overall leadership effec-

tiveness (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka, Ten Velden et al., 2011). A recent meta-analysis found no linear relationship between leader narcissism and follower perceptions of leader effectiveness (Grijalva et al., 2015) but did find a curvilinear relationship. Thus, while a certain level of narcissism in leaders appears to be associated with positive evaluations, beyond a certain threshold narcissism is considered negative.

To reconcile these findings, recent theory and research on narcissistic leadership has argued that context is important to take into account when evaluating the effectiveness of narcissistic individuals (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Campbell et al., 2011; Nevicka et al., 2013; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). Specifically, narcissistic leaders are proposed to be beneficial for organizations in the "emerging zone" (i.e., in short-term contexts following ascent to leadership position; during brief periods of instability, insecurity, or crisis; in situations involving unacquainted individuals or early-stage relationships) and detrimental in the "enduring zone" (i.e., in long-term contexts, in situations involving acquainted individuals or continuing relationships; Campbell et al., 2011). This proposed negative representation of narcissistic leaders in the long-term stems from narcissists' many toxic interpersonal characteristics, which would be expected to become more evident and impactful over time. For instance, over time narcissistic leaders' aggressive reactions toward others' criticism could become increasingly stressful for followers. While these propositions have not yet been examined in organizations where narcissists hold legitimate power positions, research on narcissistic individuals in small student groups shows support for this idea. While narcissistic individuals are initially perceived positively due to their expressiveness and humor, as time progresses (as little as a few weeks or months) more socially, toxic characteristics become noticeable, such as hostility, lack of empathy, and untrustworthiness, and consequently the popularity and leadership status of narcissistic individuals decreases (Carlson & DesJardins, 2015; Carlson et al., 2011; Leckelt et al., 2015; Paulhus, 1998).

To summarize, narcissistic leadership has both positive and negative consequences for groups, organizations, or even countries. Incorporating additional factors such as time or context as moderators might be a fruitful avenue to reconcile the seemingly contradictory findings. In the next section, I will discuss important developments in research on narcissistic leadership and provide suggestions for future research.

Future Directions

As mentioned above, recent theory on narcissistic leadership suggests that time might be an important potential moderator to further our knowledge about the consequences of narcissistic leaders. If we would generalize findings showing declining positive perceptions of narcissists in student groups to legitimate leadership contexts (e.g., in organizations), we would expect narcissistic leaders to be perceived positively by their followers in the short-term but more negatively in the long-term. However, the complexities of leader-follower relationships (Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, Guillaume, & Lee, 2013) are not captured merely by the length of acquaintance of a leader and follower. Prior research found that accuracy of personality judgments was associated with increasing amount of new behavioral expressions but not with the length of acquaintance per se (Biesanz, West, & Millevoi, 2007). Thus, it is important to take into consideration how likely it is for followers to “pick up” on or discern certain behaviors and gain better insight into their leaders. This might indeed depend on how long followers know their leader, but it might also be dependent on the amount of opportunities that followers have of observing various samples of the leader’s behavior (Hinds & Cramton, 2013). Thus, leader visibility (Napier & Ferris, 1993) could be examined as a potentially important moderator when looking at the relationship between leader narcissism and perceptions of leadership effectiveness. One would expect that the more visible and frequent a person’s actions are, the more likely that the observer will obtain an accurate picture of that person’s

character (Vazire, 2010). In addition, the intensity of leader follower contact would likewise be important to examine. Both these concepts are related to leader distance, which indeed has been shown to affect not only followers’ perceptions of leaders’ behavior but also the impact that leaders’ behavior has on followers (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002).

Another fruitful development to further unravel the influence of narcissistic leaders is to take a contextual approach to leadership. Different contexts or features of the environment can activate the need for different leadership traits (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001). Given that narcissistic individuals are perceived to reduce uncertainty and were therefore selected as leaders particularly in uncertain contexts (Nevicka et al., 2013), future research could investigate whether narcissistic leaders are actually more effective in unstable or dynamic contexts in comparison to stable contexts. For example, crises, which trigger uncertainty and are potentially threatening to individual interests (Pearson & Clair, 1998), require a leader who can signal a swift resolution of the situation (Madera & Smith, 2009) and can restore order and certainty (Shamir & Howell, 1999). When people feel threatened or afraid, they seek assertive or authoritative leadership to help them restore their sense of security (Madsen & Snow, 1991; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007) and find agentic attributes such as dominance and confidence to be more important than communal attributes such as warmth and empathy (Hoyt, Simon, & Reid, 2009). Thus, uncertain or crises contexts might represent situations in which having a narcissistic leader can actually have a reassuring influence on followers and reduce their stress. Here it would also be particularly interesting to distinguish between actual performance and perceptions of followers. Would narcissists’ problem-solving abilities actually be superior to lower narcissistic leaders in a highly uncertain or stressful context? Or would their benefit reside more in their presence allaying followers’ fears and concerns? If the latter is the case, whether or not narcissistic leaders actually make sound decisions to deal with a crisis or uncertain situation might not even

matter, as long as followers believe they have a decisive and confident leader at the helm.

Finally, given that leaders do not operate in isolation but depend on their interactions with followers, an interesting avenue for future research would be to examine fit between narcissistic leaders and followers based on followers' personality. For example, dominance complementarity theory would suggest that narcissistic leaders might fit better with followers who are more submissive rather than dominant (Grijalva & Harms, 2014). This theory posits that more satisfying relationships are achieved when dominant, assertive behavior by one person corresponds with submissive, passive behavior by the other (Carson, 1969; Kiesler, 1983). In contrast, when two individuals both demonstrate dominant behavior, this leads to irritation and anger (Shechtman & Horowitz, 2006). Thus, a narcissistic leader with a dominant follower might get frustrated in his/her efforts to exert influence over this follower, and likewise, proactive or more dominant followers might get frustrated with assertive leaders. Conversely, submissive followers will feel more comfortable in a position where they are controlled by a leader, because this provides them with structure and direction (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012). In support of the dominance complementarity theory, prior research found that extraverted leaders had a positive influence on performance of followers who were passive, but a negative influence on performance of proactive followers (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011).

Concluding Thoughts

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed a question: Does the apparent match between narcissism and leadership make narcissistic individuals an asset or a liability to the people they lead? I provided a summary of prior research which showed that, through self-selection, positive first impressions, and the possession of prototypical leadership characteristics, narcissistic individuals emerge as leaders. While these findings have been consistent, research on the consequences of

narcissistic leaders and perceptions of narcissistic leaders' effectiveness leads to more complex conclusions, with some studies pointing toward a positive and some pointing toward a negative impact. The reason for these discrepancies rests most likely in the paradox that is narcissism: narcissistic leaders possess both positive (e.g., charisma, extraversion, confidence, and bold vision) and negative characteristics (e.g., lack of empathy, aggression, tendency to exploit others, and egocentrism). Thus, a more suitable question to ask is not if but *when* are narcissistic leaders effective. Pursuing this question leads to a better understanding on how to harness the positive side of these leaders while curbing the negative effects. One thing is certain however: power appears to exacerbate narcissists' overconfidence. To ensure that the toxic side of narcissists is contained, it is imperative to put checks and balances in place to ensure that such leaders are held accountable. Narcissists' need for adulation and desire to work with submissive followers might lead them to curb voices of opposition and surround themselves with sycophants. This makes it all the more important to not be blinded by the positive, sometimes charming, side of narcissistic leaders without realizing that this leadership package also comes with many toxic sides.

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Abstract

As organizations become more adaptive and fluid in the knowledge era of work, people also have to adjust to more flexible and dynamic role responsibilities. Perhaps more than ever, people are navigating roles of leadership and followership. Narcissists may prefer leadership positions but are nonetheless likely to find themselves in positions of followership. With an emphasis on grandiose narcissism, we discuss how the demands of followership may clash with narcissistic tendencies. Emerging lines of inquiry provide insight into the ways that narcissism accounts for systematic differences in how people view positions of followership and behave in them. Recent advances also highlight the potential implications of narcissistic followership at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group levels of analysis. We conclude by advancing concrete recommendations for future research, including efforts to better understand the behavioral dynamics of narcissistic followership, when and why narcissists support or thwart their leaders, and the

efficacy of strategies to manage and lead narcissistic followers.

Keywords

Followership · Leadership · Workplace behavior · Energy clash model · Hierarchy · Status

Roles of followership are commonplace. Almost everyone occupies a position of followership (or a subordinate position), at one time or another. Followership can be conceptualized as “the characteristics, behaviors, and processes of individuals acting in relation to leaders” (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014, p. 96). However, although leaders may frame the actions, expectations, and goals prevalent in a given situation, followers are responsible for operating within the frame created by their leader (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015). This observation is consistent with the view that roles of leadership and followership are highly interdependent; thus, leading *and* following behaviors jointly determine organizational outcomes (Hollander, 1992). Yet for many years, followership was viewed as either a passive role of subordination or a problem to be addressed (e.g., Zaleznik, 1965). Some of the negative connotations associated with the “follower” label persist today (Hopton, Christie, & Barling, 2012). Nonetheless, contemporary theorizing has drawn

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attention to the broad implications of followership for organizations, teams, and social groups.

Though historically understudied compared to leadership, followership is an essential component of settings where individuals must coordinate their efforts to achieve a common goal (Van Vugt, 2006). From an evolutionary perspective, followership may be adaptive due to its pivotal role in facilitating social coordination (Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Followership positions enable individuals to align themselves with the security and benefits of group membership while also increasing the likelihood that a group of individuals can successfully coordinate their actions in a unified direction (Van Vugt & Kurzban, 2007). In addition to supporting cooperative efforts, followers can influence leaders through their actions. Candid feedback from followers can influence leaders to be less selfish when allocating resources to group members, for example (Oc, Bashshur, & Moore, 2015).

Narcissism is highly relevant to the study of followership, because the demands of followership may clash with narcissistic tendencies. We focus on grandiose narcissism in the current chapter, measured predominantly by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988), rather than vulnerable narcissism or narcissistic personality disorder. The nomological networks associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism differ in their relations with social behavior, personality traits, and psychopathological symptoms (Miller, Hoffman, Gaughan, & Campbell, 2011). Grandiose narcissism is associated with excessively positive self-views in agentic domains (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002), a disregard of others (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005; Obhi, Hogeveen, Giacomini, & Jordan, 2014), and a desire to communicate their perceived superiority over others through dominance strategies (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Reijntjes et al., 2016). In contrast, followership is associated with lower status and lower power and requires deference to others, which may require some degree of humility (Popper, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Many people prefer roles of leadership to followership. Indeed, grandiose narcissists desire

positions of leadership and self-identify as effective leaders (Brunell et al., 2008; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). Our recent research suggests, however, that narcissists find followership to be particularly unappealing (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016). Across a series of studies, our participants expected to complete a group task, for which we assigned them roles. Participants were told the role assignment was based on either their responses to a psychological test (Studies 1 and 3) or determined randomly (Study 2). Across these studies, we found that narcissists assigned to a subordinate role (i.e., employee) were more dissatisfied and perceived their role to be a less accurate reflection of their personality (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016) than those assigned a leadership role (i.e., project manager). The pattern of results extended to naturalistic groups (i.e., sports teams), where narcissists who felt they occupied a lower-status role expressed greater dissatisfaction and perceived their current role to be an inaccurate reflection of their abilities (Study 4; Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016). Taken together with previous research showing that narcissists desire leadership roles, our findings demonstrate that narcissists are reluctant to embrace roles of followership and view themselves to be ill-suited to such positions.

Further evidence of narcissists' distaste for positions of followership can be seen in how narcissism relates to willingness to endorse hierarchy. Hierarchies provide structure and order to social systems by differentiating people according to the power and status they hold in a specific social setting (Friesen, Kay, Eibach, & Galinsky, 2014; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Zitek and Jordan (2016) found that narcissism positively predicted support for hierarchy when individuals felt they could ascend the ranks in a prospective organization. Interestingly, narcissism was negatively related to support for hierarchy when it was impossible to ascend the ranks in a prospective organization. Whereas the structure and order provided by hierarchy are attractive to narcissists when they can envision themselves in a high-status position, narcissists may actively avoid group settings where they cannot ascend to leadership roles.

Narcissism also accounts for systematic differences in followership behaviors. In the workplace, narcissism is negatively related to co-worker ratings of task performance and positively related to co-workers' ratings of workplace deviance (Study 2, Judge et al., 2006). Other research suggests that narcissists intentionally undermine organizational goals, by engaging in counterproductive work behaviors, when they feel constrained by their workplace role (Penney & Spector, 2002). There is also support for the idea that narcissists are less motivated in positions of followership. Narcissists are less willing to engage in extra-role behaviors and more concerned about their own interests when assigned to a subordinate role than a project manager position (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016). In addition, fostering group goal acceptance and instilling high performance expectations typically motivate followers to put forth extra effort in their roles. But the positive effect of these two transformational leadership behaviors is attenuated among individuals higher in narcissism (Arthur, Woodman, Ong, Hardy, & Ntoumanis, 2011). A consistent thread tying these studies together is that narcissism is linked to undesirable behaviors (or behavioral intentions) in positions of followership.

Another issue is the quality of interactions between narcissistic followers and their leaders. Previous research has focused on the implications of interacting with narcissistic leaders, showing that the initial appeal and excitement generated by narcissists wanes over time and does not translate into leader effectiveness (e.g., Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011; Nevicka, Ten Velden, De Hoogh, & Van Vianen, 2011; Ong, Roberts, Woodman, & Akehurst, 2016). Similar to the difficulties of interacting with narcissistic leaders, evidence suggests that it is difficult to sustain positive working relationships with narcissistic followers. Narcissistic entitlement among protégés translated into mentoring relationships that were shorter in duration and characterized by more negative mentoring experiences (Allen, Johnson, Xu, Biga, Rodopman, & Ottinot, 2008). Narcissism is also negatively associated with tak-

ing advice from others (Kausel, Culbertson, Leiva, Slaughter, & Jackson, 2015), which is likely to create difficulties for leaders working with narcissistic followers. These findings suggest the possibility that narcissistic followers may lack gratitude for the opportunities provided by a leader or overlook genuine opportunities for self-development due to their self-perception of grandiosity. Taken together, these studies highlight some of the potential difficulties leaders may experience when dealing with narcissistic followers.

Future Research Directions

Despite recent calls for more dedicated and systematic investigation of followership, empirical research on followership remains sparse (Popper, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). There are, however, a number of questions related to narcissism and followership that would benefit from further research. One avenue of investigation is to further examine how narcissistic followers interact with their leaders. Given that narcissists strive to demonstrate their agentic qualities (Campbell & Foster, 2007), narcissistic followers may be likely to engage in "managing up" behaviors, which are strategic attempts to manipulate or influence someone in a position of leadership rather than support their position (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015). Leaders generally appreciate followers who are willing to offer alternative insights or perspectives on group-related matters, but such behaviors can be viewed as acts of insubordination or threats to their authority (Benson, Hardy, & Eys, 2016). Of relevance to narcissism, leaders describe being particularly averse to being challenged by followers in some contexts (i.e., performance-critical situations, in front of other group members; Benson, Hardy, & Eys, 2016), which are also contexts with potentially greater opportunities for self-enhancement. Thus, future research could examine the possibility that narcissists more frequently challenge their leaders at inopportune moments because of their desire to self-enhance.

Another area that warrants attention is how narcissism relates to actual patterns of follower behavior. Research so far either has focused on assessments of behavioral intentions (e.g., Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016) or self-reports of behaviors at a single time point (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2002). Given that narcissists possess social acumen and are adept at impressing others (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; Paulhus, 1998), it would be useful to track the behaviors associated with narcissistic followership across time and under different organizational conditions. Although narcissists may find it difficult to follow someone else's lead, narcissistic followers may perform quite well in their role if there are opportunities for self-enhancement (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Narcissists are likely to be concerned with finding ways to ascend organizational ranks to secure a more prominent, higher-status position within the group (Zitek & Jordan, 2016). Motivated by a desire to move out of follower roles, narcissists may also behave differently depending on who is the target of their behavior. For example, narcissists might present themselves as being eager and helpful when interacting with someone who has control over their organizational fate (e.g., a manager responsible for recommending individuals for promotion). At the other extreme, narcissists might strategically work against, rather than with, co-workers who they view to be competition in terms of ascending the organizational hierarchy.

Another question to address is whether narcissism accounts for different responses to others' claims to leadership—a core function of followership. It is evident that narcissistic individuals strive to display their superiority over others (Campbell & Foster, 2007), but little is known about when narcissists are more (or less) likely to recognize and support other leaders. In many situations, groups must adapt to shifting roles of leadership and followership (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). A functional leadership structure is defined by a series of interrelated processes where individuals claim and grant mutually recognized positions of leadership and followership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In ideal circumstances, an individual must personally identify with a role of followership (i.e., "I am a

follower in this situation") and recognize another person as being the leader in the same situation (i.e., "She is my leader in this situation"), and there needs to be a collective understanding of who is following/leading whom (i.e., "We are following this individual"). If narcissists are reluctant to self-identify as a follower or refuse to recognize a specific leader, they could disrupt group efforts. Thus, one important question is whether there are specific circumstances under which narcissists are more (or less) inclined to support someone else's claim to leadership. One possibility is that narcissists are more likely to support someone's claim to leadership if doing so might ultimately benefit their own self-interests. A related issue is whether there are situations where narcissists are willing to relinquish a role of leadership—and thus assume a position of followership. Research in this area could provide insight into the group-level consequences of narcissistic followership.

We have so far considered individual, personal, and collective consequences of narcissistic followership. It is also worth considering whether certain leadership strategies are more (or less) effective when managing narcissistic followers. One of the most popular theories of leadership is transformational leadership. In a study of high-performance, youth athletes found that the transformational leadership behaviors displayed by coaches (i.e., fostering acceptance of group goals, setting high performance expectations) were less likely to inspire extra effort from narcissistic athletes (Arthur et al., 2011). Narcissistic followers may respond more favorably to leaders who demonstrate how their own interests align with the collective interests of the group or team (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, Beersma, & McIlwain, 2011). Narcissists may also respond more favorably to an autonomy-supportive leadership style, where leaders strive to promote a sense of agency and independence among their followers (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). At an organizational level, the Energy Clash Model (ECM; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017) offers several promising strategies for managing narcissists. Although the ECM focuses on the systemic impact of narcissistic leaders on organizations, some of the proposed accommodation

tactics are also relevant to narcissistic followers. As two examples, implementing *systemic checks and balances* may function to hold narcissistic followers accountable for their self-serving actions, and *increasing organization identification* may be an indirect route to bring narcissists' self-interests in line with organizational interests. Considering that narcissistic qualities are often viewed as a mixed blessing, it is important to understand how organizations, teams, and individuals can accommodate and manage narcissistic followers.

