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Great Power Narcissism and Ontological (In)Security: The Narrative Mediation of Greatness and Weakness in International Politics

Linus Hagström
Swedish Defence University, Sweden

Why do self-representations of weakness pervade public discourse in self-identified great powers? Moreover, why do they intersect with self-representations of greatness? Do such narrative instability, inconsistency, and incoherence simply indicate that great powers are ontologically insecure? This article advances a theoretical explanation that is both embedded in and contributes to scholarship that theorizes ontological (in)security from a Lacanian perspective. The gist, ironically, is that great powers' quest for greatness is co-constituted with the narrative construction of weakness. The article then challenges the assumption in existing ontological security scholarship that states are generally self-reflexive and experience pride when ontologically secure but shame when ontologically insecure. Since great power narratives reflect persistent, exaggerated, and simultaneous feelings of shame and pride, it argues that narcissism helps better account for great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking. Drawing on psychological research on narcissism, the article develops four narrative forms—shame, pride, denial, and insult—through which self-representations of weakness and greatness, and feelings of shame and pride, can be mediated. Finally, using empirical illustrations from the United States and China, the article analyzes how and with what implications political leaders have narrated about each respective great power's weakness and greatness, with a focus on the period 2006–2020.

¿Por qué las autorrepresentaciones de debilidad se extienden en los discursos públicos en las grandes potencias autoidentificadas? Asimismo, ¿por qué se entrecruzan con las autorrepresentaciones de grandeza? ¿La inestabilidad, la incongruencia y la incoherencia narrativa simplemente indican que las grandes potencias son inseguras en términos ontológicos? Este artículo propone una explicación teórica que está incorporada a una erudición, y que contribuye con ella, que teoriza la (in)seguridad desde una perspectiva lacaniana. Irónicamente, la idea es que la búsqueda de grandeza de las grandes potencias está coconstituida con la construcción narrativa de debilidad. Por lo tanto, el artículo desafía el supuesto de la erudición existente de seguridad ontológica que establece que, por lo general, los estados son autorreflexivos y experimentan orgullo cuando están ontológicamente seguros, pero experimentan vergüenza cuando están inseguros en términos ontológicos. Puesto que las narraciones de las grandes potencias reflejan sentimientos persistentes, exagerados y simultáneos de vergüenza y orgullo, se sostiene que el narcisismo ayuda mejor a dar cuenta de la autoidentificación y de la búsqueda de seguridad ontológica de las grandes potencias. Al recurrir a la investigación psicológica sobre el narcisismo, el artículo desarrolla cuatro formas de narraciones: vergüenza, orgullo, negación e insulto, a través de las cuales se pueden mediar las autorrepresentaciones de debilidad y grandeza, así como los sentimientos de vergüenza y orgullo. Por último, usando ejemplos empíricos de los Estados Unidos y de China, el artículo analiza cómo y con qué consecuencias los líderes políticos han narrado sobre la debilidad y la grandeza de cada gran potencia, y se centra en el período que va de 2006 a 2020.

Pourquoi les auto-représentations de faiblesse imprègnent-elles le discours public des grandes puissances autoproclamées ? De plus, pourquoi ces auto-représentations de faiblesse s'entrecroisent-elles avec des auto-représentations de grandeur ? De telles instabilités, inconstances et incohérences narratives indiquent-elles simplement que les grandes puissances sont ontologiquement insécurisées ? Cet article avance une explication théorique qui est à la fois intégrée et contributrice aux recherches qui théorisent l'(in)sécurité ontologique d'un point de vue lacanien. Ironiquement, l'idée générale est que la quête de grandeur des grandes puissances se constitue conjointement avec la construction narrative de la faiblesse. Cet article remet ensuite en question l'hypothèse des recherches existantes sur la sécurité ontologique, qui est que les États sont généralement auto-réflexifs et qu'ils ressentent de la fierté lorsqu'ils sont ontologiquement sécurisés mais de la honte lorsqu'ils sont ontologiquement insécurisés. Étant donné que les discours des grandes puissances reflètent des sentiments persistants, exagérés et simultanés de honte et de fierté, cet article soutient que le narcissisme aide à mieux prendre en compte l'autoproclamation des grandes puissances et leur quête de sécurité ontologique. Cet article s'appuie sur une recherche psychologique sur le narcissisme pour présenter quatre formes narratives—de la honte, de la fierté, du déni et de l'insulte—par le biais desquelles les auto-représentations de faiblesse et de grandeur, et les sentiments de honte et de fierté, peuvent être communiqués. Enfin, cet article utilise des illustrations empiriques des États-Unis et de Chine pour analyser la manière dont et les implications avec lesquelles les dirigeants politiques ont discouru sur les faiblesses et grandeurs respectives de chacune des grandes puissances en se concentrant sur la période 2006–2020.

Linus Hagström is a Professor of Political Science at the Swedish Defence University and Senior Research Fellow at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. He has recently published articles in *Cooperation and Conflict*, *Review of International Studies*, and *International Studies Review*.

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Introduction

To be ontologically secure, self-identified great powers would seem to be dependent on the reproduction of relatively consistent and coherent autobiographical narratives that emphasize how great they are in a generalized sense. Great power narratives do indeed represent their protagonists as great, but self-representations of greatness surprisingly often intersect in public discourse with representations that worry about how weak the self is. For example, euphoric assertions of US preponderance intersect with expressions of fear and shame related to weakness (Reus-Smit 2004, 19–27). The rhetoric of former US President Donald J. Trump is a case in point. In his 2016 nomination acceptance speech, the then presidential candidate stated that the United States was "still free and independent and strong" but concurrently claimed that it was facing "death, destruction, terrorism and weakness" (2016). While these assertions are characteristic of Trump's way of speaking, they arguably resonated with "broader public sentiment" enough to get him elected (Homolar and Scholz 2019, 348).

Moreover, an "inner doubt" arguably existed in US society and international relations long before Trump's ascent (Cox 2007, 644; Arnold 2013, 3). Since the 1970s, there has been widespread concern that the United States is getting weaker relative to the Soviet Union (Dalby 1988), Japan (Campbell 1992, 223–43), and more recently China (Pan 2012). US political scientists also remain preoccupied with the question of US decline and weakness (e.g., Nau 1990; Kupchan 2003; Nye 2015). However, self-representations of weakness tend to intersect in public discourse with representations premised on the US self's greatness, as reflected, for example, in Arnold's (2013) analysis of Hollywood movies.

Self-representations of weakness and greatness intersect fairly similarly in the narratives of other self-identified great powers. Neumann (2017) details the uneasy coexistence of inferiority and superiority complexes in Russian identity narratives, which at the same time as obsessing over "the idea of being a great power" express fear that Russia might be on the verge of becoming a "banana republic." He notes: "Russia is stuck in a prison of its own making. The name of that prison is great power identity. Time and again since the fall of the Soviet Union, we have heard Russians state that Russia has to be a great power, or it will be nothing" (Neumann 2015, 5). To take another example, Japanese identity narratives recurrently emphasize that the country is at the same time greater than other Asian states, but too weak to compare with Western great powers or to approximate the normative standard for being a true great power (Hagström 2015). As China superseded Japan as the second largest economy in the world, and conflicts over disputed territory intensified in 2010, the latter trope became more dominant. The fact that Japan looked weaker than an Asian neighbor was widely regarded as particularly disheartening (Hagström 2012; Walravens 2014), but fear and shame related to imminent weakness almost immediately intersected with self-confident assertions to the effect that Japan was "back" (Abe 2013).

Ontological Security Studies (OSS) scholarship assumes that the identity of a state or nation emerges through the construction and dissemination of narratives that strive for stability, consistency, and coherence. Is the coexistence of self-representations of weakness and greatness, detailed above, simply proof of ample ontological insecurity in the United States, Russia, and Japan, linked perhaps to what is understood in each case as relative material "decline"? Interestingly, however, despite its material "rise" in recent decades, China harbors a similar "combination of a superiority complex, and an inferiority complex" (Callahan 2010, 9). Callahan calls this phenomenon "pessoptimism" and notes that it is epitomized by self-representations that simultaneously depict China as "civilised and backward" (2010, 130), a "victorious great power" and a "victim state" (2010, 168), and "the next superpower" and a "poor developing country" (2010, 196). Others concur that China is a "deeply conflicted rising power" (Shambaugh 2011, 7) that is "confused" about its identity (Pu 2017, 137), which is that of both "a weak country and a strong one" (Pu 2017, 139).

Existing OSS scholarship has begun to investigate the narrative functions of dystopia and utopia but located them as temporally separate (Kinnvall 2018; Browning 2019) and connected primarily with "populist leaders" (Kinnvall 2018, 525). The puzzle for this article, by contrast, is that weakness and greatness, and their associated notions of dystopia and utopia, are narrated as close to the present. Moreover, while incumbents and challengers in domestic politics are likely to represent things differently, the former do not simply advocate the self's greatness while the latter warn about its looming weakness, thereby "creating the very ontological insecurity that it promises to eradicate for political gain" (Homolar and Scholz 2019, 360). In fact, self-representations of weakness and greatness seem to intersect even in *competing* identity narratives. Finally, while it probably matters whether and how great power identities are (mis)recognized by others (e.g., Lindemann 2010), and how power and status are distributed in the international system (e.g., Waltz 1979; Ward 2019), this article argues that a more fundamental fear of weakness epitomizes the great power predicament. Such fear and its associated shame have little obvious connection with "underlying reality" (Herman 1997, 441) and are intersected throughout with confident assertions of pride in the self's greatness.

The aim of the article is to explain this puzzling mode of identity construction, which appears to manifest itself in several great powers, and to rethink ontological security and the way it applies to great powers. Drawing on Jacques Lacan's identity theory, the article begins to craft an explanation by conceptualizing the self as fundamentally fluid and fractured, incoherent and incomplete, and ontological security as an aspiration—the quest for which is motivated through the construction of ontological insecurities. It goes on to challenge the assumption that states have an equal capacity for self-reflexivity and experience pride when their autobiographical narratives are relatively stable, consistent, and coherent, but shame when their sense of self is challenged by contradiction. Since great power narratives reflect persistent, exaggerated, and more or less simultaneous feelings of both shame and pride, it argues that narcissism is more appropriate for making sense of great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking.

In fact, shame and pride are both central to narcissism. Indeed, narcissism is defined by an inflated sense of the self's importance and exaggerated feelings of pride. Yet, narcissists project pride to subjugate more fundamental feelings of shame that are believed to *drive* the personality disorder. Drawing on psychological research, the article develops four different narrative forms through which narcissistic self-representations of weakness and greatness, and feelings of shame and pride, can be mediated—what I call narratives of shame, pride, denial, and insult. Each narrative form is entangled with actions of interest to International Relations (IR) scholars: militarization (shame), "soft power" (pride), and the use of aggression (insult). Subotic and Zarakol (2013, 924) note that shame can lead to "denial

or hostile bravado," and this article argues that such a transformation can be made intelligible by understanding great power narratives as narcissistic and by distinguishing between different narrative forms. The article then returns to the United States and China to analyze briefly how and with what implications political leaders have narrated about each respective great power self's weakness and greatness over time, with a focus on the period 2006–2020. The aim is not to validate theory through empirical testing, but to undertake a "plausibility probe" of the theorization undertaken (Eckstein 1991, 148–52). This is the first step toward examining its "analytical generality" (Pouliot 2015, 238–39) or its relevance to instances of great power words and deeds.

The discussion thus far might be criticized for conflating great power self-representations with the rhetoric of leaders. If leaders speak in a way that sounds narcissistic, it might simply be due to the narcissism of particular office holders—a diagnosis that reputable psychiatrists have not only associated with Trump (e.g., Lee 2017), but extended to several US presidents and other world leaders both past and present (e.g., Pettman 2010; Post 2015; Bar-Joseph and McDermott 2017). With Trump out of office, it might be assumed that the United States will become the object of less narcissistic narratives. Such optimism may be premature, however, since narcissism appears to be a highly ingrained aspect of US identity construction and indeed of great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking more generally.

Ontological Security and Insecurity

Inspired by research in psychology and sociology, scholars began to develop OSS within IR about two decades ago, fundamentally to contend that states care about identity threats in addition to physical ones, which helps to explain why they at times act contrary to the expectations of materialist and rationalist IR theories (e.g., Steele 2005; Mitzen 2006). The existing literature defines ontological security as "a sense of continuity and order in events" regarding self-identity (Giddens 1991, 243) and "biographical continuity" (Giddens 1991, 53). The latter definition clarifies that most OSS scholarship adheres to a narrative conception of the self and a narrative ontology. According to such positions, pre-constituted actors not just become more or less secure by crafting narratives that situate them in the past, present, and future, but subjects emerge and vanish as such through narratives (e.g., Ringmar 1996; Berenskoetter 2014; Rossdale 2015). Some OSS scholarship contends that emerging actors reinforce their autobiographical narratives by establishing routines, and that narrative change occurs in tandem with changing routines (e.g., Giddens 1991; Steele 2005; Mitzen 2006; Zarakol 2010).

The existing OSS scholarship conceptualizes ontological security and insecurity as somewhat dichotomous, the latter defined as a "rupture" in both narrative and routine (e.g., Mitzen 2006, 348). While acknowledging the contingency and fragility of narratives, and the ubiquity of existential anxiety, these accounts nonetheless treat ontological security as the "guiding aspiration" (Rossdale 2015, 377), and indeed as possible, while claiming that "we rarely see ontological insecurity in daily life" (Mitzen 2006, 348). Building on Giddens, Steele argues that ontological security is imperiled only by "critical situations" (2005, 526). According to Giddens, critical situations are "circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind" (1984, 61). While Steele (2008, 12) acknowledges that critical situations are inseparable from the narratives through which they are constituted, the OSS literature still tends to treat them as somewhat akin to "external shocks" in materialist accounts, and to imply that certain events are *inherently* bound to cause such ruptures. For example, some suggest that "power transitions" have this quality (Ejdus 2018). Others exemplify with reference to "increased communication, global financial crises, transnational migration, mobility of labor, unemployment, and the emergence of global criminal and other networks" (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018, 828). However, if critical situations are indeed constituted as part of identity narratives, it is fair to assume that some events that seem inherently traumatic will not be narratively constituted as such, and vice versa (e.g., Croft 2006).

In this article, I conjecture that critical situations are not an aberration from the normal but a more endemic aspect of great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking. Inspired by psychoanalytical, postcolonial, and poststructuralist accounts, which in turn often draw on Lacanian identity theory, I conceptualize the self as more fundamentally fluid and fractured, incoherent, and incomplete. Defining ontological security as "security-as-becoming" (Cash and Kinnvall 2017, 269), rather than as "security as being" (Steele 2005, 526), goes some way toward accounting for this understanding. The point is that uncertainties, contradictions, and threats in the form of otherness—a "constitutive lack"—are not only ever-present, but what makes it possible to try to secure ontology in the first place (e.g., Huysmans 1998; Epstein 2011). Solomon (2015, 42) nicely captures this insight: "The split—or lack—of subjectivity is both the condition of possibility and impossibility of identification processes." Hence, it is not just narratives that mediate the relationship between ontological security and insecurity that tend to rely on the "double relation" between enemies and friends, exceptions to norms, and difference to identity (Huysmans 1998). Ontological security and insecurity also have the same kind of double relationship. The implication is that ontological insecurities both threaten and motivate a constant quest for ontological security.

According to Lacanian OSS scholarship, narratives seek to overcome the lack by engaging in fantasies that make the self seem more stable, consistent, and coherent than it actually is or can be. Fantasies convert the ontological lack into an "empirical lack" or a lack of "particular 'objects' whose recapturing promises the restoration of an imaginary full identity" (Eberle 2019, 246). Eberle emphasizes that fantasy is a narrative structure that only allows two possible versions of the future, with no room for "ambiguity or complexity" or even "middle ground": "either we recapture the 'object' and we are safe (the beatific scenario of securing a complete identity), or we fail and we are doomed (the horrific scenario of losing it)" (Eberle 2019, 248–49). While Eberle intimates that a fantasy can provide some ontological relief by offering an idea of how to escape the horrific scenario and approximate the beatific one, the bottom line is that the lack cannot be overcome more than just seemingly and momentarily, and that the desire for fulfillment remains frustrated (Eberle 2019, 245–47).

If ontological security is indeed unachievable, however, the *notion* of ontological security risks not only obscuring the self's fragility but also concealing the power struggles that unfold over the imposition of meaning and identity. The "'home' safe from intruders," which Kinnvall (2004, 763) likens to ontological security, may thus at the same time function as a "marker of exclusion, and a site of violence" (Rossdale 2015, 375). Meanwhile, OSS scholarship risks reifying the self as worthy

of protection and the other as a source of insecurity (Untalan 2020).

These discussions go some way toward explaining why seemingly contradictory self-representations of weakness and greatness intersect in great power narratives. They epitomize the "recursive and dynamic oscillation" between ontological insecurities and moments when meaning and identity *appear* to be more secure, as a product of intensified ontological security-seeking (Cash 2013, 116). The next section supplements and extends this explanation by supplanting the self-reflexivity assumption common in OSS scholarship with one premised on great power narcissism.

From Self-Reflexivity to Narcissism

Much of the existing OSS scholarship assumes that states have a capacity for self-reflexivity and can monitor the extent to which their identity narratives are internally stable and coherent, and consistent with routines. The assumption is that self-reflexive actors experience pride when their autobiographical narratives are more stable, coherent, and consistent, but shame when narratives are fraught with internal tension or inconsistent with established routines (e.g., Giddens 1991; Steele 2005). Self-reflexivity is central to Giddens' theory of ontological security and constructivist identity theory more generally. Self-reflexive actors are expected to sustain ontological security by continuously revising their autobiographical narratives and concomitant routines "in light of new information or knowledge" (Giddens 1991, 20). Steele even proposes that "materially 'powerful' states … have greater 'reflexive capability', making their decisions less 'deterministic' and constrained" (Steele 2005, 530).

Yet how fair is it to ascribe self-reflexivity to a state? While some OSS scholars intimate that states should be treated as akin to persons (Mitzen 2006), others focus on how they are represented by leaders who act on their behalf (Steele 2005) or contribute to their citizens' ontological security (Krolikowski 2008). A more fundamental critique is to ask whether a subject can engage in self-reflexive practices autonomously of the narrative power struggles through which it is constituted. The point is that self-reflexive practices may not bring us any closer to "critical knowledge of ourselves" (Button 2016, 268), but could push us further from that goal. Button (2016, 268–69) suggests that what he calls "social reflexivity" might nonetheless be possible. This entails "the organized force of plural political actors who question the fundamental terms by which political self-identity is constituted and defended." Transposed to the inquiry of this article, however, this should involve not only different narratives that compete over how to mediate self-representations of weakness and greatness, but perhaps more importantly critical interrogations of the very desire to be great, and the concomitant fear and shame related to weakness. Such alternative narratives should thus resort to less dialectical modes of self-representation and perhaps acknowledge that the self is "good enough" (Morrison 1989, 63). This is what psychological research calls "authentic pride" (Tracy, Cheng, and Robins 2009, 196).

Existing OSS scholarship in the psychoanalytical, postcolonial, and poststructuralist vein suggests that more "healthy" modes of self-identification and ontological security-seeking might involve crafting narratives that embrace and try to live with ambivalence (Huysmans 1998, 247) and anxiety (Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020), that allow mnemonical pluralism (Mälksoo 2015), that seek to dissolve binaries (Untalan 2020, 48), and that engage in a "radical exercise of doubt" (Eberle 2019, 253), "self-reflexive analysis of the community's own shortcomings" (Browning 2018, 340), and desecuritization practices (Browning and Joenniemi 2017). While narratives of this kind certainly do exist in self-identified great powers and could provide a route to more long-term ontological security, they appear marginal where traits believed to be central to the self's greatness are at stake (Browning 2018).

Interestingly, in the context of this article, Mälksoo (2015, 23) points out that "questioning oneself is often viewed as a sign of weakness by both internal critics and external adversaries—which is perhaps the reason why self-interrogation tends to be suspended." This comes close to describing former US President George W. Bush and some of his close advisors after 9/11: "He [Bush] saw questioning as wavering, doubting as weakness, indicative of a lack of moral clarity. He believed that he and those around him should make decisions and then stick with them—which meant no 'hand-wringing', no skepticism, especially in public" (Schonberg 2009, 165).

I thus interpret the excessive self-consciousness and self-interrogation inside great powers as a sign not of self-reflexivity, but of narcissistic self-absorption and perhaps "pseudo self-insight" (Lasch 2018 [1979], 45). The excessive self-centeredness that defines narcissism is easy to conflate with self-reflexivity, but it would seem more accurate to interpret it as an impaired capacity for the latter (Dimaggio et al. 2008). Existing OSS scholarship has indeed juxtaposed reflexive routines with rigid routines, and the latter are characterized by "rigid or maladaptive basic trust" and an inability to learn (Mitzen 2006, 350). As a psychological defense, narcissism is also incompatible with trusting others (Krizan and Johar 2015), and it prevents learning and emotional growth (Bar-Joseph and McDermott 2017, 29–30). While this article thus agrees that reflexivity should be differentiated from mistrust and a difficulty with learning, the existing research has not contextualized such deficiencies in relation to narcissism, and this article does not believe they are necessarily associated with *rigid* routines.

I argue that narcissism provides a new and important perspective on great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking. Indeed, the way in which self-representations of weakness and greatness intersect in self-identified great powers' autobiographical narratives could be likened to a narcissist's frustrated quest for ontological security. Great powers resemble narcissists in their explicit wish to be treated as "superior, special and unique" (Marissen, Deen, and Franken 2012, 269). Yet they also carry opposing, sometimes more implicit, notions of themselves as "contracted, small, vulnerable, and weak" (Morrison and Stolorow 1997, 63). While this mode of self-identification is full of contradiction and seeming ambivalence, these are not typically traits that narcissists can tolerate (Lasch 2018 [1979], 52). Self-representations of weakness and greatness therefore tend to be projected in an exaggerated and polarizing way, with little moderation or nuance.

Narcissism actually figures in Giddens' (1991, 178) work on ontological security as "one among several other pathologies of the body." He describes it as an obsessive preoccupation with identity—albeit one that "remains frustrated" (Giddens 1991, 170). Existing OSS scholarship in IR has not picked up on this discussion per se, but Chernobrov (2016, 587–88) draws on narcissism to understand why, during a crisis, states sometimes gloss over, or misrecognize, contradictions that challenge an autobiographical narrative premised on superiority. He argues that the desire for

narrative *consistency* is narcissistic but does not address the more fundamental contradiction that drives that narcissistic desire, apart from noting that it is "a celebration of self in response to anxiety" (Chernobrov 2016, 587). This is arguably also why he only treats one type of narrative as consistent with narcissism—what I call a narrative of denial.

In the closely related theorization of recognition, moreover, Lindemann (2010, 5) develops the concept of "narcissistic wounds" to explain why certain events might threaten an inflated "self-image." The concept is similar to that of "chosen trauma" (Volkan 2009, 211) and it can ignite what I call a narrative of insult. However, this is again a restricted perspective, which overlooks how "chosen traumas" narratively intersect with "chosen glories" (Volkan 2009, 211). Hence, while some researchers have made interesting and unique contributions to the IR literature by drawing on narcissism, they have obscured how narcissism is characterized by the uneasy coexistence of self-representations of greatness *and* weakness—or feelings of pride *and* shame.

In this article, I treat narcissism as akin to self-reflexivity in the existing OSS scholarship. Both concepts can be used to make sense of processes in which great powers are narratively imagined, reproduced, and contested. Much like self-reflexivity, narcissism originates from individual psychology and so the question again arises whether it is applicable to states, let alone self-identified great powers. First, it is important to note that narcissism is not *just* an individual-level concept (cf. Gustafsson and Krickel-Choi 2020, 14). In fact, social psychologists have analyzed narcissism as a cultural phenomenon (e.g., Lasch 2018 [1979]; Twenge and Campbell 2009) and collective narcissism in terms of groups nurturing exaggerated beliefs in their own greatness (e.g., de Zavala et al. 2009). Cai and Gries (2013), moreover, note that the group can be a nation. Some political scientists have associated narcissism particularly with "a sense of ethnic superiority or hypernationalism" (Pettman 2010, 487) and the kinds of self-love and self-absorption that arguably characterize US patriotism and nationalism (Stam and Shohat 2007). While this literature again mostly focuses on greatness and superiority, de Zavala et al. (2009, 1024) clarify that inflated beliefs of this kind are "unstable" and "difficult to sustain"—they are "a strategy to protect a weak and threatened ego" (de Zavala et al. 2009, 1025).

Second, and more importantly, while this article considers people and states to be similar in that they have narratively constructed identities, they are also different. For example, territorial borders are narratively constructed rather than pre-social, and territory does not separate states in the same way as bodies separate people. Instead, great powers are understood as spoken and written into existence, and their ontological (in)security as narratively imagined, reproduced, and contested (cf. Epstein 2011, 341–42).

The Narcissistic Mediation of Shame and Pride

As noted above, the existing OSS scholarship assumes that self-reflexive actors experience shame when faced with identity contradictions. According to Giddens (1991, 65), shame corresponds to feelings of "personal insufficiency" when the identity is challenged at its core. Constructivist scholars argue that self-reflexive actors experience shame primarily due to exogenous processes, such as allegations of identity/behavior mismatch, stigmatization, or misrecognition (e.g., Subotic and Zarakol 2013; Adler-Nissen 2014; Gustafsson 2016). Pride is the opposite of shame in Giddens' model (1991) and it signifies stable identity narratives and ontological security.

The shame/pride binary also plays a fundamental role in the study of narcissism. Even though narcissists may seem incapable of shame (Robins, Tracy, and Shaver 2001), psychological research understands shame as the most basic feeling of inferiority that drives the personality disorder. For narcissists, shame is a response to deep-seated fears that the self is flawed. According to Morrison (1989, 48), shame "inevitably involves narcissism." Giddens (1991, 8) similarly suggests that shame has "close affiliations with narcissism."

Shame can undoubtedly be accentuated due to exogenous processes, as described above. Yet, how exactly an actor becomes vulnerable to allegations of weakness depends on how it constructs identity around greatness in the first place. As Lacan writes: the "gaze I encounter is … not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other" (quoted in Solomon 2015, 42). Moreover, research on narcissism emphasizes that narcissistic shame is "chronic," since it "come[s] from within" (de Zavala et al. 2009, 1091). Narcissists are thus particularly likely to become entrapped in a "psychotic spiral" where they project or imagine that "the danger they feel inside themselves (anxiety, panic, confusion, doubts) is coming from the *outside*, so that they can escape or destroy it" (Malkin 2017, 62, emphasis in original).

Scholars consider shame to be particularly pronounced in "vulnerable" narcissists (e.g., Freis et al. 2015). Some have objected to the notion that another form of narcissism, termed "grandiose," involves shame, allegedly because self-assessments show that these "narcissists see themselves as fundamentally superior" (Twenge and Campbell 2009, 19). However, other psychiatrists and psychoanalysts argue that grandiose narcissism is instigated by and compensates for excessive feelings of shame (e.g., Morrison 1989; Robins, Tracy, and Shaver 2001; Post 2015). Since narcissists have a deficient capacity for self-reflexivity and cannot be expected to understand what drives their desire to be great, it is perhaps unsurprising that shame leaves few traces in self-assessments. Indeed, the grandiose variant of narcissism is epitomized by an overdeveloped self-love, or a "sense of pride in oneself and one's accomplishments" (Giddens 1991, 68). Yet, even if narcissists identify as special, entitled, and unique, it again seems reasonable to conceptualize "hubristic pride" as a means for suppressing strong shame (Tracy, Cheng, and Robins 2009).

Feelings of both shame and pride define narcissism, and, I contend, great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking. However, shame and pride—and their associated self-representations of weakness and greatness—do not intersect in exactly the same way in all great power narratives. This article proposes four narrative forms as ideal types on a spectrum of different modes of ontological security-seeking: shame, pride, denial, and insult. All four narrative forms are preoccupied with the question of whether the self is weak or great—an obsession that is arguably located at the most institutionalized narrative layer of great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking. The "wider cultural-affective milieu" (Solomon 2018, 936) in which great powers (and states more generally) emerge as subjects is distinctly modern, state-centric, and Westphalian. This means that great powers in the making are bound not only to seek certain markers of prominence and outside recognition (Ward 2019, 213), but also to develop persistent fears of weakness as they aspire to greatness. They are thus inclined to construct and disseminate autobiographical narratives focused on "status preservation, pride, and recognition" (Untalan 2020, 43)—rather than ones characterized by "authentic pride," as discussed above. Meanwhile, narratives that take the four forms compete, and sometimes

collaborate, in pinpointing the relationship between pride and shame, and the exact object of each emotion. This, then, is testament to the politics of identity and difference that takes place in less institutionalized narrative layers, in attempts to secure the ontology as a great power. One narrative is dominant if it is reproduced more uncritically than others, and a critical mass of social actors are emotionally tied to it and consider it "common sense" (Solomon 2015).

The narrative forms are cast here as three emotions (shame, pride, and insult) and one defense mechanism for keeping difficult and pressing feelings at bay (denial). Emotions occupy a central place in the study of narcissism (Robins, Tracy, and Shaver 2001). Literatures in and beyond IR, moreover, argue that representation in widely circulated narratives is key to how emotions become collectively shared and collective sentiments develop. Narratives that emotionally resonate with audiences are more likely to be widely diffused (e.g., Hutchison and Bleiker 2014; Hall and Ross 2015). The analysis of great power self-identification and ontological security-seeking through a focus on narrative, moreover, is consistent not only with existing OSS scholarship, but also with narrative psychology (Polkinghorne 1991).

Constructivist and poststructuralist scholarship emphasizes that narratives, and discourses more generally, enable and constrain (but do not determine) behavior/policy, or that the two are co-constituted. The argument is that dominant narratives delineate a "range of imaginable conduct" and make some policies politically possible and others politically impossible (Doty 1993, 299). Narratives typically do so by culminating in a lesson or a "moral to the story" (Jones and McBeth 2010, 329). For the purpose of this article, I simply assume that whether great powers perform one action over another depends on the relative dominance of various autobiographical narratives, which surprisingly often mediate complex feelings of shame and pride around weakness and greatness.