Conclusion

There is a strong research tradition of studying leadership but rarely can one lead without having first followed others. Perhaps more importantly, one cannot lead without followers. Narcissists may prefer and strive for leadership positions but are nonetheless likely to find themselves in positions of followership. With organizations becoming more dynamic and teams more prevalent, identifying factors that promote or hinder effective followership warrants attention. In this regard, narcissism appears to account for systematic differences in how people view and behave in positions of followership. Narcissists are reluctant to embrace roles of followership and may pose problems for groups and organizations when they are confined to such positions. However, narcissism is generally associated with both costs and benefits. It may therefore be worth investigating how organizations can better integrate narcissists into hierarchies as either leaders or followers. Future efforts have the opportunity to not only provide insight into the conditions under which narcissists disrupt groups and leaders but also the ways in which groups and leaders might benefit from narcissistic followership.

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Trait Narcissism and Social Networks

45

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Abstract

Narcissism is an inherently interpersonal trait, which both affects and is affected by those around the narcissistic individual. This chapter describes the use of social network analysis (SNA) to study narcissism. A brief primer for SNA is presented, explaining how data are collected and analyzed from both online and face-to-face social networks. I subsequently review studies of narcissism in sociocentric, egocentric, and online social networks. The reviewed studies indicate that narcissists report a greater number of social connections but that these perceived connections are often not reciprocated by the other members of their networks. Evidence from SNA also demonstrates that narcissists are more disliked and experience greater conflict with members of their networks. Social networks provide substantial information about the interpersonal effects of narcissism which might be obscured by relying only on self-report. Future research applying a social network methodology to the study of narcissism is suggested.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Social networks · Interpersonal relationships

Narcissism is a deeply interpersonal trait. Both the grandiose and vulnerable aspects of narcissism feature interpersonal comparison, ranging from feelings of superiority to shame (e.g., Pincus & Roche, 2011), with corresponding social behaviors and consequences including dismissal, denigration, and aggression. To better assess these interpersonal aspects of narcissism, a small but growing amount of research has focused on the patterns of relationships within social systems, using social network analysis (SNA). Whereas traditional social-personality psychology typically starts at the level of the individual, SNA assumes individuals to be situated within a series of relationships with others, who are themselves engaged in other relationships, resulting in an interconnected web.

SNA allows patterns to emerge that may be hidden from traditional, individualistic research. Some of these patterns may be familiar from related designs, such as the Social Relations Model for dyadic data (Kenny & La Voie, 1984), which decomposes interpersonal perceptions and behaviors into actor, partner, and relationship effects: If Albert describes Paul as “arrogant,” how much of that is due to Albert’s tendency to

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view others as arrogant in general (actor effect)? How much is due to Paul being seen as arrogant by most people (partner effect)? And how much is an idiosyncratic and unique aspect of the relationship between the two of them (relationship effect)?

Social network analysis integrates numerous dyadic effects, allowing one to look at how the members of an entire group relate to each other member in terms of actor, partner, and relationship effects. However, it can also explore more wide-ranging features of the social environment. For example, if we want to quantify Paul's interpersonal behavior, we could assess how many people he calls his friends and how many people call him their friend. We could see if his social connections tend to come from one source or if he has friends from many different contexts. We could even measure his tendency to establish new connections with people based on those others' personal characteristics, or their social positions within the network, or whether their existing friends are themselves high in arrogance. In short, we can examine the associations between individual differences and a wide range of interpersonal relationships, discovering patterns that are obscured at the individual or dyadic level.

Despite the ability of SNA to provide rich analyses of perceptions and behavior, psychology has lagged behind other fields such as sociology and anthropology in adopting these techniques (Clifton & Webster, 2017). Nevertheless, a growing number of researchers have applied SNA to better understand narcissism and related traits. In this chapter, I will review this research and its implications. I will first start with a brief overview of SNA, explaining some of the specialized terminology and techniques used in the research. For a more detailed explanation of these concepts, I refer the reader to recent primers (e.g., Butts, 2008; Clifton & Webster, 2017) or comprehensive treatments of the topic (e.g., Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Overview of Social Network Analysis

At its most basic, a social network consists of a set of individuals, called *nodes*, and a measurement of the relationship connecting each pair of nodes. These structural connections, called *ties* or *edges*, can represent knowing, liking, disliking, trust, romantic feelings, or any other relationship variable. Ties are often operationalized in a binary way, such that a connection is either present or absent (e.g., "Is this person your friend?"). Alternatively, ties can be valued, using a numeric scale to represent the strength of the connection (e.g., a Likert scale of friendship, where 0 = *unacquainted*, 1 = *acquaintance*, 2 = *friend*, 3 = *best friend*). In addition, these ties may be *undirected*, such that two actors in a dyad are assumed to be reciprocal (e.g., the number of phone conversations held between a pair of people), or they may be *directed*, allowing two members of a dyad to have differing ties to each other (e.g., ratings of how well each likes the other person).

Social network data are generally arrayed in a k by k matrix, where k is the number of individuals in the network. The matrix consists of values for the connection *from* the participant in each row *to* the other participants in each column. In undirected networks, the matrix will be symmetric, whereas in directed networks the values above and below the diagonal may differ. Table 45.1 shows a hypothetical social network matrix, which we can imagine represents friendships in an office. This example matrix is binary (friendships are represented as either 0 or 1) and directed (feelings of friendship are not assumed to be reciprocal; e.g., F considers G to be a friend, but G does not consider F to be a friend).

The social network is frequently graphed to allow easy examination of the connections among individuals. In a standard network graph, individuals are depicted as nodes, with lines connecting them to represent social ties. Binary networks represent lines as simply present or absent,

Table 45.1 Hypothetical binary directed social network matrix representing the presence or absence of friendship ties. Values in each cell indicate the rating *from* the individual in the row *to* the individual in the column. Because the network ties are directed, the upper and lower triangular matrices are not symmetrical

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
A	-	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	1	-	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
C	0	0	-	1	0	0	0	0	0
D	0	0	1	-	1	0	0	0	0
E	1	1	0	1	-	0	0	1	0
F	0	0	0	1	0	-	1	1	1
G	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	1
H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	-

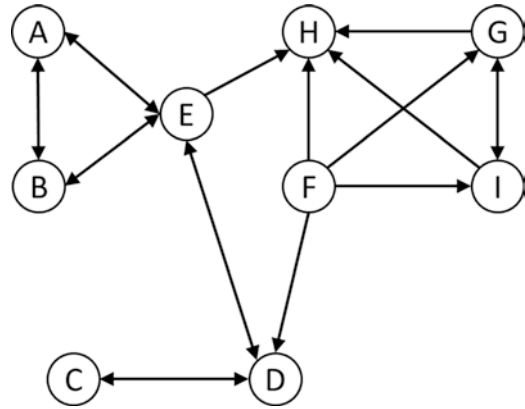


Fig. 45.1 Hypothetical binary directed social network corresponding to Table 45.1. Arrow heads indicate the direction of the friendship tie

whereas valued networks may show ties of differing thickness to indicate strength of connection. Directed networks use arrows to indicate the direction of the tie. Figure 45.1 depicts a network graph of the matrix in Table 45.1, again with directed, binary connections among nodes. For example, the arrow from I to H indicates that I considers H to be a friend, but that H does not reciprocate, whereas the two-headed arrow between I and G indicates that they are mutual friends.

Using a social network matrix, a wide range of measures can be calculated to examine the patterns of connection within the network. One typical question regards the *centrality* of nodes within the matrix: is a given individual highly connected to the rest of the group, or is the person on the fringe of the network, with a paucity of social connections? Centrality is often operationalized as a node's *degree*, simply the number of connections with others. In directed networks, degree can be separated into *indegree* (the number of others who identify connections to the individual) and *outdegree* (the number of others to whom the individual identified connections). For ties representing positive social connections, these measures generally represent popularity and gregariousness, respectively.

Although indegree and outdegree are often correlated, the use of directed network connections allows them to be considered separately. Consider the example network in Table 45.1 and

Fig. 45.1. For ease of description, I will refer to the nodes using names corresponding to each letter alphabetically (Alice, Beth, Carl, Doug, Emily, Frank, George, Howard, and Isabella). Emily and Frank are the most gregarious, each with an outdegree of 4, as indicated by their four outgoing arrows. Emily considers Alice, Beth, Doug, and Howard to be her friends; Frank considers Doug, George, Howard, and Isabella to be his. Note, however, that three of Emily's four perceived friendships are reciprocated, as indicated by double-headed arrows with Alice, Beth, and Doug, giving Emily an indegree of 3. In contrast, none of Frank's reported friendships reciprocate his friendship, such that although Frank's outdegree is 4, his indegree is 0. Similarly, Howard is the most popular person in the network, with four incoming arrows (indicating that Emily, Frank, George, and Isabella all consider Howard to be their friend), for an indegree of 4. However, he does not reciprocate any of those feelings, giving him an outdegree of 0.

Another frequently used measure of centrality is *betweenness* (Freeman, 1979). Betweenness is based in the idea that, although two nodes may not have a direct connection in a network, they may both be connected via a mutual friend (or a friend-of-a-friend, etc.). We can calculate the shortest path connecting any two nodes in a network, called a *geodesic*, and then assess how many of these geodesics must pass through a

particular node. A node's betweenness centrality is the sum of all geodesics in the network that pass through that node. Betweenness is seen as a measure of a node's social influence (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), or ability to act as a power broker, controlling the flow of information through the network (Scott, 2000). In the example network in Fig. 45.1, Emily has the highest betweenness centrality (a value of 14). If Frank wants to know what Beth is planning, or if Alice wants to pass an idea to Howard, this information must pass through Emily, giving her a central role in the network.

Most social network research uses one of the three approaches to assessing networks: sociocentric, egocentric, and online social networks. The remainder of this chapter organizes narcissism research via these three approaches, concluding with a general summary of the research.

Narcissism in Sociocentric Networks

Sociocentric social networks assess all of the connections within a bounded (closed) group. For example, a sociocentric network might comprise all the members of a fraternity, or all of the employees in an accounting department, or some other group of individuals around whom a meaningful conceptual boundary can be drawn. Once these boundaries are determined, the connection between each pair of members of the network is assessed by asking the members to rate their relationship with each other member. A sociocentric approach allows a rich depiction of the relationships within that network. We can determine not only direct connections but indirect connections like friends-of-friends. Moreover, because we assess both members in each dyad, the reciprocity of relationships can be determined. There are, however, limitations to taking a sociocentric approach. Because all members of the network are included, missing data can obscure the true structure of the network (e.g., Smith & Moody, 2013). In addition, sociocentric networks focus within the bounded group and can determine nothing about connections outside of that group.

The network in Fig. 45.1 shows that Carl has few friendships at the office but tells us nothing about his social life outside of work.

Several studies have examined narcissism in the context of sociocentric networks. Clifton, Turkheimer, and Oltmanns (2009) conducted a sociocentric analysis of 21 groups of military recruits, averaging 38 members per group, at the conclusion of their basic training. Each participant made numeric ratings of how well they knew each other member of their group, resulting in 21 valued, directed networks. In addition, participants completed self-report ratings of their own DSM-IV personality disorder traits and peer ratings of the personality disorder traits of the other members of their network. Narcissism significantly predicted a higher betweenness centrality in the network, such that individuals who scored high on either self-reported or peer-reported narcissism tended to be links connecting otherwise unconnected groups of people. Narcissism was also associated with higher outdegree, but not indegree. In fact, narcissism predicted a lower reciprocity in connections, with more narcissistic participants significantly overestimating the number and quality of their connections with others.

Czarna, Dufner, and Clifton (2014) examined four sociocentric networks of well-acquainted Polish college students, with an average of 30 individuals per network. Connections between students were operationalized using separate round-robin liking ratings and disliking ratings by the members of each network. The authors predicted centrality measures (indegree, outdegree, and betweenness) from self-reported grandiose and vulnerable narcissism scores and found that vulnerable narcissism predicted being less well-liked in the network (i.e., a negative relationship with liking indegree), but not actively disliked (a null relationship with disliking indegree). In contrast, grandiose narcissism was not associated with being liked but was a significant predictor of being actively disliked. These results remained constant even when self-esteem was controlled for, suggesting incremental validity of the narcissism construct itself as a predictor of social network unpopularity.

Building on this work, Czarna, Leifeld, Śmieja, Dufner, and Salovey (2016) conducted a longitudinal study of 15 groups of Polish students, assessing grandiose narcissism, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and network structure at zero acquaintance and again 3 months later. The authors used a specialized longitudinal social network analysis called a temporal exponential random graph model (TERGM; e.g., Leifeld & Cranmer, 2016). TERGM compares multiple timepoints of the same network and models the probability of ties between any two nodes appearing or disappearing over time as a function of structural and individual covariates. Czarna and colleagues found that narcissistic people had higher indegrees, indicating they were more popular at zero acquaintance. However, narcissism negatively predicted the formation of new ties over time, such that narcissistic individuals were less likely to be identified as a new friend after 3 months of acquaintance. These results are consistent with prior research (e.g., Back, Schmuckle, & Egloff, 2010; Campbell, 2005; Paulhus, 1998) indicating that narcissists tend to be liked upon initial acquaintance but become disliked over time.

Narcissism in Egocentric Networks

A second type of social network is called egocentric. Rather than examining connections within a bounded group, the egocentric approach assesses the personal networks of individuals. Participants are asked to list others (called *alters*) with whom they have a relationship (e.g., “friends,” “important people in your life”). The participant also identifies relationships between each pair of alters, as the participant sees it. This enables us to assess an individual’s personal network spanning multiple contexts such as work, family, and friendships, not just a single context as in sociocentric networks. Egocentric assessments are also easier to collect and less sensitive to missing data than sociocentric networks. However, egocentric networks are far more subjective than sociocentric ones, because all of the information about the alters and their connections comes from

the participant, not the alters themselves, leading to a greater chance for biased or incomplete perceptions (e.g., Casciaro, 1998).

To date, only one egocentric network study has focused specifically on the construct of narcissism. Lamkin, Clifton, Campbell, and Miller (2013) assessed the egocentric networks of 148 undergraduate participants, asking participants to rate each of their 30 alters on various characteristics. The authors compared these with self-reported grandiose and vulnerable narcissism of the participants. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Lukowitsky & Pincus, 2013; Wood, Harms, & Vazire, 2010), this study found that both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism predicted more negative relationships with one’s alters, such as arguing with them more frequently and describing alters more negatively (e.g., more self-centered, less likeable). Further, those low in narcissism saw their more central, and presumably important, alters more positively (e.g., they were less envious of their more central alters), whereas those high on grandiose narcissism were less variable in their ratings as a function of the centrality of alters. This suggests that those high in grandiosity may be less perceptive or discriminating in their interpersonal relationships and view close members of their social network just as negatively as they do their acquaintances.

Narcissism in Online Social Networks

As online social networks (OSNs) like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram gain in popularity, they have introduced the concept of social networks to a mainstream audience. The ability to collect millions of nodes of social network data from these services has also made them appealing to researchers, and to date, most social network research on narcissism has been done using OSNs (see Buffardi, 2012; Campbell & Twenge, 2015).

Most OSN research consists of surveys of how one feels about OSNs, or how one uses OSNs, rather than true network analyses. For example, Ljepava, Orr, Locke, and Ross (2013) found that

frequent users of Facebook tended to be higher in grandiose narcissism, whereas nonusers tended to be higher in vulnerable narcissism. DeWall, Buffardi, Bonser, and Campbell (2011) found that higher levels of grandiose narcissism were associated with increased use of first-person singular pronouns (e.g., “I” and “me”) in Facebook profiles and with the use of profile pictures rated to be more self-promoting, vain, and revealing. Similarly, Buffardi and Campbell (2008) found that narcissism predicted more self-promoting behavior and “sexier” profile photos. And Winter et al. (2014) found that grandiose narcissism predicted greater self-disclosure and self-promotion in users’ status updates. Some caution must be used, however, in applying conclusions gleaned from OSN research. Although these studies used OSNs as a medium, these and similar studies do not actually capture information about the structure of social networks *per se*.

Some research has, however, examined narcissism in relation to the structure of OSNs by assessing the number of connections to others. Some OSNs, like Facebook, are symmetrical, requiring confirmation from both partners to establish a friendship connection. The number of friends a user has can therefore be seen as equivalent to degree centrality. Others, like Twitter and Instagram, allow for asymmetrical connections, approximating both indegree (followers) and outdegree (number of others followed).

For example, Bergman, Fearington, Davenport, and Bergman (2011) found that narcissism was positively related to participants’ self-reported estimate of OSN friends. Further, those high in narcissism reported using OSNs to keep friends apprised of their activities and that they believed their friends were interested in these updates. Similarly, Carpenter (2012) examined the relationship between Facebook usage and the Grandiose Exhibitionism and Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscales of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Ackerman et al., 2011). Carpenter found that grandiose exhibitionism was significantly associated with the number of Facebook friends, whereas neither entitlement/exploitativeness nor self-esteem was predictive of centrality. Contextualized by additional survey

questions, the results suggested that grandiosity, but not entitlement, predicts seeking an audience for self-promotion and social validation on online social networks.

Liu and Baumeister (2016) summarized many of these types of studies in a recent meta-analysis of OSNs and narcissism, self-esteem, and loneliness. Across studies, there was a consistent association between higher narcissism and having a larger number of friends in online social networks. The meta-analysis also confirmed that narcissists tend to use online social networks as a platform to seek attention and cultivate admirers by commenting on others’ posts and by posting frequent updates and “selfie” photos.

However, because connections in OSNs are generally binary connections (a connection either exists or does not), it can be difficult to determine which connections are close, genuine friendships, and which are superficial acquaintances, based purely on network structure. Dunbar (2016) found that the average Facebook user currently has between 150 and 200 friends in their network. However, only about 28% of these Facebook friends were considered “genuine” (close) friends, and respondents on average felt they only had four Facebook friends they could count on for social support in a crisis. Asymmetrical networks may be even more skewed in this regard, such that a famous actor or politician may have many millions of Twitter followers but may only reciprocate a handful of those. Moreover, the online world changes quickly, and the most popular OSN today may be completely defunct within a few years, making results particularly context-dependent. Research into OSNs should therefore be interpreted narrowly and only cautiously generalized to “real-world” interpersonal networks.

Conclusions

Taken as a whole, social network analysis reveals patterns of interpersonal behavior elicited by narcissism. It seems clear that narcissism does impact the structure and content of individuals’ social networks, both face-to-face and online.

Grandiose narcissism predicts greater gregariousness and attempts to connect with others (e.g., Bergman et al., 2011; Carpenter, 2012; Clifton et al., 2009; Czarna et al., 2016; Liu & Baumeister, 2016). However, narcissists are generally less popular than they believe, and their perceived connections often are not reciprocated (Clifton et al., 2009). In fact, others generally feel apathy toward vulnerable narcissists and active dislike for grandiose narcissists (Czarna et al., 2014), with this antipathy worsening over time (Czarna et al., 2016). This may be related to narcissists' tendency to denigrate even close others in their social networks (Lamkin et al., 2013) and their instrumental use of social connections for self-promotion and validation (Bergman et al., 2011; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Carpenter, 2012; DeWall et al., 2011; Liu & Baumeister, 2016; Winter et al., 2014). In summary, social network analysis has consistently demonstrated effects of narcissism on interpersonal connections. Despite these results, relatively few studies have used a social network methodology, and much remains to be learned. Future research could expand on these and could also move beyond direct connections to investigate homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001), transitivity (e.g., Wasserman & Faust, 1994) and other influences on the larger network. Social network analysis is a powerful tool, which holds significant promise in further understanding the interpersonal aspects of narcissism.

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Part VI

Applied Issues in Narcissism Research



Momentarily Quieting the Ego: Short-Term Strategies for Reducing Grandiose Narcissism

46

Miranda Giacomini and Christian H. Jordan

Abstract

The negative interpersonal qualities associated with narcissism affect other people in consequential ways. As such, researchers have sought to understand the factors that contribute to and maintain narcissism or that instead reduce narcissistic tendencies. Here, we review research that examines factors that reduce grandiose narcissism or narcissistic behaviors in the short term. First, we focus on studies that suggest that making people feel more communal may reduce narcissism or make narcissists less likely to engage in negative behaviors. We then review studies that suggest that buffering people against ego threat, by affirming their self-integrity, may reduce narcissistic hostility and aggression toward others. Last, we discuss newer areas of research that may suggest additional factors that diminish narcissism. Together, this research may suggest ways to curb narcissists' more negative interpersonal tendencies.

Keywords

Communal orientation · Agentic orientation · Self-affirmation · Empathy · Defensiveness

Grandiose narcissists are highly confident, extraverted, and socially dominant but also selfish, entitled, and vain (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Though grandiose narcissism is associated with some desirable qualities (e.g., high self-esteem, self-confidence), it is also associated with many undesirable qualities (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness). These undesirable qualities often contribute to poor interpersonal relationships and unfavorable outcomes, especially for the people nearest narcissists (e.g., Campbell, 1999). Narcissists' friends, coworkers, employees, and romantic partners all tend to suffer because of narcissists' behavior. In the present chapter, we examine research that suggests factors that may reduce grandiose narcissism or narcissistic tendencies. That is, can we quiet the narcissistic ego at least momentarily?

This question may be increasingly relevant as narcissism may be on the rise among recent generations, such as the Millennial Generation (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008; though also see, Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008). This generational trend coincides with generational increases in self-esteem, agentic self-evaluations, independent self-construal, the importance placed on extrinsic goals (e.g., money, fame), and decreases in empathy and perspective taking (e.g., Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012; Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012). An overall

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increased focus on the independent self, and relative disregard of others, may fuel narcissism by emphasizing agentic qualities (e.g., competition, accomplishment) and de-emphasizing communal qualities (e.g., warmth, caring).

Here, we review research that has examined factors that reduce grandiose narcissism or narcissistic tendencies, typically in controlled experiments. These studies have not typically set out to develop interventions to reduce narcissism but to identify factors that may causally affect narcissism. The insights they provide may, however, ultimately inform interventions and longer-term efforts to reduce narcissism. The research we consider focuses on grandiose narcissism, often assessed by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988), rather than narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). We thus focus on narcissism as a personality trait that individuals in the general population possess to varying degrees (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Inferences, however, may be drawn from research on the NPI to gain better understanding of NPD because the subclinical narcissism assessed by the NPI and clinically diagnosed NPD demonstrate overlapping personality profiles (Miller & Campbell, 2010; Miller, Gaughan, Pryor, Kamen, & Campbell, 2009; Miller et al., 2014).

So, what factors or means may reduce narcissism? One challenge here is to identify techniques that might “combat” narcissism but not threaten narcissists. Challenging narcissists’ grandiose self-views may elicit defensive responses that may prevent reductions in narcissistic tendencies. One strategy derives from models that conceptualize narcissism as a self-regulatory system (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2007; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). These models view narcissism as a coherent set of attributes, strategies, abilities, behaviors, and emotions that mutually reinforce each other. Changes in one element of the system (e.g., reducing concern for enhancing self-esteem) might initiate changes in the system as a whole, effectively downregulating

narcissism (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Foster & Brennan, 2010). This is consistent with our own research on state narcissism—variations in narcissism that individuals experience over short periods of time (Giacomini & Jordan, 2014, 2016; see chapter on state narcissism in this volume). Narcissism does appear to fluctuate within individuals across different situations.

Research examining the factors that affect narcissism has typically relied on experimental methodologies within social and personality psychology, to test aspects of these self-regulatory models. These studies have focused on reducing specific, negative narcissistic tendencies (e.g., narcissistic aggression) or state narcissism as a whole. Attempts to change specific elements within the narcissistic self-regulatory system have focused on aspects that may be targeted without inciting narcissists’ defenses or hostility (Brummelman, Thomaes, & Sedikides, 2016). Two primary domains have received significant research attention: (1) enhancing narcissists’ communal orientation, thereby encouraging narcissists to care more about other people, and (2) buffering narcissists’ self-esteem or sense of self-integrity in the face of ego threat. Both areas of research have developed promising strategies for reducing narcissistic tendencies. The experimental designs employed in this research have the benefit of allowing causal inferences about what factors may affect narcissism.

Here, we review recent studies that attempt to reduce narcissism or negative behaviors associated with narcissism, by manipulating specific factors. We focus first on studies suggesting that making people feel more communal may reduce narcissism or make narcissists less likely to engage in negative behaviors. We then review studies that suggest that buffering people against ego threat, by affirming their self-integrity, may reduce narcissistic hostility and aggression toward others. Lastly, we discuss newer areas of research that may suggest additional factors that diminish narcissism.

Key Advances

Communal Orientation One approach to reducing narcissism may be to foster positive aspects of personality rather than challenge narcissists' grandiose self-views (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Narcissists tend to be more concerned with agency, more self-focused, entitled, less empathic, and less concerned with communion than less narcissistic people (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012; Watson & Morris, 1991). In short, they focus more on themselves than on other people. One factor that may reduce narcissism is encouraging narcissists to focus more on other people.

In a series of studies, we examined the effects of encouraging a more communal orientation on state narcissism (i.e., short-term fluctuations in narcissism; Giacomin & Jordan, 2014; see Jordan, Giacomin, & Kopp, 2014). Across studies, we manipulated the degree to which participants felt more or less communal toward others through a variety of experimental manipulations. We instructed participants in different studies (1) to take the perspective of a person in distress (a young woman injured by a drunk driver, who lost her sister in the crash) or to remain detached when reading her story, (2) to think of ways they were similar to or different than other people, or (3) to prime them with interdependent or independent self-construal. We then measured state grandiose narcissism, using the NPI adapted with state instructions (asking participants to respond according to how they felt in the moment). Enhancing communal orientation (through greater empathy or interdependent self-construal) led participants to endorse fewer narcissistic self-statements on the NPI. In turn, reducing state narcissism reduced some of the negative tendencies associated with narcissism, such as an overriding desire for fame (Giacomin & Jordan, 2014, Study 4).

Other research found that repeating communal self-statements, such as, "I am a caring person" (even relative to statements such as, "I am a loveable person"; Kopp & Jordan, 2013), reduced endorsement of the entitlement-exploitativeness

facet of narcissism for individuals who were initially high in entitlement-exploitativeness. Likewise, recalling a time when they were caring toward someone else reduced participants' entitlement-exploitativeness compared to recalling their typical morning routine. These results are notable because the entitlement-exploitativeness facet of the NPI is arguably its most maladaptive and interpersonally toxic facet (e.g., Watson & Morris, 1991). Thus, a variety of methodologies designed to enhance the extent to which people feel connected to others helped decrease their endorsement of narcissistic qualities, at least temporarily.

In addition, making people feel more communal may also reduce specific negative behaviors associated with narcissism. One series of studies observed that narcissistic participants administered more intense noise blasts to an interaction partner who they believed had insulted them by criticizing an essay they wrote (Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006). But when participants were led to believe they shared a birthday or rare fingerprint type with the interaction partner—increasing their sense of personal connection—narcissistic participants were no more aggressive than those low in narcissism.

Another series of studies examined effects of "communal activation" on relationship outcomes (Finkel, Campbell, Buffardi, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009). Narcissists are generally less committed to their relationship partners, but narcissists who reported that their romantic partners elicit communal traits from them (e.g., make them feel more caring and warm) actually became more committed to their marriages over time. Similarly, priming participants with communal images (e.g., a teacher helping a student) led narcissists to report greater commitment to their romantic partners.

Hepper, Hart, and Sedikides (2014) found that narcissists expressed more empathic concern toward a person in distress when they took that person's perspective (relative to when they did not). They also observed that narcissists, at baseline, demonstrated less autonomic arousal (i.e., lower heart rate) when reading about a

distressed person, suggesting a lack of concern. This tendency, however, was eliminated when participants took that person's perspective.

Together, these studies suggest that making people feel more connected to others can reduce narcissism and narcissistic tendencies, at least in the short term (though Finkel et al., 2009, observed effects over a longer period of several months). Moreover, this research has reduced narcissism through multiple methods related to communal orientation: by having people repeat communal self-statements, encouraging people to think about their similarity to others, or priming them with communal images. This research is notable because researchers have enhanced aspects of personality that narcissists generally lack in relatively noninvasive and non-threatening ways. These methods should thus pose no challenge to narcissists' grandiose egos, which likely contribute to their effectiveness in reducing narcissism.

Self-Affirmation Another approach to reducing negative behaviors associated with narcissism that avoids threatening narcissists' grandiose egos is self-affirmation. Self-affirmation is the affirmation of one's overall sense of being a moral and adequate person or self-integrity. One particularly negative behavior associated with narcissism that has been targeted with self-affirmation is aggression. Narcissists characteristically react to criticism or perceived insults with aggression and hostility, with potentially disastrous consequences (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Miller & Campbell, 2008; Miller & Maples, 2010; Paulhus, 2001; though also see, Hart, Adams, & Tortoriello, 2017). As noted above, making people feel more connected to specific others may reduce narcissist's aggression toward them (Konrath et al., 2006). Other research, however, has attempted to reduce narcissistic aggression by mitigating potential threats to self-integrity through self-affirmation, thereby reducing narcissists' experience of threat.

Self-affirmation aims to affirm people's overall sense of self-integrity so that threats to their sense of self-worth are less psychologically

threatening. When people reflect on an important skill, ability, or personal value, it can shore up their overall sense of being moral and capable (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). Indeed, values affirmations reduce a variety of defensive responses to threatening information. The mechanism by which values affirmations reduce defensiveness remains somewhat unclear, but researchers have observed that values affirmations can lead people to report more positive other-directed feelings (i.e., love and connection; Crocker, Niiya, & Mischkowski, 2008).

Self-affirmation may thus be particularly useful for reducing narcissistic aggression. Aggressive reactions to ego threats are believed to help maintain narcissist's self-worth (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Thomaes, Bushman, De Castro, Cohen, and Denissen (2009) found that self-affirmation can be an effective means of reducing narcissistic aggression in at-risk youth. The researchers assessed students' trait narcissism and had participants complete measures of state aggression (e.g., how much they engaged in name-calling, kicking, pushing other students) before and after completing a self-affirmation exercise or a control writing exercise. They found that a values affirmation exercise (i.e., writing a short paragraph on important personal values) reduced narcissistic aggression for an entire school week among adolescents compared to a control writing exercise.

In addition, recent data suggest that narcissists are more dismissive of, and verbally hostile toward, people who assert differing opinions than them. But this tendency is eliminated by values affirmation (Wang & Jordan, 2017). Narcissists crave social validation and may respond to seemingly minor differences of opinion as though they are insults. Indeed, narcissists expressed greater hostility toward someone who ostensibly liked an abstract painting that they disliked. Narcissists' hostility toward the person who disagreed with them, however, was eliminated when they wrote about a personally important value before responding. Thus, narcissists are less likely to lash out at others after being self-affirmed. In sum, self-affirmation may be an

effective means to reduce narcissistic tendencies and, in particular, mitigate aggressive behavior in response to ego threat.

Future Directions

Although several studies have identified factors that may reduce narcissism or narcissistic tendencies, at least temporarily, research in this area is still just beginning. Many opportunities remain to identify factors that can affect state narcissism and the negative behaviors associated with narcissism, which may provide additional insight into the nature of narcissism and how it might be channeled.

How Else Might We Reduce Narcissism? One avenue for future research may be to examine how others' perceptions of narcissists affect their own narcissistic tendencies. Narcissists seek admiration and attention from others, and because they are extroverted, charismatic, and charming, they may often come across as quite likeable in initial encounters (Paulhus, 1998). The social attention narcissists attract may reinforce their narcissistic tendencies (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Indeed, recent research has found that behavior on social networking sites (such as Facebook and Instagram) can reinforce narcissistic tendencies (Halpern, Valenzuela, & Katz, 2016). It may be useful to find ways to forestall the positive attention narcissists attract through their behavior. If narcissists do not gain the admiration they desire, they may begin to change their own behavior.

There is, however, a mild paradox in narcissists' popularity. People are able to accurately perceive narcissism in others based on minimal information (e.g., their physical appearance; Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008) yet still frequently form positive early impressions of narcissists (even though, over time, narcissists become relatively disliked; e.g., Paulhus, 1998). We have observed that narcissists are better liked than less narcissistic people, even when participants view only still

photos of them (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015). However, we also found that explicitly telling participants that someone is high in narcissism reverses their preference for them, leading them to be relatively disliked. Research could examine ways to encourage people to translate their relatively accurate perceptions of narcissism into impressions that better match their later, more negative impressions of narcissists. Instigating this dynamic may discourage narcissistic tendencies.

Westerman, Bergman, Bergman, and Daly (2012) noted that narcissism tends to be higher among business students, relative to students in other disciplines, which may increase narcissistic tendencies in future business sector employees. They made a number of suggestions to reduce narcissism in business education. Some suggestions were for business programs to foster awareness of narcissistic behavior among faculty and students and to put greater emphasis on community outreach and service to others as a way to build empathy and perspective taking among business students.

Another suggestion made by Westerman and colleagues (2012) is for professors themselves to behave less narcissistically, so that they do not model narcissistic behavior for their students. Developmental psychologists have similarly linked parenting styles and parental narcissism to children's narcissism (for a review, see Horton, 2011), and other research suggests that changing early socialization practices may be useful for reducing narcissism (Brummelman et al., 2015). Encouraging parents to express affection and appreciation for children without proclaiming them to be superior may discourage narcissism in children. Taking a developmental perspective may allow a better understanding of how narcissistic tendencies develop and how we might better prevent narcissistic tendencies throughout emerging adulthood (Thomaes, Bushman, de Castro, & Stegge, 2009). Using experimental methods to examine the psychological processes that encourage and maintain narcissism over time may allow both short- and long-term changes in narcissism.

Additional Considerations

Subcomponents or Variations of Narcissism

One implicit assumption in our discussion so far is that it is desirable to reduce narcissism. As noted, grandiose narcissism certainly has some negative consequences, especially interpersonally. But it is also associated with some positive qualities including psychological well-being (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). Narcissism may be advantageous in situations that call for self-promotion, risk-taking, or high levels of self-confidence. Thus, it might not be entirely desirable to reduce grandiose narcissism. Future research might consider whether some factors affect particular facets of narcissism more than others. As noted earlier, some manipulations (e.g., communal self-statements) most clearly affected entitlement-exploitativeness. Others, such as enhancing interdependent self-construal, appear to affect all facets of narcissism. If the goal is intervention, strategies that target entitlement or exploitativeness may be more desirable than strategies that reduce narcissism as a whole, including relatively adaptive aspects like leadership and authority.

The research we have reviewed, moreover, has focused on grandiose narcissism, measured using the NPI, but narcissism also assumes pathological variations (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). A recent, useful model posits that a sense of entitled self-importance underlies all forms of narcissism but that there are variations in narcissism associated with dimensions of grandiosity and vulnerability (Krizan & Herlache, 2017). Vulnerable narcissism is associated with low self-esteem, depressive states, and high neuroticism; interventions for vulnerable narcissism seem desirable and may help to alleviate narcissists' insecurities and more distressed states (Kealy & Rasmussen, 2012). Vulnerable narcissism is also linked to antisocial and disagreeable behavior, and one way to reduce these maladaptive behaviors may be to increase the perspective-taking ability of narcissists. For example, narcissists' limited perspective-taking

abilities may cause them to be less generous and more prone to anger-based retaliation (Bockler, Sharifi, Kanske, Dziobek, & Singer, 2017). Future research should further explore ways to reduce vulnerable narcissism. Our own research suggests that vulnerable narcissism may also have a state component that fluctuates across different times and situations (Giacomini & Jordan, 2016).

A Focus on Behavior We also note the importance of examining behavioral outcomes in future research. Some of our own research has focused on self-reported state narcissism. Although our data suggests that state narcissism is meaningfully associated with other psychological states and outcomes (Giacomini & Jordan, 2014, 2016), it may be relatively vulnerable to self-presentation. People may report more or less narcissism as the situation dictates, without altering their underlying narcissistic behaviors. It is therefore important to examine behavioral outcomes to ensure that factors identified as affecting narcissism also change meaningful outcomes associated with narcissism.

Longevity With few exceptions, the studies we have reviewed have also focused on short durations of time. Just as state narcissism may decrease in response to a more communal orientation, it may readily increase when one's focus shifts more toward oneself (Giacomini & Jordan, 2014). If the goal of reducing narcissism on a longer-term basis is deemed desirable, researchers should make a concerted effort to devise more structured and extensive interventions. However, studies of short-term changes in state narcissism can identify factors that causally effect narcissism and may inform more intensive interventions.

Conclusion

Grandiose narcissism is a dynamic personality dimension that is associated with both positive and negative qualities (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt,

2001). Though narcissism is associated with positive qualities, the negative qualities affect other people in consequential ways. As such, researchers have sought to understand the factors that may contribute to and maintain narcissism and in some cases reduce narcissistic tendencies. They have done so by enhancing positive interpersonal characteristics in narcissists (e.g., communal orientation) or by affirming their self-esteem or overall sense of self-integrity. This research may suggest ways to prevent narcissists' negative interpersonal behaviors, including aggression and hostility. Although most of this research has so far focused only on momentarily quieting the narcissistic ego, it may point toward ways to help narcissists curb their more negative interpersonal tendencies.