The Four Narrative Forms

How to recognize the four narrative forms? Following the existing OSS scholarship, the focus is on *autobiographical* narratives. Such narratives do not necessarily appear in full in a single text but can emerge as broader societal—or *grand*—narratives. Moreover, great powers are spoken and written into existence, and this process is not limited to "the state" and its direct representatives (Epstein 2011, 341). A range of actors is likely to craft competing narratives, some of which become dominant. Moreover, while each narrative form is associated with distinct courses of action, such practices only make sense through their intertwinement with the narratives that legitimize and enable them.

When feelings of shame and pride are mediated in a *narrative of shame*, there is emphasis on the fear of weakness and the shame it elicits, but the greatness to which the self feels entitled remains an important undercurrent. Moreover, fear and shame related to weakness are expressed in a way that is exaggerated and hyperbolic rather than measured and self-reflexive. While self-identified great powers are expected to desire *generalized* greatness, fear and shame related to weakness primarily target traits that are deemed central to their identity construction. This might involve traditional markers of great powerness, such as military, economic, and technological/industrial prowess. An aging population can also be narratively constructed as an object of shame. Indeed, narcissists are said to be "terrified of aging" (Lasch 2018[1979], 5). As such, a narrative of shame is more consistent with vulnerable narcissism and its "sensitivity to shaming" (Besser and Priel 2010, 874). A narrative of shame seeks to offset fear and shame related to weakness by advocating concrete policies premised on self-restoration or self-betterment, and the mobilization of resources through which the threatened/desired greatness can be approximated, e.g., militarization, industrialization, as well as various economic, technological, and social reforms. Fear and shame related to weakness, moreover, tend to be projected alongside continuous expressions of entitlement and the boosting of important (albeit partial) successes. As Ahmed (2014, 15) argues, "Shame … can construct a collective ideal even when it announces the failure of that ideal to be translated into action." These then become the grounds for a narrative of "national recovery" (Ahmed 2014, 109).

Pride is more explicit and shame more implicit in a *narrative of pride*, which makes it resemble grandiose narcissism and its associated arrogance (Besser and Priel 2010, 875). Yet, as Neumann (2015, 5) notes in the case of Russia: "When people shout about their status, one immediately knows that that status is insecure, for people who are secure in their status do not have to shout about it." Hence, a narrative of pride seeks to offset fear and shame related to weakness by stressing how positively exceptional the self is. The goal, again, is to excel in traditional areas of great powerness, but a narrative of pride can also be compensatory by singling out traits other than those inherent in the threatened sense of greatness. For example, in states consumed with self-doubt, it has been common in recent years to stress how "soft power" can help compensate for the perceived loss of tangible power resources—and, indeed, even to declare that "soft power" is an updated, more accurate marker of great power status than "strength in war" (Nye 1990, 154). In the case of Russia, for instance, an identity premised on soft power was described in the 1990s as a "shortcut to greatness" (Larson and Shevchenko 2003, 78). Todd (2003, 121–22), moreover, analyzes talk of US "social and cultural hegemony" precisely as a sign of "its ever expanding narcissism," in the face of "the dramatic decline of America's real economic and military power." Similarly, Iwabuchi (2002, 447) describes the Japanese wish to disseminate its popular culture globally as a sign of its "'soft' narcissism."

A *narrative of denial* not only reproduces self-representations of greatness but does so while explicitly rejecting the notion of a weak self as utterly incomprehensible and unthinkable. As such, a narrative of denial is closely related to a narrative of pride and grandiose narcissism. A case in point is the statement by Jon Huntsman, who as a candidate for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination claimed that warnings about US decline were "simply 'un-American'" (Layne 2012, 21). Psychologists interpret narcissistic denial as a defense mechanism for suppressing negative feelings, especially painful shame about aspects that do not fit the ideal of a grandiose self (e.g., Morrison 1989; Robins, Tracy, and Shaver 2001; Tracy, Cheng, and Robins 2009). In this vein, a narrative of denial serves to "disavow or to disclaim awareness, knowledge, or responsibility for faults that might otherwise attach to them" (Brown 1997, 646). Of course, to reject outright even the possibility of being weak ironically confirms that weakness is the object of certain fears and shame. Lupovici (2012, 818)—one of the few IR scholars to have explored denial, or what he calls "avoidance"—observes that it enables the rejection of new information, the reinterpretation of events, and the creation of ambiguities. Denial is said to help an actor to avoid "annihilation." Steele (2008, 65) has also touched on the possibility that actors might wish to avoid sources of shame:

"we cover it up, we obfuscate, we rewrite texts, we discipline with talking points." This basically describes denial but, since narcissism has no place in Steele's understanding of ontological (in)security, he does not conceptualize it separately from shame. Since the fear and shame related to weakness is only implicit in a narrative of denial, it does not translate into a distinct policy agenda, other than one premised on correcting the misunderstanding that the self is weak.

When the fear of weakness becomes so persistent that it cannot be verbally denied or offset through a range of reforms, and the implicit feelings of abysmal shame at the core of narcissism threaten to annihilate the self, self-representations of weakness and greatness, and their associated feelings of shame and pride, are likely to be mediated in a *narrative of insult*. A narrative of insult thus treats fear and shame related to weakness as akin to an offense, which must be actively rejected through a host of actions intended to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the self is great. Steiner (2006, 939) writes of his narcissistic patients that they "feel humiliated when they feel small, dependent and looked down on." Narcissists are so emotionally attached to the belief in their own greatness that they tend to enter into "ego-defense" mode if they think there is an urgent need to protect this belief (Brown 1997, 647). While it is not only diagnosed narcissists who react to instances of misrecognition with feelings of insult, the perceived need to safeguard identity in this way can nonetheless be interpreted as *narcissistic*. Previous IR scholarship has demonstrated that when leaders believe that their national identity is inadequately recognized by others, feelings of insult can erupt and legitimize aggression (e.g., Lindemann 2010). Research in social psychology verifies the link in the case of collective narcissism (de Zavala et al. 2009). Psychological research finds that the connection between narcissism, feelings of insult, and acts of aggression or revenge toward the perceived source of the insult is particularly strong in vulnerable narcissists (Freis et al. 2015; Krizan and Johar 2015; Maciantowicz and Zajenkowski 2020). Yet, when faced with particularly persistent and public threats to the self, grandiose narcissists can also resort to anger and aggression (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). Transposed to the inquiry of this article, I thus assume that narratives of shame, pride, and denial can all transform into a narrative of insult, although such a transformation is arguably more likely in the case of a narrative of shame. Ultimately, to repudiate widespread fears of weakness and concomitant shame, the state acts like a great power—often by embarking on military adventures. Moreover, if an identity premised on greatness is seen as actively undermined by people who should be part of the self, domestic repression can also follow as "traitors" are separated from "patriots" (Hagström 2020; Hagström and Pan 2020). Acts of violence against domestic and foreign enemies alike thus seek to substantiate that an identity premised on generalized greatness is in no way threatened.

To exemplify, Russian leaders have repeatedly stressed in recent decades that the West is trying to undermine or weaken Russia and is not taking it seriously. They have repulsed these attempts by juxtaposing weakness and greatness in a narrative of insult (Neumann 2017). Nowhere was this clearer than in President Vladimir Putin's speech immediately following Russia's annexation of Crimea: "They [the West] are constantly trying to sweep us into a corner … And with Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally." He went on: "Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard" (Putin 2014). Months before the annexation, moreover, Putin (2013) warned: "No one should entertain any illusions about achieving military superiority over Russia; we will never allow it." Meanwhile, Russian official statements "described political opposition and western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a 'fifth column'" (Chernobrov 2019, 352).

Finally, irrespective of form, no narrative can permanently brush off fear and shame related to weakness, and an identity premised on greatness will therefore always be incomplete and threatened. Drawing on Lacan, Solomon explains that the experience of having a "full" identity is inevitably "momentary" and "fleeting": "The joyous relief of a war triumph subsides, the elation of a sports victory quickly settles, and lack is felt again" (Solomon 2015, 49). While this Lacanian insight may be valid for all identity constructions, narcissists fit the description perfectly. As Post (2015, 75) writes: "No matter how positive the response [from others], they [narcissists] cannot be satisfied but continue seeking new audiences from whom to elicit the attention and recognition they crave."

Narcissistic Ontological Security-Seeking in Practice

This section undertakes illustrative case study analysis of how and with what implications political leaders in the United States and China have narrated their respective state's weakness and greatness, with a focus on the period 2006–2020. The two states are not only self-identified great powers, but also widely recognized as such. Nonetheless, materialist theories have quite different expectations of a "declining" United States and a "rising" China (Chan 2008). Within-case comparison in the United States is also illustrative, as the Trump era might intuitively seem more associated with narcissistic narratives than previous presidencies, particularly that of Barack Obama.

The material consists of major policy speeches: thirty-four speeches by US leaders and fifty-seven by Chinese ones. In each case, the time span allowed for some variation in who the leaders/speakers were. In the following, I analyze narratives about weakness and greatness by briefly addressing how leaders constructed meaning around what was happening, how and why it was happening, who the protagonists were, and what needed to be done in light of the above (Hagström and Gustafsson 2019). I have used relevant secondary sources to contextualize the findings.

The United States of America

Speeches by US presidents in 2006–2020 were permeated by US exceptionalism or narratives of pride in US greatness. Exceptionalism, defined as the idea that a country is "unique, superior, and even God-favored" (Gilmore 2015, 302), is believed to be particularly prevalent in the United States. In Trump's narrative, for instance, "America is strong, America is proud, and America is free" (Trump 2017)—it is "by far, the world's most powerful nation" (Trump 2019). In 2020, moreover, Trump claimed to "have shattered the mentality of American decline" and "rejected the downsizing of America's destiny" so that "pride is restored." He went on to boast that "our economy is the best it has ever been" and "[o]ur military is completely rebuilt, with its power being unmatched anywhere in the world" (Trump 2020).

Trump and Obama are sometimes contrasted as two of the most dissimilar US presidents. Some Republicans even criticized Obama for his alleged lack of exceptionalism (Gilmore, Sheets, and Rowling 2016, 304–5). Nonetheless,

there was intriguing continuity in how the two presidents constructed narratives of pride in US greatness. For example, Obama said: "The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period" (Obama 2016a). Much like Trump, he derived US strength from its military and economy: "Our troops are the finest fighting force in the history of the world. No nation dares to attack us or our allies because they know that's the path to ruin." Moreover, "the United States of America … has the strongest, most durable economy in the world" (Obama 2016a). Consequently, "if the playing field is level, I promise you, America will always win" (Obama 2012). In his speeches in 2006–2008, George W. Bush also designated the United States "the most powerful nation on Earth and a beacon of hope for millions" (Bush 2008), expressing confidence in the "skill and spirit of our military" and establishing that the "American economy is preeminent" (Bush 2006).

Pride in military and economic greatness is arguably located at a highly institutionalized layer of US identity construction and ontological security-seeking (Gilmore 2015, 305). This makes the US resemble a grandiose, rather than a vulnerable, narcissist. In Obama's narrative, but not Trump's, the United States was great also because of its democracy, rule of law, optimism, and willingness to "think beyond narrow self-interest" (Obama 2016b). These qualities were construed as making the United States a popular partner and trusted leader: "Surveys show our standing around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office, and when it comes to every important international issue, people of the world do not look to Beijing or Moscow to lead—they call us" (Obama 2016a).

While Trump began to promote a narrative of pride as president, his 2016 presidential campaign was underpinned more by narratives of shame and insult, revolving around US loss of greatness, and targeting the people and states seen as responsible, but also a strong sense of entitlement reflected in the promise to "Make America Great Again" (McMillan 2017). After becoming president, Trump continued to craft narratives of shame targeting less central features of US greatness, such as its "crumbling infrastructure," which "it is … time to rebuild," and "outdated immigration rules," which it "is time to reform" (Trump 2018a). Obama (2012) also discussed the need to rebuild US infrastructure, saying in 2012: "So much of America needs to be rebuilt." Unlike Trump, he also talked about deepening inequality—a trend he pledged "to reverse" (Obama 2014).

Narratives of shame also permeate recent commentary on US power. They lament "the end" of the American century and prescribe a set of policies for restoring US pre-eminence (Acharya 2014, 32). However, also in line with grandiose narcissism, US presidents have tended to place such fear and shame related to weakness in a narrative of denial. In a classic example, Bush (2006) said: "we must never give in to the belief that America is in decline, or that our culture is doomed to unravel." Obama (2012) made several similar remarks: "anyone who tells you that America is in decline or that our influence has waned, doesn't know what they're talking about." A narrative of denial is arguably prominent in debates on US power (Acharya 2014, 1) and inherent in US exceptionalism: while "other nations and indeed empires have risen to power only to fall, the US will *not*—it will resist this law of history" (Restad 2019/20, 67, emphasis in original).

The only acknowledged threat to US greatness is China's rise—particularly its "unfair" trade policy. Several speeches by Trump and Obama attested to the fact that this threat was seen as particularly persistent and dangerous. Obama (2015), for example, concluded: "We should level the playing field". Trump, moreover, said: "We will no longer tolerate such abuse. We will not allow our workers to be victimized, our companies to be cheated, and our wealth to be plundered and transferred. America will never apologize for protecting its citizens" (Trump 2018b). This resembles more a narrative of insult, and in Trump's case it was intertwined with and legitimized the imposition of US tariffs on Chinese products in 2018, setting off a "trade war." The debate about how to handle relations with China draws on a more institutionalized narrative, according to which any conciliatory gesture vis-à-vis China is seen as "appeasement" and "showing signs of weakness" (Pan 2012, 94).

Even more aggressive measures could have been taken, however, given that US collective narcissism has been represented as "armed and dangerous" (Stam and Shohat 2007, 61). A case in point is the response to 9/11—which was a particularly public threat to the US self. Some observers explained the attack as "the product of two decades of American weakness … we came to be seen as a 'weak horse'" (Croft 2006, 99). President Bush, however, flatly refuted the notion of US weakness: "Our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness. They were as wrong as they are evil" (Bush 2002). Hence, the "War on Terror" and the invasion of Iraq might be interpreted as measures not just to defeat indistinct enemies, but more importantly to establish beyond reasonable doubt that US identity was premised on greatness. Meanwhile, prominent figures in the Bush administration believed that diplomacy was "indicative of weakness" and equated it with "appeasement" (Schonberg 2009, 234). This is arguably why states that did not unequivocally support the wars were met with suspicion and bitterness (Croft 2006, 189–90) and why dissenting views within the United States were demonized as anti-American and as "giving comfort to America's enemies" (Hutcheson et al. 2004, 47).

The People's Republic of China

In their speeches in 2006–2020, Chinese leaders reproduced narratives of pride in China's greatness, revolving significantly around "the glories of Chinese civilization" (Hu 2008). For example, President Xi Jinping stated: "The Chinese people are great people, the Chinese nation is a great nation, and Chinese civilization is a great civilization" (Xi 2019; see also Callahan 2010; Schneider 2018). Another narrative of pride revolved around China's economic development over the past forty years or more, through which China has been transformed "from a closed, backward and poor country with a weak foundation" (Wang 2019). Speeches detailed achievements of all kinds and portrayed them as a "miracle" (Wang 2019), as bringing "infinite pride to every son and daughter of the Chinese nation" and as "the marvel of the world" (Xi 2019).

However, the latter narrative in particular is not easily disentangled from one of shame, which instills the notion that "national rejuvenation" is incomplete and remains partly a dream—as in Xi's "Chinese Dream" slogan from 2012 to 2013. Underlying the agenda of "national renewal" is a highly institutionalized narrative of "national humiliation," according to which China was victimized at the hands of colonial powers in the ninetieth and twentieth centuries (Deng 2008, 4; Callahan 2010, 14). In Xi's (2017b) words, China was "an abyss of poverty and weakness." Hutchison (2016, 226) notes also that shame intertwines with pride so that victimization and suffering serve as a "badge of honor" for the Chinese people.

Leaders have thus continued to stress that China is a "developing country" (Xi 2020c), where development is "unbalanced and inadequate" (Xi 2017c), and which faces severe social, legal, ethical, and security problems. The notion that China remains inferior or backward in comparison to the West, in particular, motivates continued "domestic reforms to overcome China's weaknesses in the political, social, economic, technological, and military arenas" (Deng 2008, 66). Moreover, some of China's achievements—notably, its hosting of mega events—have been narrated as "a way of curing China's national weakness" (Callahan 2010, 8) and crafting "its image as a strong nation" (Pu 2017, 145). Meanwhile, speeches by senior leaders have displayed a clear sense of entitlement: Although China's international status is yet to be fully restored, the country will eventually be in a position to advance "the noble cause of peace and development for humanity" (Xi 2019). Since becoming president in 2013, Xi has narrated the Belt and Road Initiative as just such an initiative (Xi 2018).

Since a narrative of shame is strong in China, the country resembles a vulnerable narcissist more than a grandiose one. In that sense, Chinese leaders would also be more prone to craft a narrative of insult should they perceive a lack of outside recognition for the country's various achievements. A narrative of insult has indeed been activated particularly around Western attempts to obstruct China's rise and when suffering and humiliation are depicted as the negative consequences of Western and Japanese colonialism and imperialism. The slogan "the backward will be beaten" carries the lesson not only that China must continue to pursue self-betterment in all areas, *but also* that it must remain vigilant regarding the intentions and actions of external powers that take every opportunity to weaken China (Wang 2020). Similarly, narratives on the need to "cleanse" humiliation legitimize militarization and military buildup *and* underpin calls for revenge (Callahan 2010, 198–205). Shambaugh (2011, 12) notes that many Chinese realists have strong grievances regarding "China's long period of weakness and believe that now that China is strong, it should retaliate" against those states that kept China in a subordinate position. Speeches by senior leaders feature narratives of insult revolving primarily around Hong Kong, Taiwan, and some sensitive aspects of relations with Japan and the United States (e.g., Xi 2017a). These narratives have yet to intertwine with foreign aggression, but some have involved the threat of force and/or legitimized domestic repression and violence against those construed as traitors for weakening China.

From the start, Xi has portrayed reunification with Taiwan as the most important step toward overcoming China's past weakness and achieving the greatness it is entitled to: "The Taiwan question originated from national weakness and disorder, and will definitely end with national rejuvenation" (*New China* 2019). He continued: "We make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means. This does not target compatriots in Taiwan, but the interference of external forces and the very small number of 'Taiwan independence' separatists and their activities" (*New China* 2019).

The relationship with Japan has also often been the object of narratives of insult. A case in point is the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, especially Japan's nationalization of three islands in 2012. A Chinese statement at the time noted: "Long gone are the days when the Chinese nation was subject to bullying and humiliation from others. The Chinese government will not sit idly by watching its territorial sovereignty being infringed upon" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2012). While armed conflict did not break out on that occasion, Chinese vessels increased their presence in the disputed area. In addition, nationwide protests erupted within China and Japanese-run factories were targeted and attacked along with anything and anyone displaying even the smallest and vaguest association with Japan. For example, a Chinese national received serious head injuries during a riot for driving a Japanese car (Schneider 2018; Hagström and Pan 2020).

On a more general note, Suzuki (2014, 645) finds that slightly contradictory consensuses have emerged among Chinese analysts: China should avoid "getting embroiled in major wars with other great powers," on the one hand, while beginning to "act as a 'great power'," on the other. At the very least, China's performance in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937–1945) and the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (Korean War) (1950–1953) have often been construed as helping to wash away humiliation, falsify the notion that China was "the sick man of East Asia," and demonstrate "the position of new China as a great nation" (Xi 2020b; see also Xi 2020a). The implication is that war can be seen as a feasible strategy for refuting the notion that China is weak and for restoring China's greatness.

Conclusions

This article departs from the observation that self-representations of weakness coexist with self-representations of greatness in competing identity narratives in several great powers. It argues that this is puzzling for OSS scholarship, which assumes that state identities emerge through stabilizing narratives that strive for consistency and coherence. The article contributes by theorizing why, how, and with what implications self-representations of weakness and greatness intersect in great power narratives. First, it argues that, while seemingly contradictory, self-representations of weakness and greatness are co-constituted. Second, the article revisits a neglected discussion in Giddens (1991) to contend that the intersecting of these self-representations and their associated feelings of shame and pride are evidence of narcissism rather than self-reflexivity. Third, drawing on psychological research on narcissism, the article contributes by developing the narrative forms of shame, pride, denial, and insult, through which seemingly conflicting self-representations and complex feelings are mediated with different implications for great power action. Regardless of which narrative form predominates, however, the fear of weakness is only temporarily dealt with and cannot be completely overcome.

The article illustrates the relevance of this theorization by analyzing the speeches of political leaders in the United States and China in 2006–2020. The extent to which these speeches mediate notions of each respective great power self's greatness *and* weakness is striking. There are also clear narrative tendencies in each state that transcend individual leaders/speakers. In the United States, narratives of pride in US greatness predominate, but narratives of denial and insult have also been reproduced in attempts to eliminate feelings of fear and shame related to weakness and restore feelings of pride in greatness. While these narrative tendencies make the United States resemble a grandiose narcissist, Chinese leaders narrate more in line with vulnerable narcissism. Hence, while they tell a narrative of pride in China's rise, this is almost inseparable from narratives of shame and insult related to national humiliation. The lesson is that China must continue to strive for self-betterment (shame) while also remaining vigilant against foreign powers that might seek to weaken it again (insult). Narratives

of insult are most consequential for international politics in the sense that they can be a harbinger of aggression and conflict. However, they can also enable and motivate domestic repression, as occurred in China after Japan's nationalization of disputed territory in 2012 and in the United States after 9/11.

Great powers are unique in the sense that their identity construction is premised on *generalized* greatness. However, self-representations of weakness and greatness seem to intersect in the autobiographical narratives of smaller states too, albeit around more isolated traits that are central to their self-identification and ontological security-seeking. For example, the Finnish sense of greatness—being a "sports superpower" (Laine 2006, 69) and an honest skiing nation—was threatened by a doping scandal in 2001. Fear of weakness and concomitant shame activated, and were activated by, widespread feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis other European states. These were mediated in a narrative of shame and legitimized measures intended to resurrect the erstwhile identity (Laine 2006). Moreover, narratives about how different states have handled the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have resorted to similar narcissistic identity construction and ontological security-seeking. Hence, they have tended to vacillate between euphoric assertions that the state has handled COVID-19 very well—perhaps the best in the world—and gloomy characterizations of total failure. While narcissistic identity construction and ontological security-seeking may not be limited to self-identified great powers, future research will have to theorize how the self-identification and ontological security-seeking of smaller states differ from those of great powers. For instance, a narrative of insult may not be as tied up with belligerence in smaller states, since war-making is not as deeply ingrained in their identity construction and they typically have less military capability at their disposal.

Future research also needs to theorize with greater precision why certain narrative forms come to dominate public discourse, how they legitimize one action rather than another, and also how narrative forms mutate. It should continue to theorize why and how different narcissistic narratives become consequential in international politics. We have established that both vulnerable and grandiose narcissists can embark on aggression when they feel insulted. While the two forms of narcissism are not fully distinct, future IR research should try to disentangle whether and how the two pathways differ in the context of international politics, either through a deeper engagement with narcissism theory or inductively by conducting more thorough empirical analysis.

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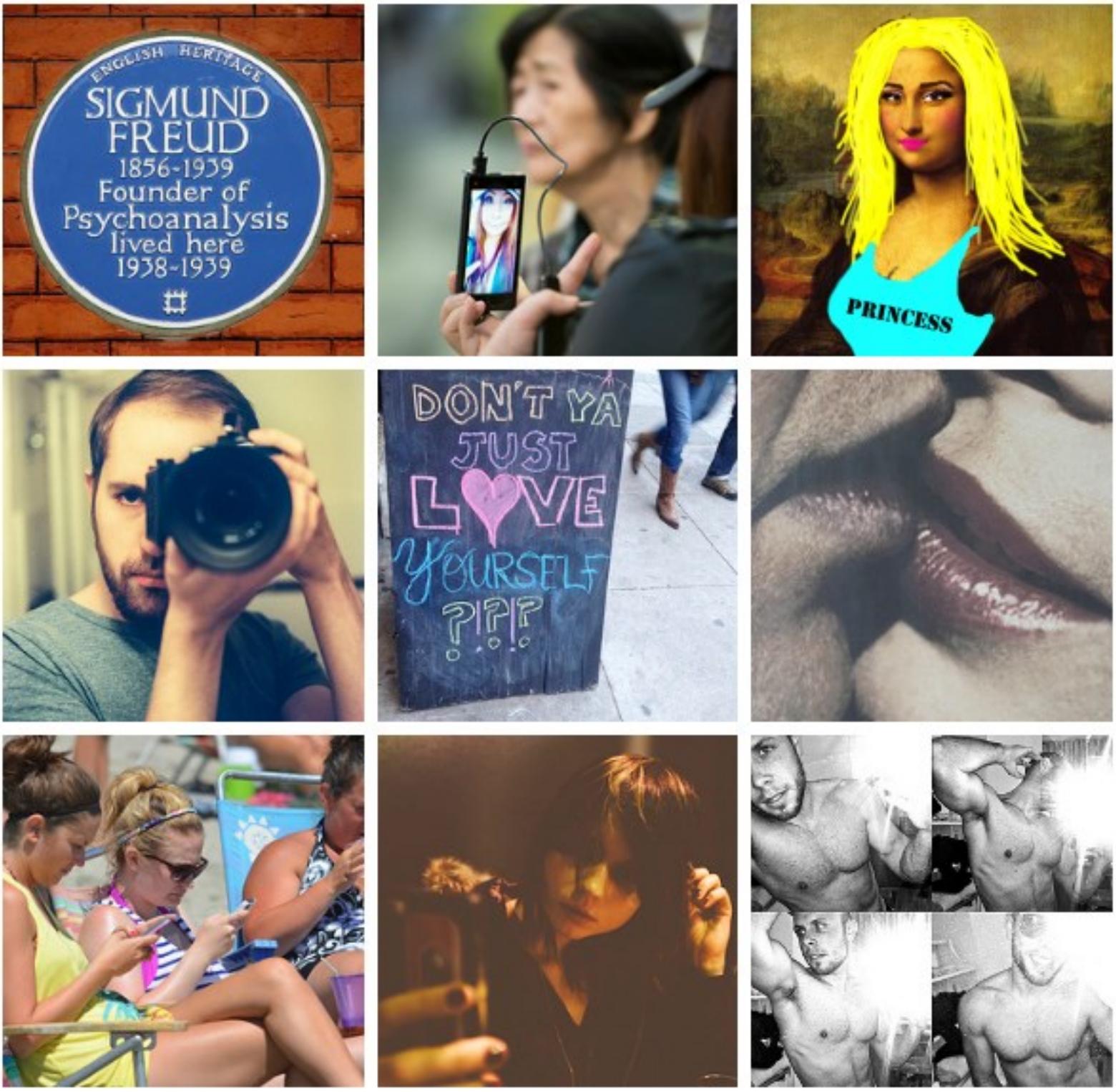
LSE Review of Books

Sex and Psychopaths

Celebrating 100 years of Freud's *On Narcissism*



LSE Public Policy Group

LSE Review of Books

Sex and Psychopaths

Celebrating 100 years of Freud's *On Narcissism*

This e-book will look at how we can understand the apparent growth in narcissism and withdrawals from intimacy in a digital age. From the impact of Facebook and online porn on sex, to whether we're losing the capacity to be close to the people we work with. Join us to explore whether we're all turning into narcissists or whether we can do something to salvage intimacy with other people.

This e-book is released to coincide with the LSE Review of Books event of the same name at the LSE Literary Festival 2014. Speakers include Marianna Fotaki, Professor of Business Ethics at Warwick Business School; Yiannis Gabriel, Professor of Organizational Theory at the University of Bath; Steve Fuller, Auguste Comte Professor of Social Epistemology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick; David Morgan, a Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society; and Elizabeth Cotton, the founding director of The Resilience Space and the Surviving Work Library. A podcast of the event will be available in the days after the event.

The LSE's 6th Annual Literary Festival will explore the distinctive qualities of the social sciences' and the arts' approaches to understanding the world around us with a programme of talks, readings, panel discussions and film screenings, as well as creative writing workshops and children's events. The Festival runs from 24th February to 1st March 2014, under the theme 'Reflections'. Browse the full LSE Space for Thought Literary Festival programme here.

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Contents

Narcissism and perversion in public policy

Narcissism is increasingly being observed among management and political elites. Recognising how it underpins policy making and how it becomes increasingly prevalent in socially destructive ways is key to re-engaging citizens with the political process, writes ***Marianna Fotaki****.*

Derived from the ancient Greek myth of a beautiful youth Narcissus who died through falling in love with his own image, the term narcissism - coined by Sigmund Freud - has travelled widely in the past one hundred years, shaping popular culture, business and public policy.

Psychoanalytic ideas present an important framework for understanding the rise of the culture of narcissism in work, management and organisational settings. Narcissism is applied to individuals who are incapable of empathy, unable to relate to and totally unaware of other people's needs, or even their existence. Under growing uncertainty and the ruthless striving for innovation that characterises late capitalism, it is increasingly observed in business leadership. In 2000 Michael Maccoby argued that narcissists are good news for companies, because they have passion and dare to break new ground.

But even productive narcissists are often dangerous as they are divorced from the consequences of their judgements and actions, whenever these do not affect them directly. They will strive at any cost to avoid painful realisations of failure that could tarnish their own image and will only listen to information they seek to hear, failing to learn from others. Popular portrayals of corporate figures as 'psychopaths' who unscrupulously and skilfully manoeuvre their way to the highest rungs of the social ladder are presented as fundamentally different from the rest of humanity. However, this is a misconception obscuring the pervasiveness of narcissism and mechanisms that enable it.