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Social Media: Platform or Catalyst for Narcissism?

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Abstract

Social media inherently involve self-displays to an audience of followers and the potential for feedback from those followers. Relatedly, there is increasingly societal and empirical interest in whether social media reflect, or alternatively have contributed to, narcissism. This chapter reviews the extant evidence on the association between narcissism and social media behavior and discusses two predominant views: (a) social media as an opportunity display grandiosity and receive desired attention and (b) social media as a catalyst toward increased narcissism. To date, most research has addressed the former view through cross-sectional designs utilizing self-reports and has noted associations between narcissism and apparent attention-seeking behavior, as well as negative perceptions on the part of onlookers. Challenges in research methodology and suggestions for future directions in this area are discussed.

Keywords

Narcissism · Social media · Facebook · Grandiosity · Exhibitionism · Selfie

The proliferation of social media applications over the past decade has brought with it a keen interest in the psychological factors that are relevant for the use of social media. Foremost among those factors is narcissism. It has been suggested that social media inherently involve displays of narcissistic grandiosity and, because of their interactive nature, provide an opportunity for the self-enhancing positive feedback that someone with narcissistic tendencies would crave (McCain & Campbell, 2016; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Alternatively, it has been proposed that consistent engagement with social media and its potential for virtual positive regard from others might result in heightened narcissism (e.g., Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012). From the former perspective, it may be that social media provide an opportunity for the expression of narcissism and subsequent social rewards for grandiose displays, whereas from the latter perspective, social media may be uniquely oriented to evoking narcissism “even among the more humble” (Twenge & Campbell, 2010; p. 107).

Despite theoretically intuitive, if opposing, perspectives on the relations between narcissism and social media activity, research in this area is challenged by the ever-evolving landscape of social media applications, the vast number of

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functions that social media might serve, and the sheer number of active users of social media with their own unique personality and self-perception profiles. Although empirical investigations have grown exponentially, any particular study tends to focus on a specific set of individual characteristics (narcissism being but one such characteristic), a specific social media platform (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), or a specific behavior (e.g., frequency of use, status updates, posting selfies). Studies that attempt to capture a wider array of individual and cultural variables as they relate to more varied social media behaviors are valuable but also tend to be quite limited in that they rely on self-report which may not reflect observable activities.

This chapter highlights some of the conclusions from the first wave of research on the association between narcissism and social media behavior from two primary perspectives: (a) that social media applications provide a venue in which one might express his/her preexisting narcissism and (b) that immersion in social media might serve as a catalyst for increased narcissism through affirmation or admiration received from others. Clearly, the vast majority of research has been approached from the former perspective, whereas beliefs about the latter connection persist despite a relative lack of empirical investigation. The chapter closes with a brief recognition of the complexity of social media behavior, particularly as it relates to self-perception and some proposed avenues for the next wave of research in this area.

Social Media as Opportunity: Narcissistic Grandiosity and Exhibitionism

Because social media applications essentially provide a platform whereby an individual can select content to send to an audience, largely of one's own choosing, it is easy to view these applications as uniquely suited for expressing narcissism. Social media are ready-made to feature the grandiose, vane, and attention-seeking self-presentational style of narcissistic individuals, as posts might reflect one's accomplishments, and images

may highlight desirable physical features or affiliations. At the most basic level, research has considered whether individuals high on narcissism use social media relatively more frequently, including posting more updates and images, as well as whether narcissism is tied to having more social media friends/followers (see Gnambs & Appel, 2017; McCain & Campbell, 2016 for review). One of the pioneering studies in this area (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008) employed mixed methodology by obtaining self-reports of non-pathological narcissism and direct observations of participants' Facebook profiles. Thus, that approach avoided a reliance on self-reported social media behavior that has plagued much of the research in this area. Self-reported narcissism was associated with a higher quantity of interactions on Facebook and more indications of self-promotion via status updates and photos (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Interestingly, observers' impressions of narcissism for the owners of the Facebook profiles showed similar relations, suggesting that narcissism on social media may also be evident in the eye of the beholder. Non-pathological narcissism has also shown a relation with selecting a Facebook profile photo that highlights one's attractiveness or personality as opposed to photos that highlight connections to others (Kapidzic, 2013). Similarly, grandiose narcissism has been negatively related to posting selfies that emphasize affiliations with other people (Barry, Doucette, Lofin, Rivera-Hudson, & Herrington, 2017). Another study reported that self-reported narcissism was related to self-reported posts of selfies and editing of photos posted on social media (Fox & Rooney, 2015). It has even recently been noted that non-pathological narcissism is moderately associated with addictive use of social media (e.g., distress in the absence of social media use; Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017) and with greater importance and intensity (e.g., frequency, emotional investment) of Facebook use (Blachnio, Przepiorka, & Rudnicka, 2016).

Aside from using social media frequently and for making grandiose displays of one's accomplishments, or even mundane activities, individuals high in certain characteristics of narcissism might use social media applications in

particular ways. For example, individuals high in grandiose narcissism may enjoy superficial connections, including with others of high status. Similarly, such individuals may post or respond more frequently on social media to increase the chances of social rewards (see McCain & Campbell, 2016) and may be particularly attuned to the attention or feedback they receive for their posts (Lee & Sung, 2016). Different aspects of narcissism may also be differentially connected to the use of particular social media applications, with exhibitionism predicting more frequent Facebook posts among college students and superiority being associated with Twitter use (Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2013). Among men, relatively maladaptive aspects of narcissism (i.e., entitlement/exploitativeness) have shown a relation to self-reported selfie posting, whereas among women, presumably more adaptive features (i.e., leadership/authority) were more strongly connected to posting selfies (Weiser, 2015). In addition, perhaps not surprisingly, a form of vulnerable narcissism is related to spending more time editing photos before posting to Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), perhaps because of concern with getting the most favorable responses from other users.

Based on these findings and those of other recent studies, it may be tempting to overstate the importance of narcissism for understanding of social media behavior. For instance, in a study that employed self-reports of narcissism and observations of participants' Instagram pages, there was no connection between narcissism and posts of self-images overall. However, non-pathological narcissism was predictive of self-image posts for participants with a relatively high number of followers (Barry, Reiter, Anderson, Schoessler, & Sidoti, *in press*). Such results may speak to the different ways that individuals with narcissistic tendencies seek to make personal displays and elicit responses from friends/followers based on the features available on specific forms of social media (e.g., posting more photos of oneself if there is a greater likelihood of getting positive feedback/comments). In addition, from their meta-analysis, Gnambs and Appel (2017) conclude that narcissism is most clearly related to the aspects of social

media that provide the greatest chance for self-presentation (e.g., engaging in more visual self-presentation specifically, having more friends or connections on social media, reporting more intense connection to Facebook) rather than mere frequency or duration of social media use. It should be noted that the overall magnitude of these effects was small.

To further complicate the question as to narcissism's connection to social media use and behavior, the relations appear especially relevant for grandiose aspects of narcissism rather than vulnerable narcissism (Gnambs & Appel, 2017; McCain & Campbell, 2016). That is, to the extent that narcissism is related to higher activity and more personal displays on social media, these behaviors may only be predicted by a tendency toward grandiose self-views and a desire for positive attention from one's social media connections. For example, grandiose narcissism has shown a relation with self-reported posts of selfies on social media and positive affect regarding doing so, but vulnerable narcissism was related to negative affect tied to posting selfies (McCain et al., 2016). Understandably, the aspects of narcissism centered around a fragile self-view and a desire to avoid negative appraisals from others would portend keeping a "lower profile" on social media and selectivity as to what is displayed. Therefore, empirical evidence presents a mixed picture as to whether narcissistic features predict social media behavior; however, an alternative could be that social media experiences (e.g., feedback from others) foster higher narcissism.

Social Media as Catalyst to Higher Narcissism

A simple online search reveals a widespread belief that social media contribute to a cultural and generational growth of narcissism. Social media offer a convenient way for individuals to seek and receive positive social feedback from an audience, which may, but does not necessarily, include friends and close acquaintances. The ability to receive such feedback quickly on material that inherently involves images of

oneself and information about one's activities or accomplishments could very well increase one's self-appraisal and perhaps even narcissism. Overall, little research has attempted to directly address social media as a "cause" of rises in narcissism. A short experimental paradigm executed in two studies concluded that participants who spent time editing their personal social media accounts subsequently scored higher on narcissism than participants assigned to a neutral online task (Gentile et al., 2012). However, this effect appeared to hold for MySpace but not Facebook. It was also unclear whether the groups of participants differed initially on narcissism as well as whether a marked within-group increase in narcissism was evident after engaging with social media.

With the limited research on this perspective to date, it may be difficult to separate empirical evidence from popular notions when it comes to how social media are thought to provide a breeding ground for narcissism. Independent of the rise of social media and a potential role in fostering generational increases in exhibitionism and self-centeredness, the personality literature has proposed cohort increases in non-pathological narcissism over the past few decades (e.g., Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Additional evidence has called such uniform increases into question (Barry & Lee-Rowland, 2015; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008). Thus, if there is a concomitant rise in societal levels of narcissism and use of social media applications, the question will remain as to whether social media play a role in exacerbating generational increases in narcissism until temporal relations can be teased apart.

Furthermore, in younger generations (i.e., present-day adolescents and young adults), social media involvement may be considered more normative and not necessarily indicative of individuals whose narcissism draws them to social media or who have experienced social media-induced narcissism. For example, aside from some of the relations noted above, non-pathological narcissism has shown a less clear connection to use of social media than attributes such as openness to experience or loneliness

(Skues, Williams, & Wise, 2012). One of the first studies of this issue in millennials demonstrated that non-pathological narcissism was not related to basic parameters of social media use (e.g., frequency, duration) but was related to *reasons* (e.g., informing friends of their activities, self-displays of a positive image) for social media use (Bergman, Fearington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011). Furthermore, in contrast to studies relying exclusively on self-report (e.g., Fox & Rooney, 2015; Sorokowski et al., 2015), examination of the relation between self-reported narcissism and observed posting of self-images on Instagram has revealed little connection (Barry, Doucette, et al., 2017; Barry, Reiter, et al., 2017). One possible reason for these findings is that posting photos of oneself via social media has become culturally normative and thus not indicative of problematic self-perception. In addition, Deters, Mehl, and Eid (2014) demonstrated that although individuals believe that narcissism is associated with more frequent posts on Facebook, the actual relation is not significant.

In a rare longitudinal study of narcissism in relation to social media behavior, self-reported selfie posts were associated with self-reported non-pathological narcissism concurrently and 1 year later (Halpern, Valenzuela, & Katz, 2016). Although there was evidence of a weak effect of posting selfies and subsequent narcissism as well as reciprocation in this relation, the study did not address whether these associations were independent of the social feedback received regarding selfies or how well self-reports matched actual selfie posts on social media. Thus, the overall mixed findings regarding the link between narcissism and the extent of social media activity (McCain & Campbell, 2016) raise doubts about a definitive connection between social media and subsequent increases in narcissism. The emerging picture is that narcissism is associated with certain uses of social media or reasons for using social media (e.g., positive attention) but is not necessarily more predictive of social media habits than are other attributes. In addition, the lack of clear evidence for the perspective that social media involvement is a catalyst for increased narcissism may be largely an artifact of

a lack of studies that have tested this model and the methodological rigor needed to do so. To provide support for the social media as catalyst perspective, longitudinal studies that document an increase at the individual and/or cohort level *as a function* of social media activity are needed. For example, investigations that specifically gauge social media activity (e.g., frequency of checking social media, frequency of social media posts, number of connections on social media, number of social media applications used) in relation to later changes in dimensions of narcissism and as a function of developmental stage (i.e., adolescence, young adulthood, older adulthood) represent an important area of future research.

Future Directions

Narcissism is perhaps the personality construct that has been the focus of the most attention in terms of a hypothesized relation to social media activity and behavior. However, recent meta-analyses indicate that the relations between grandiose forms of narcissism and various parameters of involvement with social media are small in magnitude (Gnambs & Appel, 2017; McCain & Campbell, 2016). Therefore, research on social media and its relation to narcissism clearly reflect the complexity of the intrapersonal and contextual factors that influence social media activity and behavior. Apparent from this review is that studies have almost exclusively focused on non-pathological and/or grandiose features of narcissism in relation to social media. The preponderance of evidence to date suggests that (grandiose) narcissism is tied to exhibitionistic or self-presentation motives for social media use. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of studies have focused on general social media activity (e.g., updates, number of friends/followers, posting of images) as a function of grandiose aspects of narcissism with little attention devoted to vulnerable narcissism. Indeed, vulnerable narcissism may reveal quite a different pattern in regard to social media behavior (Gnambs & Appel, 2017; McCain & Campbell, 2016).

Social and cultural context also play a role in social media activity and motivations for social media use (e.g., McCain & Campbell, 2016; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012); thus, such factors must be considered in drawing conclusions about whether social media displays reflect situational or dispositional influences. Development exemplifies one important context in that adolescents and adults may approach social media differently, may use different applications, and may be differentially influenced by the feedback they receive on these platforms. Some evidence suggests that among adults (ages 19–39), exploitative aspects of narcissism are related to antagonistic uses of Facebook (Leung, 2013), but other factors may be at play for adolescents who are negativistic in their social media interactions. Indeed, certain developmental time periods (e.g., adolescence) may provide a unique confluence between narcissism and social media use, with narcissism (and perhaps social media use) naturally declining through adulthood (Roberts, Edmonds, & Grijvala, 2010).

Along with further work on the self-perception and personality correlates of social media activity, one might consider individual differences in important motivations for frequent social media use. For instance, individuals who have a fear of missing out (FoMO) on events in their social circle may be particularly drawn to monitoring the social media activities of their acquaintances. Already, some evidence indicates that FoMO in conjunction with higher social media activity may translate to higher levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms in adolescents (Barry, Sidoti, Briggs, Reiter, & Lindsey, 2017). FoMO may be particularly important during adolescence, but it also may be especially relevant for understanding how or why individuals with narcissistic tendencies use social media. Specifically, the preoccupation with others' appraisals that is central to narcissism (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991) and the damage to self-esteem that may result when one is the subject of negative feedback (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) or is left out of social activities may elicit higher monitoring of social media. Such concern with online interactions may have implications for behavioral,

emotional, and interpersonal maladjustment in ways that have not yet been empirically explored.

This brief summary of findings on narcissism and social media highlights some of the interesting, foundational work that has attempted to draw empirical conclusions about an issue that has received no shortage of theoretical musings. Much of this work has been fairly unidimensional in the sense that narcissism is used as a predictor of one's social media behavior, has been overreliant on self-reports, and has been limited in the aspects of social media activity or behavior investigated. Social media clearly involve a venue in which narcissism and a variety of other personality constructs influence both the quantity and quality of one's attempts at self-presentation. However, other sides of this issue need further investigation, particularly, for example, the influence of social media on subsequent self-perception, behaviors, and mood.

Moreover, it is possible that the role of narcissism as a predictor of a person's social media activity is overestimated, whereas the perceptions of an individual's narcissistic social media displays may carry more importance. Specifically, narcissistic presentations on social media may have interpersonal consequences based on how they are perceived by others in terms of lower likeability (Kauten, Lui, Sary, & Barry, 2015) or decreased attention/fewer likes (Choi, Panek, Nardis, & Toma, 2015). Although we cannot definitively conclude that certain types or degrees of social media activity are indicative of narcissism, it is reasonable to suggest that one's social media audience might infer personality characteristics, including narcissism, on the basis of that activity. Thus, analysis at the dyadic and broader cultural levels is needed to reflect the transactional nature of social media activity and its broader societal influences. To truly understand the complex ways in which narcissism may manifest in the virtual exchanges offered by social media, more diverse methodology is needed that reflects the numerous factors involved and that accurately captures the rapid and nuanced changes to how social media and its users interact.

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Theoretical Perspectives on Narcissism and Social Media: The Big (and Beautiful) Picture

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Abstract

Narcissism and social media use are intertwined and possibly causally related phenomena. Empirical research on narcissism and social media has been ongoing for a decade. The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of these research findings and review a selection of theoretical models that may be useful for understanding narcissism and social media. These models include personality/trait theories as well as perceptual, self-regulation, network, and cultural models. Some of the limitations and controversies in this literature are highlighted and avenues for future research suggested. The chapter focuses primarily on grandiose narcissism, although some research pertaining to vulnerable narcissism is also to be included.

Keywords

Grandiose narcissism · Social media · Selfies
· Theoretical models · Methodology

Narcissism has been associated with the discussion of social media for at least a decade. Social media has been viewed as a prime setting for narcissistic grandiosity, and the growth of social media has been potentially linked to increasing cultural manifestations of narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In this chapter, we begin by briefly reviewing the history and findings of this research area. We next present several theoretical models useful for understanding narcissism in social media. We conclude with a discussion of some of the limits and controversies in this work as well as suggestions for future research.

First, however, we will take a quick moment to define our terms. We are talking about trait narcissism in this chapter, primarily *grandiose narcissism* (the more extraverted and assertive form) but also *vulnerable narcissism* (the more neurotic and covert form; Miller et al., 2011). When we use the term “narcissists,” this is shorthand for individuals with high scores on trait narcissism. Narcissism exists on a continuum, and there is no bright line between non-narcissists and narcissists (Campbell and Foster, 2007). We are not talking about *narcissistic personality disorder* (NPD) as there is no research published on NPD and social media. Our speculation is that the work with clinical samples or measures would show similar results, but this work needs to be done (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Miller, Gaughan, Pryor, Kamen, & Campbell, 2009). When we are talking about social media, we are talking about

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computer-mediated peer-to-peer communication networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

History and Findings

Research Headwaters

Work on narcissism and social media grew out of at least four different research streams. One research stream focused on narcissism and self-enhancement processes more generally. The core finding is that grandiose narcissists are motivated to increase and maintain the positivity of the self, conceptualized as self-concept, status, or self-esteem (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). This can be done through the self-serving bias (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998), inflating self-beliefs (John et al., 1994), reporting the better-than-average effect (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002), and overclaiming knowledge that they could not possibly have (Paulhus, Harms, Bruce, & Lysy, 2003).

A second stream involved narcissism in close relationships, which showed that grandiose narcissists used social relationships as an arena for self-enhancement. For example, grandiose narcissists are attracted to romantic partners who can bolster their social status and self-esteem (Campbell, 1999). Similarly, grandiose narcissists are willing to sacrifice close relationship partners in the interest of status (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). Narcissists are also very successful at shallow, short-term relationships (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2017).

A third stream included the broad interest in personality traces or cues in the world (Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzman, & Gaddis, 2011; Gosling, Ko, Mannarelli, & Morris, 2002; Mehl, Gosling, & Pennebaker, 2006; Naumann, Vazire, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2009). The idea is that personality traits like narcissism can be observed in the social and physical world through traces or marks these individuals leave behind. One early example was the link between narcissism and self-enhancing and salacious personal email

addresses (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2008). Another was narcissism and blogging (Marcus, Machilek, & Schütz, 2006). More recently, this work has examined narcissism and personal appearance, including clothing and makeup (Vazire, Naumann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2008).

A fourth and final stream linked grandiose narcissism to trait extraversion (Paulhus, 2001), psychological agency or surgency (Campbell & Foster, 2007), and approach motivation or behavioral activation (Foster & Trimm, 2008). The central finding is that trait grandiose narcissism is grounded in – or at least linked to – basic traits like extraversion (Glover, Miller, Lynam, Grego, & Widiger, 2012), power (e.g., Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Carroll, 1987), and reward seeking (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Miller et al., 2009).

Together, these streams of research converged on the idea that narcissists are interested in self-enhancement and social status, and these motives influence their close relationships. Further, narcissism leaves traces in the physical and social world that can be detected and measured, and that grandiose narcissism is grounded in more basic traits of assertive extraversion, agency, and approach orientation. Each of these research findings has implications for social media.

Overview of Social Media Findings

The first research on narcissism and social media examined grandiose narcissism and Facebook use. The approach focused on the traces or cues that narcissism left on Facebook profiles but also examined self-enhancement via analysis of self-promoting content (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The general pattern of findings was that narcissism predicted number of friends, main photo attractiveness and self-promotion (as coded individually by outside observers), and more “fun” pictures. Further, based on cues primarily from the photo, strangers were able to estimate the narcissism of the individual at a modest but greater than chance level of accuracy, $r = 0.25$.

Since the publication of this paper, many variants of this research topic have been done. Here is what the last decade of research shows, based

on our meta-analysis (McCain & Campbell, 2016). (Note: similar results have been reported by two other recent meta-analyses Gnambs & Appel, 2018; Liu & Baumeister, 2016.)

First, grandiose narcissism is modestly related to number of connections on social media, $r \sim 0.20$. Second, there is a similar but smaller correlation between narcissism and time spent on social media, $r = .11$. Third and fourth, grandiose narcissism predicts the frequency of status updates, $r = 0.18$, and selfies posted to social media, $r = 0.14$.

There has been far less research on vulnerable narcissism on social media. The few early studies seem to suggest a relationship between vulnerable narcissism and number of friends, $r = 0.21$, and frequency of status updates, $r = 0.42$, but more data are needed (McCain & Campbell, 2016). Research using thin slice data (Miller et al., 2011) suggests that vulnerable narcissism may be much harder to detect on social media. This would indeed be consistent with the alternate name for vulnerable narcissism, “covert” or “hidden” narcissism.

A newer line of research has focused specifically on “selfies” or photos that individuals take of themselves. Several studies have now examined selfies in relationship to narcissism, with the first paper a large self-report survey (Fox & Rooney, 2015). In general, grandiose narcissism predicts selfie taking and specifically selfies that reveal more of the body and include only the self (Barry, Doucette, Loflin, Rivera-Hudson, & Herrington, 2017; McCain et al., 2016). This relationship may differ between men and women, with a stronger association for men (Sorokowski et al., 2015;

Weiser, 2015). Further, grandiose narcissists seem to enjoy selfie taking and tend to do it for self-promotional reasons (McCain et al., 2016). Vulnerable narcissism is more complex in its relationship to selfies. It does predict more selfie taking, but these selfies are not as enjoyable. Indeed, vulnerable narcissism predicts taking multiple images before an ideal selfie is captured (McCain et al., 2016) and posting more selfies emphasizing physical appearance (Barry et al., 2017).

In sum, grandiose narcissism does leave traces on social media. These narcissistic individuals appear to use social media for self-promotion. They also appear quite adept at creating social networks via links with friends and followers. However, we are only at the beginning of this research. The general patterns are established, but there needs to be more work on motives, more work targeting different social media platforms (e.g., Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2013), more research on the use of social media as part of a larger self-enhancement strategy on the part of individuals, and, of course, more work that includes vulnerable narcissism. It is also important to note that the work to date is largely correlational. That is, we know social media and narcissism are associated, but we do not know which direction, if any, the causal arrows fly. It could be that narcissism causes social media use, so that increasing narcissism would increase social media use; it could be that social media use causes narcissism, so that increasing social media use would increase narcissism; or it could be a reciprocal or bidirectional effect (see Fig. 48.1). And there could even be a third factor like cultural individualism that causes both.

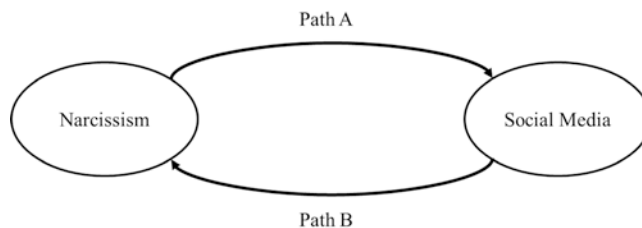


Fig. 48.1 Plausible causal paths linking narcissism and social media. Path A represents narcissism influencing social media. Path B represents social media influencing

narcissism. Together, paths A and B represent bidirectional influence. (Image available online at <https://osf.io/aycx9/> (McCain & Campbell, 2017))

Current Models of Narcissism and Social Media

With the basic set of findings described, we next turn to several promising approaches and models for conceptualizing narcissism in social media. These models are, of course, not the only ways to approach the topic but will hopefully provide some suggestions for intrepid researchers. These are meant to spur thinking beyond the standard trait model – narcissism as a trait is associated with social media use – by looking across levels of analysis, from the individual to the network to the culture. There is nothing wrong with the standard trait model – especially when used with an eye toward construct validation – but additional models can be helpful.

Expanded Trait Model

The trait model focuses on the link between narcissism and social media. The goal of the expanded trait model is to take the additional step to ground narcissism in its more basic traits and use them to explain the narcissism/social media relationship. For example, there is an easy case to be made that the aspects of narcissism related to extraversion should be important for social media connections (e.g., Ong et al., 2011; Pollet, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011).

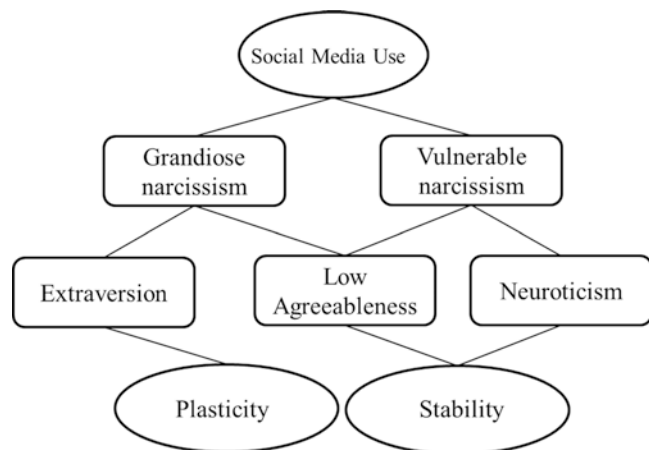
There are several basic models that can be used to better understand narcissism. The most obvious of these is the Big Five model, where narcissism seems to be grounded primarily in

(low) agreeableness, extraversion (especially agentic extraversion for grandiose narcissism), and neuroticism (for vulnerable narcissism). Researchers might also want to use more expansive variants of the Big Five that can offer more precision. These include the six-factor HEXACO model, which includes an honesty/humility factor that is not well captured by Big Five measures (Gaughan, Miller, & Lynam, 2012). For more detail, a ten-factor model that divides each of the Big Five traits into two components for a total of ten could be used (e.g., Deyoung, 2015) or even examine the Big Five at the facet level using a tool like the NEO with 30 facets (6 for each factor; Costa & McCrae, 1992). This approach in particular provides a very nuanced view of narcissism (Miller et al., 2011).

The other direction is to ground narcissism and social media into a two factor model (see Fig. 48.2). Several useful two factor models are available. These include the “Big Two” metatraits of *plasticity* (extraversion plus openness) and *stability* (conscientiousness plus agreeableness minus neuroticism) based in a cybernetic trait model (DeYoung, 2014). These Big Two have provided a useful description of social media use (Liu & Campbell, 2017).

A similar approach focuses on social behavior in the interpersonal circumplex, with axes of agency/communion, power/love, extraversion/agreeableness, dominance/affiliation, etc. depending on the version used. This approach has been useful for modeling narcissism (e.g., Miller,

Fig. 48.2 Sample integrative trait model of narcissism and social media use. The Big Five traits are grounded in the metatraits of plasticity and stability. (Image available online at <https://osf.io/aycx9/>)



Price, Gentile, Lynam, & Campbell, 2012). A final approach is to ground narcissism and social media in basic approach and avoidance motivations (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). There are several approaches to conceptualizing these basic drives, with behavioral activation (e.g., pleasure and reward seeking) and behavioral inhibition (e.g., pain or risk avoidance) being the most established in the literature as the BIS/BAS model (Foster & Trimm, 2008).

Narcissistic Lens Model

A narcissistic lens model approach for understanding narcissism and social media focuses on the specific aspects of social media that are predicted by narcissism and the cues observers use to detect narcissism from social media. The metaphor of a lens for conceptualizing the importance of cues or traces (e.g., social media content) mediating the link between an individual's traits (e.g., narcissism) and observer's perceptions of narcissism originated in the work of Brunswik (1952), so these are sometimes referred to as Brunswikian lens models (see Fig. 48.3). Importantly, the cues used can be false or invalid which raises the possibility for training. So, for example, narcissism might predict several aspects of social media use, such as self-promotional images or number of connections. Observers might detect narcissism modestly from the social media but use a combination of valid cues (e.g., self-promoting photo) and invalid cues (e.g., the use of "I" in the text).

Researchers have used this lens model approach in many instances as noted earlier, including studying the perception of narcissism from appearance (Vazire et al., 2008) and Facebook (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The challenge in this work is extracting the specific cues from the social media site or other observable data (e.g., thin slices). These data often take the form of both objective data (e.g., counting friends on a Facebook page) and less objective data (e.g., trained observer judgments of certain aspects of the page such as the profile picture when isolated from other page content). But the results can yield a great deal of insight (e.g., Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010; McCain et al., 2016).

Social Media as Self-Regulation Model

The social media as self-regulation model (SMSM) focuses on the use of social media for self-regulation. Self-regulation is typically conceptualized as narcissistic self-enhancement or self-protection. Self-enhancement is arguably grounded in approach motivation and self-protection in avoidance motivation (Spencer, Foster, & Bedwell, 2017). Self-enhancement is about actively seeking opportunities to enhance social status or self-esteem and actively confronting those who try to lower the narcissist's status or esteem; self-protection is about avoiding potential threats to the self-concept or self-esteem (i.e., ego threats). Self-enhancement is associated with grandiose narcissism and self-protection with vulnerable narcissism. But these ideas have not been fully explored or agreed upon in the field (Wallace, 2011).

The SMSM predicts that narcissistic self-enhancement (and self-protection) should be part of a dynamic and recursive process. So, for example, a grandiose narcissist posts an attractive selfie on Instagram (narcissism → social media), this selfie is liked and positively commented on by the narcissist's followers which, in turn, further bolsters the narcissist's positive self-views (see Fig. 48.4).

This recursive process makes sense theoretically, but the dynamic nature of this process has rarely been studied in full (see Halpern, Valenzuela, & Katz, 2016 for a good example of how this can be done). The field is filled with correlational work showing the link between narcissism and social media. There is little longitudinal work showing that narcissism predicts social media, nor that social media use reinforces or bolsters narcissism. Furthermore, there have been few efforts to test causal claims via experimental methods by, for example, manipulating narcissism or self-esteem threat and measuring social media use or manipulating social media responses (e.g., follower comments or likes) to see if these causally impact narcissism (cf. Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012). As a result, the SMSM is currently a primarily heuristic model. It makes intuitive sense, and pieces of it have been tested, but the complete dynamic and recursive aspects of the model need much more research.

Fig. 48.3 Sample lens model: accuracy refers to the correlation between site owner’s narcissism and perception of narcissism based on the site. Cues or traces are aspects of the site that may be predicted by owner’s narcissism and/or predict the perception of owner’s narcissism. (Image available online at <https://osf.io/aycx9/>)

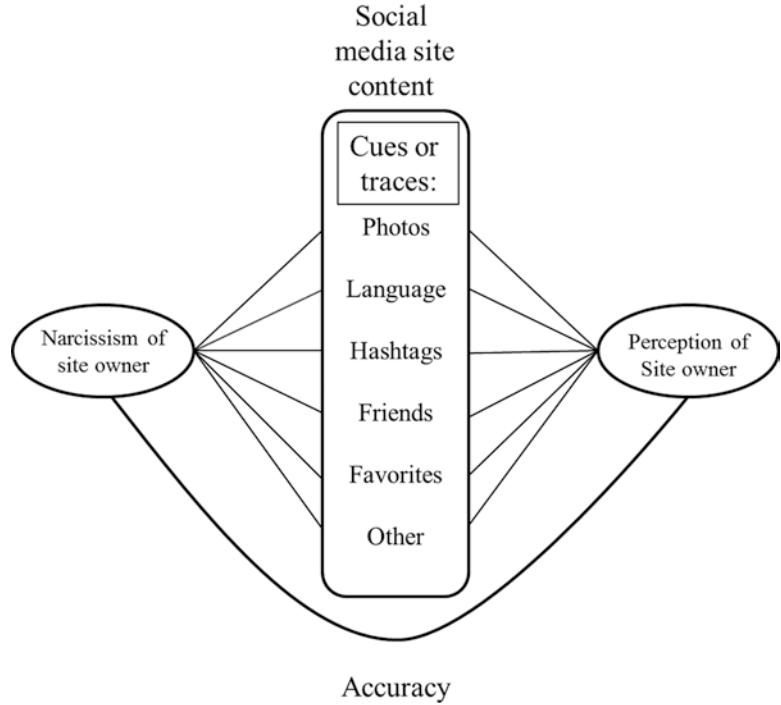
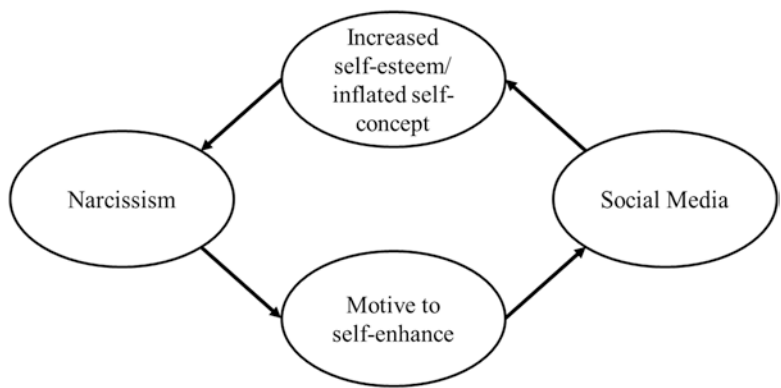


Fig. 48.4 Sample social media as self-regulation model: this is a simple version showing the role of self-enhancement motive in narcissists’ social media use and the feedback loop whereby self-concept is inflated and narcissism is maintained. (Image available online at <https://osf.io/aycx9/>)



Social Network Models

Another theoretical approach to understanding narcissism in social media is to examine narcissism within egocentric (Lamkin, Clifton, Campbell, & Miller, 2014) or sociocentric

(Clifton, Turkheimer, & Oltmanns, 2009) networks. One key feature of social networks is centrality, with high indegree centrality meaning lots of people report links to the target and outdegree centrality meaning the target reports

links to lots of people. A link, for example, could be liking, or friendship, or simply knowing. The existing work is mixed, suggesting that grandiose narcissism is associated with outdegree centrality in real-life social networks but not indegree centrality (Clifton et al., 2009; Czarna, Dufner, & Clifton, 2014). What is missing, however, is a good model on narcissism in computer-mediated social networks. These data would give a good deal of insight into how narcissism is functioning in the space of the social network – are narcissistic individuals central? Is that outdegree centrality driven by narcissists’ actively building these networks or by others connecting with the narcissists? How active are these networks? And how stable is this centrality?

What is most exciting is the prospect of watching these networks change over time (e.g., Czarna, Leifeld, Śmieja, Dufner, & Salovey, 2016). On the one hand, grandiose narcissists could play a crucial role in building social networks. Social media without narcissists would be blander, and narcissistic self-promotion might be a driver of social network use and build-out (Campbell, 2017). On the other hand, narcissistic self-promotion may grow dull or off-putting over time, and narcissists’ social networks might show high turnover in membership or high rates of “muting” (i.e., having the narcissists’ posts removed from friends’ information feeds without the narcissists knowing). Social network models of narcissism and social media are, in our opinion, one of the most exciting areas for empirical and theoretical growth.

Cultural Models: Narcissism Epidemic and Great Fantasy Migration

One fascinating set of questions regards the interplay of narcissism and social media on a cultural level. An early approach to this question argued that the cultural rise of social media would be associated with a rise in grandiose narcissism culturally. The argument was that social media was a platform that (a) provided the opportunity for presenting a curated and enhanced view of the self and (b) would reward the creation of broad but shallow social networks. This narcissism epi-

demic model (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) suggested that social media sites were a social niche well-suited to narcissism because of both the opportunity to self-enhance and the shallow rather than deep relationships involved. Consistent with the narcissism epidemic model, social media and narcissism expanded together until the economic collapse but have since seemed to move apart as the reality of high underemployment and debt have mitigated many narcissistic fantasies for young people but not slowed social media growth (Bianchi, 2014; Leckelt et al., 2016).

Given the stark realities of the economic collapse of the Great Recession, we have been working on another model, the *great fantasy migration hypothesis* (GFM). GFM presents the following argument: high narcissism plus a belief in a collapsing economic system will push narcissistic individuals into virtual or fantasy realms where their narcissism can be maintained. Or, simply, an inflated self plus a deflated reality predicts fantasy migration. Someone high in trait narcissism and failing economically can still retain an inflated self-view by engaging in an aspect of geek culture (e.g., gaming, sci-fi, cosplay) or social media where the checks of the reality principle are put on hold. One can be unemployed in the “real world” but still be a 15th degree Druid Warrior in a fantasy world or command a large audience of followers on Facebook and Twitter.

Preliminary data on this model are somewhat encouraging. Narcissism, both grandiose and vulnerable, does reliably predict engagement in geek culture (McCain, Gentile, & Campbell, 2015). And some data show that the highest rates of engagement in social media and geek culture are reported by those both high in grandiose narcissism and high in beliefs that the real world is providing fewer opportunities (Weiler, 2017). Much more work on this model is needed, however.