Susan Long has persuasively argued that whole societies may be caught in a state of pathological perversion whenever instrumentality overrides relationality – that is, whenever narcissism becomes dominant, other people (or the whole groups of other people) are seen not as others, like oneself, but as objects to be used. For instance, when markets are seen as anonymous 'virtual' structures, employees may be seen and treated as exploitable commodities. Such behaviours are pathologically perverse in that people disavow their knowledge of the situations they create through narcissistic processes.

Public policies have been subject to these pathological perversions. Separating risk from responsibility in the financial sector was not merely about creating perverse incentives enabling people to engage in greed through financial bubbles that were bound to burst, but about disengaging policy makers from the all too predictable consequences of such policies.

Another example is the dramatic shift in public policy that has occurred in Europe where instead of ensuring liveable wages, access to affordable health care, public education and a clean environment, there is an increasing preoccupation with how to unleash the alleged desire of citizens to enact their preferences of how public services should be provided. The justification is that citizens want to choose between different providers to ensure that they get the best quality. However, at least in health care services, this is not borne out by the evidence. In reality, the logic of consumerist choice valorises individualism and narcissistic self-gratification by undermining the institutions created to promote public interest. The re-modelling of the public organisations as 'efficient' (read flexible and dispensable) business units, the widespread privatisation of the Commons and the diminution of the value of the public good are just a few of the means by which this have been achieved.

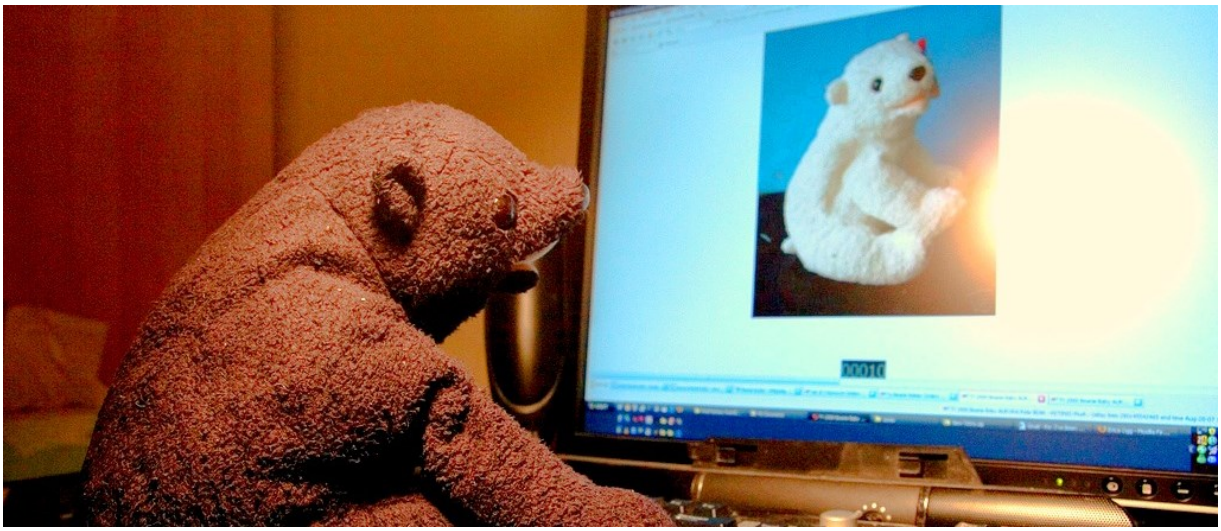
We see the effects of these changes in the NHS: imposing a market ethos on health care staff, and a focus on indicators and targets, has led to the distortion of care. Studies have shown the long term reality of the suffering, dependence and vulnerability of mentally ill patients is disavowed, and the complexities of managing those in psychological distress are systematically evaded. It is replaced by work intensification and demands on the overworked front line staff to show more compassion. Equally, the needs of patients for relational aspects of care are ignored as they do not fit with the conveyer-belt model of services provided in 10-minute slots by GPs in England.

The institutionalisation and systemic sanctioning of such practices involving instrumentality, disregard for sociality and relational ties, and pathological splitting from one's own actions - all originating in individual narcissistic processes - constitute a state of pathological perversion on a societal level. The increasing narcissism among management and political elites is also enabled by the public at large, who may be projecting on to them their own desire for power while splitting off ambivalent feelings emerging from this desire. The progressive marketisation of public services illustrates both the insensitivity of policy makers to the impact of their policies on those who are less able to benefit from them (i.e. the less affluent and less-well educated citizens) but also in appealing to the narcissism of voters. Thus the issue of how much choice is possible and what are the inevitable trade-offs involved (between choice and equity or quality and efficiency in public health systems) is sidestepped by politicians and their constituencies.

A narcissistic denial of reality deflects the citizens' attention from a much needed social critique. Understanding how narcissism underpins policy making, and how it becomes increasingly prevalent in socially destructive ways of managing employees and manipulating the public, is therefore a necessary first step towards re-engaging with the political process.

We live in a narcissistic society where random acts of intimacy with real people are pointless and romance is dead

*Online contact is often dressed up in the language of love but much of it is actually fully devoid of human feeling, writes **Elizabeth Cotton**. Online technologies also get us into bad narcissistic habits. The result: we live in a narcissistic society where random acts of intimacy with real people are pointless and romance is dead.*



Romance takes a real pounding in a recession, with divorce going up by nearly 5% since 2008 and a rise in domestic violence and family break-up. Tell us something we don't know? Actually relationships in a time of recession are a complex business, reeling from the impact of public policy on family incomes to the massive rise in availability of online porn, there's something about our collective decline in intimacy that requires us to dig deep.

It's 100 years since Freud wrote *On Narcissism*, which over time has become the most written about idea in psychoanalysis. Tempting as it is to blame the narcissists for this (seriously what do you think about me?), one of the reasons might be the hold that narcissism has on our culture. From the narcissism of the ego-ideals we present through social media to the collective perversion of NHS privatisation – one way or another, narcissism is a dimension of ordinary life.

Some of us stare open mouthed at our corporate culture which celebrates megalomania and magic solutions and a public policy of anti-vulnerability promoting superheroes and self -sufficiency. Cut, cut, cut. This is narcissism as a perversion of love, a world of leaders that can only love the things that they control and withdraw their interest from the external world to the internal one. Me, me, me.

Despite being a big fan of anything that puts people in contact with each other, online technologies can indeed get us into bad narcissistic habits by helping us withdraw from the troublesome activity of having to rub along other separate and independent human beings. The technology we use at work and play is potentially a space where these perverse ideals can be pursued offering a virtual exit from human neediness and insecurity. One third of all US divorces cite Facebook activity and 50 per cent of baby boomers regularly sleep next to

their smart phones. Intimacy gets replaced by shoes or the hairless body of the online porn star. I am my facebook profile.

Online contact is often dressed up in the language of love – human emotion and therapy speak peppering public engagement and policy consultations. Much of it is actually fully devoid of human feeling, summed up in the image of political leaders doing a selfie at Mandela's funeral. A narcissistic society where instrumentality rules over relationality creating a world of haves and have nots, omnipotence and a disdain for human life and the vulnerability and pain that this actually involves. This is a narcissistic world where random acts of intimacy with real people are pointless, and romance is dead.

Tempting as it is to project the problem of intimacy into our un(self)conscious attempts to virtually link-in, all that the technology does is concretise one of the many psychic retreats we're all tempted to take when it comes to relationships. Whatever our status, there exists a narcissistic choice of love objects; ourselves and our ideals or what Freud called anaclitic love, based on intimacy with someone different and separate from us.

Narcissus mistook his own reflection for a lost love and got locked in a matching-anorak-co-dependency-situation with someone that wasn't really there. Click here for your perfect partner, a 99% match, or click here for chemistry and the messy business of relations with other people. Narcissus stopped the crushing pain of loneliness by staring at his own reflection and in the process starved, his needs left untouched without any intercourse with life.

In a profoundly Scandinavian response, the Norwegian government this week adopted a policy of Date Nights. Yup, a policy to encourage fledgling narcissists to go out and date. No generational slander here because despite the research on the impact of technology on the Millennials it turns out that the group most vulnerable to narcissistic withdrawals are the 40-44 year olds. That sentence alone should remind us of the real value of actual data and public policy that uses it.

Has Freud got it all wrong about narcissism?

Milena Stateva *believes that in the modern world Narcissus would flourish and not perish, and would survive by becoming a groupie to the cult of the individual. It is time we re-examined Freud's ideas and look again at how we imagine love and the essential notions connected with being human.*

Narcissism has ended up boxed in a clinical corner - a quick Google search returns thousands of entries to help us recognise the narcissist next to us and quantify the perils of living with them. And yet narcissism as a clinical category is no longer a tragic condition of Greek mythology but characterised as a pathetic social state pathologising life in an individualistic society and lumping us all in together. We have all become psychopaths.

The real Narcissus of today would not die, drown or commit suicide while staring forever at their physicality. Rather he or she escapes in the comfort of a new type of tribalism that provides them with the in-group admiration they are longing for. The Narcissus of today still cannot fall in love with anything he perceives uglier than himself – the under-dog or the different — and instead survives by becoming a groupie to the cult of the individual. Narcissism has become a metaphor for the great contemporary difficulty to exercise the very human capacity to experience and show recognition when faced with the other, the simple yet complicated thing we call 'love'.

The turbulent, high-speed times in which we live (or the previous times that got us here) are a little excuse for the overwhelming focus on physicality that comes with the demands for productivity and efficiency today. Rather, the contemporary pace and turmoil are a

result of these very demands for productivity and efficiency paired with an all-pervading instrumentality, an invasion of business and scientific rationality and pathological busyness that serves to keep our all too human vulnerability at bay.

We, and our work and life collaborators, are forced to be able to quickly sell - and to constantly do so - each and every part of our selves and ways of interacting, behaving and living. I am consciously not using 'relating, acting and being' even though these verbs more appropriately describe what I wish we were able to do – but they do not sell very well. The impoverishment of selves, relationships and work caused by isolating art, love, physical activity and political action, empathy, and enjoyment to battery-charging compartments in time and space suffocates desire and reduces it to what Zygmunt Bauman calls a series of wishes.

Love then suffers the burden of consumerism and the effects of processes that are divorcing it from everyday life – thus carefully cultivating a Narcissist in each one of us. An unprecedented process of intensification and even turmoil liquidifies our experience of living in a late modern world to produce a separate socio-erotic sphere that serves no other function but to help people go on in their otherwise frustrating days (see also Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs, 1986; Hochschild, 2003).

This new, rather narcissistic modernity, Bauman says, calls for a re-examination of the 'basic concepts around which the orthodox narratives of the human condition tend to be wrapped': emancipation, individuality, time/space, work and community. It is difficult, if not impossible, to think of love as an emancipatory and enriching power in the contemporary context: of re-defined freedom that masks dependency, of excessive individualism, growing inequalities, intensified time/space (and - consequently - re-drawn boundaries), and not least relationships with work that take over personal life. All this is complemented by a declining sense of community at the expense of a growing, rather primitive, tribalism – the wish to be one with everything, but everything that is like us and serves us well.

Love, Bauman warns us, divorced from caring and desire, is replaced by excessive sexuality which then functions as a way to escape the limitations and to deny the mortality of the body rather than to express love. Consequently, sexuality becomes a centre of tension and conflict as it becomes in fact a focal point for society to control and regulate by taking over people's displaced attempt to control their own lives and deaths.

In such a context love itself can be easily reduced to an instrumental self-directed tool, but this context can also provide a platform for experimenting with new ways of feeling and doing love. This hope has been expressed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim as long ago as in 1995 – one can only hope with them that this is what the current generations are doing.

Psychoanalysis, especially its practice-orientation informed by object relations theory, is one of the few surviving streams in social studies in which it is not only acceptable to speak of love in a rigorous way, but it can be seen as a methodology promoting the systematic and conscious application of love. Yet, psychoanalysis itself seems to suffer the limitations of staring at itself and pairing with the quick fixes of clinical categories rather than engaging in a dialogue with disciplines that are looking more at the world around the individual.

So perhaps Freud after all has got it all wrong about narcissism, with a capital N or not?

Between 1931 and 1932 Freud and Einstein exchanged letters in which they were exploring Freud's views on what would make the overwhelming power of aggressive and destructive instincts disappear from the net of social and political relations. Freud was very pessimistic about the potential of overcoming this aspect of human nature unless strengthening the countervailing powers of love. Perhaps, had he had the time, his work would have gone in a rather different direction, one that we may look to pursue 100 years later.

Digitalia

Who amongst our leaders would have been able to win a place in history without having lived, perhaps even having "acted out" a substantial portion of the narcissistic drive inherent in his or her own personality? ***Ross A. Lazar*** *discusses how narcissism can play an important but potentially dangerous role in leadership.*

Ever since Narcissus spurned Echo's love, preferring to gaze at himself through his own reflection in the still waters of a pool in the absence of a computer screen or smartphone, the notion that we can "fall in love" with ourselves and prefer the pursuit of such self-love rather than enter into intimate relationships with others has been our guilty secret. Our culture has developed an endless proliferation of forms of narcissistic life styles, relationships, forms of social and commercial activity, literature, music, art, science and religion, and continues to do so – perhaps even more than ever.

Since Freud published his celebrated study of narcissism, the psycho-analytic, philosophical and sociological world has been preoccupied with classifying the many and varied forms of narcissism which have come to characterize so much of modern life. Wikipedia lists no less than at least 15 different forms of narcissism; from co-dependency to corporate narcissism backed up by scientific literature and tick box questionnaires.

> “According to recent cultural criticism, Narcissus has replaced Oedipus as the myth of our time. Narcissism is now seen to be at the root of everything from the ill-fated romance with violent revolution to the enthralled mass consumption of state-of-the-art products and the ‘lifestyles of the rich and famous’."
> - Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*

Even Wikipedia digs deep to explain our cultural relationship with narcissism.

But, does that perhaps even imply that there may be *nothing* in the modern world that is not in some sense a product of our infatuation with ourselves? Is there such a thing as a

modern leader, whether in the political, the commercial, the scientific, the artistic or the religious sphere, who is *not* preoccupied with his or her own narcissistic need to dominate, to be the centre of attention, to be the one and only decider, dictator and evaluator of how things are to be? Thank goodness for Narcissists! Whatever would we do without them?!

Who amongst our leaders would have been able to win a place in history without having lived, perhaps even having "acted out" a substantial portion of the narcissistic drive inherent in his or her own personality? What Pharaoh or Holy Roman Emperor could have survived neighbours without it or ruled over the of the rightness of his actions and the legitimacy of his aims. And as for the power of narcissistic women, starting with Eve herself, Cleopatra, Jeanne d'Arc, Marie Antoinette, right up to Angela Merkel (although she succeeds in hiding it very well), it is to a great extent their extraordinarily narcissistic personality structures that motivate them to be who they are, to do what they do.

In the vast field of leadership literature, narcissistic types of leadership are found to be a common form of leadership style, whether healthy or destructive for the group being led. A study published in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* suggests that when a group is without a leader, you can often count on a narcissist to take charge with people who score high in narcissism tending to take control of leaderless groups, conforming with Bion's theories of leadership and group dynamics.

Without living out that aspect of their personalities, who in his right mind would dare to take on the running of a huge multinational corporation, take responsibility for billions of dollars' worth of other peoples' money, make blockbuster films, or even stand in front of a philharmonic orchestra, not to mention before an army of thousands of troops or a nation or international body representing millions of people. Who could bear the responsibility of supplying the world with enough water, energy or peace to guarantee future survival?

Narcissistic states of mind in this sense are characterized by feelings of greed, selfish self-centeredness, lack of concern for the "Other" and ruthless pursuit of "what's good for Number One" (so called "me-ness"). In Kleinian terms, this state of mind can be seen as a more or less extreme lack of development of the "depressive position" or Winnicott's "position of concern". What should bother us about this link is whether narcissistic leadership will or *must* ultimately cause the breakdown of civilization altogether. Not merely the endless wars and genocidal acts which every day destroy a bit more of our hard-won civilization, but the world's persistent lack of concern for the fate of the environment is probably the clearest evidence for this globally suicidal attitude.

Question: If the all-powerful narcissists amongst us are running the world into Oblivion what do the rest of us do while waiting for Armageddon?

Answer: 1.2 billion of us join Facebook!

For it is not Moses whom we follow, in hopes of his leading us into the Promised Land; not Alexander the Great, nor Martin Luther, George Washington, Napoleon or Karl Marx. Instead we follow the lead of a latter day Pied Piper who has offered us a new kind of digital "reflecting pool" through which to indulge our navel-gazing. All because a pimply, insecure, socially incompetent 18-year old computer nerd promised us Friendship, Beauty, Attention, Admiration and perhaps even Love (or some substitute for it), if only we reveal ourselves,

strip ourselves digitally naked for all to see.

While we blindly wade through his algorithms, he and his cohorts laugh all the way to the bank. We, meanwhile, are left alone to lose ourselves in the contemplation of our and all our so-called "friends’" digital navels.

Destroying the Knowledge of Love

David Morgan *argues that the world opposed to the earth is a man made construction, but in the modern era there are so many distractions from our internal or emotional world, that turning away from deep involvement has reached epidemic proportions.*

We are buried beneath the weight of information, where quantity is confused with knowledge. This is a narcissistic economy where wealth means happiness; a world where a dog made $12 million last year while a farmer producing basic food stuffs made £20,000.

> *Sometimes we are just monkeys with money and guns*
> - Tom Waits

According to Hannah Arendt, the world (as opposed to the earth), is something man-made. It is planned out in our heads and composed by our manual labour. But without deep human relatedness, it is just a static "heap of things"; a hardened reality without value is just as mindless as running around while remaining in the same place.

What lends pliability to reality in all its complexity - as opposed to rigidity and myopic thinking - she claims, as Freud did decades earlier, is taking the time to talk with one another without any predetermined purpose. Without hurrying from one topic to another, without seeking solutions, and without skirting the real difficulty of actually communicating with one another. It is here that the continuing value of Freud's discovery, creating mental space with another, asserts itself.

In a digital age there are so many distractions from our internal or emotional world, that turning away from deep involvement has reached epidemic proportions. A market economy providing entertainments, where the commodification of human experience is fast replacing human attachment, characterised by the creation of mechanical Geishas, an alternative to a sexual woman.

Some experiences have been so painful that human contact and love is a real threat to whatever defensive structures people have been able to develop. The terror of the abyss is always with them and analysis can threaten exposure to this frightening place.

This experience is captured in Louis MacNeice's poem 'Autobiography' (see p.14) about the frightened child abandoned in the night. The refrain "Come back early or never come", is one of wounded ultimatum. In this way it is a lullaby thrown into reverse and represents the

resignation which a child might feel when faced with overwhelming trauma occurring too early for its level of cognitive development and understanding. These situations may create the necessity in some people to fall back on their own process as is the case in narcissism. Like the deprived child rescued from an earthquake who has kept himself company by staring at his own hand, this investment of part of oneself or something in one's control provides retreat that is then difficult to leave.

At these times a turning away from needing the other in the face of life and death anxieties is a reasonable solution, a narcissistic withdrawal into the fantasy of omnipotence. These issues manifest in the consulting room as traumatised patients arrive looking for quick fixes and short term treatments. This puts unrealistic pressures on the therapist to either collude, as with current fashionable treatments, or to provide the first frightening experiences of unstructured thought in what might have been a world dedicated entirely to avoidance.

In trying to understand the difficulties of managing these issues with patients it is helpful to draw on Roger Money Kyrle's *Facts of Life*. He wrote that he has found it useful to consider three core facts of life which are; "the recognition of the dependency, the recognition of the parents' intercourse as a creative act, and the recognition of the inevitability of time and ultimately death" (Money Kyrle, 1971: 30). He went on to say about this third 'fact' that "to fear death is not the same as to recognise its inevitability, which is a fact forced on us much against our will by the repeated experience that no good (or bad) experience can ever last forever—a fact perhaps never fully accepted" (1971: 62).

As fundamental schematics of the human experience, these 'facts' belong to us all, not just our patients. As Money Kyrle argues, we all work unconsciously to distort or blunt our acceptance of these profound human experiences but that traumatic events may destine some of us unconsciously to devote all our efforts to subvert the recognition of these facts. This narcissistic withdrawal becomes an activity in place of living.

My work as a clinician leads me to believe that it is the process of the analyst to bear these facts whilst being bombarded with our patients' fear of death and resistance and then to work so that that the patient may begin to digest this and a taking in of reality.

As analysts we too are defended against the painful recognition of these facts, which are interrelated. However poor our experiences of early life may have been, we must all have had some experience of nurturing and we are all the products of a procreative union that made us but inevitably excluded us. In psychoanalytic terms we have all lost the breast and struggle to re-find it in life just as we all fear exclusion and ultimately the exclusion that comes through death.

It is only perhaps as we grope our way to understanding that good and nurturing experiences are all transient in reality but must be kept alive psychically inside our minds that any of us are able to experience hope for ourselves and others.

This mature development is essential if human relationships with all their pitfalls, pain and joy are not to be circumvented for what Hannah Arendt describes as man-made distractions with all of their narcissistic gratification and limitations.

'Autobiography' by Louis MacNeice

In my childhood trees were green
And there was plenty to be seen.
Come back early or never come.

My father made the walls resound,
He wore his collar the wrong way round.
Come back early or never come.

My mother wore a yellow dress;
Gentle, gently, gentleness.
Come back early or never come.

When I was five the black dreams came;
Nothing after was quite the same.
Come back early or never come.

The dark was talking to the dead;
The lamp was dark beside my bed.
Come back early or never come.

When I woke they did not care;
Nobody, nobody was there.
Come back early or never come.

When my silent terror cried,
Nobody, nobody replied.
Come back early or never come.

I got up; the chilly sun
Saw me walk away alone.
Come back early or never come

The tale of Narcissus as a lesson in the definition of personhood

The main take-home point of the tale of Narcissus is that we should not reject qualities that we esteem so highly in ourselves when they are found in others, simply because they do not come from us writes ***Steve Fuller.***

The most famous rendition of the tale of Narcissus appears as an invention in the great Latin love epic, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In this version there are two main characters, Narcissus, an accomplished hunter, and Echo, a fluent and witty nymph whom a jealous Hera, wife of Zeus, consigns to a life of speaking only by repeating the final lines of whomever she encounters; hence, the meaning of 'echo'. After having been so cursed, Echo falls in love with Narcissus, who ends up being frightened away by her simple repetition of what he says. However, the goddess of revenge, Nemesis, deems Narcissus' response to be unfair, cursing him to fall in love with his reflected image that he accidentally espies upon a lake. Transfixed for the rest of his life by his image as an object of fascination, Narcissus only realizes its illusory character just before he is about to die.

In contemporary debates over personhood – in particular, its extension to non-humans – the main take-home point of this tale is that we should not reject qualities that we esteem so highly in ourselves when they are found in others, simply because they do not come from us. In Ovid's tale, Echo is doubly cursed – first by Hera, who recoils when Echo challenges her verbal authority, and then by Narcissus, who recoils when Echo imitates his verbal authority. Perhaps the most natural response to this narrative premise in our times is to see Echo as the archetypal 'modern woman' who is damned whether she tries to 'get ahead' (*à la* Hera, i.e. at work) or 'stay behind' (*à la* Narcissus, i.e. at home). However, I believe that it is more productive to see the narrative as an implied critique of the association of *authority with uniqueness* – or, as the economists put it with the sort of

insulting clarity that only abstraction can provide, *value with scarcity*.

Neither the value of humanity as such nor our own personal sense of humanity is diminished by recognising humanity in other beings. To be sure, this is much more difficult to achieve in practice than my platitude might suggest. Nevertheless, as the fate of Narcissus illustrates, the cost of not recognising this moral fact is that one falls victim to *self-consumption* – the opposite of the virtue of *self-production*, in which the self is projected to every other thing, thereby rendering it an object of concern. In Ovid's day, the point would have been seen through the lens of Cicero's observation about the Roman general and consul, Pompey: He was a man so in love with himself that he had no rivals. Specifically, Pompey trusted his own judgement to such an extent that he became inflexible in dealing with his opponents over time, which brought about his downfall. In other words, Pompey was so self-enamoured that he failed to see how others were trying to teach him things that could improve his position. In this deep cognitive sense, then, he fell victim to a false sense of self-love, which led him to do things that went against his own self-interest. If 'narcissism' is meant to stand for a pathological condition, then this should be it.

It follows that the antidote for narcissism is a version of *anthropomorphism*, a psychological tendency that has admittedly come under suspicion from a variety of quarters – ranging from evolutionary biology to animal rights activists to the more fashionable quarters of postmodern social theory that fancy the term 'posthuman'. To be sure, if anthropomorphism entailed all the qualities that its opponents suspect, then it would go little way toward addressing the pathology of narcissism. However, when proposed in a relatively positive spirit (e.g. by the 19th century theologian Ludwig Feuerbach, who strongly influenced the early Marx), anthropomorphism is an invitation to universalise one's most esteemed qualities to others who show signs of manifesting them as well. In other words, anthropomorphism requires an abstract identification with others that narcissism precludes. Thus, the anthropomorphist perceives the *prima facie* cogency of another's utterance not as a threat but as a friendly gesture in a world where both are equally legitimate inhabitants and perhaps even share the same ultimate goals. In contrast, narcissists will always think that if what the other person says makes sense, they could have thought of it, which then leads them to disregard the alien utterance as superfluous, if not an artefact, vis-à-vis their own thinking.

In this respect, narcissism is the complementary pathology to what the sociologist W.E.B. DuBois originally identified as 'double consciousness'. In other words, if some subaltern group comes to think of itself as the dominant group sees them (i.e. double consciousness) but tries to gain maximum advantage from that psychic condition, then it invites members of the dominant group to respond with revulsion when a member of the subaltern group appears to match the dominant group's standards (i.e. narcissism). In DuBois' own case, a Black man holding a Ph.D. in the first decade of 20th century America provokes suspicion, if not outright fear and loathing – perhaps not unlike what roboticists dub the 'uncanny valley', whereby humans are taken aback by androids that possess many human-like qualities yet quite clearly do not possess a human nature.

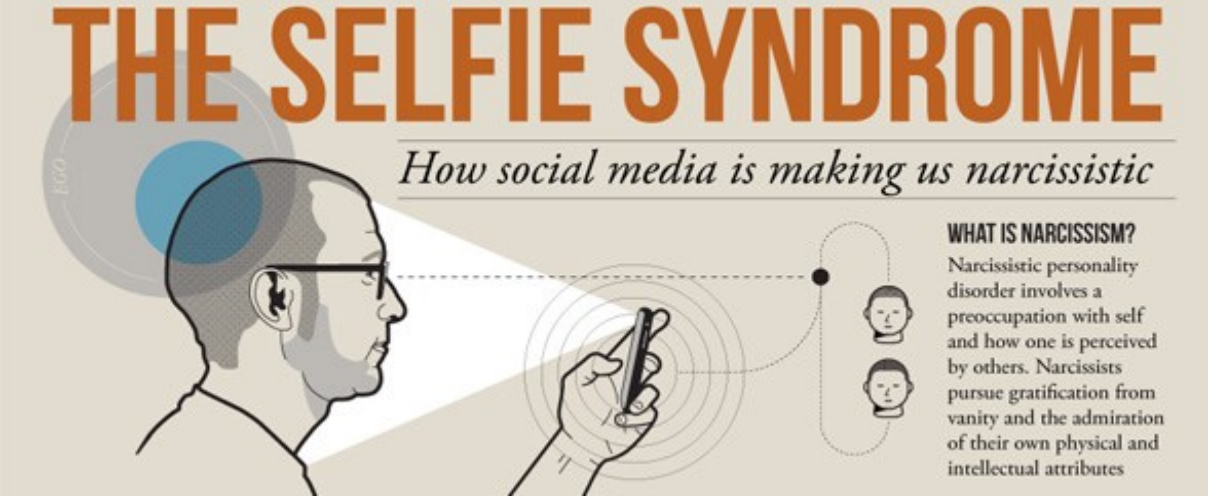
To be sure, the narcissist could have probably come up with whatever statement was uttered by the alien being that caused him or her to recoil as Narcissus did to Echo. Nevertheless, the logical compatibility of 'could have' and 'did not' provides a breeding ground for a sense of common humanity to which the narcissist is insensitive. Put it this

way: The narcissist could never be convinced that another entity – perhaps even a member of *Homo sapiens* – has passed the Turing Test. Alan Turing wanted to know whether machines can think and concluded that the best way to find out was to have a known thinker – a human being – judge the responses to questions from a being whose identity was hidden. Artificial intelligence researchers have treated this test as a challenge for designing computers potentially fit to live as equals with humans. Thus, if the unknown being answers a series of questions to the satisfaction of the intelligent questioner, then that being passes as intelligent, regardless of its material makeup. To be sure, there is the issue of the number and nature of the questions necessary before reaching a judgement, as anyone who has watched the film *Blade Runner* will immediately understand. However, a narcissist could never fairly administer the Turing Test because the very fact that the interrogated being is not oneself would already prejudice the interrogator against the being. In other words, the narcissistic interrogator would interpret every similarity to oneself as a veiled difference that requires further scrutiny, perhaps imagining that he or she could have programmed the scrutinised being.

Now, of course, it may well be that the interrogator could have programmed that being. But should that fact matter in judging the entity's worth as a person on the same terms as oneself? After all, the biological reproduction of *Homo sapiens* has always involved – however crudely and imperfectly – the shaping of offspring in the parents' own image. In this respect, the care lavished on the child is simply an extended opportunity to make the child aware that he or she has been deliberately brought into existence. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, narcissism is normally seen as a deformation of this process. Depending on the analyst you believe, a narcissistic personality results from either too much or too little care lavished on the child during the period when he or she is welcomed as a new member of the human community. In both cases, the empirical connection to the parents matters mainly as a *prima facie* virtue that may become a source of pathology. The non-narcissistic child comes to acquire a sense of self-worth that is comparable to the parents' own, even while realizing his or her own created character. From this perspective, the future looks bright for androids whose sense self is instilled through sustained interaction with their creators who every so often are pleasantly surprised and perhaps even instructed by behaviours emitted by their creations.