Limitations and Future Directions

In closing, we want to bring up a few issues, ideas, and challenges that might help researchers or prospective researchers in the study of narcissism

and social media. First, social media changes and evolves faster than science. These changes occur throughout the social media space. Social media platforms grow and decline in popularity. Second, the demographics of platforms change. Facebook was developed for college students (its name comes from the book with faces and names of students used at some prep schools and universities). Now, Facebook is popular with older individuals, and college students and adolescents have migrated to sites like Snapchat and Instagram. Third, our research methods are in many ways archaic and uninformed. The social media companies themselves have massive amounts of data and could easily obtain large numbers of participants with narcissism scores to study. This type of data would be a gold mine for science, but there are no easy mechanisms for getting it. Fourth and related, our research approaches need to expand to include big data, machine learning, and social network analysis. There are some fascinating examples of this already (Garcia & Sikström, 2014; Park et al., 2015; Schwartz et al., 2013), but so much more could be done. However, we also need more basic methods from social personality psychology, such as longitudinal and experience sampling measures, experimental methods (e.g., controlling social media use; Sheldon, Abad, & Hinsch, 2011), etc.

Finally, we need to be careful about our measurement of narcissism. Ideally, researchers would use multiple measures of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in their studies and even include peer reports in addition to self-reports. Researchers can use these scales as multiple indicators of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and create latent factors to capture the traits. Or, if researchers are interested in more targeted assessment of components of narcissism, they could use scales designed to capture them, for example, entitlement (i.e., the Psychological Entitlement Scale, or PES; Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) or exploitation (the Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale or IES; Brunell et al., 2013). Obviously, there are multiple constraints on these measurement decisions, but we recommend being as thoughtful as

possible and use multiple measures when possible (e.g., Miller et al., 2014; Miller, Price, & Campbell, 2012).

Final Thoughts

Social media have changed the world in massive and still poorly understood ways. Narcissism has played an important role in this process at the individual, network, and cultural level. We are almost a decade into trying to understand this process and now have some replicable findings for grandiose narcissism, some useful theoretical models and approaches, and some hints about ways to move forward with this research program. It will be remarkable to see how this space looks in another decade.

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Narcissism and Bullying

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Abstract

Narcissistic traits can be identified as early as childhood and tend to increase during adolescence, and as such can impact one's behavior throughout development. Narcissism has been associated with aggressive and externalizing behaviors, although the association between narcissism with bullying has not been thoroughly investigated. However, this association might be of great importance, since highly narcissistic individuals might use bullying to acquire social status. Although the literature is not extensive, the studies reviewed in the current chapter support the link between narcissistic traits and the expression of bullying behavior. Results are also discussed in terms of distinct associations with direct or relational aggression, as well as school and cyberbullying. The potential association between narcissistic traits with victimization is also explored. In addition, we pay particular attention at the interaction between self-esteem and narcissism in relation to bullying behavior and victimization. Finally, the chapter attempts to inform prevention and intervention efforts.

Keywords

Narcissism · Bullying · Victimization · Cyberbullying · Aggression · Self-esteem

Individuals high on narcissism exhibit a strong sense of grandiosity, an excessive need for admiration, and an inability to show signs of empathy (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). As such, narcissism has been found to be a risk factor for aggressive behavior. Indeed, narcissism has been linked with both proactive (i.e., planned, premeditated) and reactive (i.e., impulsive, retaliatory) forms of aggression (Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009; Fossati, Borroni, Eisenberg, & Maffei, 2010; Washburn, McMahon, King, Reinecke, & Silver, 2004). The contribution of narcissism to bullying has received less attention in the literature. However, narcissistic individuals might be prone to engage in bullying behavior, since bullying involves intentional acts designed to achieve social gain and dominance over peers through intimidation (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Griffin & Gross, 2004; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). It has been suggested that by acquiring social dominance and admiration through acts of bullying, individuals high on narcissistic traits can enhance

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their grandiose self-image (Fanti & Henrich, 2015).

This chapter will focus on the association between trait narcissism with bullying and also discuss work testing associations with victimization. Estimates suggest that up to one half of school-aged children report having been a victim of bullying behavior (Fanti & Kimonis, 2013; McGuckin, Cummins, & Lewis, 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Both victimization and bullying have been associated with peer rejection/isolation, social incompetence, poor academic achievement, anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). As a result, identifying factors explaining engagement in this type of behavior is of great importance for prevention and intervention efforts.

Narcissism and School Bullying: Direct Associations

Narcissistic traits exist as early as childhood with a tendency to increase in adolescence (Barry, Pickard, & Ansel, 2009; Carlson & Gjerde, 2009; Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). Certain narcissistic traits, such as overconfidence and the desire to be the center of attention, can be reliably measured in children and show continuity across time (Carlson & Gjerde, 2009; Cramer, 2011; Scholte, Stoutjesdijk, Van Oudheusden, Lodewijks, & Van der Ploeg, 2011; Scholte & Van der Ploeg, 2007). As a result, narcissism already exists early in development and is likely to influence behaviors within schools. In the personality literature, there is increasing consensus that children's personality characteristics can have a long-lasting impact for their future adaptation (Caspi, 2000). Thus, it is important to understand associations with behavioral problems that unfold early in development, such as bullying.

Although the majority of studies on narcissism have been done in association with externalizing behaviors and aggression (Barry et al., 2007; Fanti & Kimonis, 2012, 2013; Priddis, Landy, Moroney, & Kane, 2014), community studies investigating associations with bullying behavior during childhood and adolescence have started to emerge. Bullying has been given much attention as a social phenomenon. School bullying represents the deliberate negative actions from one student or a group of students against another student who has difficulty defending him or herself, with the intention of causing him or her harm (Olweus, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993). These negative actions involve many aspects and have a social interaction component. Ang, Ong, Lim, and Lim (2010) were among the first to link narcissism to bullying behavior among children aged 9–13, reporting a small positive correlation between them ($r = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$). Fanti and Henrich (2015) suggested that narcissism assessed during adolescence was positively associated with bullying after a year even after controlling for earlier levels of bullying behavior. Fanti and Kimonis (2013) also reported a longitudinal association between narcissism and bullying during adolescence after statistically controlling for earlier levels of conduct problems and dimensions of psychopathic traits, including callous-unemotional traits and impulsivity, using a regression model. In a similar vein, Fanti and Kimonis (2012) reported that narcissism predicted the onset of bullying behavior during early adolescence as well as change over time from age 12 to age 14 by using a latent growth model. Importantly, this study suggested that individuals high on narcissism were less likely to discontinue from engaging in bullying behavior across time. These studies provide strong evidence that narcissism predicts bullying behavior among youth both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. Building on this evidence, it has been suggested that the imbalance of power that characterizes acts of bullying may motivate narcissistic youth to commit such acts in order to enhance their grandiose self-image and establish their social status (Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Salmivalli, 2001).

Narcissism in Relation to Victimization and Bully-Victim Groups

Although only limited work investigated associations with victimization, a study which collected data from college students reported that narcissistic individuals tend to perceive themselves as victims of others' interpersonal transgressions more so than other individuals (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003). However, the majority of empirical work conducted with adolescent community samples does not agree with this suggestion. For example, Fanti and Henrich (2015) did not find an association between narcissism and self-reports of victimization. When separating the sample into bully-victim (e.g., bully, victim, bully-victim, and uninvolved) groups, this study suggested that youth engaging in bullying behavior, irrespective of their victimization status, were more likely to be narcissistic compared to victims and uninvolved youth. Fanti and Kimonis (2013) also reported no significant association with victimization, although youth in the bully-only group scored higher than the bully-victim group on narcissistic traits. Similar to Fanti and Henrich (2015), this study suggested that both bully-victim and bully-only groups scored higher on narcissism than youth in the uninvolved and victim-only groups. Importantly, the victim-only group was not differentiated from the uninvolved group in terms of their levels of narcissistic traits. These findings provide evidence that narcissism is a personality characteristic unique to bullying behavior, irrespective of victimization. Some contradicting evidence exists. For example, Fanti and Kimonis (2012) found that narcissism was related with the onset of victimization during early adolescence, but not with the continuation of victimization into middle adolescence. Early adolescence is regarded as a more vulnerable developmental period, which might place individuals with narcissistic traits at greatest risk for being victimized (Fanti & Kimonis, 2012). However, additional research is needed to confirm this finding.

Associations with Different Forms of Bullying

Similar to aggression, bullying is expressed in different forms and functions. Direct bullying can be expressed with either physical (hitting, taking someone's possession forcibly) or verbal (calling names or taunting) aggression and relational bullying with behaviors other than direct confrontation (spreading rumors, ostracizing from peer group, talking behind someone's back) (Ang, et al., 2010; Reijntjes et al., 2016). Direct forms of bullying and aggression are characterized by emotion regulation deficits (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1999), whereas relational aggression reveals a more sophisticated strategy for causing harm, due to its manipulative nature toward interpersonal relationships (Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1992).

Recently, attention was given to associations with the different aspects of bullying in relation to narcissism. For example, it has been argued that relational aggression rather than direct aggression is preferred by narcissistic youth, as a more effective way to acquire a position of power in the peer group (Golmaryami & Barry, 2010). Agreeing with this suggestion, recent research suggested that although highly narcissistic boys were more likely to engage in both direct and relational bullying compared to their peers with lower levels of narcissism, the association was stronger for relational than for direct bullying (Reijntjes et al., 2016). This study also suggested that highly narcissistic girls did not significantly differ in their expression of direct or relational bullying compared to their peers. These results found that narcissistic youth tend to manipulate others through social interactions in the form of relational bullying, with gender differences being an important factor explaining this association. However, more light needs to be shed in regard to the association of narcissism and different forms of bullying behavior, since this line of research is still limited.

Investigations have also attempted to explain the association between bullying and narcissism in other settings than school and with a variety of

age samples. A study that investigated the association of shame and pride with workplace bullying and victimization suggested that individuals who score high on narcissistic pride (i.e., high arrogance and dominance) were more likely to engage in bullying behaviors (Braithwaite, Ahmed, & Braithwaite, 2008). In the same study, individuals who were more likely to be targets for bullying also demonstrated narcissistic pride, although they also displaced and acknowledged shame (i.e., blaming others vs. taking responsibility for one's actions). Thus, narcissism is significantly related to the expression of bullying behavior even among adults outside of the school context. Research with cyber forms of bullying (i.e., the Internet, cell phone, social media) is lacking, although some exceptions exist. One prior work provided evidence that after controlling for school bullying and victimization, narcissism was not related to cyberbullying or cyber-victimization during adolescence (Fanti, Demetriou, & Hawa, 2012). This study also suggested that school bullying was more strongly correlated with narcissism compared to cyberbullying, indicating that narcissistic traits might be more likely to predict traditional forms of bullying taking place within schools.

Self-Esteem and Narcissism in Relation to Bullying and Victimization

Studies have derived inconclusive results in regard to the role of self-esteem in bullying. Some studies have suggested that bullies tend to have low self-esteem (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001), whereas other studies found that bullies have higher self-esteem (Karatzias, Power, & Swanson, 2002) or that bullies and victims do not differ in terms of their self-esteem (Seals & Young, 2003). Thus, although self-esteem has received great attention by the research community, the trait alone did not explain the expression of bullying behavior. Narcissism, however, could be one factor that might explain the contradictory results in terms of bullying and its association with self-esteem.

According to Barry, Frick, and Killian (2003), although the correlation between global self-esteem and narcissism in childhood and adolescence is very low ($r = 0.02$), their interaction could explain why youth engage in aggressive and externalizing behaviors. Indeed, the interaction between narcissism and self-esteem explained engagement in bullying behavior in that individuals high on narcissism and low on self-esteem were more likely to bully their peers (Fanti & Henrich, 2015). These results imply that the combination of narcissism and self-esteem might give important information toward the understanding of bullying behavior.

Another line of research used the construct of defensive egotism to explain why youth engage in bullying behavior. It has been suggested that youth low on self-esteem and high on narcissistic traits tend to act in a self-enhancing manner or seek attention by using antisocial behaviors to protect their vulnerable self and enhance their grandiose self-image (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Indeed, individuals with low self-esteem and high narcissism tend to use bullying to enhance their self-image, as bullying is a status-related goal behavior (Caravita & Cillessen, 2012; Fanti & Henrich, 2015; Sijtsema, Veenstra, Lindenberg, & Salmivalli, 2009). Findings by Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, and Lagerspetz (1999) also suggested that adolescents with defensive self-esteem (high defensive egotism and average self-esteem) showed high levels of bullying, whereas adolescents with low scores on both bullying and victimization (i.e., belonging in a normative group) scored high on self-esteem and low on defensive egotism. These findings agree with suggestions that bullies tend to behave aggressively to accomplish a purpose (Griffin & Gross, 2004) and is consistent with previous findings pointing to an association between youth with high levels of narcissism and proactive aggression (Fossati et al., 2010; Washburn et al., 2004). As suggested by Salmivalli (2001), narcissistic individual might be inclined to act in this manner due to their grandiosity and the importance they give over their social status. In other words, when the ego of a bully is threatened, he or she might be more

likely to exhibit aggression toward peers as a way to compensate for these threats and recover their inflated self-views (Barry et al., 2007; Washburn et al., 2004).

Findings also started to emerge in relation to how the interaction between narcissism and self-esteem relates to victimization. Salmivalli et al. (1999) indicated that adolescents with low levels on both self-esteem and defensive egotism were more likely to be victimized by peers. In contrast, Fanti and Henrich (2015) suggested that self-esteem negatively predicted victimization experiences over time only among youth with high narcissistic levels. These findings might be explained as follows: if highly narcissistic adolescents with low self-esteem fail to expand their social status and strengthen their self-image, they might place themselves in a negative situation of lower social standing and increased risk for peer victimization. Fanti and Henrich (2015) also attempted to explain the degree of self-esteem and narcissism among early adolescents in distinct bully-victim groups. Findings indicated that the bully-only group showed lower self-esteem and higher narcissism compared to uninvolved youth. These findings can explain previous inconsistent findings, in that low self-esteem is more strongly associated with bullying in combination with high narcissism. Further, only narcissism differentiated the bully-victim and bully-only groups from the victim-only group, indicating that narcissism might be more important than self-esteem to understand bullying and victimization.

Conclusions and Future Directions

As demonstrated by the studies reviewed in this chapter, bullying is a complex behavior, in which someone engages purposefully when their goal is to gain power and social status (Olweus, 1993; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2007). Even though in some cases bullying is an individual act, it can grow to have complex group dynamics, if the existence of other groups, bullies, victims, and bystanders is taken into consideration (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Narcissistic personality traits might be one factor that can explain engage-

ment in bullying behavior and, as demonstrated in the current chapter, can distinguish between bully-victim groups. The combination of low self-esteem and high narcissism might in fact explain the need to engage in these types of behaviors in order to acquire social status, protect their vulnerable self, and enhance their grandiose self-image. Although we can concretely argue that narcissism is a personality trait that plays a key role in the expression of bullying, but not necessarily victimization, additional work is needed to understand engagement in different forms of bullying behavior (i.e., direct and relational). Further, gender is a crucial component that has not been investigated thoroughly in terms of narcissism and its relation to bullying, and future studies need to take that into account. Additionally, another research topic that should be the focus of future work is the identification of personality traits characterizing the victims targeted by bullies high on narcissism. This will bridge a significant research gap by allowing the identification of a vulnerable population at high risk for victimization.

There is also a great need to understand additional factors that might explain the association between narcissism and bullying. For example, Vazire and Funder (2006) suggested that narcissistic individuals' aggressive behaviors are their natural reaction to emotional triggers and that they are neither strategic nor planned. Thus, it is possible that narcissists' aggression is partially explained by their impulsive temperament, with impulsivity being linked to higher probabilities for expressed aggression (Vazire & Funder, 2006). Indeed, prior work suggested that the combination of impulsivity and narcissism predicted bullying behavior (Fanti & Kimonis, 2012). However, this suggestion contradicts findings that youth high on narcissism are more likely to engage in proactive aggression that is planned and instrumental (Fossati et al., 2010; Washburn et al., 2004). Thus, additional work is needed to understand whether bullying behavior among narcissistic individuals is impulsive or planned.

Further, no prior work has taken into account different forms of narcissism in relation to bullying. Researchers argued that there are two aspects

of narcissism: maladaptive and adaptive (Ackerman et al., 2011). Maladaptive narcissism indicates characteristics of entitlement and negative affect (Pincus et al., 2009), whereas adaptive narcissism is connected with resilience and psychological well-being (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). Based on Ackerman et al. (2011), personality traits associated with greater mental health and psychological flexibility, including assertiveness, leadership skills, and confidence, are considered adaptive facets of narcissism. On the other hand, maladaptive narcissistic traits are personality characteristics strongly linked with interpersonal toxicity and social dysfunction and are related with lower levels of self-esteem, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Prior work supported that only maladaptive narcissistic traits were positively correlated with antisocial and aggressive behavior (Barry et al., 2003), although further research on the topic is required to make a firm association in regard to the relation between maladaptive narcissism and bullying or victimization.

Despite the need for additional work, findings from existing work can be used to enhance intervention efforts aiming to reduce bullying, in that these efforts might need to focus on bullies' narcissistic or grandiose traits. Barry et al. (2003) suggested that children with narcissistic traits and aggressive behaviors might benefit from learning how to cope with negative criticism when their performance is not equivalent to their sometimes unrealistically elevated self-view and expectations. Fanti and Henrich (2015) suggested that anti-bullying interventions should focus their efforts on simultaneously enhancing self-worth and discouraging grandiosity, as well as teaching youth alternative ways to deal with concerns over their social status. One possibility is for schools to provide different ways for students to fulfill their status goals, such as engaging in their choice of a variety of extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, arts, and other structured activities). Participating in these activities can help to build status for victims and also redirect bullies away from bullying behaviors. Moreover, because bullying is a social phenomenon, youth not directly

involved in these behaviors (i.e., bystanders) should be encouraged not to reinforce or attribute status goals in this type of behavior, which is at the expense of one or more of their peers.

To sum up, although a number of studies demonstrated the association between narcissism and bullying, additional work is needed to understand why narcissistic youth engage in these type of behaviors or who they target as their victims. Further, it is not clear how different types of narcissism relate to school bullying or different forms of bullying. Finally, current work suggested that it is important to investigate how narcissism predicts bullying behavior and whether it can explain differences between bully-victim groups. In conclusion, although we can argue for an association between narcissism and bullying based on existing findings, this line of work is still at its infancy.