Narcissus and the tragic plight of Echoes

Yiannis Gabriel *argues that the narcissism's longevity is due to its flexibility in being able to describe the best and worst aspects of our culture.*



Narcissus has long ceased to be the guarded secret of psychoanalysts or psychiatrists. Google picks up 7,630 items on 'narcissism' in its news search, with delights from "18 signs for diagnosing yourself as a narcissist" to "Narcissism and selfies – don't be ashamed".

We meet Narcissus every day. We meet him on the street, we meet him at work, and we meet him on TV. In fact, we meet many Narcissi, so many that we lose track of them. How then can we be sure that when we see someone looking at their image in a mirror or a computer screen we have met the real Narcissus?

For one thing, Narcissus does not return our look. He is lost in himself. Like his mythical counterpart, he barely registers our existence. In his presence, we become invisible just like Echo, the ancient nymph who fell tragically in love with him and ended up repeating the words of others with no voice of her own.

A culture of narcissism is a culture of echoes, where our 'voices' are just sounds merely reverberating off each other. In this culture, Narcissus does not return our look; he is uninterested in what we have to say. No need for the other's voice.

Why then have we as a culture, like Echo, fallen in love with Narcissus? For there can be little doubt – we have fallen in love with him in contemporary discussions of culture, politics, art, media, consumption, to say nothing of psychology and psychiatry sooner or later all have been drawn to narcissism. Indeed, our love for Narcissus has replaced and supplanted other loves: the love of tragic Oedipus who, like Narcissus, had some difficulties in recognizing himself, the love of the wise Athena, the love of heroic Achilles, even the love of simply beautiful but boring people like Helen and Adonis.

Let us not deceive ourselves. The reason why the concept of narcissism has overtaken virtually every other psychoanalytic idea is not the concept's intrinsic brilliance, though it is that. Rather its success is due to its ability to match nearly anything we like or dislike about ourselves and our culture. Narcissism is popular because it can be flexibly used and abused, responding to any projection, wish and desire.

Unlike concepts like 'democracy', 'justice' and 'art', narcissism is a concept that permits many different meanings with little contest or argument. Ironically, if Narcissus is unwilling to enter into conversations with others, narcissism easily slips into most conversations. Thus Narcissus easily becomes anything we want him to be.

The ancient Greeks who invented Narcissus were undoubtedly a culture of narcissists, something that was to leave us with a rich cultural legacy but was to cost them dear, as Thomas Mann recognised. Theirs was a culture of narcissistic surpluses. Ours is a culture of narcissistic deficits. Theirs was a culture of narcissists, boastful, disputatious and constantly prone to hubris. Ours is a culture of survivors, licking our narcissistic wounds, forever underappreciated and sidestepped. Lost in our impersonal cities and our impersonal workplaces, we seek solace in our equally impersonal shopping malls, our spectacles, our cathedrals of consumption and our pathetic social media self-promotions. As if Photoshop retouching, plastic surgery and an infinite array of beautifying accoutrements will turn us into Narcissus.

But all this is a vain self-delusion – Narcissus needed no audience and relied on no beautifying accoutrements. Freud, who knew his ancient myths well, had read the narcissist to a T. It is not the narcissistic but the erotic type who is constantly dependent on the love, appreciation and approval of others. The narcissist, by contrast, has a proud ego, is capable of original action and thought, and "is independent and not open to intimidation".

Sadly, this is not how we have come to recognize Narcissus today. In seeking to emulate Narcissus we become more like the shrivelled carcass and the subjectless voice of poor Echo.

You and me

The cuts to welfare services also have a profound psychological effect as they attack a communal social structure where, through progressive taxation, the community as whole provides for its members writes ***David Bell.***

The image of Narcissus staring into the pool of water transfixed by his own reflection, a kind of imprisonment in fascination, has an emblematic place in the history of psychoanalysis. In 1914 Freud wrote a complex paper entitled ‘On Narcissism’ which gave the problems of self-love a centrality in our lives, something which we can never completely escape.

Freud saw this self-love as having, and this is typical of psychoanalysis, a strange dual quality. Some degree of self-love is necessary for survival but it is also one of the most powerful sources of resistance to psychological development and the basis of profound disturbance. Later, he was to recognise that narcissism is an important source of human destructiveness, for we all have a natural hatred of everything that is ‘not me’.

The word ‘narcissism’ has of course a number of different meanings and these are all loosely related – we talk of an individual’s ‘narcissism’, certain types of relationship as being predominantly ‘narcissistic’. We also talk of 'narcissistic wounds’, here referring to the intense pain we experience where there is damage to our view of ourselves, most especially when this fall from grace is felt to be visible to others – here the pain is felt as shame and humiliation.

For Freud, idealisation was one of the hallmarks of narcissism. All of us in infancy have a natural tendency to believe ourselves to be the centre of the world— 'His Majesty the Baby' and we have great difficulty in giving up this inflated view of ourselves and accepting our ordinary place in the world. We cling onto this version of ourselves and so it surfaces from time to time in the way we interact with others. In love, we think the object of our love is so perfect, so above criticism, so unlike any other. But this is in reality a remnant of our own narcissism. This perfect object has chosen us as the object of its love. It is true of course that we have to idealise to fall in love at all but then, if the relationship is to survive, we have to be able to give up that idealisation.

In a very poignant piece of writing, toward the end of his 1914 paper, Freud discusses parents' love for their children and suggests that their tendency to idealise their children, to see them as above criticism and immune from the ordinary 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' is, at root, derived from the parents' narcissism. The parent who has had to give up her own infantile narcissism now recovers it vicariously in her child. As the child has a very special attachment to the parent, in a sense is part of the parent, the parent can thus share in the perfection attributed to the baby.

The overly narcissistic person at depth believes himself to be dependent upon no one, to be above ordinary human needs. People with these difficulties are also unable to distinguish ordinary dependence from a kind of helpless invalidism and tend to treat any awareness of ordinary dependence with contempt. Sometimes this manifests itself as contempt for others who are obviously needy, but as often it is awareness of need *in the self* that is the problem, and so it becomes deep self-contempt.

But these are not just characteristics of certain so-called narcissistic individuals. These individuals make manifest what lies more hidden in the rest of us. Our awareness of our own vulnerability is a continuous source of discomfort –it is a universal narcissistic wound. We all have a natural tendency to locate awareness of our ordinary needs in other people – it is *he*, not me, who is in need, it is *she*, not me, who is vulnerable. Unfortunately, this projective system has a drive of its own: as it gathers momentum it acquires contempt, providing the psychological soil for the germination of destructive social processes such as racism or homophobia. Those in extremes of need (such as refugees) are hated not so much for what they *are* but for they *represent* - a case of shooting the messenger because the message he brings, awareness of the extremes of human need, cannot be tolerated.

This comes to the heart of narcissisms anti-development tendencies. All development entails accepting that there is development to do, and more that it never ends - there is no point of arrival. It is predicated on the capacity to accept our vulnerability and dependence upon others all aspects of reality that insult our narcissism.

Freud never tired of pointing out that one of the most important qualities of the human creature, something that distinguishes us from other animals, is the fact of our very long period of infantile dependence. This is both a blessing and a curse. For this prolonged period of dependency is at one and the same time the basis of all human culture and the source of pain (arising from the recognition of our basic helplessness and need for others) that remains part of our being. We are thus left with a deep ambivalence in relation to this dependence, a continual source of discomfort.

Freud used the term 'the narcissism of minor difference' to describe our tendency to exaggerate the difference between ourselves and others, so providing a kind of crazy justification for our hatred of them. That is we have to make the 'other' much more other than they are in order to rationalise the hatred directed towards them.

In his later work on Group Psychology (1921) Freud explored further the relationship of this process to our group life. Man in order to develop needed to form larger groups. We are bound together in groups through affectionate ties to each other and to our leaders. But this cannot be achieved without the suppression of our natural aggression towards each other. This inhibition of violence has a double register: it is both a precondition of the capacity to form groups and the outcome of living in one. However the suppressed aggression will always seek an outlet. 'It is always possible to bind a number of people in love' Freud writes, 'as long as there are others left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness … When once the Apostle Paul had posited universal love between men as the foundation of his Christian community, extreme intolerance on the part of Christendom towards those who remained outside it became the inevitable consequence'. The outsider may be different in only minor ways, but this will suffice.

So, if we accept that humanity is divided in its nature – on the one hand an irreducible narcissistic urge to destroy and on the other a reparative more loving wish towards the other - then we can ask what kind of social structures might act to contain our destructiveness and support the better side of our nature and, on the other hand, what kind of social structures will serve the opposite aim – namely support our narcissism, fan the flames of our destructiveness and obstruct our capacity for a more creative engagement with the world.

The welfare state and other forms of public provision, over and above their economic and political significance, have very profound psychological meaning. They create a communal social structure where, through progressive taxation, the community as whole provides for its members. This serves to contain and limit the damage we inflict upon each other; its reparative function acts as a profound source of reassurance.

The capitalist market, it seems to me, acts in exactly the opposite direction – it is an asocial narcissistic structure driven only by its inner needs, sweeping out of its way everything that does not serve those needs. As Marx put it, before the force of capital 'all that is solid melts into air'. But the public sector, representing as it does a different form of social organisation, has always been a thorn in the side of capital, as it ever more seeks to penetrate all forms of social and cultural life. Nowhere is this conflict between market and non-marketised forms of social organisation more acutely contested than in attitudes to the NHS and other sources of public provision.

The cuts, then, should not be understood in terms of economic necessity but as expressions of a violent ideological assault on the concept of welfare. A narcissistic logic comes to dominate where the welfare state is viewed not as providing citizens with the basic necessities of life as part of a duty of state but instead is perversely misrepresented as a mechanism by which people are disempowered, creating in them a helpless state of invalidism. The 'have-nots', instead of 'getting on their bikes' and competing in the

marketplace, ‘stay at home and whinge for the nanny state to do something for them’. Namely, to have one's basic needs met is to be treated as if suffering from a state of infantile dependence and to be dominated by a delusion of an inexhaustible supply of provision. In this kind of thinking or more properly non-thinking, the world collapses into simple binary categories – ‘us and them’ – and all complexity is lost. We are witnessing a kind of social cleansing where those on benefits will have to vacate their homes- this will further fuel this projective process - lending support to the sense that ‘they’ unlike ‘us’ do not deserve to live where they are living.

The current assault on public services, serving as it does the penetration of the market into all forms of life, gives force to a primitive moralism. Those that survive have a right to, have done so because they are superior to the brothers and sisters who, now morally inferior, failed, and they failed as they had no right to survive. This thus supports a narcissistic a-social character structure. This archaic world view, the simple binary division between the morally upright and good ‘strivers’ (like us) and the hated others, ‘the skivers’, projective targets for our contempt, lays the basis for an increasingly thoughtless and violent world. The market economy may be a necessity of life at least for our current epoch, and that is one thing, but as an ideal of social institutions it is not likely to give much support to the nobler side of our nature.

If we look at the attitude of affectionate parents towards their children, we have to recognize that it is a revival and reproduction of their own narcissism, which they have long since abandoned. The trustworthy pointer constituted by overvaluation, which we have already recognized as a narcissistic stigma in the case of object-choice, dominates, as we all know, their emotional attitude. Thus they are under a compulsion to ascribe every perfection to the child — which sober observation would find no occasion to do — and to conceal and forget all his shortcomings. (Incidentally, the denial of sexuality in children is connected with this.) Moreover, they are inclined to suspend in the child's favour the operation of all the cultural acquisitions which their own narcissism has been forced to respect, and to renew on his behalf the claims to privileges which were long ago given up by themselves. The child shall have a better time than his parents; he shall not be subject to the necessities which they have recognized as paramount in life. Illness, death, renunciation of enjoyment, restrictions on his own will, shall not touch him; the laws of nature and of society shall be abrogated in his favour; he shall once more really be the centre and core of creation—‘His Majesty the Baby’, as we once fancied ourselves. The child shall fulfil those wishful dreams of the parents which they never carried out — the boy shall become a great man and a hero in his father's place, and the girl shall marry a prince as a tardy compensation for her mother. At the touchiest point in the narcissistic system, the immortality of the ego, which is so hard pressed by reality, security is achieved by taking refuge in the child. Parental love, which is so moving and at bottom so childish, is nothing but the parents' narcissism born again, which, transformed into object-love, unmistakably reveals its former nature.

Political Selfies: narcissism and political culture

Politicians are harnessing the power of social media to create new ways for voters to identify with them says **Candida Yates**. But it means when they are seen to let the public down, voters feel a narcissistic rage.

The self-promotion of politicians was recently encapsulated in the 'selfie' taken by Barack Obama, David Cameron and the Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, at Nelson Mandela's memorial service. This image of narcissistic pleasure that was broadcast around the world, also provoked a backlash from the public, who felt that it trivialized what was meant to be a 'once in a life time' memorial service for a man who was a leader and politician of real integrity and substance. As a recent *Guardian/ICM poll* indicates this reaction is linked to the growing anger and also cynicism of UK voters with politicians more generally, who are seen as untrustworthy and lacking in integrity.

Christopher Lasch's book, *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) uses Freud's ideas on narcissism to link our inability to sustain emotional commitment and a capacity to cope with the disappointments of attachment and loss, with the prevailing emphasis of market values and consumer culture. Lasch's book continues to be cited by researchers in the humanities and social sciences who argue that his psychosocial reading of narcissism works well in the context of late capitalist societies. Lasch uses sociological, cultural and psychoanalytic ideas to explore the interaction of self, culture and society, arguing that late capitalist society has given rise to a narcissistic personality type that is self-centered and also, often seemingly-confident, and yet underneath that exterior may lie an insecure person, who feels alienated, lost and anxious. Lasch used psychoanalytic theory to argue that whilst a certain degree of narcissism is healthy, overly narcissistic individuals create a false, split, self to mask and protect an insecure, fragile ego and that such people are unable to experience emotions in a way that feels authentic.

The implication of Lasch's analysis appears to be that narcissists dart from sensation to sensation, addicted to the image and the narcissistic pleasures of short-lived encounters, a description that also resonates with contemporary accounts of life as it is experienced within the fluid, illusory environment of late modernity. As Lasch also anticipated, today there is a proliferation of emotionalized, therapeutic discourse in all areas of life and the boundaries between public and private spheres of experience have become blurred as the language of feeling and emotion has become a dominant mode of expression, graphically lived out in social media. Yet at the same time, some argue that men and women seem to have lost the ability to actually feel in a meaningful way, or living with the risks and disappointments of attachment. Of course, one way to avoid disappointment, is to commit to nothing at all, a flirtatious trick that is used in relation to the sphere of political allegiance and is a recurring theme of both (floating) voters and politicians on the contemporary party political scene in the UK and elsewhere.

Lasch's ideas about narcissism are suggestive when applied to contemporary political culture, and one can draw on his ideas to explore the psychodynamic links between narcissism and the processes of political communication which rely on the personalization of politics and the techniques of advertising and promotional culture. In an age where the boundaries between political parties have become increasingly indistinct, the branding of politicians through the politics of personality and celebrity has become significant as a means of marking out and promoting political parties to voters, whose loyalties and political identifications have also become more fluid from Boris, Barack to Berlusconi, all exemplify this trend of celebrity politics. Shaped by emotion and the irrational vicissitudes of desire and identification the experience of celebrity politics, where like other forms of consumption, voters' responses are not always governed by rationality. This is not to say that voters are manipulated and brainwashed victims of false consciousness, but rather that the engagement with politics is also bound up with the emotional experience of what Colin Campbell (1989) calls 'illusory hedonism'.

Social media and celebrity culture provide new ways for politicians to engage with the electorate that also allow new modes of narcissistic identification to take place. In the UK, New Labour's emphasis on the 'flirtatious' mechanisms of spin and PR provided a model for David Cameron's re-vamped UK Conservative Party, where, like Tony Blair before him, the leader is the brand of the party. Contemporary politicians often draw on the discourses of therapy culture to promote themselves and connect with the public. From Tony Blair's emotional response to Princess Dianna's death in 1997, to David Cameron's plea to 'hug a hoodie' in 2006, or Gordon Brown's tears on the show, *Piers Morgan Life Stories* in 2010 (ITV), one can find examples of the ways that politicians use the language of feelings and therapy to convey a sense of emotional authenticity.

The reasons for this negative response appear straightforward, as the contradictions of capitalism are felt and made visible in an age of economic and social crises. It may be that the perception that politicians 'don't listen' or respond, also inspires a form of narcissistic rage in the sections of the electorate who feel betrayed and duped by a political class who promise so much, yet actually deliver so little. This is not to pathologise that response, but rather to link that disillusionment to the narcissistic processes of idealization and the difficulties of creating a different kind of political culture, which creates new spaces for active and creative political engagement.

Author Biographies

Marianna Fotaki is Professor of Business Ethics at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, and holds a visiting professorship in Manchester Business School. She is a graduate of medicine, public health, and obtained a PhD in public policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Before joining academia Marianna worked as EU resident adviser and as a medical doctor for Médecins Sans Frontières and Médecins Du Monde for eight years.

Elizabeth Cotton blogs as Surviving Work and is an academic at Middlesex University Business School. Her academic background is in political philosophy and current writing includes precarious work and employment relations, activism and mental health at work. She has worked as an activist and educator in over thirty countries, working with trade unions and Global Union Federations at senior level. Some of this work is reflected in her co-authored publication, *Global Unions, Global Business*, described as "the essential guide to global trade unionism". Elizabeth lived and worked abroad until returning to the UK in 2007 to write and start the process of training in adult psychotherapy. She is founding director of The Resilience Space and runs the Surviving Work Library.

Milena Stateva is Senior Researcher and Consultant at the Tavistock Institute. She is Leader of the Support for Organisations Going through or Working with Overwhelming Experiences and Director of Families and Schools Together (FAST) Programme. Her most recent publications include *Good Practices in Social Inclusion through Employment*.

Ross A. Lazar was a founding member and chairman of The Wilfred R. Bion Forum for the Advancement of Psycho-Analysis, as well as a Founder Member and Member of the Executive of MundO. He is a member of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations, the Association of Child Psychotherapists - UK, the Organization for the Promotion of Understanding in Society) the Infant Observation Study Group - Vienna, and has served as a supervisor and coach on INSEAD's Executive Master's program in Consulting and Coaching for Change, Fontainebleau.

David Morgan is a fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society, a senior member of the British Psychoanalytic Association, and has been consultant psychotherapist at the Portman Clinic for 20 years. He is a training analyst, supervisor and lecturer, and is consultant psychotherapist at Whistleblowers UK. He is also a consultant psychotherapist and psychoanalyst in private practice.

Steve Fuller is Auguste Comte Professor of Social Epistemology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick. The author of twenty books, his most recent work focuses on the future of humanity. He has two new books being published this year: *Knowledge: The Philosophical Quest in History* (Acumen) and, with Veronika Lipinska, *The Proactionary Imperative: A Foundation for Transhumanism* (Palgrave).

Yiannis Gabriel is Professor of Organizational Theory at the University of Bath. He has a PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. Yiannis is known for his work into the psychoanalysis of organizational and social life. He has written on organizational storytelling and narratives, leadership, management learning and the culture and politics of contemporary consumption. He has developed a psychoanalytic interpretation of organizational stories as a way of studying numerous social and organizational phenomena including leader-follower relations, group dynamics and fantasies, nostalgia, insults and apologies. He has been editor of Management Learning and associate editor of Human Relations and is currently senior editor of Organization Studies.

David Bell is the President of the British Psychoanalytic Society, a Fellow of the Institute and a Training Analyst. He is a Consultant Psychiatrist in psychotherapy in the Adult Department of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust where he is director of Fitzjohns Unit, a specialist unit for serious/complex psychological disorders. He writes and lectures on a variety of subjects including the history and development of psychoanalytic concepts, psychosis, personality disorder, suicide and trauma. Throughout his professional career he has been deeply involved in the relation between psychoanalysis and other disciplines such as literature, philosophy, culture and socio-political issues and has for the last ten years co-chaired a study group on philosophy and psychoanalysis. He is a leading psychiatric expert in asylum/human rights. He is the contributing editor of two books: *Reason and Passion* and *Psychoanalysis and Culture: a Kleinian Perspective*. He is also the author of a short book *Paranoia*.

Candida Yates is a Reader in Psychosocial Studies at the University of East London and is Co-Director with Caroline Bainbridge of the AHRC Media and the Inner World (MiW) research network. She has published widely on the themes of popular culture, psychoanalysis, identity and emotion. She is Co-editor of the journal Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and Culture, Media, Groups, Politics; the Consulting Editor of Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society; and Joint-Editor of Karnac Book Series: Psychoanalysis and Popular Culture. Her publications include: Masculine Jealousy and Contemporary Cinema, (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007); Culture and The Unconscious, (co-edited, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Emotion: New Psychosocial Perspectives (co-edited, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Television and Psychoanalysis: Psycho-Cultural Approaches (co-edited, Karnac Books, 2013); Media and the Inner World: Psycho-Cultural Approaches to Emotion, Media and Popular Culture (co-edited, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming); The Play of Political Culture, Emotion and Identity (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

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Contact

LSE Public Policy Group
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

Email: LSEReviewofBooks@lse.ac.uk
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The Big Five Personality Traits and Narcissism as the Predictors of Anxiety and Confidence before Archery Class Final Exam

Nihal Dal

Faculty of Sport Sciences, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Turkey

Abstract In the present study I investigated whether the big five personality traits together with narcissism may have ability to predict the anxiety and self-confidence in physical education teacher candidates immediately before archery course final exam. The sample consisted of 52 college student athletes ranging in age from 20 to 24. Participants first completed the measures of the Big Five personality traits and narcissism measures. Then, their anxiety and self-confidence levels were measured via 100 mm visual analogue (VAS) scale immediately before the archery practical final exam. Results indicated that among the Big Five personality traits only agreeableness and openness to experience was positively correlated to anxiety. On the other hand, narcissism was negatively correlated to anxiety and positively correlated to self-confidence. In two regression analyses in a stepwise fashion, it was tested whether the model consisting of the Big Five personality traits and narcissistic personality trait may have ability to predict pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence. Results of the regression analysis demonstrated that final model containing solely narcissism may explain significant amount of variation in both anxiety and self-confidence. Overall, findings observed in the present study indicated that teacher candidates high on narcissism may have lower level of anxiety and higher level of self-confidence before a practical academic examination.

Keywords The Big Five Personality Traits, Narcissism, Anxiety, Self-confidence, Archery

1. The Big Five Personality Traits and Narcissism as the Predictors of Anxiety and Confidence before Archery Class Final Exam

During their college education period physical education teacher candidates repeatedly face a good deal of practical course exam which requires both physical and mental abilities. As these exams may have vital effect of students' academic achievement, students may experience intense anxiety and other negative emotional experiences. Most of the previous studies investigating psychological (or emotional) responses before an academic examination focused largely on theoretical courses such as mathematic (Chapell et al., 2005; Ma and Xu, 2004) or second language learning (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989). However, in several scientific disciplines, including sport sciences, academic success is not determined only by means of theoretical courses. Practical courses, which require considerable amount of physical and mental effort also play a vital role in academic success of physical education teacher candidates. Therefore, it is of great importance to examine factors that can possibly influence students' psychological responses in a practical examination.

Test anxiety, which is defined as a variable referring to enduring differences in the tendency to become anxious in situations where one's performance will be judged or evaluated (Dacanay, 2016, p. 554) is a relatively well-known trait-like variable. Although test anxiety has been demonstrated to effect on academic achievement, less is known regarding the predictors of test anxiety, especially in practical academic tests. In the present study, based on the argument by Dacanay (2016) suggesting that personality may influence the way stressful events, are perceived and appraised. I decided to recognize the Big Five personality traits together with narcissistic personality trait as the possible antecedents of academic test anxiety and confidence immediately before a practical academic test (archery course final exam), which requires considerable amount of physical and mental effort.

Among the personality traits within the Big Five model neuroticism and conscientiousness are the most important candidates that can possibly be associated with academic test anxiety. Previous research consistently revealed a

moderate relationship between anxiety and neuroticism within the Big Five personality model. As the neuroticism is associated with the arousability of the limbic system (Eysenck, 1967) and imbalance of the autonomic nervous system (Eysenck, 1982, p. 13) it is quite logical to expect that neuroticism may give rise to higher level of anxiety and lower level of confidence in stressful situations such as academic tests. Conscientiousness is another Big Five facet that can be associated with emotional responses before an academic test. Previous research provided strong support for the usefulness of conscientiousness in diverse academic settings. For example, Tok, and Morali (2009) found conscientiousness to be associated with academic success in physical education candidates. Further, Dacanay, (2016) demonstrated that conscientiousness is negatively correlated to test anxiety in college students. However, no previous study provided evidence for association among conscientiousness, anxiety and confidence before a practical academic exam.

The last personality trait that is considered as the possible predictor of academic test anxiety and confidence is the subclinical "normal" narcissism. Before presenting the features of narcissistic personality, it would be necessary to make a distinction between two kinds of narcissism. Previous research provided strong empirical support for the two types of narcissism, namely grandiose versus vulnerable narcissism (Cain, Pincus, and Ansell, 2008; Miller et al., 2011). In the present study, I focused on grandiose or sub-clinical type of narcissism as the predictor of academic test anxiety and confidence. Narcissism is characterized by the feeling of superiority, exaggerated self-importance, self-sufficiency, grandiosity and vanity, entitlement and exploitation, and dominance and authority (Jonkmann, Becker, Marsh, Lüdtke, and Trautwein, 2012, p. 738). For example, in a study by Gabriel, Critelli, and Ee, (1994) despite the lack of correlation between actual intelligence and narcissism, self-rated intelligence moderately correlated to narcissism. Likewise, Farwell and Wohlwend-Lloyd (1998) found narcissism to be positively associated with self-estimated final grade. Taken together, it seems that individuals high on narcissism may have lower level of anxiety and higher level of self-confidence before an important academic test due to their vulnerability to use self-enhancement strategies.

In the present study, I aimed to examine whether students' anxiety and self-confidence level during a practical archery final exam may be predicted by the Big Five personality traits and narcissistic personality trait. In the light of aforementioned theoretical reasons and research findings, I predicted that among the Big Five personality dimensions, conscientiousness should be negatively correlated to anxiety and positively correlated to self-confidence. Inversely, I expected to find neuroticism to be positively associated with anxiety and negatively associated with self-confidence. Lastly, I hypothesized that narcissistic personality buffers anxiety and enhances self-confidence.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 52 physical education teacher candidates (13 females) ranging in age from 20 to 24, [mean 21.4 (2.16)]. All participants were recruited from the Faculty of Sports Sciences. Participants were required to abstain from the use of any medications or commercial ergogenic aids that could influence athletic performance. All experimental procedures were approved by the local ethics committee, and all data were collected in accordance with the latest version of the Helsinki Declaration. All participants completed a form providing informed consent, as approved by the ethics committee.

2.2. Personality Measures

The Short Form of the Five-Factor Personality Inventory developed by Tatar (2005) was used to measure the Big Five personality traits; this is an 85-item personality inventory designed to evaluate the five main personality traits, namely neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Item responses are made using a 5-point scale. In this study, only the conscientiousness subscale of the five-factor personality inventory was used.

2.3. Narcissism

Narcissism was measured through the use of the short version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) developed by Ames, Rose, and Anderson (2006). The NPI-16 is a 16-item forced choice measure: one narcissistic and other non-narcissistic. Narcissistic responses are summed to calculate an overall narcissistic personality score. The NPI-16 was translated into Turkish by Atay (2009).

2.4. Anxiety and Self-confidence

In order to measure pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence 100 mm Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) was used. VAS marked at one end as "*very low anxiety / self-confidence*" and at the other as "*very high anxiety / self-confidence*". Participants were instructed to rate their anxiety and self-confidence level immediately before the exam. Individuals rate their pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence on two different VASs (one for anxiety and one for self-confidence).

2.5. Procedure

Participants first completed measures regarding the Big Five personality traits and narcissism. Afterwards, participants were allowed to make 10 shots for warm up

and to adjust the bow's site. Then, participants were instructed to make 10 shots from 18 m to an 80-cm diameter target. The shooting task was self-paced, so participants decided when to shoot an arrow and how long to prepare to shoot. Participants were also told that they had to get at least 60 points in order to be receive the course credits.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

To analyze obtained data, I first calculated Pearson correlation coefficient among the Big Five personality traits, narcissism and pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence. Afterwards, linear regression analyzes in a stepwise fashion were conducted to explore whether regression model consisting of the Big Five personality traits and narcissism may have ability to predict variation in pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence.

3. Results

Results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that among the Big Five personality traits only openness to experience ($r = .39$, $p = .010$) and agreeableness was positively and significantly correlated to pre-exam anxiety. On the other hand, narcissism was significantly correlated to both pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence. Hence, narcissism was negatively associated with pre-exam anxiety (-.41, $p = .006$) and positively associated with pre-exam self-confidence (-.31, $p = .044$).

Based on the significant relation of personality traits to anxiety and self-confidence, I decided to perform two regression analyzes in a stepwise fashion to test whether regression model consisting of the Big Five personality traits together with narcissism may have account for the variation in pre-shooting anxiety and self-confidence. As can be shown in Table 2 and 3, results of regression analyzes indicated that a final model containing solely narcissism was able to explain significant amount of variance in both pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence.

4. Discussion

In the present study, it was aimed to examine whether the Big Five personality traits together with narcissism may be associated with pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence measured immediately before an archery practical final exam in physical education teacher candidates. The results observed in the present study provided partial support for my prediction regarding the association among personality, anxiety and self-confidence. Therefore, among the personality traits considered in this study, narcissism emerged as the strongest psychological construct with a potential to predict physical education teacher candidates' pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence immediately before archery class final exam. On the other hand, neither conscientiousness nor neuroticism has been found to be associated with pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence.

Table 1. The relation of the Big Personality traits and narcissism to anxiety and self-confidence

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness	Narcissism
Confidence	.232	-.079	.237	-.195	-.047	.308*
Anxiety	-.122	.339*	.114	.106	.389**	-.413**

*p<.05 **p<.01

Table 2. Ability of the Big Five personality traits and narcissism to explain self-confidence

	B	Beta	t	R	R^2_{adj}
Constant	6.51		12.07	.33	.09
Narcissism	.201	.091	2.22		

Table 3. Ability of the Big Five personality traits and narcissism to explain anxiety

	B	Beta	t	R	R^2_{adj}
Constant	4.74		7.90	.432	.17
Narcissism	-.310	.101	-3.06		

The most notable finding of the study was the association of narcissistic personality to anxiety and self-confidence. In this respect, narcissistic personality appeared as psychological factor that buffers anxiety and enhances self-confidence immediately before a practical academic exam. The underlying reason for the relation of narcissism to low anxiety and high confidence concerns the self-concept of individuals high on narcissistic personality trait. Hence, previous research has consistently indicated that individuals high on this trait may have exaggerated or inflated beliefs regarding their capabilities (Jonkmann et al., 2012; Robins and Beer, 2001). In this respect, individuals high on narcissism may possibly perceived themselves more capable to be successful which in turn may give rise to lower level of anxiety and higher level of self-confidence. Another theoretical reason that can likely explain the link between narcissistic personality trait and pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence is the narcissists' desire to have a highly positive self-evaluation. Formerly, researchers provided strong support for the notion that narcissistic personality was associated with the use of self-enhancement strategies to restore or maintain a favorable self-evaluation. For example, Farwell, and Wohlwend-Lloyd (1998) found that students having higher level of narcissistic personality trait may be more prone to overestimate their final grade. In another study by Robins, and Beer (2001) narcissism has been found to be associated with self-enhancement bias in an academic setting. Moreover, similar results were also obtained in previous studies that support the observed relationship between narcissism, anxiety and self-confidence (Akehurst and Thatcher, 2010; Wallace, Baumeister, and Vohs, 2005).

The result of the present study together with previous ones indicating that narcissistic personality trait may be a psychological construct that can give rise to favorable emotional reactions before an important academic examination should be interpreted with caution. Accordingly, Robins, and Beer (2001) stated that narcissistic personality is not related to academic performance and higher grades. The authors also emphasized that narcissistic individuals' self-enhancement strategies may not be adaptive in long term.

Data did not support the hypothesis that suggests neuroticism should be positively associated with pre-exam anxiety and negatively associated with self-confidence. Similarly, the prediction regarding the association between conscientiousness and pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence was not confirmed. The lack of association of these big five facets to pre-exam anxiety and self-confidence may be explained by the nature of academic examination context. Former studies demonstrating that The Big Five facets may have account for the emotional states or reactions examined this relationship in contexts where performance is determined by largely cognitive skills (Chamorro-Premuzic, Ahmetoglu, and Furnham, 2008). However, in the present study anxiety and self-confidence were measured immediately before a practical exam (archery course final exam) where performance is determined by physical capabilities in addition to emotional and cognitive capabilities. Therefore, in the light of the obtained results, it can be concluded that the context in which academic evaluation is made can moderate the relationship between personality and pre-exam emotional reactions, anxiety and self-confidence in this case.

In future studies researchers should examine this relationship in both practical and theoretical exams. Moreover, researchers should also take into account factors that can possibly mediate the link between personality traits and pre-exam emotional reactions.

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Articles

Narcissism and Anger: Self-Esteem and Contingencies of Self-Worth as Mediating Self-Structures

Grisel M. Garcia[a], P. J. Watson*[a], Christopher J. L. Cunningham[a], Brian J. O'Leary[a], Zhuo Chen[b]

[a] University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, TN, USA. **[b]** University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA.

Abstract

Theory and research suggest that an internalization of psychological "structure" related to self-esteem may mediate relationships of Maladaptive Narcissism with higher and Adaptive Narcissism with lower Anger. In the present study (N = 623), Self-Esteem and Contingency of Self-Worth Scales served as presumed indices of the presence or absence of structure. Maladaptive Narcissism predicted greater Anger and a relative absence of structure whereas Adaptive Narcissism displayed an opposite pattern of results. Constructs assessing structure partially mediated the Maladaptive Narcissism relationship with greater Anger. Mediation analyses also revealed that structure not only fully mediated the inverse Adaptive Narcissism linkage with Anger, but also suppressed an association with greater Anger that would otherwise have been evident. These data supported the idea that psychological structure related to self-esteem is noteworthy in explaining the implications of narcissism for personality and interpersonal functioning.

Keywords: narcissism, anger, self-esteem regulation, mediation

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*Corresponding author at: P. J. Watson, Psychology/Dept. #2803, 350 Holt Hall-615 McCallie Avenue, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, TN 37403. E-mail: paul-watson@utc.edu

In classic psychoanalytic terms, narcissism essentially represents an innate love of the self that becomes maladaptive when it interferes with a maturation of abilities to love others (Freud, 1986). Clinical insights and theoretical speculation later identified anger, rage, and aggression as especially prominent features of maladaptive narcissism (Kernberg, 1976; Kohut, 1971, 1978). Personality research more recently confirmed that anger accompanies wide-ranging narcissistic disturbances in interpersonal functioning, as revealed, for example, in aggressive reactions to ego-threatening interactions (Stucke & Sporer, 2002), disruptive work-related behavior (Meier & Semmer, 2013), social maladjustment in adolescents (Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, & Nezlek, 2011), male sexual aggression (Baumeister, Catanese, & Wallace, 2002), and road rage (Edwards, Warren, Tubré, Zyphur, & Hoffner-Prillaman, 2013).

Kohut's (1977) interpretation of self-esteem development may help explain the linkage of narcissism with anger. Mature self-esteem, he argued, develops as a young child internalizes the loving relationships of caregivers. He called these caregivers "selfobjects" because the child initially experiences them as a seamless whole both inside the self and outside as "objects" in the interpersonal environment. Important features of self-esteem regulation,

therefore, exist initially outside the self in the social environment, as supportive selfobjects offer the soothing love and care that makes it possible for a child to experience an esteeming of the self even in disturbing circumstances. If objects gradually and optimally frustrate this need for soothing, the individual will internalize a capacity to do for himself psychologically what previously was done for him socially. In other words, "structure" will develop within the personality that enables the individual to esteem the self even in the absence of social support. On the other hand, internal structure will fail to develop if selfobjects fail to meet basic esteem needs in an age appropriate fashion or if they traumatically frustrate the child. Maladaptive narcissism will be the result. Removal of social support will then be experienced as a threat, and anger, rage, and aggression will follow as a self-protective response.

Efforts to explore the role of "structure" in narcissistic anger must address the complexity of narcissism (Watson, 2005). Kohut's (1977) framework suggests a continuum of self-esteem regulation that ranges from maladaptive narcissism to progressively more adaptive forms of narcissism as structure develops within the self. Research in fact demonstrates that indices of narcissism record both more adaptive and more maladaptive forms of personality functioning, and that the mental health implications of one become more obvious after statistical procedures control for the other (Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman, 1992; Watson, Sawrie, Greene, & Arredondo, 2002). In other words, maladaptive narcissism becomes more unambiguously maladaptive when procedures control for its covariance with adaptive narcissism. Conversely, adaptive narcissism becomes even more obviously adaptive after controlling for maladaptive narcissism. The obvious presumption would be that maladaptive narcissism would predict less evidence of structure and higher anger whereas adaptive narcissism would predict more structure and less anger. In addition to this obvious possibility, the present project most importantly tested the hypothesis that "structure" helps explain the linkages of narcissism with anger. Evidence supporting that suggestion would appear if presumed indices of the presence or absence of structure mediated such relationships.

Measures of Structure

One clearly relevant marker of structure would be a Self-Esteem Scale (Goldberg, 1999). Additional indices seem available in the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). This instrument assesses 7 dimensions of personality functioning in which personal self-worth depends upon the achievement of goals. Two dimensions reflect "internal contingencies of self-worth" and point toward the presence of internalized self-structure. God's Love operationalizes self-esteem based upon the love and acceptance of God, and Virtue records the self-approval that follows from abilities to meet internalized ethical standards.

Five other dimensions assess what Crocker et al. (2003) describe as "external contingencies of self-worth." Family Support makes reference to self-worth based upon compliance with what the family wants a person to do, and Academic Competence records self-satisfaction based upon abilities to meet personal goals for scholastic achievement. Though designated as "external," these two contingencies appear to be somewhat ambiguous relative to the concept of "structure." Crocker et al. suggested that Family Support is relevant to loving family relationships that promote healthy self-esteem and hence might reflect experience with Kohut's soothing and supportive selfobjects. Indeed, Crocker et al. found that Family Support predicted greater self-esteem, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Academic Competence also suggests an internalization of standards that might encourage academic achievement. While Crocker et al. observed positive correlations with agreeableness and conscientiousness, they nevertheless found that Academic Competence displayed no linkage with self-esteem and predicted greater neuroticism. This project used an empirical criterion for determining

whether these variables reflected structure. If a measure correlated positively with self-esteem, then it assessed "structure."

Three other external contingencies of self-worth were clearly relevant to maladaptive narcissism. With Physical Appearance, positive self-assessment depends upon how attractive the individual feels in the eyes of others. Approval of Others makes self-esteem rest upon how other people evaluate the individual. Competition makes self-esteem a product of successfully bettering others. Crocker et al. (2003) discovered that all three of these external contingencies correlated negatively with self-esteem and positively with neuroticism. In other words, these external dimensions of contingent self-worth served as indicators of an absence of structure.

Hypotheses

In summary, this study[i] explored the possibility that variables indicative of Kohut's (1977) conceptualization of "structure" would help explain relationships of narcissism with anger. Support for this model would appear with the confirmation of five most important sets of hypotheses.

First, maladaptive narcissism should predict greater and adaptive narcissism should predict lower levels of anger.

Second, maladaptive narcissism should yield a pattern of relationships suggesting a lack of structure. Specifically, maladaptive narcissism should correlate positively with Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, and Competition and negatively with God's Love and Virtue and perhaps with Family Support and Academic Competence.

Third, adaptive narcissism should be a marker for the internalization of self-structure. In other words, adaptive narcissism should correlate negatively with Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, and Competition and positively with God's Love and Virtue and perhaps with Family Support and Academic Competence.

Fourth, indices of structure should predict lower anger whereas measures suggesting its absence should display an opposite linkage.

Fifth, and most importantly, measures presumed to operationalize the presence and absence of structure should at least partially mediate the relationships of narcissism with anger.

Method

Participants

Participants included 623 undergraduates enrolled in Introductory Psychology classes at a state university in the southeastern United States. Making up this sample were 408 women and 215 men. Average age was 19.0 (*SD* = 2.19). In terms of race, the majority of the sample was Caucasian (73.5%), with 18.9% African-American, 2.4% Hispanic, 1.6% Asian/Oriental, 0.6% Middle-Eastern, and 2.9% "other" or simply failing to respond.

Measures

All psychological scales appeared in a single questionnaire booklet that contained measures for use in several projects. The first page asked participants to report basic background information. Then, after an initial section that obtained data for a different investigation, the booklet presented all instruments in the order in which they are described below. All but the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI: Raskin & Hall, 1981) utilized a 0 to 4 Likert scale.

Anger — Ten items from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP: Goldberg, 1999; Goldberg et al., 2006) assessed anger. This Anger Scale (α = .82, *M* response per item = 1.59, *SD* = 0.69) paralleled the NEO-PI-R Neuroticism facet developed by Costa and McCrae (1992). A representative item said, "I get angry easily."

Self-Esteem — The IPIP Self-Esteem Scale (α = .80, *M* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.62) also included 10 items. Patterned after the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, this instrument included such self-reports as, "I feel comfortable with myself."

Narcissism — The original 54-item NPI assessed narcissism. Procedures centered on this version of the instrument because it included the four factors (Emmons, 1984) that previous investigations have most clearly defined as adaptive or maladaptive (e.g., Watson et al., 1992; Watson, Hickman, & Morris, 1996; Watson, Varnell, & Morris, 1999).

This inventory uses a forced-choice format in which participants choose between a narcissistic (1) and a non-narcissistic (0) response. Illustrative of the 11-item Exploitative/Entitlement (E/E) factor was the narcissistic assertion that "I expect a great deal from other people," in contrast to the non-narcissistic claim that "I like to do things for other people." Nine items defined a Leadership/Authority (L/A) factor which was exemplified in the self-report that "I see myself as a good leader." The non-narcissistic option said, "I am not sure that I would make a good leader." The Superiority/Arrogance (S/A) factor contained 11 items with a representative item suggesting, "I can make anybody believe anything." The more modest non-narcissistic choice said that "people sometimes believe what I tell them." Nine items defined Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (S/S). Illustrative of this factor was the narcissistic self-report, "I like to look at my body," as opposed to the non-narcissistic alternative that stated, "My body is nothing special."

Preliminary analyses indicated that all NPI data could be meaningfully and more conveniently examined by dichotomizing the factors into measures of Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism. Based on previous research and on a preliminary examination of the present data to ensure the validity of this approach, Adaptive Narcissism (α = .76, *M* = 0.50, *SD* = 0.20) reflected the average score on the L/A, S/A, and S/S factors. E/E defined Maladaptive Narcissism (α = .53, *M* = 0.33, *SD* = 0.20). Prior to creating these variables, procedures addressed the potential problem of cross-loadings. With regard to the narcissistic claim that "I am assertive," Emmons (1984) reported that this item helped define both L/A and S/A. The stronger loading, nevertheless, appeared on L/A, resulting in its elimination from S/A in this study. Another narcissistic option stated, "People always seem to recognize my authority." Emmons found that this statement loaded on both E/E and L/A. The stronger loading appeared for L/A; so, computation of E/E did not include this item.

Contingencies of Self-Worth — The Contingences of Self-Worth Scale uses 35 items to record the seven dimensions of contingent self-esteem (Crocker et al., 2003). Five items express each domain. Again, five of the seven domains reflect external sources of contingent self-worth. An illustrative "Physical Appearance" (α = .69, *M* = 2.55, *SD* = 0.75) item said, "My self-esteem is influenced by how attractive I think my face or facial features are." Self-worth based upon "Competition" (α = .81, *M* = 2.57, *SD* = 0.82) appeared in such claims as, "My self-worth is affected by how well I do when I am competing with others." Indicative of "Academic Competence" (α = .78, *M* = 2.88, *SD* = 0.77) was the assertion, "I feel bad about myself whenever my academic performance is lacking." Expressing "Family Support" (α = .74, *M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.71) was, for example, the statement, "Knowing that my family members love me makes me feel good about myself." Indicative of "Approval of Others" (α = .76, *M* = 1.78,

SD = 0.94) was the admission, “My self-esteem depends on the opinions others hold of me.” Two other measures operationalized internal contingencies of self-worth. A representative expression of "Virtue" (α = .75, *M* = 2.79, *SD* = 0.77) said, “Doing something I know is wrong makes me lose my self-respect.” "God’s Love" (α = .93, *M* = 2.80, *SD* = 1.17) appeared in such statements as, “I feel worthwhile when I have God’s love.”

Procedure

All research procedures complied with institutional guidelines for ethical research. Student participation was fully voluntary, completely anonymous, and rewarded with extra course credit. Statistical procedures scored all measures in term of the average response per item.

Results

Given the much larger number of women than men in this sample, preliminary analyses examined whether this variable should be controlled in subsequent statistical procedures. A multivariate analysis of variance, in fact, revealed a significant overall gender effect, Wilks’ Lambda = .79, $F(11, 611) = 14.77$, $p < .001$. Women scored lower on Adaptive Narcissism, Maladaptive Narcissism, and Competition and higher on Physical Appearance, Family Support, Academic Competence, God’s Love, and Virtue (see Table 1). Gender contrasts also appeared in the covariance among measures, Box’s *M* = 90.99, $F(66, 638421.51) = 1.35$, $p < .05$. All subsequent procedures, therefore, controlled for gender.

Table 1

Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Comparisons Between Men and Women

	Men		Women		
Variables	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***F***
Adaptive Narcissism	0.55	0.01	0.47	0.01	20.52***
Maladaptive Narcissism	0.41	0.01	0.29	0.01	49.87***
Anger	1.59	0.05	1.59	0.03	0.02
Self-Esteem	2.97	0.04	2.94	0.03	0.41
External Contingencies of Self-Worth					
Physical Appearance	2.37	0.05	2.61	0.04	18.50***
Competition	2.72	0.06	2.49	0.04	11.26***
Approval of Others	1.73	0.06	1.81	0.05	0.65
Family Support	2.80	0.05	3.17	0.03	39.96***
Academic Competence	2.69	0.05	2.98	0.04	21.93***
Internal Contingencies of Self-Worth					
God’s Love	2.47	0.08	2.97	0.06	27.22***
Virtue	2.59	0.05	2.90	0.04	23.93***

Note. Means are the average response per item.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Partial correlations controlling for gender appear for all but the narcissism variables in Table 2. Anger correlated negatively with Self-Esteem, Family Support, God’s Love, and Virtue. Anger also predicted higher levels of Physical Appearance and Competition. Self-Esteem, in contrast, correlated negatively with Physical Appearance, Competition, and Approval of Others and positively with Family Support, God’s Love, and Virtue. Of the 21 rela-

tionships among the Contingency of Self-Worth constructs, all but three associations observed for God's Love and one for Virtue proved to be significant and positive.

Table 2

Partial Correlations Among Anger, Self-Esteem, and Contingencies of Self-Worth Controlling for Gender

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Anger	-	-.42***	.18***	.16***	.05	-.08*	-.02	-.14**	-.20***
2. Self-Esteem		-	-.19***	-.09*	-.25***	.15***	.06	.26***	.16***
External Contingencies of Self-Worth									
3. Physical Appearance			-	.42***	.41***	.21***	.27***	-.01	.02
4. Competition				-	.25***	.31***	.40***	.05	.17***
5. Approval of Others					-	.15***	.19***	-.02	.12**
6. Family Support						-	.47***	.36***	.47***
7. Academic Competence							-	.19***	.39***
Internal Contingencies of Self-Worth									
8. God's Love								-	.37***
9. Virtue									-

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 3 describes partial correlational findings for Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism. After controlling for only gender, Adaptive Narcissism predicted greater Self-Esteem and God's Love and lower Approval of Others; however, it failed to exhibit any linkage with Anger and also correlated positively with a Competition variable that had displayed connections with greater Anger and lower Self-Esteem. After controlling for Maladaptive Narcissism along with gender, Adaptive Narcissism did correlate negatively with Anger and also with Physical Appearance. In addition, the conceptually problematic linkage with Competition became non-significant. As expected, therefore, Adaptive Narcissism became more unambiguously adaptive when procedures controlled for Maladaptive Narcissism as well as for gender.

As Table 3 also reveals, Maladaptive Narcissism became more clearly maladaptive in partial correlations controlling for both Adaptive Narcissism and gender. After controlling for only gender, Maladaptive Narcissism predicted higher levels of Anger, Physical Appearance, and Competition and also lower levels of Virtue. However, no linkage appeared with Self-Esteem. After controlling for Adaptive Narcissism as well as for gender, these significant associations remained essentially unchanged, and Maladaptive Narcissism correlated negatively with Self-Esteem and God's Love and positively with Approval of Others.

These results demonstrated that in addition to controlling for gender, mediational analyses needed to examine Adaptive Narcissism after controlling for Maladaptive Narcissism and vice versa as independent variables in models predicting the dependent variable of Anger. Identification of potential mediators followed the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) in examining only those potential mediators that displayed a significant association with the independent variable. After controlling for gender and Maladaptive Narcissism, Adaptive Narcissism exhibited significant associations with Self-Esteem (β = .56), Physical Appearance (β = -.11), Approval of Others (β = -.28), and God's Love (β = .19, *p*s < .05). Analyses, therefore, included these four variables as possible mediators of the Adaptive Narcissism relationship with lower Anger. In these procedures, significance tests of indirect

effects used the bootstrap generated confidence interval (CI) estimations recommended by Hayes (2012) and maintained the conventional focus on unstandardized regression coefficients.

Table 3

Partial Correlations of Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism With Anger, Self-Esteem, and Contingencies of Self-Worth

	Controlling for Gender		Controlling for Gender and Narcissism	
Variables	**Adaptive Narcissism**	**Maladaptive Narcissism**	**Adaptive Narcissism**	**Maladaptive Narcissism**
Anger	.03	.29***	-.13***	.31***
Self-Esteem	.41***	.00	.48***	-.26***
External Contingencies of Self-Worth				
Physical Appearance	-.02	.11**	-.09*	.14***
Competition	.11**	.23***	-.01	.20***
Approval of Others	-.21***	-.02	-.24***	.11**
Family Support	-.01	-.04	-.02	-.04
Academic Competence	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.02
Internal Contingencies of Self-Worth				
God's Love	.14**	-.02	.17***	-.10*
Virtue	-.05	-.17***	.04	-.16***

Note. Partial correlation controlling for narcissism along with gender examined adaptive narcissism after controlling for maladaptive narcissism and vice versa.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

In regressions controlling for Maladaptive Narcissism and gender, Adaptive Narcissism exhibited a negative unstandardized regression coefficient in its association with Anger, B = -.53, p < .001. After including Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, and God's Love as possible mediators, the direct effect of Adaptive Narcissism on Anger shifted in the *opposite* direction and proved to be significant, B = .33, p <. 05. As Table 4 makes clear, a significant total indirect effect appeared with all four mediators combined. Specifically, Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, and Approval of Others proved to be significant mediators, but the indirect effect of God's Love was non-significant. For the three significant mediators, an examination of the indirect effect paths revealed that Adaptive Narcissism (1.) increased Self-Esteem which in turn decreased Anger, (2.) decreased Physical Appearance which in turn increased Anger, and (3.) decreased Approval of Others which in turn decreased Anger. Noteworthy was the unexpected finding that Approval of Others predicted lower rather than the greater Anger when examined within the context of these other mediators.

After controlling for gender and Adaptive Narcissism, significant associations appeared for Maladaptive Narcissism with Self-Esteem (β = -.29), Physical Appearance (β = .17), Competition (β = .24), Approval of Others (β = .13), God's Love (β = -.11), and Virtue (β = -.19, ps < .05). These six measures, therefore, served as potential mediators of the association of Maladaptive Narcissism with greater Anger.

Table 4

Indirect Effects in the Prediction of Anger by Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism

	Indirect Effect	Boot *SE*	95% *LLCI*	95% *ULCI*
Adaptive Narcissism as Predictor				
TOTAL	-.86[a]	.12	-1.10	-.64
Self-Esteem	-.88[a]	.11	-1.13	-.69
Physical Appearance	-.04[a]	.02	-.11	-.01
Approval of Others	.08[a]	.04	.00	.17
God's Love	-.02	.03	-.08	.03
Maladaptive Narcissism as Predictor				
TOTAL	.57[a]	.10	.37	.77
Self-Esteem	.44[a]	.08	.29	.62
Physical Appearance	.05[a]	.03	.00	.14
Approval of Others	-.03[a]	.02	-.10	-.00
God's Love	.00	.02	-.04	.03
Competition	.05	.04	-.02	.14
Virtue	.07[a]	.03	.01	.15

Note. These data include the indirect effects, the bootstrap standard error (Boot *SE*), the lower limit of the confidence interval (95% *LLCI*), and the upper limit of the confidence interval (95% *ULCI*).

[a]Significant indirect effect.

In regressions controlling for Adaptive Narcissism and gender, Maladaptive Narcissism exhibited a positive association with Anger, $B = 1.30$, $p < .001$. After including Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, Competition, Virtue, and God's Love as mediators, the direct effect of Maladaptive Narcissism on Anger remained significant, $B = .73$, $p < .001$. A significant total indirect effect appeared with all six mediators combined (see Table 4). Specifically, Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, and Virtue were significant mediators, but the indirect effects of God's Love and Competition were non-significant. Apparent in these indirect effect paths were findings that Maladaptive Narcissism (1,) decreased Self-Esteem and Virtue which in turn decreased Anger, (2.) increased Physical Appearance which in turn increased Anger, and (3.) increased Approval of Others which in turn decreased Anger, Once again, Approval of Others displayed an unexpected negative connection with Anger when examined within the context of other mediators.

Discussion

Maladaptive Narcissism predicted higher Anger and lower Self Esteem, whereas Adaptive Narcissism displayed linkages with lower Anger and higher Self-Esteem. Such outcomes conformed to claims that healthy self-esteem develops out a maturation of narcissism (Watson, 2005). Kohut (1977) more specifically argued that this maturation proceeds through an internalization of the loving care received from selfobjects, a process which gradually creates structures within the self that enable an individual to maintain self-esteem without social support. Defined by an absence of internalized structure, immature narcissism can lead to anger and sometimes aggression in response to frustrations associated with the loss of social support. In contrast, more mature narcissism emerges from an internalization of structure that makes it possible for the individual to weather the loss of social support without anger. In this investigation, Self-Esteem and Contingencies of Self-Worth scales served as presumed indices of structure, and mediational results confirmed that these measures exerted important and largely expected influences on the associations of Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism with Anger.

Most straightforward were findings for Maladaptive Narcissism. Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, Approval of Others, and Virtue partially mediated the connection of Maladaptive Narcissism with greater Anger. As expected, indirect effect paths revealed that Self-Esteem and Virtue did appear to operate as indices of structure in that they predicted both lower Maladaptive Narcissism and lower Anger, whereas Physical Appearance did seem to record an absence of structure because it exhibited an opposite pattern of effects. The expectation was that Approval of Others would display results parallel to those of Physical Appearance, but complexities appeared. The indirect effect path for this measure exhibited the expected positive connection with Maladaptive Narcissism, but a negative rather that positive linkage appeared with Anger. This unexpected outcome obviously requires clarification, but these data most importantly confirmed that a lack of structure at least partially mediated the connection of Maladaptive Narcissism with greater Anger.

Especially noteworthy were mediation results for Adaptive Narcissism. A negative association of Adaptive Narcissism with Anger became positive when Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, and Approval of Others served as mediators. Indirect effect paths reconfirmed Self-Esteem as an index of structure because it predicted greater Adaptive Narcissism and lower Anger, and Physical Appearance again seemed to operationalize the absence of structure because it exhibited an opposite pattern. Unanticipated results emerged once again for Approval of Others. As hypothesized, Approval of Others was like Physical Appearance in displaying a negative indirect effect path with Adaptive Narcissism; but with Anger, the path once more proved to be negative rather than positive. Most importantly, however, these results revealed that Self-Esteem, Physical Appearance, and Approval of Others not only fully mediated the Adaptive Narcissism relationship with lower Anger, but also suppressed a positive connection with Anger that would have been evident without the influence of structure. Such a suppression effect seemed consistent with previous observations that Self-Esteem may help explain the positive mental health implications of Adaptive Narcissism (Watson et al., 1999) and also with Kohut's (1977) understanding that self-esteem matures out of narcissism with the internalization of structure.

All significant partial correlations for the Contingencies of Self-Worth measures conformed to expectations. Presumed indices of the absence of internalized structure, including Approval of Others, Physical Appearance, and Competition, predicted lower Self-Esteem; although, the hypothesized linkage with greater Anger was non-significant for Approval of Others. All three measures displayed positive ties with Maladaptive Narcissism, and Approval of Others and Physical Appearance correlated negatively with Adaptive Narcissism. God's Love, Virtue, and Family Support served as presumed measures of internalized structure, and connections with Self-Esteem and Anger that were positive and negative, respectively, confirmed that presumption. God's Love and Virtue also predicted lower Maladaptive Narcissism, and a positive connection appeared between God's Love and Adaptive Narcissism. Only Academic Competence seemed irrelevant to the prediction of self-esteem, anger, and narcissism; and this lack of associations seemed generally in line with ambiguous outcomes observed previously for this measure (Crocker et al., 2003). Except for a few findings for God's Love and Virtue, all Contingency of Self-Worth measures displayed positive partial correlations with each other, and these results pointed toward a psychological commonality that these measures seek to record. In short, partial correlations offered broad support for the validity of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale.

For the Approval of Others measure, therefore, unexpected effects in the mediation analyses were specific to procedures examining this construct within the context of other mediators. Self-Esteem and Physical Appearance were the only other significant mediators in both analyses; and so, these two measures presumably were critical in producing the counterintuitive negative indirect effect paths between Approval of Others and Anger. Perhaps

these unexpected outcomes revealed that this correlate of immature narcissism had noteworthy positive potentials. Such a possibility may receive support within Kohut's (1977) theory. Early in life, the seeking of approval from others would be an adaptive process when those others served as loving and supportive selfobjects who optimally frustrated that need and thus promoted its internalization as self-approval. In therapy for narcissistic disorders, the seeking of approval could have beneficial effects as well. The Kohutian therapist essentially operates as an empathic and supportive selfobject who, among other things, attempts to meet but also to optimally frustrate the client's need for approval. Once again, an internalization of self-approval would be the hoped for result. In these developmental and therapeutic scenarios, therefore, the need for approval would have beneficial potentials, and the unexpected Approval of Others mediation findings perhaps pointed in that direction.

As in earlier projects, Adaptive Narcissism emerged as a more unambiguous measure after controlling for Maladaptive Narcissism and vice versa, and this pattern supported attempts to conceptualize narcissistic functioning along a continuum of self-esteem regulation (Watson, 2005; also see Trumpeter, Watson, O'Leary, & Weathington, 2008). Various interpretative frameworks exist for conceptualizing narcissism, and one previous study differentiated between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and examined their relationships with Contingencies of Self-Worth (Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008). Correlations identified vulnerable narcissism as clearly maladjusted, but grandiose narcissism as operationalized by the NPI yielded mixed implications. Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism also correlated positively. Findings of the present investigation first suggest that more unambiguous outcomes might have appeared if grandiose narcissism had been reexamined after partialing out vulnerable narcissism (and vice versa). More basically, the present study also reveals that at least some features of grandiose narcissism as recorded by the NPI may betray a lack of structure and display their own forms of vulnerability, a possibility in fact implied as a footnote consideration in this previous examination of narcissism and Contingencies of Self-Worth (Zeigler-Hill et al., p. 765). The broader suggestion, therefore, is that narcissism measures might be better conceptualized along a continuum of self-esteem regulation rather than as constructs that can be dichotomized.