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Interpersonal Functioning of Narcissistic Individuals and Implications for Treatment Engagement

Joanna Lamkin

Abstract

The interpersonal problems associated with narcissism reflect patterns of perceiving and relating to others. These patterns have implications for psychotherapy treatment-seeking and engagement, an understudied yet important domain. The surprisingly limited literature available suggests that narcissistic individuals are not only less likely to seek treatment but also to drop out prematurely. This chapter provides an overview of the way that interpersonal functioning can serve as a lens through which to understand psychotherapy treatment engagement for narcissistic individuals and suggestions for how it may be leveraged. Although much of the literature is based on trait grandiose narcissism, where available, findings are presented for vulnerable narcissism as well as clinically assessed narcissistic personality disorder. By considering the interpersonal dynamics of narcissistic individuals, researchers and clinicians may be better able to understand the nature of clinically relevant relational problems and engage these individuals in treatment. The early findings reviewed here highlight the need for additional research in this domain.

Keywords

Interpersonal dysfunction · Treatment engagement · Treatment retention · Grandiose narcissism · Vulnerable narcissism · Narcissistic personality disorder

Narcissism is associated with interpersonal impairment, especially in relationships with close others, such as romantic partners and family members. Problems stemming from interpersonal dysfunction may be the impetus for psychotherapy treatment-seeking, or may emerge in therapy and complicate treatment for comorbid issues. Importantly, these problems reflect patterns of perceiving and relating to others that have implications for treatment engagement. Existing evidence suggests that narcissistic individuals are unlikely to initiate treatment, and when they do, they are more likely to drop out. Although additional research is warranted, interpersonal functioning is a useful context for understanding the relations between narcissism and treatment engagement.

In this chapter, I will review recent findings related to the interpersonal functioning of narcissistic individuals and how these patterns of perception and behavior may relate to psychotherapy treatment engagement. I also will provide information about how these patterns may differ

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for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism¹. Much of the reviewed literature in this chapter focuses on grandiose narcissism. When appropriate, findings specific to individuals diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder, which includes diagnostic criteria that are primarily grandiose, will be specified. Given the increasingly recognized heterogeneity of narcissism, it is important to consider possible differences in types of interpersonal dysfunction and motivation for presentation to mental health services. I will briefly address how treatment engagement for vulnerable narcissism may be different and is an important area for further study. Developments and limitations in the current literature will be noted with recommendations for building this literature base further. Overall, I will emphasize how specific attention to the interpersonal dynamics of narcissistic individuals will lead to better understanding of the nature of clinically relevant relational problems and how to better engage these individuals in treatment.

Recent Developments Regarding Interpersonal Aspects of Narcissism

Although some narcissistic individuals may not endorse experiencing distress, interpersonal impairment is clearly associated with narcissism. Indeed, aspects of narcissism may stem from social and familial factors in the first place (Bender, 2012). Narcissistic personality disorder is related to significant interpersonal impairment, above and beyond general distress, and the presence of other Cluster B personality disorders (i.e., borderline, histrionic, or antisocial personality disorders; Ogrodniczuk, Piper, Joyce, Steinberg, & Duggal, 2009). Narcissistic personality disorder is also associated with poorer quality of life (i.e., subjective well-being; Soeteman, Verheul, & Busschbach, 2008) as well as causing pain and suffering to others beyond contributions

of other Cluster B personality pathology (Miller, Campbell, & Pilkonis, 2007).

Recent findings related to close relationships have provided a broader picture into the social worlds of narcissistic individuals. In particular, narcissism is associated with a moderate degree of homophily. Homophily refers to the commonly observed tendency for similar people to end up together, in friendships, romantic relationships, and beyond (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Social network analyses of grandiose and vulnerable narcissistic individuals reflect that they perceive close others as narcissistic, self-centered, unlikable, and unkind (Lamkin, Clifton, Campbell, & Miller, 2014). And, they rated their peers' personality traits consistently with their own narcissism score (e.g., vulnerably narcissistic individuals rated close others as antagonistic, introverted, and neurotic). Narcissism also is related to a small amount of homophily in romantic relationships for grandiose, but not vulnerable, traits (newlyweds, Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell, & Karney, 2016; students, Lamkin, Campbell, vanDellen, & Miller, 2015). In addition to homophily, these close relationships are characterized by conflict. Both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are positively correlated with arguing with close others in their social networks. Vulnerable narcissism also is related to reports of envying and comparing oneself to family and friends. In romantic relationships, the combination of entitlement and exploitativeness in both partners relates to poorer relationship adjustment (Lamkin et al., 2015). These findings provide some context for the types of people with whom narcissistic individuals surround themselves – or at least, how they perceive those people.

Reasons That Narcissistic Individuals Engage in Treatment Often Involve Interpersonal Factors

Personality likely influences treatment receptivity and preferences (Goodwin, Hoven, Lyons, & Stein, 2002). Broadly, the literature frames grandiose narcissistic and personality-disordered

¹For more information about grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, see Chap. 1, Weiss & Miller, this volume.

narcissistic individuals as unlikely to engage in treatment in the first place and notes that when they do, it is often at the demand of close others or in the midst of a crisis (Caligor, Levy, & Yeomans, 2015). Although narcissistic individuals may infrequently seek treatment on their own, experts in the field have noted some common reasons that they may present, including a failure or loss, a sense of dissatisfaction, or, especially relevant for this chapter, due to an ultimatum from a family member, employer, or judicial system (Ronningstam, 2011). Many of the reasons discussed for seeking treatment appear to involve interpersonal dysfunction.

Narcissistic individuals may not seek psychotherapy specifically to address narcissism itself. In fact, other comorbid conditions are typically the primary reason these individuals present for treatment (Caligor et al., 2015). Contrary to historical conceptualizations, grandiose narcissistic individuals appear to have some level of insight into their narcissism (Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011), although the extent of that insight is unclear. For example, those with grandiose (but not vulnerable) narcissistic traits see antagonism (and related traits associated with narcissism) as tolerable: they rate these traits as unlikable, but not as unlikable as the average person (Lamkin, Maples-Keller, & Miller, 2018). These findings have implications for limited interest in engagement in therapy, such that narcissistic individuals may not desire to change their antagonism if they perceive it to be tolerable. Also, seeing close others as narcissistic and selecting other narcissistic individuals to surround themselves with likely contributes to interpersonal conflict wherein the other person is perceived to be the cause of problems.

Models of Treatment Engagement and Interpersonal Factors

Broad models of treatment engagement (e.g., Andersen healthcare utilization model; Andersen & Newman, 1973) incorporate individual difference variables, such as patient characteristics, perceptions, attitudes, and assumptions.

Interpersonal functioning has important implications for treatment engagement. In a meta-analysis of social support and adherence to medical treatment, social support was found to have a consistent positive relationship with adherence, while family conflict was associated with poorer adherence (DiMatteo, 2004). Broadly, there is some evidence that social dysfunction is associated with poor outpatient psychiatric follow-up (e.g., Killaspy, Banerjee, King, & Lloyd, 2000). In a review of factors that were linked to missing the first psychiatric appointment, poorer family support was predictive of nonattendance (Kruse, Rohland, & Wu, 2002). In their review of factors contributing to early attrition from treatment, Barrett et al. (2008) note that social factors, such as perceived therapist expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, have been associated with dropout from treatment. Narcissistic individuals, whether grandiose or vulnerable, may be especially attentive to these attributes of others, including therapists.

Given evidence that narcissistic individuals have impairment in their social functioning, and that poor social support/functioning is associated with lower adherence to treatment, it is likely that narcissism is related to poorer treatment engagement. Indeed, some studies have found this pattern. However, narcissism and associated traits are not regularly modeled as specific predictors of treatment engagement. There is some evidence that personality diagnosis contributes to non-completion, but evidence is somewhat sparse (McMurran, Huband, & Overton, 2010). An exception is a recently published observer-rated measure developed to predict treatment dropout for individuals with personality disorders, which identified traits associated with narcissism as a predictive factor (Gamache, Savard, Lemelin, & Villeneuve, 2017). These traits included hostility, spitefulness, envy, and using projective defense mechanisms.

Of note, engagement is a broad term that can refer to multiple aspects of participation in treatment, including initiation of treatment, following through with a referral, attending the first few sessions, or even attending a certain number of sessions. For the present review, treatment

engagement will be broadly construed given the limited number of studies assessing it in relation to narcissism and associated traits. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, a methodological issue in treatment engagement literature is the widely varying definition of terms (e.g., dropout, engagement, attrition, retention; Barrett et al., 2008). Different uses of these terms have led to inconsistent findings in the field, and it will be important for future studies to clearly define them.

Review of Findings Related to Narcissism and Therapy Engagement

Traits Related to Narcissism Are Associated with Higher Dropout from Treatment In a study of psychiatric outpatients, treatment dropout was associated with self-reported narcissism (measured dimensionally from items derived from narcissistic personality disorder criteria) such that the rate was 63% for high scorers, nearly twice that of the low and moderate groups (Ogrodniczuk et al., 2009). On an interpersonal circumplex measure, those with higher narcissism scores (who were also more likely to drop out of treatment) endorsed more domineering, vindictive, and intrusive interpersonal problems. Posttreatment, narcissistic patients endorsed fewer domineering and vindictive problems although intrusive problems still remained, suggesting that treatment for narcissistic individuals has the potential to improve some aspects of interpersonal functioning.

Other studies have generated similar findings. In a study of newly admitted psychiatric outpatients, vindictiveness/self-centeredness was negatively associated with patient-rated therapeutic alliance, and low alliance was predictive of early dropout (Johansson & Eklund, 2006). Another study also demonstrated a quite high dropout rate associated with this trait: 75% of personality disordered outpatients characterized by vindictiveness terminated prematurely from psychotherapy, compared to a 31% dropout rate for others

(Thormählen, Weinryb, Norén, Vinnars, & Bågedahl-Strindlund, 2003). Also, in an earlier investigation of attrition from treatment, the narcissistic personality disorder diagnostic criteria item “need for excessive admiration” was a significant predictor of therapy discontinuation (Hilsenroth, Holdwick, Castlebury, & Blais, 1998).

Externalizing Traits and Antagonism Are Related to Lower Treatment Utilization Externalizing and antagonistic traits appear to be related to low treatment utilization. In a study of psychiatric outpatients and inpatients, refusal of a therapy referral (i.e., low treatment engagement) was predicted by a broad externalizing style, which includes dominance and impairment in relating to others (Löffler-Stastka, Blueml, & Boes, 2010), traits that could be connected to narcissism. Likewise, antagonism or disagreeableness predicts lower treatment utilization (Miller, Pilkonis, & Mulvey, 2006), although this study was more focused on antisocial personality disorder.

Grandiose Narcissism Predicts Lower Utilization and Higher Discontinuation of Treatment Grandiose narcissism was related to (1) lower utilization of clinical services and (2) higher client-initiated psychotherapy discontinuation in a community sample of 60 patients (Ellison, Levy, Cain, Ansell, & Pincus, 2013). Ellison and colleagues highlight the importance of using traits rather than binary diagnoses to assess narcissism in these questions, as trait narcissism was predictive of dropout even though only one patient in the sample met actual diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder.

Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

Because narcissism does not appear to be a homogenous condition, it is unlikely that all narcissistic individuals would participate to the same

extent in psychotherapy. As noted previously, nuanced differences continue to be observed between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism with respect to interpersonal relations and patterns of perception of others. Given the strong associations that vulnerable narcissism has with neuroticism (Miller et al., 2018), and evidence that neuroticism is a strong predictor of mental health service use (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2002), it is likely that vulnerably narcissistic individuals would demonstrate increased engagement in treatment. They are more likely to endorse anxiety and depression (e.g., Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Conversely, more grandiosely narcissistic individuals may be less likely to engage in treatment, as found in Ellison and colleagues' study (2013). Grandiose narcissism is associated with prioritizing short-term benefits over long-term commitments (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Building a therapeutic alliance may confer a substantial risk of long-term commitment. Narcissism consists of a wide range of functioning levels (Kernberg, 2014). Those with higher functioning (which could include grandiosity more than vulnerability) may demonstrate limited motivation for treatment unless family members or close others express an ultimatum (Caligor et al., 2015).

Interpersonal Dysfunction May Help to Explain Why Narcissism Is Related to Low Engagement

The way narcissistic individuals perceive their social worlds may provide clues into how they perceive treatment and associated interpersonal processes. As Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) have observed, narcissistic behaviors often appear paradoxical (e.g., behaving antagonistically toward others yet seeking positive social feedback; describing oneself as definitively superior yet constantly seeking affirmation of this status); attention to functioning from an interpersonal framework may help to provide context for the ongoing regulation and maintenance of narcissistic individuals' self-concept. Grandiose narcissistic individuals seem to experience a disconnect

between trait and behavior, such that they tolerate the idea of narcissistic traits but not the associated behaviors (Adams, Hart, & Burton, 2015). Perhaps this disconnect contributes to difficulty engaging in treatment. They also appear to demonstrate a perception bias wherein they perceive close others as similarly narcissistic (Lamkin et al., 2014). A variety of reasons have been identified that contribute to the tendency for individuals with narcissistic traits to prematurely terminate therapy (Ronningstam, 2011). These reasons may include disagreements or negative emotions associated with the provider, dysregulation or intolerance of unpleasant emotions, and an attempt to assert interpersonal control. As reviewed, vindictiveness appears to be particularly salient, as it is related to higher dropout rates. Furthermore, if compelled to attend treatment by a significant other or family member, narcissistic individuals may not desire to follow through. As Kealy and Ogrodniczuk (2011) mention, patients with narcissistic personality disorder may not acknowledge interpersonal problems in therapy directly. Committing to treatment confers a certain amount of risk in that it requires a commitment to an individual relationship that may evoke discussion of impairment antithetical to a narcissistic individual's self-concept, especially for those with grandiose narcissism. Even if narcissism is not the initial reason for treatment-seeking, behaviors associated with the trait often become apparent over time and may interfere with treatment processes. Thus, there is an interpersonal aspect of sustaining treatment (i.e., retention) as well.

When interpersonal relationships are impaired or dysfunctional, the behavioral patterns that contribute to them will likely be reflected in the treatment room. Narcissistic individuals work to regulate their self-esteem, and participation in therapy may be a challenge to that. In a review of factors that impact dropout in individual psychotherapy, Roos and Werbart (2013) highlight the dearth of information about the relationship, or interaction, between client and therapist, which naturally taps into interpersonal functioning. Narcissistic individuals use interpersonal strategies to regulate their self-esteem (Morf &

Rhodewalt, 2001), which may involve extremes such as devaluing or idealizing the provider (Ronningstam, 2011). Interpersonal control (e.g., maintenance of a sense of mastery and self-sufficiency) can be a major hindrance to treatment for narcissistic personality disorder (Ronningstam, 2010). Therapy could be perceived as an affront to interpersonal control in that patients may have to relinquish some amount of this control. Of course, interpersonal patterns that cause problems in real life may appear specifically in relationships with the therapist and may complicate treatment for narcissistic individuals (Bender, 2005), although the range of these behaviors is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

Limitations in the Current Literature and Future Directions

Given the relationship between interpersonal impairment and narcissism, along with what is known about the way social functioning impacts treatment engagement, it is surprising that there is relatively limited attention to the way narcissistic traits may impact treatment engagement – and even less attention to possible differences between grandiose and vulnerable presentations. Although a small number of studies have considered these patterns, some limitations must be noted in the literature. First, personality predictors of dropout are often considered categorically: having or not having a personality disorder. Using unspecified personality disorder as a category presents similar problems in that researchers cannot tease apart which patterns are driven by which traits. As Löffler-Stastka et al. (2010) mention, it may be more useful for research to focus on traits or styles rather than specific disorders as we work to improve the scant treatment outcome literature that addresses patient characteristics. It is especially important for future studies to consider trait-based differences, given the movement in the field toward trait-based conceptualizations of personality disorders (e.g., the proposed alternative personality disorder model in DSM5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Second, personality disorders in the treatment engagement literature are often considered only as clusters, with Cluster B personality disorder diagnoses demonstrating poorer adherence to treatment (e.g., Holma, Holma, Melartin, & Isometsä, 2010). As a related issue, much of the personality and dropout literature compares borderline personality disorder (BPD) to a category of “all other personality disorders,” with evidence that BPD may be associated with greater early dropout compared to non-BPD patients (Chiesa, Drahorad, & Longo, 2000; Martino, Menchetti, Pozzi, & Berardi, 2012). Third, sometimes personality disorders are excluded from participation. For example, antisocial personality disorder is sometimes excluded, especially in group studies, but because this diagnosis is characterized by high levels of antagonism, individuals with narcissistic traits are likely inadvertently excluded as well. Fourth, the scope of these studies is often toward personality disorder-focused treatment. As mentioned, narcissistic individuals may not present for treatment to address personality specifically, and studies of this nature may not capture the broad patterns more typically seen for this population.

In reviews of strategies for reducing attrition in general psychotherapy, researchers note that several approaches have been posited in the literature, but empirical investigation of the effectiveness of these strategies is limited and should be subjected to more rigorous testing (Ogrodniczuk, Joyce, & Piper, 2005; Oldham, Kellett, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012). The same has been said specifically for narcissism (Magidson et al., 2012). Briefly, experts suggest some strategies for treating and proactively anticipating dropout, primarily for narcissistic personality disorder specifically. Ronningstam (2011) recommends setting a shared, collaboratively decided goal at the outset of treatment and continued attention to the patient’s goals. Caligor et al., (2015) recommend focusing on specific goals, communicating empathy, and working with the patient’s social system. McMurrin and colleagues have developed a goal-based motivational interview to increase engagement in personality disorder treatment (McMurrin, Cox, Whitham, & Hedges, 2013).

It is important that personality disorder studies move toward systematic investigation of the relations between psychopathology and treatment processes and outcome (Perry, 2014). Although additional study is warranted, narcissism appears to be related to lower treatment engagement, with more current evidence for grandiose narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder. More information is needed to determine whether vulnerable narcissism is differentially related to treatment engagement. Furthermore, interpersonal dysfunction provides a useful lens through which to view the relations between narcissism and treatment engagement. Lower treatment engagement does not indicate that narcissism cannot be treated; on the contrary, these findings should compel researchers to gather more evidence to develop and validate proactive interventions that can improve treatment engagement for this population.

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The Treatment of Trait and Narcissistic Personality Disturbances

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Jeffrey J. Magnavita

Abstract

The treatment of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorders (NPD) is challenging for clinicians because of their complexity and limited empirical evidence to guide treatment. This chapter provides an overview of the state of the field of psychotherapeutics for NPD. Interest in the treatment of NPD was stimulated by Heinz Kohut who developed a theory of self-psychology and developed methods for treating what he termed disorders of the self. Kohut did not articulate a specific approach for treating NPD, so much as articulating principles for how to create a therapeutic relationship, using empathy and mirroring to mend structural deficits in the self-system. While there is substantial support demonstrating the efficacy of psychotherapy in general, and growing empirical evidence for the treatment of personality disorders, there is limited evidence for NPD. A review of the literature shows over 30 randomly controlled treatment studies evaluating the efficacy of treatment for personality disorders but most focused on borderline personality disorder and none specifi-

cally on NPD. There are a number of studies, which include NPD in their sample, but sample sizes are so small that specific implications cannot be generalized for NPD. While there is a dearth of empirical evidence demonstrating efficacy for any single approach for NPD, there are a number of treatment approaches, which have been suggested for narcissism and NPD. Currently, there is only one approach specifically for NPD, but no single approach has shown efficacy using randomly controlled treatment studies. However, there is substantial clinical case material and anecdotal evidence suggesting that integrative and unified approaches are the most suited for narcissistic trait and personality disorders.