Gender differences appeared. Most important was the observation that men scored higher than women on both Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism. Such outcomes seemed consistent with previous demonstrations that gender development and sex role orientations make sense within Kohut's (1977) understanding of self-maturation (Sawrie, Watson, & Biderman, 1991; Watson, Biderman, & Boyd, 1989; Watson, Biderman, & Sawrie, 1994). Higher male levels of Competition (Deaner, 2013) and female levels of Physical Appearance (Franzoi, Vasquez, Sparapani, Frost, Martin, & Aebly, 2012), Family Support (Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1986), Academic Competence (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2008), and the religiously relevant constructs of God's Love and Virtue (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993) all find parallels in the previous research literature.

As with any project, limitations necessitate interpretative caution. Especially noteworthy is the realization that "structure" was a metaphor based on theory and that Self-Esteem and Contingency of Self-Worth scales served as hypothetical, indirect indices of that metaphor. Better measures of structure may be available, and even more basically, other more fruitful theoretical approaches may exist for explaining narcissism and self-esteem regulation. In additional, all data were essentially correlational. Strong assumptions about causality, consequently, remain unwarranted. Even if analyses of mediation involved examination of causal models, procedures did not manipulate the independent variables or the mediators; so, observed outcomes could have reflected, at least in part, the covariance of other unexamined influences. This study examined college undergraduates. Samples examining participants of other ages or different backgrounds might yield important contrasts with the present results. Finally,

E/E served as the index of Maladaptive Narcissism and displayed a relatively low internal reliability. A more psychometrically adequate operationalization of Maladaptive Narcissism could uncover even more robust outcomes.

In conclusion, this study found that "structure" presumably related to self-esteem regulation did as hypothesized mediate the linkages of Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism with Anger. Complexities associated with Approval of Others suggested that especially this variable seems to deserve additional research attention. For Maladaptive Narcissism, only a partial mediation effect appeared, and future studies might usefully explore what other factors might be necessary to produce a full mediation effect. Also of interest would be efforts to examine whether operationalizations of structure might mediate Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism relationships with other aspects of personality functioning, such as empathy, shame, and perfectionism (Watson et al., 1994, 1996, 1999). At the broadest and most important level, however, the present data suggested that the conceptual framework of Kohut (1977) may supply useful guidance in future research attempts to clarify the dynamics of narcissism and self-esteem.

Notes

i) Data from this project appeared in a thesis submitted by the first author in partial fulfillment of the M.S. degree in Psychology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Grisel Garcia is currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree at the University of Rhode Island.

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Impact of narcissistic leadership on employee work outcomes in banking sector of Pakistan

Muhammad Asrar-ul-Haq* and Talha Anjum

Abstract

Background: Narcissism has been studied as a positive as well as a negative trait. It is a personality disorder in which a person is preoccupied with power, self and vanity. Narcissists often pursue leadership and work for their personal interests which ultimately affect others' well-being. It affects employee performance and leads toward turnover. The purpose of this study is to examine how narcissistic leadership can impact subordinates' job-related outcomes.

Method: Data are collected from 310 banking professionals using Likert scale survey questionnaire and analyzed through SEM using AMOS.

Results: Results show that narcissistic leadership has a negative impact on subordinate job satisfaction and well-being, whereas a positive relationship with stress and intentions to quit. However, its relationship with job performance was observed to be insignificant.

Conclusion: Bosses with narcissistic tendencies drive hardworking employees away. The initial problem in narcissistic individuals is their elevated ego. To reverse the trend of narcissism, changes should be made at different levels, i.e., home, school, college or university. In order to tackle narcissism at work place, different established strategies can be used to deal with such individual/leader.

Keywords: Narcissism, Leadership, Job satisfaction, Well-being, Stress, Turnover

Background

Recent studies have reported an association between narcissism and employee work outcomes. Narcissism has been studied for a long time, but its relationship with employee work outcomes is not much explored, particularly in Pakistani context [44]. Banking sector of Pakistan has been a fast growing business sector in Pakistan [7], and the literature suggests that mental distress among banking professionals has increased drastically over the last decade [15, 17, 27, 52]. It affects their performance and leads toward turnover. There may be different reasons for this alarming change, but unsupportive leadership is considered one of the main factors [7]. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of narcissistic leadership on employee work outcomes (job satisfaction, job performance, well-being, stress and intentions to quit) in the banking sector of Punjab, Pakistan.

Narcissism has been studied as a positive as well as a negative trait [45, 46]. The supporters state that people with narcissistic personality are intelligent [5], highly creative [50, 61] and have high self-esteem [60, 21]. On the other hand, some researchers believe that people with narcissistic personality hate themselves and the high self-esteem is just a defense mechanism [10]. The central focus of a narcissist's behavior is his own self, i.e., the behavior is highly focused on self and doing things that are just good for themselves, instead of focusing on the needs of others around and affected by them [54]. According to Campbell et al. [14] and Fahy [22], the

*Correspondence: asrar.uiuc@gmail.com
Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad, Sahiwal Campus, Sahiwal District, Pakistan

people with narcissistic personality are not good at teamwork as narcissists tend to blame others for their failures. Narcissistic leadership has negative relationship with team's creativity as well [30]. That's why, people do not like them and try to avoid them. Studies have shown that narcissists, when given the chance, try to take more than others, make competitive choices [12, 13] and try to do good when they see higher opportunity [59]. According to Campbell [11], they are only attracted to people with high status. On the other hand, people are impressed by them at first because of their energy and extraversion, but this is a short-lived duration [47]. When people start to notice how self-centered they are, this phase of attraction most likely fades. It is reported by narcissists' partners that initially they had an exciting relationship, but the relationship lacks intimacy [25]. They most likely behave in an erratic and aggressive manner when criticized [10, 41]. Overall, a narcissistic individual can have many outcomes for himself that are positive, but there are many negative consequences of his/her behavior for those who are in relationships with him/her.

Narcissistic leaders are observed to follow their own agenda rather than thinking about their followers and do what suits them instead of doing what is best as a whole [16, 45, 46]. As compared to others, narcissists are most likely to self-promote and self-nominate toward management positions [34]. Managers with such personality engage their skills in influencing, bullying and deception [28] to get desired positions. They use these tactics more often than their actual skills and take extra credit for success than they actually deserve; and if they fail, they blame others for it [34]. There are certain psychological problems related to narcissistic leadership like inferiority feelings, unquenchable need for power, hypersensitivity, anger, lack of empathy and inflexibility.

Malik and Khan [44] examined the impact of narcissistic leadership on psychological contracts of employees (i.e., motivation level, commitment level, ownership of work, and behavior and attitude). The results showed that narcissism of boss causes a decrease in psychological contracts of the employees who work for such bosses. According to Robbins [51] and Akehurst et al. [2], employees set their attitudes toward their jobs by considering their behavior, feelings and beliefs. The satisfaction of employees toward their jobs is influenced by many factors within the organization. However, the satisfaction of an employee with his job and the leadership style of the boss are two main elements that have a definitive impact on the effectiveness of an organization [7]. Leadership style of the boss or manager has a direct relationship with employee satisfaction [3, 58]. However, narcissism seems to have a complex relationship with job satisfaction of the employees. Some studies find a direct positive relationship of narcissism and employee job satisfaction [1], some find a direct negative relationship [43], whereas some find no direct relationship at all [56]. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1 Narcissistic leadership would have a significantly negative impact on employee job satisfaction.

The success of any organization relies on the ability of its leader to optimize the human resource of that organization. A good leader understands how important employees are in accomplishing the goals of organization and the importance of motivating employees to move toward these goals. It is believed that leadership style of the boss has significant relationship with employee job performance [19, 36, 49]. Fang et al. [23] conducted a study on hospital employees to check relationship between leadership style and employee job satisfaction, commitment and job performance. The results indicated that leadership style has a significant direct positive impact on job satisfaction. On the other hand, there is an indirect positive relationship of leadership to job performance through job satisfaction. This suggests that leadership style effects job performance of employees through job satisfaction. Godkin and Allcorn [29] stated that satisfied employees cause the organization to be successful. As narcissistic leadership is considered to be a negative kind of leadership, it would have negative association with job performance. However, its relation with job performance is yet to be examined. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2 Narcissistic leadership has a significantly negative impact on employee job performance.

The stress caused by poor supervision often results in compromised well-being, and the outcomes are either mental or physical disturbance. The literature suggests that leadership is linked to employee well-being in a way that it acts as means to affect the well-being of employees [39]. According to Gilbreath and Benson [26], employee well-being is not only affected by the physical work environment, but also by the psychosocial work environment. Godkin and Allcorn [29] found that narcissists spend unlimited amount of time in order to succeed. In this process, they blame and exploit others working for them. If the narcissistic leader is working overtime, then he/she expects the same from his employees without considering about their well-being. Narcissistic leadership is considered as a negative style of leadership. Therefore, the relationship between narcissistic leadership and employee well-being needs to be studied.

Hypothesis 3 Narcissistic leadership has a significantly negative impact on employee well-being.

Leadership is one of the main causes of stress among employees. It is reported that employees face distressed situation if they face an abusive leader or a passive leader. Both kinds of leaders result in increased stress among the followers [9, 53]. Hsieh [37] also validated that leadership style has a significant negative influence on job stress and significant positive influence on job satisfaction. Narcissistic leaders tend to be arrogant [35] that leads to vanishing the sense of community from organization and leaving employees depressed, feeling anxious and disengaged from work [29]. Based on the above discussion, this is assumed that narcissistic leadership would have significant relationship with employee job-related stress.

Hypothesis 4 Narcissistic leadership has a significantly positive impact on increased stress level of employees.

The behavior of supervisor is one of the most important factors in increasing or decreasing employee's morale. Manager expects from employees, in terms of productivity and quality of work, but fails to develop sense of belonging among employees [18]. It results in hateful feelings about the leader. To start over and have a new beginning, employees have to leave the place and find new work. According to Grier [31], a couple of employees had to leave the organization and start over new due to narcissistic boss. There is a saying, 'Employees don't leave companies—they leave bosses.' Satisfied employees execute more positive feelings toward their jobs with increased feelings of responsibility and accountability and stay with the organization for a long time [55].

Elçi et al. [20] examined the effects of ethical leadership and leadership effectiveness on employee turnover intentions using work-related stress as a mediator. They concluded that ethical leadership and leadership effectiveness have negative association with employee turnover intentions, whereas work-related stress has a positive effect on employee turnover intentions. As narcissistic leadership is considered to be a negative kind of leadership, its relation to employee turnover intensions is yet to be examined.

Hypothesis 5 Narcissistic leadership has a significantly positive impact on employees intent to leave.

Methods

Participants

The participants were 310 banking professionals (52% females) from all commercial banks of Punjab Province in Pakistan. Seventy-two percentage of the participants were 20–30 years old. However, all of these did not make the target population for this study. Only those employees were considered who had spent at least 1 year in the same work environment with same boss.

Measures

The scales for different variables were adopted from different instruments. Job satisfaction instrument is adopted from Spector [57]. Narcissistic leadership is measured using short version of Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) by Ames et al. [4]. Job performance scale is adopted from Apenteng [6], and employee well-being is measured through survey developed by Black Dog Institute [48]. Workplace stress is measured through stress scale of The American Institute of Stress, and scale developed by Maertz and Campion [42] is used to measure turnover intensions of the employees. It was Liker-based scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 5 represents strongly agree and 1 represents strongly disagree.

Results

At the first step, normality of data was checked through skewness and kurtosis statistics. The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) are also given in Table 1. The statistics show that intention to quit has the highest mean value (3.59) and employee satisfaction has the

Table 1 Descriptive statistics (N = 310)

	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. error	Statistic	Std. error
Employee satisfaction	2.2016	0.71087	0.691	0.138	− 0.089	0.276
Employee performance	3.3346	0.73931	0.000	0.138	− 0.969	0.276
Employee well-being	2.4801	0.63181	0.428	0.138	− 0.118	0.276
Stress	3.5552	0.58776	0.028	0.138	− 0.489	0.276
Intentions to quit	3.5927	0.48477	− 0.858	0.138	1.744	0.276
NP	3.4653	0.28191	− 0.574	0.138	− 0.040	0.276

lowest mean value (2.20). The results show that data are normally distributed as the statistics of skewness and kurtosis are within the acceptable range (±3) as suggested by Hair [33].

Correlation matrix

Statistics of α validate the reliability of data. Pearson's correlation test is used to analyze the relationship among variables. The result shows that job satisfaction and well-being have a negative relationship with narcissistic leadership, whereas stress, intentions to quit and job performance show a positive relationship with narcissistic leadership. The relationships between narcissistic leadership and other variables are statistically significant except job performance. Correlation matrix also shows a significant negative relationship of narcissistic personality (NP) with job satisfaction of employees. Similarly, narcissistic personality is also seen to have a significant negative relation with employee well-being. On the other hand, workplace stress and intentions to quit are reported to have a significant positive relationship with narcissistic personality. As far is job performance of employees is concerned, the relationship is positive but insignificant at 0.077. Table 2 includes the results of Cronbach's alpha and correlation.

CFA (confirmatory factor analysis)

To test the validity of the measuring instrument, CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) is used [32]. CFA confirms that the items used are good indicators for the construct.

CFA was performed to calculate the validity of the scale. In this study, convergent and discriminant validity of all unobserved variables was computed. To calculate the convergent validity, AVE was computed using the factor loading score of the items of latent variables. The value of AVE should be greater than .50 [8]. Table 3 provides the analysis of convergent and discriminant validity. As indicated in the table, all values lie above .50. Discriminant validity was measured by the method provided by Fornell and Larcker [24]. To satisfy the validity of the scale, the value of squared root of AVE must be greater than squared correlation between the variables. Table 3 indicates that the values of AVE, which are greater than squared correlation. The measurement model of this study is shown in Fig. 1.

According to Jaccard and Wan [38], there are different fitness indices which are analyzed to see the fitness of model. The values of GFI, IFI, RMSEA, RMR, NFI and CFI (.963, .956, .026, .009, .974 and .957) are within the threshold values. This shows that the measurement model of this study is best fit.

Path analysis (structural model) and hypothesis testing

Hypotheses of this study are analyzed through path model. The fitness of model is analyzed using different fitness indices. The values of GFI, IFI, RMSEA, RMR, NFI and CFI (.951, .968, .045, .049, .977 and .964) are within acceptable range. The path model is shown in Fig. 2.

Results indicate that narcissistic personality of supervisor has a direct negative impact on job satisfaction of employees (*estimate* = − .531, $p < .001$); hence, **H1 is accepted**. Narcissistic personality has a direct negative impact on employee well-being of employees (*estimate* = − *.517, p value* < .001), suggesting that **H3 is accepted**. Results also indicate that narcissistic personality of boss has a positive impact on workplace stress faced by the employees (*estimate* = .314, *p value* = .007); similarly, narcissistic personality of boss has a direct positive relationship on employees' intentions to quit (*estimate* = .317, *p value* < .001); hence, **H4 and H5 are accepted**, respectively. Whereas narcissistic personality of boss and job performance of employees showed an opposite relationship than what was predicted and hypothesized (*estimate* = .264, *p value* = .076), it was predicted that the relationship will be negative in nature, but the results show that the relationship is positive in nature; however, the significance level of this result is unacceptable; thus, **H2 is rejected**. Standardized estimates of path model are given in Table 4.

Table 2 Correlations and reliability

	α	Satisfaction	Performance	Well-being	Stress	Intensions to quit	NP
Satisfaction	.71	1					
Performance	.80	.133*	1				
Well-being	.76	.216**	.082	1			
Stress	.77	− .264**	− .398**	− .525**	1		
Intensions to quit	.72	− .059	− .025	− .227**	.312**	1	
NP	.83	− .211**	.101	− .230**	.151**	.184**	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 Standardized regression weights

Variables	Measure	Factor loading (convergent validity)	AVE	√AVE
Narcissistic personality	AU1	.838	.6577	.8110
	AU2	.821		
	SS1	.820		
	SS2	.861		
	SS3	.826		
	SU1	.878		
	SU2	.821		
	SU3	.804		
	EX1	.824		
	EX2	.812		
	EX3	.860		
	EP1	.619		
	EP2	.665		
	EP3	.798		
	ET1	.851		
	ET2	.834		
Job satisfaction	JS1	.840	.6878	.8293
	JS2	.853		
	JS3	.831		
	JS4	.792		
Job performance	JP1	.656	.5411	.7356
	JP2	.693		
	JP3	.729		
	JP4	.710		
	JP5	.678		
	JP6	.831		
	JP7	.792		
Employee well-being	WWB1	.838	.6577	.8110
	WWB2	.821		
	WWB3	.820		
	WWB4	.861		
	WWB5	.826		
	WWB6	.878		
Work stress	WS1	.701	.6187	.7865
	WS2	.778		
	WS3	.837		
	WS4	.823		
	WS5	.854		
	WS6	.774		
	WS7	.817		
	WS8	.856		
	WS9	.833		
	WS10	.778		
Intentions to quit	ITQ1	.843	.6316	.795
	ITQ2	.905		
	ITQ3	.797		
	ITQ4	.801		
	ITQ5	.847		
	ITQ6	.560		
	ITQ7	.795		
	ITQ8	.793		

Discussion

Leadership style is one of the main elements that have a definitive impact on the effectiveness of an organization. It is also an important determinant of job satisfaction of employees as it can impact the motivation and dedication levels of employees [40].

The results of the study regarding job satisfaction and narcissistic leadership of boss did not contradict previous studies [31, 43]. The findings of this study show that narcissistic leadership has significant association with job satisfaction of employees in the banking sector of Pakistan. The relationship was found significant with a negative coefficient of −.531 with a p value of .000. This negative coefficient reveals that leaders with grandiose sense of self, who exaggerate about their accomplishments, have a negative impact on the satisfaction level of employees that work for them. As the previous works do suggest, narcissistic tendencies of the boss relate to less satisfaction of the employees who work for such boss. Narcissistic leaders exploit others for their personal gains and blame whoever and wherever they feel like to save their own selves. Employees in such situations feel threatened and un-supported. On the other hand, employees who are supported have better attitudes toward their jobs and appear to be much happy.

Based on the findings of this study, narcissistic leadership does not have a negative impact on job performance, as suggested by Shurden [56] that an indirect relationship exists between job performance and narcissistic leadership through leader member exchange, but in this study it was found to be positive, but the results were insignificant. The relationship was found insignificant with a coefficient of .264 with a p value of .076. The reason of this unexpected finding might be that because some dimensions of narcissistic personality, i.e., authority and self-sufficiency, are ignored by the employees as they

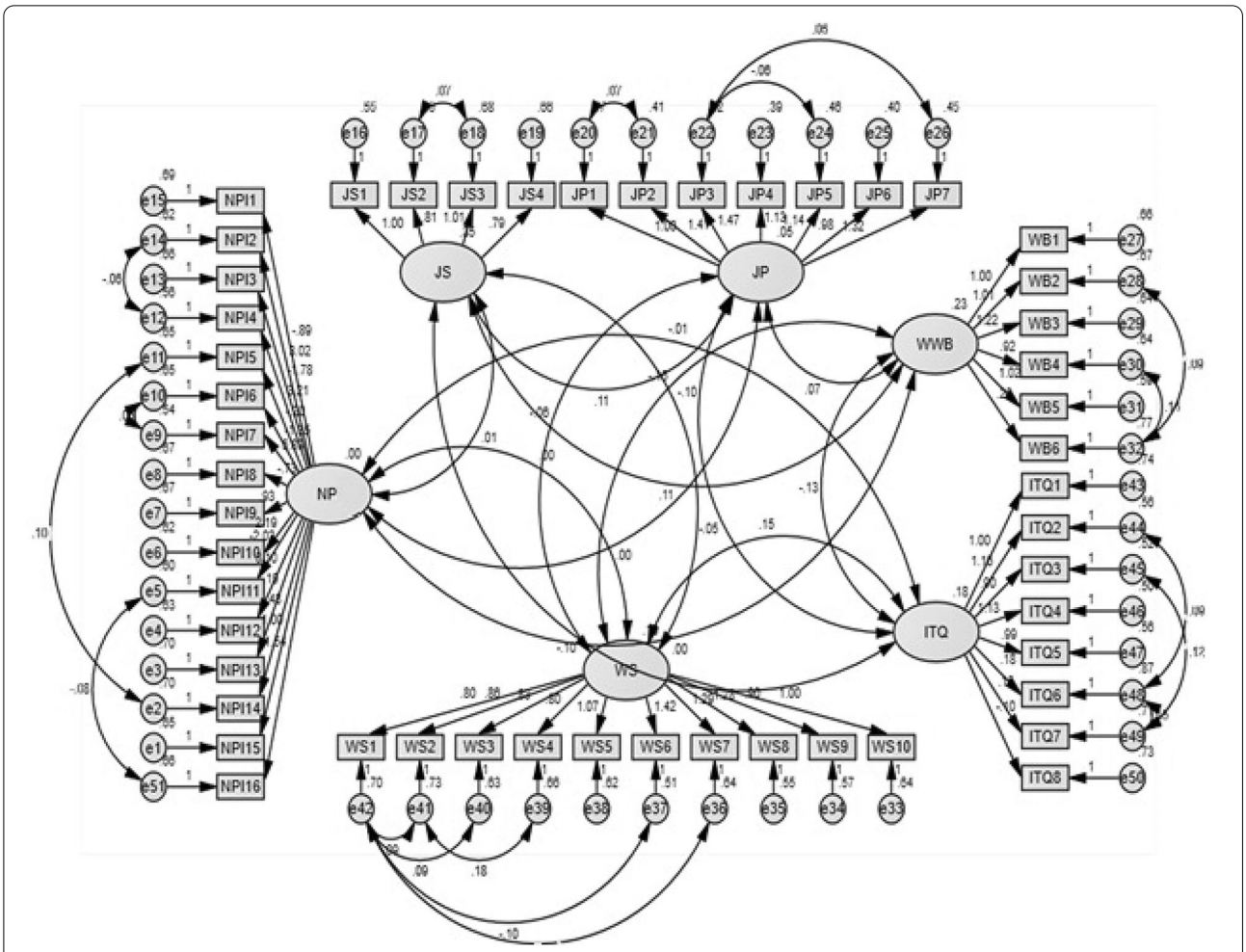

Fig. 1 Measurement model

little care about the level of authority their boss has over them and focus primarily on their own work.

The results of this study did indicate that there is a strong negative relationship between narcissistic leadership style of boss and the employee well-being of employees. The relationship was found to be significant with a negative coefficient of −.517 with a p value of .000. This proves that in the presence of self-centered bosses who do a favor only to get two more in return, employees are more than likely to feel that their employee well-being is at stake. It was also found that narcissistic leadership in fact affects employee workplace stress levels. The relationship was found significant with a coefficient of .314 with a p value of .007. This represents that narcissistic leadership contributes to elevated stress levels of the employees who work for such an individual.

The study also highlights that narcissistic leadership has a strong positive relationship with employees' intentions to quit the organization. The relationship was found significant with a coefficient of .317 and a p value of .000. This indicates that bosses with narcissistic tendencies are more than likely to drive hardworking employees away simply with their extreme sense of superiority and a grandiose sense of self.

All of us have some sort of narcissism in one form or another; it is not necessarily a bad thing as it is related to self-esteem. A higher degree of extraversion is reported in such individuals. The problem does not occur as long as you are aware and know what you are doing and the kind of ways you are reacting. It becomes a problem when it crosses the normal limits of self-indulgence and turns into self-absorption, verbal or physical abuse, paranoia and other humiliating behaviors. A huge amount of money is spent every year on training and development programs, but narcissism in bosses remains ignored. It is needed for organizations to understand that without changing the behaviors and attitudes, all the training is not going to do any good. Employees get de-motivated

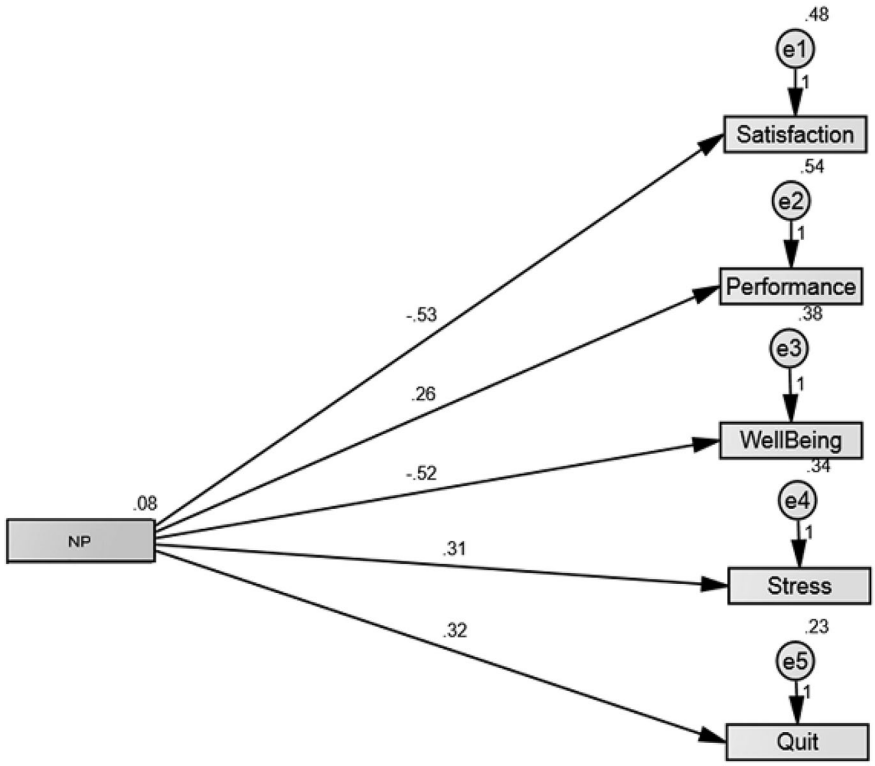

Fig. 2 Structural model

Table 4 Standardized estimates of path model

Causal path		Estimate (β)
NP	**Satisfaction**	**−.531*****
NP	Performance	.264
NP	Well-being	− .517***
NP	Stress	.314**
NP	Quit	.317***

***$p < .001$; **$p < .05$

when they see the same behaviors and narcissistic tendencies in their bosses.

Conclusion

Leadership style has a significant impact on subordinates' performance which ultimately leads to organizational success. Narcissistic leadership has a significant association with job satisfaction of employees in the banking sector of Pakistan. Based on this study, it can be inferred that leaders who exaggerate about their accomplishments and have narcissistic personality cannot satisfy their subordinates. If management wants their employees to perform better, leaders should not exploit others for their self-interests, rather support them. Narcissistic leadership style elevates stress levels of the employees and ultimately affects workplace environment and individual well-being.

Implications

Parents are the initial perpetrators that inculcate narcissistic tendencies in their children [35]. Therefore, to break this cycle of narcissism, awareness is to be made to help future parents. The initial problem in narcissistic individuals is their elevated ego. So, the solution is to stop feeding the ego.

To reverse the trend of narcissism, changes can be made in school, college or university levels or additional programs can be urged. The basic premise behind this addition is to focus on the similarities within students rather than on differences. These programs help students in developing social skills and teach them to resolve conflicts peacefully.

In order to tackle narcissism at work place and to positively influence the workforce, some big steps at the organizational level are to be taken. If a narcissistic individual is employed, different established strategies can be used to deal with such individual/leader, for instance, appeasement tactic (to let the narcissistic individual have

his way), defensive tactic (to fight the narcissist and dealing with the problems as they arise), retaliatory tactics (to fight fire with fire). In addition, organizations can have professional development programs that focus on developing personality and utilizing narcissistic approach in productive matters.

Abbreviations
SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences; AMOS: Analysis of a moment structures.

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Authors' contribution
Both authors T.A. and M.A. have made substantial contributions to conception and design of this study. T.A. has been involved in acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data and drafting of the manuscript. M.A. has been involved in revising the content to make it publishable. Both authors have given final approval of the version to be published. Both authors agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. Further, both authors read and approved the manuscript.

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Narcissism: It's more Complex than High Self-Esteem

Marion Wallace*

Mental Health Adolescent Unit, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Alabama, USA

***Corresponding author:** *Marion Wallace, Clinical Director, Mental Health Adolescent Unit, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, USA, Tel: 205-975-3313, E-mail: wallace9@uab.edu*

Narcissism is often used synonymously with high or inflated self-esteem. Indeed, narcissism is illustrated by individuals with grandiose self-views and a need for admiration. The origins of the term stem from Greek mythology where a young man named Narcissus became enamored with his reflection. However, individuals with higher levels of narcissistic traits make up a unique combination of high and vulnerable self-esteem. Since narcissism is more complex than high self-esteem, individuals with higher levels of narcissism may not see the benefits typically rewarded to those with stable high self-esteem. In particular, narcissism is associated with maladaptive behaviors, fragile self-esteem, and impaired interpersonal relationships.

Although some researches suggest that high self-esteem is linked to aggressive behavior, these findings have been inconsistent [1]. A more through look at the literature may lead one to believe that narcissism, not high self, is linked to aggression. Stable high self-esteem is associated with better problem solving abilities and a decreased likelihood to attribute the motives of others as hostile. These factors actually help protect an individual from behaving in aggressive ways. Alternatively, fragile or unstable high self-esteem- in the form of narcissism- has been linked with aggression, a need for retaliation, and negative feelings after upward social comparisons.

In considering the differences in outcomes one must think of narcissism and high self-esteem as two related but unique constructs. High self-esteem is based on an individual's subjective view of themselves and their worth. Narcissism is based on an elevated view of self that stems from the approval, admiration, and acceptance of others. Henceforth, when an individual is not validated or viewed as superior by their peers they are more likely to respond in aggressive, antagonist ways. An individual with high self-esteem maintains their level of self-esteem despite the opinions of others. The self-esteem of individuals with higher levels of narcissism is fragile and reliant on power or exploitation of others to maintain status quo.

Another important difference to note between these variables is their impact on interpersonal relationships. Specifically, individuals with high stable self-esteem typically possess healthy, egalitarian social relationships. Individuals with higher levels of narcissism are plagued with strained interpersonal relationships that ultimately lead to the dissolution of the relationships. Some theorists suggest that narcissists' are initially liked for their confident, charismatic attitudes, but are subsequently shunned for ostentatious displays of these traits.

In summation, narcissism should be viewed as high, elevated, self-esteem that is also fragile and dependent on the opinions of others. If we categorize narcissism into its adaptive and maladaptive facets, one may see benefits associated with high self-esteem. However, narcissism in general is not associated with the positive consequences that have been liked to high stable self-esteem.

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Voicing the Victims of Narcissistic Partners: A Qualitative Analysis of Responses to Narcissistic Injury and Self-Esteem Regulation

Ava Green[1] and Kathy Charles[1]

Abstract

Addressing an underresearched aspect of narcissism, this study investigated subclinical "grandiose" and "vulnerable" narcissism within the context of domestic violence. Common triggers evoking narcissistic rage and differences in narcissistic injury response were explored. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with seven participants who reported being in a relationship with a narcissistic partner were thematically analyzed. Three overarching themes emerged: (a) overt and covert expressions of abuse, (b) challenge to self-perceived authority, and (c) fear of abandonment. Findings suggest both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists' reactions to narcissistic injury are most likely covertly and overtly aggressive and violent; however, the underlying motives for the behavior differed. For grandiose narcissists, violence was commonly triggered by threats to self-esteem, whereas vulnerable narcissists commonly experienced significant injury and rage from fear of abandonment. It is argued that attempts to regulate and restore self-esteem for the two subtypes of narcissistic presentation will differ, thus providing further support for theoretical distinctions between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists in intimate relationships. It is concluded that popular images of the narcissist are overly simplistic as the personality trait is more complex than the grandiose type typically presented. This study contributes new understanding to the nature of narcissism in domestic violence. Limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords

narcissism, narcissistic injury, rage, domestic violence

Introduction

The psychopathology of narcissism has been widely researched (Larson, Vaughn, Salas-Wright, & Delisi, 2015; Miller, Widiger, & Campbell, 2010; Ronningstam, 2005), with the extreme and unhealthy forms of narcissism considered a personality disorder (narcissistic personality disorder [NPD]; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Although clinical and empirical research consistently identifies two types of narcissistic characters, namely, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; APA, 2013) criteria of NPD emphasize the grandiose character at the expense of vulnerable content. In these criteria, narcissistic pathology is represented as grandiose, arrogant, entitled, envious, and exploitative. The vulnerable personality, on the contrary, is observed as overtly presenting with shyness, hypersensitivity, and inhibition, while harboring feelings of covert grandiosity and entitled expectations (Levy, 2012). It is noteworthy that many traits descriptive of NPD diagnosis exist among the general population, wherein individuals exhibit narcissistic traits reflective of both adaptive and maladaptive characteristics (i.e., subclinical narcissism). In the empirical literature, dominant assessments of subclinical narcissism are based on the NPD description, with more than 75% of research only capturing grandiose elements of narcissism (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). The present study investigates perceptions of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism through a qualitative analysis of underlying responses to narcissistic injury in intimate relationships. The focus is specifically on individuals with subclinical narcissistic personality styles, in contrast to actual NPD.

[1]Edinburgh Napier University, UK

Corresponding Author:
Ava Green, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh EH11 4BN, UK.
Email: ava.green@city.ac.uk

Background

Subclinical Narcissism and Its Relationship With Violence

One of the more frequently studied consequential interpersonal behaviors of narcissism is the perpetration of aggression following ego threats (Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Theories have postulated the concept of "narcissistic injury" in explaining how narcissistic self-preoccupation can fuel a vicious cycle of intense anger, violence, and vindictiveness when self-esteem is challenged (Freud, 1914/1957; Kohut, 1977). Logan (2009) proposed that when the potential of a threat (real or imagined) is perceived by the narcissist, intolerable emotions in the form of shame, humiliation, and anger are evoked, followed either instantly or later by a self-righteous defensive response intended to attack or eliminate the source of threat to restore self-esteem.

Accordingly, the reaction and intense anger in response to perceived interpersonal slights and injury will inevitably result in a phenomenon referred to as "narcissistic rage" (Krizan & Johar, 2015). Narcissistic rage is thought to be instigated by underlying feelings of shame and inferiority experienced as extremely severe, culminating in intense anger at the perceived sources of shame. These intolerable emotions, if prolonged, may result in chronic rage reactions, which further aggravate existing feelings of guilt and shame, in turn fueling anger and ultimately creating a self-perpetuating "shame-rage spiral" (Krizan & Johar, 2015). Although such behavior captures narcissistic rage as a state of explosive anger, narcissists may also respond to provocations and insults in a passive–aggressive manner (Miller et al., 2010; Roark, 2012). Such behavior may involve narcissists holding grudges against those who are perceived to have wronged them, carefully planning plots for revenge to reassert domination and control, and thus repair damage done to self-esteem (Roark, 2012).

A number of studies on basic personality traits have predicted narcissistic traits that predispose certain individuals to criminal behavior (Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2016; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Hepper, Hart, Meek, Cisek, & Sedikides, 2014; Miller & Campbell, 2008). For instance, Hepper et al. (2014) investigated the role of narcissism (both NPD and subclinical narcissism) by comparing levels in young prison offenders with those without a criminal record. In short, results showed that while prison participants had significantly higher levels of narcissism than the control group, this finding was significantly mediated by levels of trait narcissism rather than clinical NPD symptoms. It was found that narcissistic entitlement and the ensuing lack of empathy were the main predictors of offending behavior. The authors concluded that the findings might be symptomatic of the blurred boundary between pathological and subclinical narcissism, in that pathological narcissism, instead of being a qualitatively distinct construct, may simply reflect the extreme end of a single dimension, with entitlement and lack of empathy being the most maladaptive components.

Subclinical Narcissism and Its Relationship With Domestic Violence

The empirical research on trait narcissism casts a negative light on narcissistic individuals in intimate relationships (Miller et al., 2010). In such relationships, narcissism has been associated with conflict and hostility (Moeller, Crocker, & Bushman, 2009), low commitment and infidelity (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; McNulty & Widman, 2014), vengeful-seeking behavior (Brown, 2004), maladaptive jealousy (Chin, Atkinson, Raheb, Harris, & Vernon, 2017), a game-playing and exploitative approach to romantic relationships (Campbell et al., 2002), and an accepting attitude toward domestic violence (Blinkhorn et al., 2016). Domestic violence encompasses physical, verbal, and psychological forms of abusive behavior; thus, any pattern of controlling, coercive, or threatening behavior intended to punish, harm, or frighten an intimate partner is considered illegal (Legislation.gov.uk, 2015). Narcissism has been linked to the perpetration of psychological abuse (Gormley & Lopez, 2010), verbal abuse (Caiozzo, Houston, & Grych, 2016; Lamkin, Lavner, & Shaffer, 2017), and sexual and physical abuse (Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2015; Carton & Egan, 2017; Keiller, 2010; Ryan, Weikel, & Sprechini, 2008; Southard, 2010). It is noteworthy that although these maladaptive behaviors can also be applied to nonnarcissistic relationships, it is arguable that, in the case of narcissists, they may well be more prevalent (Fields, 2012; Peterson & DeHart, 2014).

A related line of research points to the conclusion that narcissists view interpersonal relationships in the service of self-esteem regulation, power, and control (Besser & Priel, 2010; Campbell et al., 2002). Alarmingly, these relationship-threatening behaviors may reflect, in part, strategic attempts at manipulating and undermining intimate partners to reexert and reestablish a sense of power and control (Filippini, 2005; Määttä, Uusiautti, & Määttä, 2012; Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Tortoriello, Hart, Richardson, & Tullett, 2017). Although romantic partners are often viewed as "objects" for self-enhancement and self-aggrandizement for narcissistic individuals (Foster & Campbell, 2005; Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002), the often complex and tragic outcome of entering a relationship with a narcissist is that the narcissist may initially come across as charming, seductive, and exciting during the early stages of the relationship, but the dark and toxic characteristics associated with the trait only become apparent over time (Moeller et al., 2009).

Grandiose Versus Vulnerable Narcissism in Intimate Relationships

The majority of studies on narcissism and domestic violence have been dominated by the grandiose component (i.e., the Narcissistic Personality Inventory or the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subcomponent) as the main assessment of narcissism (Blinkhorn et al., 2015; Caiozzo et al., 2016;

Carton & Egan, 2017; Fields, 2012; Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Keller et al., 2014; Lamkin et al., 2017; Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Robins, Tracy, & Shaver, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008; Southard, 2010). These studies arguably fail to consider the complex and multidimensional construct of the personality trait. Indeed, while all narcissists are likely to display similar behaviors, they are not all the same. Rinker (2009) argued it is necessary that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are differentiated, as violence against a partner, controlling behaviors, and psychological abuse are mediated by the two subtypes of narcissistic presentation.

Interpersonally, both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists display cold, domineering, and vindictive characteristics, but the underlying motive for these interpersonal behaviors can diverge based on the predominant subtype. For instance, Dickinson and Pincus (2003) found that grandiose narcissists are associated with less interpersonal distress, higher self-esteem, and a secure/dismissive attachment style as compared with vulnerable narcissists. On the contrary, it was found that vulnerable narcissists appeared to exhibit an anxious/fearful attachment style, high interpersonal distress, and low self-esteem. As a result of these interpersonal difficulties, Dickinson and Pincus (2003) asserted that vulnerable narcissists are likely to promote social withdrawal and avoidance of intimate relationships, given their fear of disappointments and self-esteem threat.

Similarly, other research has found that vulnerable narcissism has been associated with a possessive love style characterized by dependency and interpersonal fearfulness (Rohmann, Herner, Bierhoff, & Neumann, 2012), whereas grandiose narcissism was associated with attachment avoidance and independent self-construal. Besser and Priel (2010) compared the two subtypes in relation to emotional reactions to threatening scenarios involving achievement failure and interpersonal rejection. Although both forms of narcissism required external validation, vulnerable narcissists were particularly concerned with the approval of others as evidenced by heightened sensitivity toward the interpersonal rejection scenario, whereas grandiose narcissists were particularly vulnerable to threats concerning achievement and competition failure but were less concerned regarding domains requiring the approval of others. Although caution must be exercised when interpreting these findings as they are based on imaginary responses to threats and may not capture and elicit uncontrolled acts of anger as would be representative of real-life experiences (Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010). The divergent nomological networks associated with grandiose and vulnerable narcissism suggest that the two subtypes differ in domains in which self-esteem is built and maintained.

Although subclinical narcissism has received growing interest in the empirical literature, the overreliance of quantitative methods measuring grandiosity has led to a paucity of research investigating the multidimensional conceptualization of narcissism and the underlying motives underpinning grandiose and vulnerable narcissists' relationship-threatening behavior. The present study begins to address this shortcoming through a qualitative analysis of how grandiose and vulnerable narcissistic individuals are perceived to differ in their responses to injury and self-esteem regulation in domestically abusive relationships. These concepts will be explored through the use of informant narratives, that is, the romantic partners of narcissistic individuals. In so doing, this study intends to expand the nomological networks associated with grandiose and vulnerable features of subclinical narcissism and aims to offer a more nuanced and in-depth insight into how narcissistic individuals are perceived through the lived experiences of their romantic partners.

On the basis of existing empirical research and theoretical distinctions between grandiosity and vulnerability, it was surmised that different triggers or intent for similar abusive behavior would be identified, and that there would be differences in how grandiose and vulnerable narcissists attempt to regulate and restore self-esteem following narcissistic injury. Violence is expected for both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists in their responses to injury; however, in the grandiose narcissist, such violence may be means to the end of ego promotion and enlargement, whereas in the vulnerable narcissist, the violence is a protection from personal vulnerability.

Method

Sampling and Participants

Given the nature of the research, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted. This involved specifically selecting participants based on their relevance to the research topic (Silverman, 2010). The inclusion criteria required participants to perceive themselves to have been in a relationship with a narcissist and also be above 18 years old. There were no criteria for gender. Seven participants (six females and one male) took part in this study. Seven participants proved sufficient to reach "data saturation," that is, when the number of interviews conducted generates repetition of ideas and themes, and collection of any new data tends to, therefore, be redundant of data already collected (Saunders et al., 2018).

The majority of participants were accessed through a private Facebook group ("NARH—Narcissism Abuse & Recovery Hotline"). At the time of recruitment, the group contained 1,990 members and considered active with daily posts. The administrator of the group was asked to forward a recruitment email as an approach to recruit participants, inviting members to contact the researcher directly if they were interested in taking part. Subsequently, those who were interested in taking part directly contacted the researcher voluntarily, and no one was coerced into taking part in the study. Other participants showed interest through word of mouth about the research project and approached the researcher as self-perceived victims of narcissistic partners.

Design

A qualitative approach was chosen for this project as such an approach allows sensitive exploration of a difficult topic in a way that a quantitative approach would not. While quantitative studies seek broader numerically based data for generalization to a wider population (Wilson & MacLean, 2011), a qualitative design offers an in-depth approach to the research question to understand it more thoroughly, and to analyze concepts in more detail (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Semi-structured interviews were chosen to gain in-depth knowledge of the participant's experiences of their encounters with a narcissistic partner. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility and allow participants to elaborate and elicit accounts of their experiences (Gough & Lyons, 2016).

The interview schedule (see the appendix) contained broad, open-ended questions centered on how participants perceived narcissistic traits in their partners and their recollections regarding the abuse they were subjected to. The interview questions emerged from theoretical concepts and empirical research in the literature review. Although a deductive approach has been taken, the interview allowed for flexibility and openness for alternative themes and concepts to emerge throughout the interview process, which might not fit within the theoretical approach, but were, nevertheless, worthwhile to discuss. Additional prompt questions were asked in instances where elaboration and clarification were desired for both the participant and the researcher. Throughout the interview process, the researcher allowed for openness and nondirective questions as a way to encourage the participants to expand their responses and individual experiences. At times, the researcher asked more specific questions based on the nature of the interview; however, this acted as a prompt to reinforce communication and to avoid any prejudgments or influence on the part of the researcher (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003).

Data Collection and Procedure

Four interviews were conducted online (using Skype) and three interviews were conducted face-to-face in the city center at a place and time of convenience for each participant. Prior to the interview, all participants were provided with an information sheet followed by a consent form. The participants were also informed that the interview would be recorded from start to end on a voice-recording app. Each interview lasted approximately 45 min, ranging from 20 to 76 min. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Bracketing was used to minimize research bias as much as possible. Bracketing is a conscious effort to avoid idiosyncrasies and personal bias throughout the research, thereby consistently interpreting what is truly articulated in the data to most accurately reflect participants' subjective accounts. A step-by-step analysis process was documented and supported with relevant data extracts for further illustration of the approach to interpretation. The data set and the illustrative quotes were discussed within the research team before final representation of themes to further eliminate interpretation bias and to ensure intercoder reliability.

Given the sensitive nature of this research topic, a conscious effort was made to ensure a safe atmosphere where participants had the freedom to share their experiences without feeling uncomfortable or judged. All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and that their names would be replaced with a pseudonym for anonymity purposes. Participants were also fully aware of information which the researcher may not be able to hold in confidence, such as disclosures containing potentially serious risk (to either the participant or someone else) or information that would entail a future risk or act of criminal activity. At the end of the interview process, each participant was thanked for their participation and was provided with a debrief sheet detailing the rationale of the study followed by a list of contact details for agencies providing emotional support, in case participants had experienced any sort of discomfort followed by taking part in this study.

Data Analysis

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher decided not to provide explicit guidance regarding the definition of narcissism as to avoid influencing participants' understanding of narcissism. This strategy was used on the basis that it would potentially offer a more accurate glimpse into how others conceive of the construct of narcissism (also suggested by other research; Miller et al., 2011). Once interviews were conducted, it was possible to predict what type of narcissist the participant's partner was through the use of the first interview question, for example, "How would you describe a narcissistic person?" followed by a thorough analysis of trait descriptions and theoretical distinctions between the two subtypes of narcissism. As a result, four participants had partners who displayed grandiose characteristics and three victims had partners who exhibited vulnerable traits.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). These guidelines contain a six-phase step at conducting thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finally, producing the results. To perform thematic analysis, the transcripts were read several times to facilitate familiarity with the data. This was followed by annotations and highlighting to identify initial codes that were of relevance to the key issues and concepts raised in the literature review. After the coding process, the data were thoroughly analyzed in a search for recurrent underlying patterns or themes that captured meaningful and important information in addressing the research aims of this project. As this study has a specific research question, themes and patterns within the data were identified using a deductive

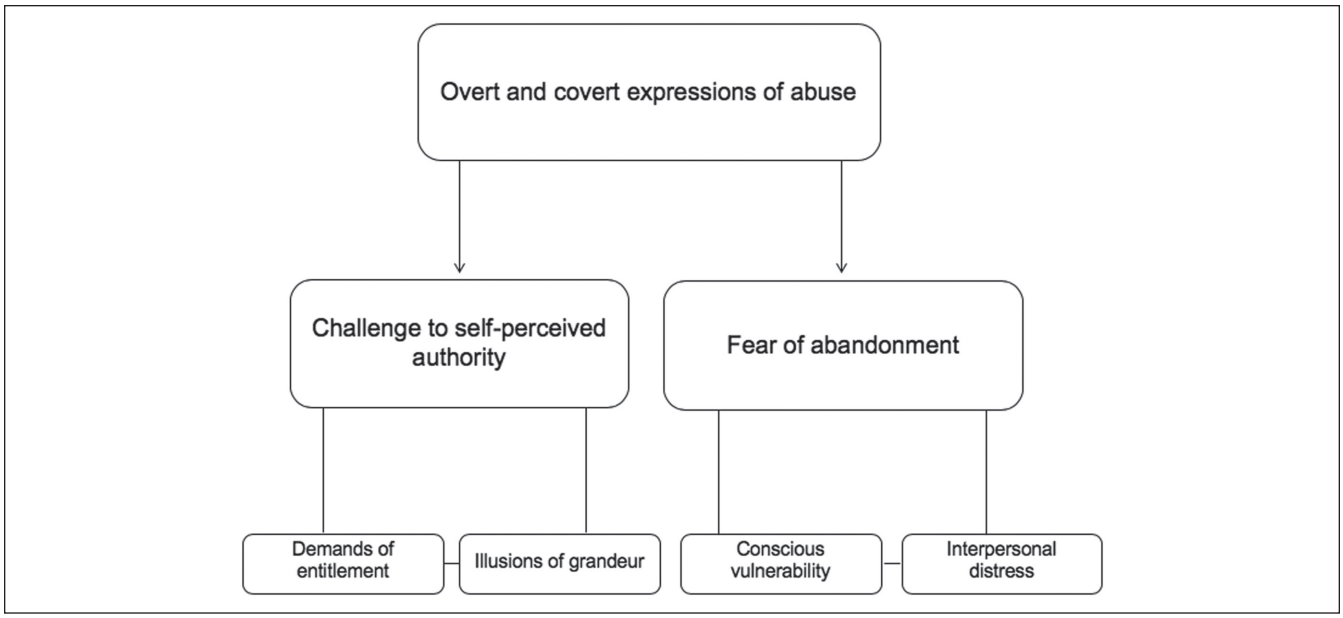

Figure 1. Thematic Map.

(theory-driven) approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that a deductive approach is more analyst driven, as it is closely related to the researcher's theoretical interest and research topic.

The codes and development of themes were analyzed at a latent level of interpretation, as this type of analysis goes beyond surface-level interpretations and identifies underlying patterns and meanings, which are theorized as underpinning what is truly articulated in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The stages following these steps required a recursive process where subthemes were reviewed and refined to ensure an accurate representation of analysis had been produced between the participants' accounts and the thematic description of data. Finally, a thematic map was constructed to further enable visualization between the subthemes, which were generated from the coding process and main overarching themes.

Results

Thematic Analysis

Three overarching themes emerged from the interview transcripts concerning the participants' subjective accounts of their intimate relationships with narcissistic partners. These themes are (a) overt and covert expressions of abuse, (b) challenge to self-perceived authority, and (c) fear of abandonment. The first theme captures the variety of abuse and hostility reported by the participants in their victimization of domestic violence. The second and third themes encapsulate the underlying motives driving aggressive outbursts for the grandiose narcissist and for the vulnerable narcissist, respectively (see Figure 1). The following section presents each theme with accompanying data narratives, before proceeding with a discussion of how the data findings relate and differ from existing literature on narcissism in domestic violence.

Overt and Covert Expressions of Abuse

This theme concerned the common and frequent expressions of narcissistic rage in intimate relationships. The narcissists described in this sample were perceived to be in a constant state of rage, which appeared to be manifested outwardly in the form of verbal and physical abuse, and inwardly in terms of more subtle and repressed anger, pernicious psychological manipulation, and passive–aggressive behavior. The harm enacted to participants was perceived to be instigated of feelings of control, dominance, and power on part of their narcissistic partners. At times, the rage was experienced as unpredictable, frightening, and occurring without apparent provocations:

> . . . he was always mad for no reason. He was always physically abusive when we argued. One time he sat on top of me and headbutted me on the nose because he saw a text I sent to a friend that he was "mentally ill." I cried and panicked but he said it was my fault and later on showed remorse and started playing the victim. (Sarah—grandiose partner)

Although physical assault was a common theme underpinning victimization of violent behavior, many participants experienced the psychological abuse as more damaging, with violent threats, coercive control, and the systematic attempts

to menace and invalidate their perceived reality (i.e., "gas-lighting") as being significant factors in their mental health.

A glaringly example of "gas-lighting" was conveyed by Elisabeth, who suffered prolonged psychological abuse during her relationship:

> He would tell me what the reality was and he justified it so well and he was so convinced in his arguments that I would sort of accept his reality as my own . . . I felt like I was part of his reality to the point where I didn't even have my own thoughts anymore. (Elisabeth—vulnerable partner)

Similarly remarked by another victim of severe psychological torment,

> In the end the rage was huge, violent, scary and lots of threats of killing me and my children. I mean he threatened to burn me and my children alive. (Jessica—grandiose partner)

The interpersonally exploitative and devious nature of their relationships was described by participants as both swift and vicious, as well as slow and insidious. Participants conveyed sentiments that the attachment they formed with their narcissistic partners left them with feelings of worthlessness, confusion, anxiety, posttraumatic stress and suicidal ideation as a result of the tormenting behaviors, blame-shifting tendencies, and the disavowal of the ramifications following the maltreatment they were sustained to.

Challenge to Self-Perceived Authority

This theme illustrated the common underlying trigger that evoked rage in narcissistic partners who displayed grandiose characteristics. During thematic coding, several elements of grandiose personalities emerged, such as overt expressions of arrogance, self-absorption, and exhibition of superiority in attitude and behavior without any need for its justification. These defining characteristics appeared to be underpinned by inflated demands of entitlement and illusions of grandeur. Analysis showed that rage associated with grandiosely narcissistic partners appeared to be commonly provoked by confrontation or perceived threats to their self-worth (exemplified in the data excerpts below):

> The minute I stood up against him or he felt he was losing control he would get aggressive and violent . . . once we were arguing and he knew he was losing the argument so he grabbed the iron, held it two inches from my face and said "I will burn you and nobody will ever look at you again." (Jessica—grandiose partner)

And,

> Once I said something and she got offended and said "well normally I would just get up and punch you in the face." (Lydia—grandiose partner)

Narcissistically grandiose partners were narrated to make hostile outbursts through a justification underpinned by feelings of entitlement for being "special" and "superior." Deviant patterns of behavior manifested in continual attempts to reassert dominance and control in interpersonal contexts. Susan describes,

> He didn't like to be argued with, I should have just listened to him you know and have him taking over complete control. (Susan—grandiose partner)

Infuriation precipitated by ego threats stemming from unmet expectations was described by most participants. In responses to narcissistic injury, perceptions of grandiose narcissists suggest that restoration of self-esteem is maintained through engaging in self-regulatory behaviors to undermine and derogate partners, often quite overtly, as a way to defend themselves against slightest injury and ego-threatening contexts. It is apparent in the data that there is a dissonance between narcissists' expectations of intimate relationships (i.e., self-enhancement by means of admiring attention) and their tendency to fluctuate with hostility when their selves have been threatened. Paradoxically, it appears grandiose narcissists use self-defeating strategies in interpersonal relationships, essentially undermining the self they are trying to build and maintain.

Fear of Abandonment

The common underlying trigger that fueled narcissistic rage in individuals who exhibited vulnerable characteristics was the fear of being abandoned (i.e., losing narcissistic supply). Vulnerable characteristics were apparent in the interview narratives, with features of hypersensitivity, insecurity, jealousy, paranoia, control, and an exploitative interpersonal style being common of narcissistic partners as recalled by the participants. Vulnerably narcissistic partners were perceived to regularly become enraged at the slightest fear of rejection or abandonment, underpinned by defenses against conscious vulnerability and interpersonal distress:

> Just the idea, the prospect of us breaking up freaked him out so much that I sort of had to take it back in a way you know because it seemed to utterly destroy him. (Elisabeth—vulnerable partner)

Similarly as described by another victim,

> Well the fact that me and him were on the verge of breaking up for such a long time and never actually broke up says a lot about how he didn't want me to ever leave him . . . (Rebecca—vulnerable partner)

Participants conveyed that they gradually cut people out of their lives and became isolated as they struggled to leave their long-term relationships. The data also show that

vulnerable narcissists were perceived to manipulate in ways to inspire more sympathy, power, and control from their partners and to keep them in a heightened state of codependent anxiety. The quote below provides an example of how the "victim card" is exploited in an attempt to maintain control:

> He would never admit that "I never want to lose you" but I think he was so afraid of losing me that he turned into the victim just to keep me. (Danielle—vulnerable partner)

In the case of vulnerable narcissists as described in this sample, responses to narcissistic injury and underlying triggers of rage, mostly sulky passive–aggressive behavior, stemmed from fears of losing external validation in the service of self-esteem regulation. This fearful attachment style was evidenced across the narratives and is indicative of vulnerable narcissists' covert entitled expectations of partners to satisfy their needs while fearing they will fail to do so. Participants' perceptions of the covert and manipulative tactics inflicted upon them in the attempt for control and isolation suggests that vulnerable narcissists engage in self-regulatory behaviors intended to defend their vulnerability.

Discussion

The findings of this study support previous empirical research establishing a clear link between subclinical narcissism and criminal behavior (Blinkhorn et al., 2016; Campbell & Foster, 2002; Hepper et al., 2014; Larson et al., 2015; Miller & Campbell, 2008) and concepts relating to threaten egotism and narcissistic injury (Freud, 1914/1957; Kohut, 1977; Logan, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). From the participants' accounts, narcissists in this sample were perceived to exhibit a pervasive pattern of defensive responses to sources of ego threats and injury accompanied by violent outbursts. Such findings provide further support to the notion that narcissistic injury is not necessarily symptomatic of narcissism as a full-fledged personality disorder. In this study, narcissistic partners were described as experiencing chronic rage reactions in both overt and covert forms, adding further credence to the existence of explosive and passive–aggressive types of rage identified in previous research (Krizan & Johar, 2015; Miller et al., 2010; Roark, 2012). Interestingly, the literature has repeatedly noted that angry outbursts are almost intrinsic to the narcissistic personality. Despite this, the *DSM-5* does not specifically refer to this core feature in its nine criteria (APA, 2013).

The significant distress and pain experienced by participants shed light on the dysfunctional context narcissists create through their interpersonal hostility, resulting in a lack of empathy and callous exploitation of others (Blinkhorn et al., 2016; Brown, 2004; Campbell et al., 2002; Filippini, 2005; Foster & Campbell, 2005; Määttä et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2010; Moeller et al., 2009; Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002; Tortoriello et al., 2017). Interestingly, an intriguing pattern emerged throughout the interview narratives, suggesting that the entitled expectations and exploitative motivations driving behavior and the attempt to regulate self-esteem appear to diverge for the two subtypes of narcissistic presentation. In terms of the overt presentation of the grandiose narcissistic subtype, participants shared experiences of being subjected to hostile outbursts when demands of entitlement, admiration, and perceived authority were not met. These tendencies reflective of the grandiose type are consistent with both theory and research (Besser & Priel, 2010; Campbell et al., 2002; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; McNulty & Widman, 2014; Rohmann et al., 2012). The data demonstrated that grandiose narcissists were perceived to show little interpersonal distress, coupled with an inability to endure committed long-term relationships, suggesting that partners serve as narcissistic supply. Participants reported feeling deceived as their whole relationship appeared to be an illusion, much like the identity portrayed by the narcissist.

Contrary to long-standing preconceived notions of the stereotypical grandiose narcissist, the vulnerable subtype is arguably the lesser seen and understood image of narcissism in interpersonal contexts, given its overt presentation of shyness, constraint, and emotional sensitivity. These reticent behaviors intrinsic to the overt presentation of the vulnerable narcissist were highlighted in the participants' accounts indicating that they would not necessarily label their partners as narcissists because their behavior did not fully match the extant findings or literature regarding narcissism. In line with previous research, vulnerable narcissists appeared to display high levels of interpersonal distress, emotional sensitivity, and extreme reliance on their partners to modulate self-esteem (Besser & Priel, 2010; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Yet, in previous research, vulnerable narcissists are believed to be prone to avoiding relationships, and this avoidance serves to sustain elevated self-esteem against conscious awareness of chronic disappointments and self-esteem threat (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). In this study, however, results provide new insights into how vulnerable narcissists are perceived to maintain their intimate relationships, and, more importantly, identify the underlying dynamics driving their relationship-threatening behaviors. Indeed, it is suggested here that, at the crux of vulnerable narcissism is the profound fear of abandonment, which appears to reside at the core of the narcissists' maltreatment and interpersonal exploitation of intimate partners in attempts to defend self-conscious states of vulnerability and underlying narcissistic needs.