Keywords

Narcissistic personality disorder · Treatment approaches · Psychotherapy · Unified psychotherapy · Personality dysfunction

The treatment of narcissistic trait and narcissistic personality disorders (NPD) is a relatively new development in clinical science and psychotherapeutics, emerging in the early part of the twentieth century. More recently, a number of treatment approaches for personality disorders have been developed, although there is only one specifically for the treatment of narcissistic disorders. A few

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approaches for personality disorders include NPD, but efficacy in most cases has not been broadly established. Most clinicians utilize integrative and unified approaches, based on principles derived from clinical practice in the treatment of narcissistic disorders (Livesley, Dimaggio, & Clarkin, 2015; Magnavita, 2010). Unlike borderline personality disorder, for which a number of specific treatment approaches have been developed and proven efficacious, the treatment of narcissistic disorders remains rooted in clinical case material with an absence of randomly controlled treatment studies comparing efficacy among various treatments or care as usual. This chapter reviews the past literature, extant research, and provides a brief overview of current treatment paradigms. We begin with a brief review of relevant past clinical literature.

Review of Past Literature

The nascent treatment of narcissistic disorders began with Sigmund Freud (1966). Although Freud formulated concepts of narcissism, Freud's psychoanalytic approach, which was characterized by the neutrality of the analyst, often proved too frustrating for individuals with narcissistic disorders and thus were not ideal treatment candidates. Other psychoanalytic pioneers, most notably Wilhelm Reich (1949) and Heinz Kohut (1971), modified psychoanalysis for the treatment of narcissistic disorders. Reich's approach, which is similar in many respects to modern short-term dynamic psychotherapy (Davanloo, 1980), emphasized restructuring the defensive system by identifying and challenging defenses in a direct manner. Kohut's approach in contrast emphasized attunement, which refers to the ability to empathically sense the state of the patient, and remains one of the most influential models for treatment.

The contemporary conceptualization and treatment of personality disorders began in earnest in the 1980s in part fueled by the development of the modern diagnostic and classification system of mental disorders (APA, 1980), which offered a separate category called Axis II to diag-

nose personality disorders and articulated nine types in three clusters: (*Cluster A*, paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal; *Cluster B*, borderline, narcissistic, antisocial; and *Cluster C*, avoidant, dependent, obsessive-compulsive). The more severe sector is Cluster A, then B, with C usually being the least severe form. Some personality disorders which many find clinically useful, such as passive-aggressive, were excluded. As a result of DSM classification, psychosocial epidemiologists were able to more accurately estimate the prevalence rate of personality disorders, now estimated to be 10% of the population in North America (Lenzenweger, 2008). The high incidence of personality disorders being admitted for emergency services and recidivism rates for re-hospitalizations became a burden to the health-care system and an interest in developing effective treatments ensued. These trends spawned a new era in the development of psychometric instruments to more accurately assess personality, as well as specific approaches for the treatment of personality disorders. However, because of the heterogeneity of personality disorders, no single approach has been shown to effectively treat the variety of disorders. As a result of the broad spectrum of structural and symptom disturbances evident in those with personality disorders, the tendency for there to be significant overlap among them, and the high occurrence of comorbid clinical syndromes, most clinical scholars endorse an individualized approach using integrative and unified treatment, which identify specific domain areas that need to be addressed and modified, selecting from a range of approaches and modalities (Livesley et al., 2015; Magnavita, 2010; Millon & Davis, 1996).

While narcissistic personality disorders have many features, which are reviewed elsewhere in this volume, there is a particular cluster of symptoms which makes it a challenge to successfully treat these patients with conventional forms of psychotherapy. These symptoms include a lack of empathy for others, a sense of entitlement, grandiosity, and an excessive need for admiration from others. There is a tendency to exaggerate one's accomplishments; show a preoccupation with beauty,

brilliance, and wealth; and believe they are special or unique and only he or she can solve difficult problems. Individuals with narcissistic personalities often require that family members revolve their lives around satisfying their own needs (Donaldson-Pressman & Pressman, 1994; Magnavita, 2002). Traditional approaches to psychotherapy are often ineffective for patients with narcissistic disorders. For example, patients with NPD can engender strong countertransference feelings in clinicians resulting in alliance ruptures and premature termination (Magnavita, 2013). Clinicians who treat personality disorders should be appropriately trained before they do so as specialized skills and knowledge are necessary to successfully engage and form a trusting relationship that will allow self-examination and restructuring of the personality (Magnavita, Levy, Critchfield, & Lebow, 2010). While narcissistic personality configurations are seen in children (Kernberg, Weiner, & Bardenstein, 2000), their diagnosis may be detrimental in that it may obfuscate the presence of dysfunctional family or social systems. There are no specific treatments for narcissistic disorders in children (Freeman & Reinecke, 2007).

Review of Current Literature

While there is growing empirical evidence of the efficacy of psychotherapy for the treatment of personality disorders (Leichsenring & Leibing, 2003), no randomly controlled treatment (RCT) studies were found specifically for NPD. In an extensive review of the literature, researchers identified 33 RCTs that evaluated the efficacy of various psychosocial treatments for personality disorders. The authors summarize the findings:

Of these studies, 19 focused on treatment of borderline personality disorder, and suggested that there are several efficacious treatments and one well-established treatment for this disorder. In contrast, only five RCTs examined the efficacy of treatments for Cluster C personality disorders, and no RCTs tested the efficacy of treatments for Cluster A personality disorders. (Dixon-Gordon, Turner, & Chapman, 2011, p. 282)

There are a number of contemporary treatment approaches, which are useful in treatment in the narcissistic disorders, and one manualized approach has been offered specifically for NPD. However, there are no definitive studies that demonstrate the efficacy of one approach over another for narcissistic disorders; treatment development is in the early stages. The major treatment models for personality disorders useful in the treatment of NPD fall within three main categories: psychodynamic, interpersonal, and cognitive. Most clinical researchers and innovators suggest treatment of narcissistic disorders is best addressed through integrative and unified approaches (Magnavita, 2012). While there is no single approach that has been empirically demonstrated as efficacious with narcissistic disorders, each approach offers a selection of methods and techniques that can be useful when combined. The major treatment models, which clinicians currently rely upon include:

Psychodynamic/Psychoanalytic Sigmund Freud (1966), who was the founder of psychoanalysis, created the most comprehensive treatment model for mental disorders in the early twentieth century. His psychoanalytic or psychodynamic model emphasized uncovering the repressed impulses and feelings that are defended through narcissistic defenses. While psychoanalysis has not demonstrated efficacy with narcissistic disorders, later forms of psychodynamic psychotherapy continues to be a mainstay of contemporary treatment.

Interpersonal Psychotherapy Emerging in part from dissatisfaction with the emphasis in psychoanalytic theory on intrapsychic process, interpersonal theorists pioneered a newer form of treatment (Smith Benjamin, 1996; Sullivan, 1953) based on developments in interpersonal theory (Leary, 1957). Benjamin (1996) developed Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy (IRP), an integrative approach with foundations in interpersonal process.

Cognitive and Cognitive-Behavior Models of Personality Pioneers such as Albert Ellis (1961), Aron Beck (1975), Beck, Freedman, and Davis, (2003) and others created a revolution when they introduced the idea that in addition to the stimulus and response studied by behaviorists, there also existed *beliefs* that shaped behavior. This theoretical development emerged in part from cognitive science with its emphasis on information processing. These cognitions encoded in us from early in life become templates that are enduring and create a consistent self, called early maladaptive schema (Young, Klesko, & Weishaar, 2003). There are various cognitive schema identified by Beck et al. (2003) and Young (1999) that describe the common beliefs underlying NPD, which cohere into a somewhat fixed schema that account for personality dysfunction.

While aspects of all of these approaches contribute techniques and methods useful in the treatment of narcissistic disorders, there are also a few specific approaches developed to treat narcissistic disorders.

Specific Approaches to Treatment and Psychotherapy of Personality Dysfunction

A review of the literature reveals a dearth of empirical evidence to identify the optimal treatment for NPD. The two main reasons for this lack of evidence base is that only one approach has been developed for NPD, and no empirical research using randomly controlled studies, which focuses exclusively on treatment outcome for narcissistic personality, has been undertaken. The majority of comparative outcome studies combine various types of personality disorders. Compared to borderline personality disorder, NPD has received little research focus. This is likely due to the fact that patients with borderline personality disorder are often high utilizers of mental health services and are often seen in emergency rooms following episodes of parasuicidal behavior. At this time, there is one manualized treatment protocol, metacognitive

interpersonal therapy (MIT) (Dimaggio & Attina, 2012), that has been developed exclusively for the treatment of NPD, which we describe next, but efficacy has not been established. There is evidence to suggest that a number of approaches may be useful in treating NPD. Two of the main approaches to the treatment of narcissistic disorders are psychodynamic in origin—Kernberg’s object relations approach and Kohut’s self-psychological approach (Ambaradar & Bienfeld, 2017). A number of approaches developed for treating personality disorders show promise. Most treatments for NPD were developed more generally for the severe personality disorders and are primarily based on the results of clinical case material as opposed to RCTs. These include forms of psychodynamic therapy (Akhtar, 1992; McWilliams, 1994), transference-focused therapy (Kernberg, 1984; Yeomans, Clarkin, & Kernberg, 2002), short-term dynamic therapy (STDP) (Davanloo, 1980; Magnavita, 1997; Messer & Abbass, 2010; Trujillo, 2002), mentalization-based therapy (MBT) (Batemen & Fonagy, 2016), supportive-expressive psychotherapy (Vinnars, Barber, Noren, Galop, & Weinryb, 2005), cognitive therapy (Beck & Freeman, 1990), and schema-focused therapy (Young et al., 2003). All of the above have been applied to the treatment of narcissistic disorders. Schema-focused therapy, which is a form of CBT, addresses narcissistic schema by elucidating and confronting the cognitive distortions that make up their defenses while challenging the underlying beliefs such as “I must be perfect.” A multicenter RCT has shown schema therapy to be efficacious in treating personality disorders including NPD, but the small numbers included make these findings only suggestive (Bamelis, Evers, Spinhoven, & Arntz, 2014). Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy has also been reported to be useful in the literature (Benjamin, 1996). As mentioned, metacognitive interpersonal therapy (MIT) (Dimaggio & Attina), another form of interpersonal treatment, is the only manualized treatment specifically for NPD. Treatment begins with autobiographical narrative to develop a shared understanding of the patients’ problems. Recognition and awareness of functioning,

mental states, interpersonal relationship schemas, and indications of poor agency and acting are encouraged. This approach emphasizes reality through perspective-taking and identifying normal grandiosity. The goal is to create critical distance to old behavior while building new schemas for thinking, feeling, and managing interpersonal relationships. This process seeks to encourage agency and autonomy.

All of the above approaches offer important components useful in treating NPD. Cognitive approaches are useful to map the beliefs that form the guiding schema for NPD, with specific techniques for restructuring these dysfunctional beliefs, while interpersonal approaches elucidate the relational processes, and psychodynamic focus on the intrapsychic dimensions and defenses. Most clinical theorists suggest that an integrative or unified approach that draws from a variety of methodologies is best suited for the spectrum of personality disturbances.

Treating Personality and Personality Disorders Using and Integrated and Unified Framework

The current treatment of narcissistic personality dysfunction relies on annexing various elements of a spectrum of approaches (Livesley et al., 2015). Domain systems and subsystems such as attachment, defense, affective, cognitive, and interpersonal shape and alter the expression of personality (Magnavita & Anchin, 2014; Magnavita, 1997, 2005a, 2010). More recently, clinical theorists have begun to recognize the importance of having an understanding of the interrelationships among intrapsychic, interpersonal, triadic, and sociocultural domains of personality. Interventions include various techniques from a spectrum of evidence-based approaches and from broad categories of defensive, affective, cognitive, dyadic, triadic, and mesosystem restructuring (Magnavita & Anchin, 2014). This unified framework affords clinicians the flexibility of shifting frames from micro-viewing intrapsychic processes to increasingly more macro, such as dyadic, triadic, and sociocultural

(Magnavita, 2005a, b). While individual psychotherapy has been the mainstay modality of treatment, other modalities such as couples, group, and family have been reported.

Couples Therapy for Narcissistic Personality Dysfunction

Couples therapy has been offered for NPD (Lachkar, 2004) with useful results. Based on anecdotal evidence and accumulated case reports, it is likely that a high percentage of couples with chronic conflict suffer from personality dysfunction. Most of those who have personality dysfunction also suffer from interpersonal difficulties (Lebow & Uliaszek, 2010). It has been reported in the literature that individuals with personality dysfunction often attract partners who also suffer from these disorders (Lachkar, 2004). While there are currently no evidence-based approaches to treating personality dysfunction using couples psychotherapy, there have been a range of approaches, which have been documented, and these are primarily integrative and unified approaches. These approaches share a systemic foundation, which blends and incorporates various components, techniques, and methods from the multitude of approaches. Most approaches follow a standard format: “(1) engagement (i.e., establishing a working therapeutic alliance); (2) assessment and formulation; (3) rebalancing the couple relationship; (4) modifying individual dynamics; and (5) maintenance and termination (Sperry, 2004, p. 155).”

Family Therapy for Narcissistic Personality Dysfunction

Just as there may be a higher incidence of personality dysfunction in couples with severe and chronic conflict, such is the case with dysfunctional family systems, of which various types have been identified, including two types: the narcissistic dysfunctional personologic system (NarDps) and the covertly narcissistic family (CNrDps) (Magnavita, 2002). These family systems are characterized by the influence of one or more members of the family who suffer from NPD and require the family system to cater to their needs. While the first variation is obvious in

many prominent families, the covert type reflects a more subtle reversal of the parent-child dyad with children often fulfilling the role of mirroring the parent and providing cohesion to the self-system of the narcissistic parent. The family system can provide “a stable holding environment that can mitigate some of the difficulties associated with PDs” (Lebow & Uliaszek, 2010, p. 195). Family therapy shows promise as a vital but underutilized modality in the treatment of NPD. The family system offers a rich matrix to observe and model new forms of more adaptive communication and to alter the processes that give rise to personality dysfunction through the selected use of various types of restructuring (MacFarlane, 2004; Magnavita & McFarlane, 2004).

The Bi-directionality Between Individual Personality and Family System

The formal classification of personality disorders emerged in the 1980s with the publication of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association (1980), resulting in a resurgence of research and novel approaches for treating personality disorders. Another trend spawned by family system theorists offered an alternative version of individual psychopathology being the focus of personality disorders. This relational model viewed personality disorder as an expression of a chronically dysfunctional system (Kaslow, 1996). There is accumulating evidence that in families with members diagnosed with personality disorder, there is a higher incidence of family conflict, sexual abuse, and neglect (Magnavita, 2004).

Principles of Treatment

While at this time there is scant empirical evidence to support one type of treatment over another, there are a number of principles and relational factors, which are important in treating personality disorders in general and are likely important in the treatment of narcissistic disor-

ders in particular (Critchfield & Benjamin, 2006; Muran, Eubanks-Carter, & Safran, 2010). The literature suggests that at this time, the common factors that all forms of psychotherapy share are important to employ in treatment. The principles, which have been identified by Critchfield and Benjamin (2006) from the existing literature, and essential in treating NPD, include: (1) building and maintaining a collaborative relationship; (2) comprehensive treatment utilizing combinations of interventions; (3) emphasis on therapeutic conditions including support, empathy, and validation; (4) immediately attend to therapeutic misalliances; (5) flexibly tailored to presenting problems; (6) engaged therapeutic stance as opposed to detached and passive; and (7) instill hope and maintain motivation for change.

Future Directions

Johnson (1985) described working with the personality disordered patient as “the hard work miracle cure.” Effective treatment of narcissistic trait and personality disorders, as well as other personality disorders, is important for the identified individuals, their families, and society and requires a multidimensional unified approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1969; Magnavita, 2005a; Magnavita & Anchin, 2014). A revolution occurred in the 1950s laying the groundwork for systemic models of personality at a time when information science, cybernetics, and system theory were emerging from computer science. A major unifying paradigmatic shift occurred, changing our understanding of complex phenomenon with Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s (1968) formulation of system theory. Angyal (1941) was the first theorist who introduced the concept of “personality system” and wrote:

Personality can be regarded as a hierarchy of systems. In the larger personality organization the significant positions are occupied by constituents which themselves are also systems; the constituents of the secondary system may also be systems; and so on. Thus, personality may be considered as a hierarchy with the total personality at the top; below it follow the subsystems of the first order,

second order, third order, and so on. When one studies connections in such a hierarchy from the dynamic point of view, it is useful to distinguish the dynamics within a given subsystem and between systems of different orders. (pp. 286–287)

Angyal (1941) also emphasized the cultural aspects of personality, and Bronfenbrenner (1969) created a nested structure framework of the total ecological system, allowing us to categorize and view systems from micro- to macro-structures and processes. These nested structures are like Russian dolls with each domain enveloped in and interacting with others.

System theory has been adopted by a number of personality theorists to better understand the interrelationships among the component domains of personality (Magnavita, 2005a, b; Mayer, 2004, 2005, 2006). In these unifying models, personality is seen as a system embedded in and expressed in various domains. Personality systematics (Magnavita, 2005b, 2011) was applied to the study of personality and is the term used to describe the ways in which the component domains of various levels of the biopsychosocial system operate, continually shaping the expression of personality. A unified approach drawing on the principles, methods, and techniques from various approaches and incorporating advances in technology appears to be gaining support and may be the pathway for future treatment (Magnavita, 2018). Some of these advances, such as progress monitoring systems, allow the clinician to receive instantaneous feedback about the progress and therapeutic alliance so that if the indices show symptoms or alliance are worsening, the clinician can respond in a corrective fashion. Other technologies that offer state changes such as electrocranial stimulation, neurofeedback, and biofeedback may offer nonthreatening methods that can engage patients with NPD who tend to be resistant to traditional forms of treatment. The use of audiovisual technology can assist therapists by providing a deeper understanding of the process of therapy and how to respond therapeuti-

cally to certain challenging interpersonal patterns seen in the narcissist.

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