The results of this study provide further support for the theoretical distinction between grandiose and vulnerable subtypes of narcissistic character styles in the context of intimate relationships. Despite the evidence for a theoretical distinction, it is important to acknowledge that expressions of grandiose and vulnerable subtypes do overlap. The findings of this study showed that vulnerable narcissists, like grandiose narcissists, display domineering and vindictive

interpersonal behaviors. These may be underpinned by high levels of interpersonal exploitation and entitlement across both subtypes, which is a core feature of the narcissistic personality. In support of this argument, Pincus and Lukowitsky (2010) contend that expressions of grandiosity and vulnerability may each be either overtly or covertly displayed, and, therefore, these character styles may appropriately be considered as states operating dialectically and reciprocally. Nevertheless, the distinctive expressions of narcissistic grandiosity and vulnerability in domestic violence will arguably provide insight into the motives and behaviors that initially gave rise to them. The current findings present a more individualized and complex image of the narcissist than what has been previously understood. Through qualitative real-life narratives, these findings add understanding to the nature of narcissists' relationship-threatening behaviors, embrace the diversity and complexity of the narcissistic personality styles, and identify divergent self-regulatory behaviors underpinning responses to narcissistic injury.

Limitations and Future Directions

In terms of participant bias, the narratives developed throughout the interview process suggest that participants took an interest in being members of groups (i.e., recovery from "narcissistic abuse"), and sharing their stories while adapting to a particular vocabulary, which is driven and influenced by the language used in pop-psychology and self-help books. In terms of the authenticity of the data, it can be argued that participants' recollections of their past relationships may have been somewhat restructured and rephrased through repeated telling in self-help groups. If this was indeed the case, this may affect the validity of the results as participants would be more likely to speak the language used in these groups rather than using their own voice. Data transcripts from the participants who had been with a vulnerable narcissist appear to have a more idiosyncratic style with less psychologized language in their recollections. This could be the result of there being a paucity of literature concerning the vulnerable narcissist in domestic violence, meaning that participants were unable to find a label or cause for the behavior of their partners and were "working this out" through the dialogue in their interviews. It may also be evidence that individuals were using their own language to describe their experiences, and not the language and labels they had read about in literature and pop-psychology books.

It is recommended that future research incorporates data obtained from narcissists' own accounts in intimate relationships to more accurately distinguish how grandiose and vulnerable narcissists differ in their responses to injury. Such research would complement that research related here and also allow for comparison and further granularity with regard to distinguishing and understanding the different types of narcissistic rage and their impacts. Elucidating characteristics and triggers to aggressive outbursts in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism can aid clinicians to develop appropriate courses of intervention to reduce potentially criminal behavior according to the type of narcissist. Furthermore, in light of research suggesting that manifestations of narcissism in females and males tend to differ (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008), it is recommended here that future research should explore female narcissists and their responses to narcissistic injury in intimate relationships to achieve a more complete image of the role of narcissism in domestic violence.

Current findings also support theoretical contentions that narcissism is not necessarily grounded in the perceptible grandiosity as suggested by the *DSM-5* (Reynolds & Lejuez, 2012). In considering recommendations for practice, more caution and clarity should be placed on the *DSM-5* criteria pertaining the diagnosis of NPD. In particular, an emphasis on the interpersonal features and self-regulation behaviours which underlie vulnerable narcissistic themes. It is noteworthy that earlier versions of NPD criteria (e.g. *DSM-III* and *DSM-III-R*) acknowledged vulnerable aspects of narcissism, such as shameful reactivity or humiliation in response to narcissistic injury. Vulnerable themes have been eliminated from subsequent versions of the *DSM-5* criteria to increase its grandiose emphasis (Cain et al., 2008), and in turn, are only included in the self and interpersonal portion of the diagnosis (Criteria A), as opposed to the actual trait perspective (Criteria B; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Failing to capture the complex and multidimensional aspects of narcissism may impede clinical recognition of patients who present narcissistic vulnerability (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010), along with the related self-regulation behaviours that drive narcissistic pathology. Vulnerable presentation in narcissistic patients may also be easily misdiagnosed as other personality disorders, such as borderline personality disorder (BPD; Ronningstam, 2011). Fear of abandonment, for instance, is a central marker for BPD (American Psychological Association, 2013). Future research should identify meaningful deviations in the interpersonal problems experienced by these individuals, and dismantle underlying causes to fears of abandonment.

Appendix

Interview Schedule

How would you describe a narcissistic person?
When was the first time you noticed that your partner is narcissistic/abusive?
Did you experience any manipulation from your partner?

- If so, why do you think that your partner behaved the way that they did?

Did your partner ever express any sudden aggressive or violent behaviors?

In what ways did your partner justify their behavior?

- If they did not justify their behavior, how did they response to being confronted to their behavior? Do you think that they were aware of their behavior?

Did you ever experience your partner being demanding and in constant need of control and power?
Did you ever find that your partner was extremely obsessive and jealous?
Despite the previous questions, did you feel like you still had an emotional connection with your partner? Did you feel like they loved you, cared about you and wanted to be in a relationship with you?

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Author Biographies

Ava Green is a PhD student and an associate lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University, UK.

Kathy Charles is an associate professor and a chartered psychologist at Edinburgh Napier University, UK.

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An Exploratory Study of the Relationships between Narcissism, Self-Esteem and Instagram Use

Olga Paramboukis, Jason Skues, Lisa Wise

Department of Psychological Sciences, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Australia
Email: lwise@swin.edu.au

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Abstract

The aim of this mixed-methods exploratory study was to examine the relationship between narcissism, self-esteem and Instagram usage and was motivated by unsubstantiated media claims of increasing narcissism due to excessive use of social networks. A sample of 200 participants responded to an online survey which consisted of the Five Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, and the Instagram Usage, Behaviours, and Affective Responses Questionnaire (IUBARQ) constructed specifically for the purposes of this study. There was only weak evidence for any relationship between narcissism and Instagram usage, suggesting that media concerns are somewhat exaggerated. However the negative correlation between vulnerable narcissism and self-esteem warrants further examination.

Keywords

Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism, Grandiose Narcissism, Instagram, Self-Esteem, Social Media

1. Narcissism, Self-Esteem and Social Media

Recent research has suggested that young people today are more narcissistic compared to previous generations [1]. This statistical increase in scores on narcissism measures has coincided with the introduction, uptake, and widespread use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Several researchers have investigated the simultaneous increase in narcissism and social media use and note that self-reported narcissism tends to be associated with different motivations and patterns of usage for social media [2]-[10]. Yet few studies have investigated whether social networking sites other than Facebook or Twitter are related to high levels of self-

reported narcissism. This study contributes to the current research by investigating how Instagram, a social networking site focusing on editing, posting, and commenting on images, is associated with the personality trait of narcissism.

1.1. Measures of Narcissism

Although narcissism has been investigated for around 40 years (see [11] for a review), there is still ongoing debate about whether narcissism should be conceptualised as a psychiatrically diagnosed personality disorder or a subclinical personality trait [12]-[14]. Narcissism has been viewed from a social and personality psychology perspective as a trait comprising multiple dimensions shaped from the earlier clinical construct. A common distinction in both the clinical and social/personality psychology literature is between *grandiose* and *vulnerable* narcissism [15]. The grandiose dimension refers to traits such as exhibitionism, callousness, extraversion, manipulativeness, superiority, aggression, indifference and seeking of acclaim, whereas the vulnerable dimension is believed to reflect feelings of inadequacy, emptiness and shame, reactive anger, helplessness, hypervigilance to insult, excessive shyness and interpersonal avoidance [16] [17]. In general, more emphasis has been placed on the grandiose aspect of narcissism compared to the vulnerable aspect. The current study defines narcissism from the social and personality perspective as a sub-clinical trait with two factors, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism respectively.

1.2. Narcissism and Self-Esteem

Some researchers have posited significant conceptual overlap between narcissism and self-esteem with individuals high in both traits having a higher opinion of themselves [18]-[20]. In contrast, others have argued that, while self-esteem is considered to be an intrapersonal trait, narcissism is primarily interpersonal [21]. Narcissistic individuals may present a false mask of high self-esteem, scoring high on explicit measures of self-esteem, but showing much lower scores on implicit measures of the same trait [21].

Another possible explanation for the equivocal findings relates to the notion of different aspects of the self, e.g., agentic versus communal self-views [18] [19]. Campbell *et al*. [19] found that narcissists and people with high self-esteem report positive, albeit distinct, self-views. That is, narcissists perceive themselves as better than average primarily on traits reflecting agency (e.g., competence), whereas individuals with high self-esteem hold superior beliefs regarding both agency and communal traits. In this regard, the self-regulatory strategies employed by narcissists involve seeking attention and admiration by comparing themselves to others, and by defending their competence to others. Given the multiple alternative explanations relating to the relationship between narcissism and self-esteem, this study will contribute to this research by exploring the relationship between these two constructs in the context of social network use.

1.3. Narcissism and Social Networking Sites

Several researchers have investigated the relationship between narcissism and social media with studies ranging from testing simple correlations between narcissism scores and basic usage and descriptive data, to studies that have examined how different dimensions of narcissism relate to motivations and behaviours associated with different social network sites including MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. Not surprisingly, the findings have been mixed. The early studies focused primarily on Facebook and reported significant correlations between narcissism and time per day spent using Facebook, number of Facebook friends, numbers of photos and the selection of specific profile photos, and status updates [3] [8]. Bergman *et al*. [2] did not find narcissism to be related to actual social media usage, but instead that it was positively associated with motivations such as wanting to have a lot of online friends, believing others are interested in what they are doing, and wanting to show others what they were doing. This highlights that researchers need to look beyond simplistic quantitative variables in relation to social media use.

In one of the first studies to separate narcissism into different factors and relate these factors to Facebook use, Carpenter [4] found Grandiose-Exhibitionism to be associated with self-promoting behaviours, number of Facebook friends, seeking social support and retaliating against perceived mean comments, while Entitlement/Exploitativeness was related to more anti-social behaviours such as retaliation and checking up on whether he or she is being talked about by others.

Panek *et al*. [10] also examined how different aspects of narcissism were related to Facebook and Twitter use in a study of both undergraduate students and adults. For university students, exhibitionism was related to time spent and number of Facebook status posts, and entitlement was related to time spent per day. For adults, superiority and authority were related to Facebook checking, and vanity was associated with Facebook posting and Twitter checking. According to Panek *et al*., university students use Twitter as a "technologically augmented megaphone" that allows them to demonstrate their superiority to others. For adults, it appears to be Facebook that is used in this manner. Davenport *et al*. [5] also examined the role of narcissism and motives in relation to Facebook and Twitter in university and adult samples. Similarly to Panek *et al*. [10], Twitter was found to be associated with narcissistic university students for whom tweeting was the preferred mode of communication. However, it was more important for narcissists in both samples to have more Facebook friends than Twitter followers, which is probably a reflection of the different affordances and relationships with people in the audience for both of the social network sites. Ong *et al*. [9] also found in their sample of secondary school students that after controlling for extraversion, narcissism was positively associated with self-generated content on Facebook (e.g., profile picture selection etc), but not system-generated content (e.g., number of friends or photos etc). However, Ong *et al*. acknowledged that they did not consider privacy settings, which can limit the size and intended audience.

It may be that the expression of narcissistic behaviour through social networking sites is more of a by-product of a society that is becoming increasingly more "self-centred", and social media merely provide another arena in which narcissistic tendencies can be displayed. Alternatively, social media may facilitate, encourage and applaud narcissistic behaviours in a problematic spiral that magnifies the degree of narcissism even further. A further possibility is that this association is merely the result of changes in the way people respond to narcissism and self-esteem scale items on the respective scales (*i.e.*, with less false modesty than in previous generations), rather than a actual change in the nature of the personality traits themselves.

1.4. Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video sharing social networking site that is becoming increasingly popular among young people[1]. Instagram prompts users to edit photos using inbuilt, easily-applied filters and special effects, before posting these images onto the Instagram site [22]. Instagram differs from Facebook and Twitter through being entirely focused on images. According to Instagram Press [22], 300 million of its users have an Instagram account that they regularly use (monthly). There is also an average of 70 million photos being posted daily worldwide, attracting 2.5 billion "likes" [22]. Nonetheless, in spite of its widespread usage and specific focus on posting images, there is a dearth of research on Instagram, and how it relates to narcissism.

Based on the integration of previous research on other social networking sites and the affordances that Instagram provides to users, it is argued that narcissistic tendencies such as attention-seeking and exhibitionism may be facilitated by Instagram usage due to its specific image-based applications and functions. Firstly, Instagram facilitates the selection and editing of photos that can be used to make a specific impression to others by glamorizing their portrayal of themselves or their lives. Such behaviour aligns with grandiose narcissism traits such as attention-seeking, vanity, self-promotion and exhibitionism. Secondly, "liking" and "commenting" functions are available on Instagram for followers and do not require the formation of a deeper relationship (which may be achieved via instant messaging functions). This aspect of the site may greatly appeal to highly narcissistic individuals (both grandiose and vulnerable) as they tend to not retain close relationships despite their desire for social contact [23] [24]. Thirdly, "hash tagging" may also be used as a form of self-promotion by both highly vulnerable and grandiose narcissistic individuals as a user may choose to hash tag their photo with popular search terms with the intention of their photo being seen by a larger audience.

1.5. The Current Study

The current study aims to explore the relationships between narcissism and its subtypes, self-esteem, and Instagram use. The main motivation for the study was to investigate the relationship between narcissism and social

[1]Although typically considered a separate social networking site in its own right, it is important to highlight that Instagram is often linked to Facebook and Twitter, which means that content and communication on these sites is not necessarily mutually exclusive and will depend on whether one has linked the respective profiles. Indeed since this study was undertaken, Facebook has purchased Instagram, making the boundary between them even more difficult to define.

media use by targeting a social networking site (*i.e.*, Instagram) that specifically facilitates the type of behaviour that has been shown to be associated with narcissism in previous research (*i.e.*, photo-sharing).

H1: Individuals who score high on narcissism will engage in more Instagram behaviours.

We anticipate that some aspects of narcissism may be related to self-esteem and that both narcissism and self-esteem may influence patterns of Instagram use. These relationships are best investigated as research questions, in keeping with the exploratory nature of the study.

RQ1: How do different aspects of narcissism relate to self-esteem and Instagram use?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the pattern of Instagram use for individuals who are classified as grandiose narcissists compared to those classified as vulnerable narcissists?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

After preliminary data screening, during which participants with missing data were deleted listwise, a total of 200 participants completed the study. There were 148 female and 52 male participants, with ages ranging from 18 to 51 (M = 22.41, Med = 21, SD = 6.15). Of these participants, only 154 had Instagram accounts, and the majority of data will be reported from the demographic of interest, constituting 141 of the 154 Instagram users who were under the age of 26.

2.2. Measures

Five Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI [25]). The Five Factor Narcissism Inventory is a 148-item narcissism personality trait measure that was designed from a theoretical framework that views narcissistic traits as maladaptive extensions of traits from the Five Factor Model of personality. The FFNI contains 15 different facets which form two subtypes of narcissism, namely Grandiose Narcissism (Indifference, Exhibitionism, Thrill Seeking, Authoritativeness, Grandiose Fantasies, Manipulativeness, Exploitativeness, Entitlement, Arrogance, Lack of Empathy and Acclaim Seeking) and Vulnerable Narcissism (Reactive Anger, Shame, Need for Admiration and Cynicism/Distrust). Participants were asked to respond on a five point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree with higher scores corresponding to more of a particular trait.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS [26]). Participants completed the Rosenberg self-esteem scale which is a measure of global self-esteem that consists of 10 items which are measured on a four point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (4) Strongly Agree [26].

Instagram Usage, Behaviour, and Emotional Reactions Questionnaire (IUBRQ). Participants completed the Instagram Usage, Behaviour, and Emotional Reactions Questionnaire (IUBRQ), which was designed for the purpose of the current study. Since no specific scale is currently available to operationalise Instagram usage, the following questionnaire was created to investigate only the areas of interest in this study, which included frequency of usage, frequency of Instagram-specific behaviours and the attitudes and affective reactions towards Instagram usage. The selection of the content for this scale was formed via informal focus groups with a small cohort of research students from our laboratory, along observations of online forums regarding behaviours on Instagram undertaken by the first author.

Instagram Usage. This section comprised 12 questions ranging from open-ended estimates of time or frequency to yes/no responses or 4-point likert scale responses.

Instagram Behaviours. This section consisted of 16 questions relating to ways of interacting with Instagram. Participants responded on a five point scale (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often; and 5 = Very Often) based on their recollection of activities over the past month.

Instagram Attitudes. This section consisted of 5 questions relating to motivations for interacting with Instagram. Participants responded on a four point scale (1 = Not at all important; 2 = Slightly important; 3 = Kind of important; and 4 = Very important).

Instagram Emotional Reactions. The section consisted of 3 open-ended questions where participants were invited to respond to questions about how they characterised some aspects of Instagram usage, and also how they emotionally reacted to positive and potentially negative feedback they may receive on Instagram posts.

2.2. Procedure

Participants were invited to complete a 30-minute online survey which consisted of the FFNI, the RSES, and the

IBURQ. Participants completed the survey at a time and location that was convenient to them, and they were provided with a debriefing statement immediately upon the completion of the survey. The study was approved by Swinburne University's ethical review committee. Data were analysed using Microsoft Excel, SPSS Version 23.0, and R Version 3.2.3.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Instagram and Other Social Networks

Of the 200 participants recruited for the study, 154 had Instagram accounts, of whom 122 were female and 32 were male. Of the 154 participants with Instagram accounts, 62 participants linked their Instagram account to another social network. Of these, 53 linked their Instagram account to Facebook, 9 to Twitter, 8 to Tumblr. Some linked to more than one social network, with 8 linking to both Facebook and Twitter, 6 linking to both Facebook and Tumbler, 3 linking to both Twitter and Tumblr. No participants linked to all three. Thirty six of the remaining 46 non-Instagram users reported having a Facebook account, and only 5 did not report any use of social networking sites at all.

Within our sample, it appeared that Facebook was still the most popular social networking site, and that Instagram was often used in conjunction with other social media sites. Since our data were collected for this study, Facebook has purchased Instagram, underscoring the transient nature of usage/behaviour patterns for specific social network sites.

3.2. Instagram Privacy Settings

We asked participants three questions relating to privacy: 1) was their account publically available?; 2) did they accept follower requests from people unknown to them?; and 3) did their bio page contain personal information? (see **Table 1**). While it might be expected that users would maintain consistency between different privacy settings (for example, keeping their content private, accepting follower requests only from people they know and restricting personal information in their bio), this was not always the case. For example, as can be seen from **Table 1**, 24 participants who kept their accounts private accepted follower requests from strangers. The inconsistency in privacy settings is more likely to reflect a lack of knowledge of account settings and how they operate than any deliberate strategy for information dissemination.

3.3. Instagram Usage, Behaviours and Emotional Reactions Questionnaire

The vast majority of the sample of Instagram users were university students under the age of 26 (141 of 154 Instagram users) and this was the demographic targeted for our analysis of relationships between personality traits and Instagram behaviours and attitudes. The IUBRQ survey attempted to quantify aspects of Instagram usage in terms of frequency of interaction with Instagram, the types of behaviours engaged in through Instagram, and the motives and attitudes surrounding Instagram interactions.

3.4. Instagram Usage

While half of the participants (51%) visited their Instagram site often or very often, the majority of the sample posted photos occasionally or rarely (77%). This suggests that the majority of Instagram users are consumers rather than creators of content.

Table 1. Privacy settings on Instagram: cross-tabulation of participants who accept followers who are unknown to them, have personal information in their bio sections and have their accounts publically available.

Account Public	Accept Unknown		Bio with Personal Info	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yes	69	13	33	49
No	24	48	19	53

3.5. Instagram Behaviours

The Behaviours section of the IUBRQ survey addressed ways in which users could interact via Instagram and reflects features of Instagram at the time when the research was undertaken.

As can be seen from the top panel of **Figure 1**, most participants rarely used the Instagram features listed, consistent with finding that very few Instagram users regularly post photos. The most frequent behaviour was use of hashtags, which was the only listed behaviour that the majority of Instagram users performed at least sometimes.

In order to generate possible metrics to capture the degree of interaction with Instagram, a Principal Components Analysis was conducted on the 16 Instagram Behaviour items of the IUBRQ. A one-factor solution was revealed to be the best fitting model in which 13 of the 16 items had primary loadings above 0.3 on a single factor and explained 25% of the variance. On the basis of this analysis, we compiled a single Instagram Behaviours score from all the items of this section for use in the correlational analyses with personality traits.

3.6. Instagram Attitudes

The Attitudes section of the IUBRQ survey addressed attitudes towards Instagram usage. As can be seen from the bottom panel of **Figure 1**, being portrayed and recognised in a positive light was important to the majority of participants. However it should be noted that positive acclaim was not purely reflected through getting "likes", something that 35% of the participants did not find particularly important. Achieving symmetry in the layout of images on the screen was also not particularly important to most participants.

3.7. Narcissism, Self-Esteem and Instagram Behaviours

In order to test whether narcissism relates to self-esteem and Instagram use, summary data were first calculated for each of the narcissism and self-esteem scales and relevant subscales used in this study and reported in **Table 2**.

Narcissism. The median values for both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism scores were approximately at the midpoint of the scoring, with some participants scoring toward the upper limit of possible scores. At the trait level, the highest-scoring trait was "acclaim seeking" (M = 36.33, SD = 6.85), whilst the lowest scoring trait was

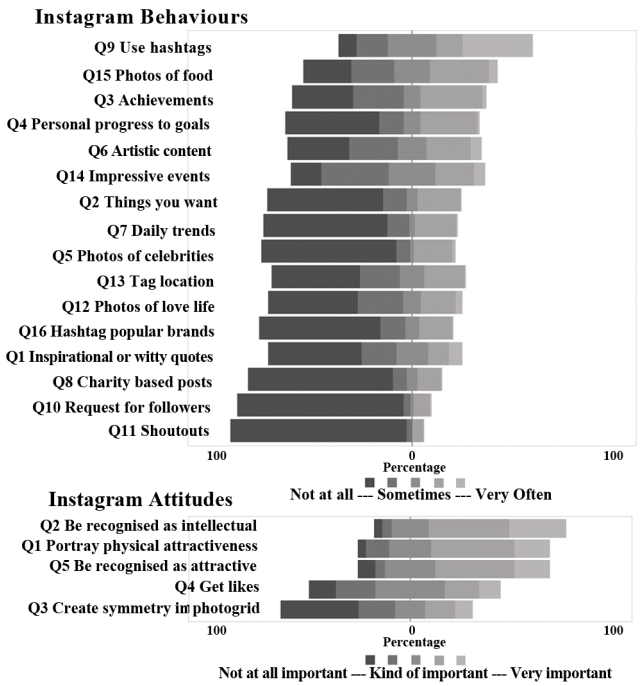

Figure 1. Likert scales for each item on the Instagram Behaviours and Instagram Attitudes sections of the IUBARQ.

Table 2. Means, SDs, medians and ranges for scales and subscales from the FFNI and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Personality variable	Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	SD	Median	Range
Indifference	26.90	8.55	26	10 - 49
Exhibitionism	32.35	6.81	33	15 - 49
Thrill seeking	21.13	6.87	21	8 - 36
Arrogance	22.10	6.19	21	10 - 48
Entitlement	20.23	5.41	20	10 - 48
Manipulativeness	24.80	7.16	23	10 - 47
Exploitativeness	20.94	7.29	20	10 - 47
Authoritativeness	31.99	7.62	33	10 - 50
Grandiose fantasies	31.44	7.02	32	11 - 49
Lack of empathy	17.72	5.22	17	10 - 42
Acclaim seeking	36.33	6.85	37	11 - 50
Grandiose Total	**285.80**		**283**	**155 - 462**
Reactive anger	27.53	6.56	28	11 - 46
Shame	31.78	8.12	32	12 - 50
Need for admiration	28.39	6.22	28	10 - 44
Distrust	26.46	5.72	27	12 - 39
Vulnerable Total	**114.20**		**116**	**51 - 168**
FFNI Total	**400.00**		**401**	**269 - 622**
Rosenberg Self-Esteem	**29.33**	**5.34**	**29**	**11 - 39**

"lack of empathy" ($M = 17.72$, $SD = 5.22$).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem scores were found to be high in the sample with more than 75% of the sample scoring more than the midpoint of the scale.

Correlations. Spearman's rank order correlations were used to test the significance of associations between narcissism, self-esteem, Instagram Behaviours as measured by a composite score from the IUBRQ Behaviours items and Instagram Attitudes as measured by a composite score from the IUBRQ Attitudes items. As can be seen in **Figure 2**, overall narcissism (FFNI Total) did not correlate with self-esteem (RSS). However when narcissism was separated into grandiose and vulnerable dimensions, a weak positive correlation was found between grandiose narcissism and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), whilst a negative moderate strength correlation was found between vulnerable narcissism and self-esteem ($\rho = -0.59$, $p < 0.001$). That is, those Instagram users with higher levels of grandiose narcissism tended to report higher self-esteem levels, whilst vulnerable narcissists reported lower self-esteem levels. All three narcissism scores were positively associated with both Instagram Attitudes and Instagram Behaviours, but the relationships between self-esteem and both Instagram Attitudes and Instagram Behaviours were not significant.

An inspection of the item level data for selected Instagram behaviours revealed significant correlations between grandiose narcissism and Instagram behaviours such as "Hashtagging popular or expensive brands" ($\rho = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), "Posting photos of things you want, but do not have" ($\rho = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$), "Posting photos of celebrities or people you admire" ($\rho = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$), and "Posting photos of progress towards physical health, fitness and wellbeing" ($\rho = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, vulnerable narcissism correlated with "Hashtagging popular or expensive brands ($\rho = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), "Posting photos of things you want, but do not have" ($\rho = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$), "Posting photos of celebrities or people you admire" ($\rho = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$), "Posting photos of yourself at impressive events or functions" ($\rho = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), and "Request for followers" (e.g. #follow4follow)

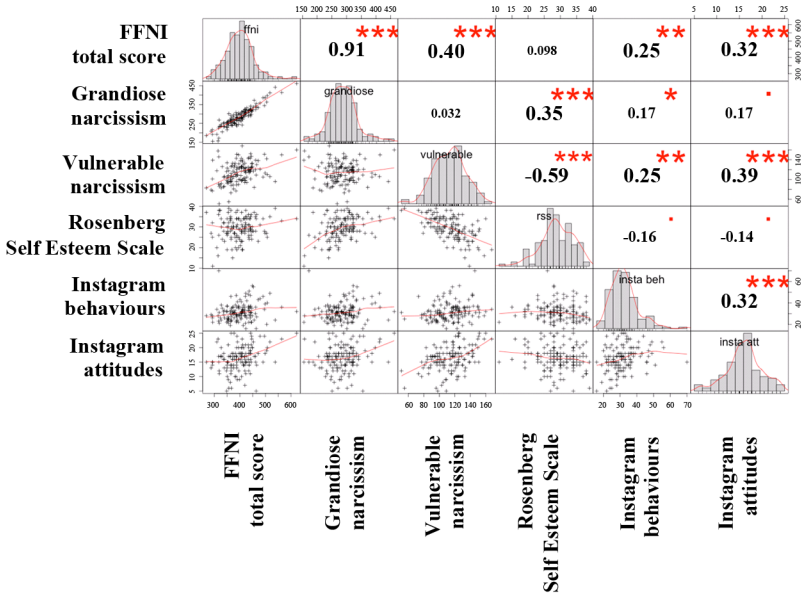

Figure 2. Scatterplots, frequency histograms and correlations for narcissism scores, self-esteem scores, Instagram Behaviours and Instagram Attitudes. Ranges of values for scatterplots and histograms can be identified from the range column of **Table 2**.

($\rho = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$). For the most part, the pattern of correlations were similar for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, with the only differences being a significant association between grandiose narcissism and posting photos of physical health, fitness and wellbeing, and a significant relationship between vulnerable narcissism and requests for followers.

3.8. Qualitative Analyses

The similarities and differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were also explored using open-ended questions exploring emotional reactions to feedback received from other people in response to a participant's Instagram behaviours. Prior to performing a content analysis on the open-ended responses, three groups of participants were identified according to their combined Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism scores, namely 1) a High Grandiose/Low Vulnerable group; 2) a High Vulnerable/Low Grandiose; group; and 3) a High Grandiose/High Vulnerable group. Responses to three questions were compared across the three groups. The first question was 1) "Do you feel happy or elated when you receive a lot of feedback on a post?" The most common response to this question across all three groups was "Yes, because it gives a sense of validation and/or approval". According to one participant, "…I feel that people are 'liking' an aspect of my life and further more are showing approval of me as a person".

In response to the second question, "If your post receives no feedback, how does that make you feel?", participants classified in the high grandiose groups typically responded with indifference, whilst the most common responses for participants in the high vulnerable/low grandiose group were experienced negative emotions (32.1%) and deleted the post (17.9%).

For the last question, "If someone is critical of your post, how does that make you feel?", the most common response for the high vulnerable, low grandiose group was "Block/Delete the post and/or the person whom was critical" (28.6%), with the second most common response relating to feeling defensive (25%). Indeed, one participant states "I react negatively and defensively. It makes me feel judged and unintelligent". In contrast, both high grandiose groups tended to be neutral in their responses.

In sum, the content analysis revealed that participants who were simultaneously high in vulnerable narcissism and low in grandiose narcissism reacted more strongly to both negative and positive interactions on Instagram in comparison to participants who scored either high on grandiose narcissism exclusively or scored high on both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.

4. General Discussion

This study aimed to explore the interrelationships between narcissism, self-esteem and Instagram usage. Although there were differences in how grandiose and vulnerable narcissism related to self-esteem, neither types of narcissism were strongly associated with Instagram usage as identified via the IUBRQ.

4.1. Narcissism and Self-Esteem

The FFNI total score for narcissism was not correlated with self-esteem, however vulnerable narcissism was negatively correlated with self-esteem, while grandiose narcissism was positively correlated with self-esteem, albeit at a lower level. This finding provides further evidence for the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and supports the view that self-esteem is an important factor that distinguishes between those subtypes of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (see [18] [19]). Moreover the data suggest that vulnerable narcissism may have more of an intrapersonal component compared to grandiose narcissism, and that internal feelings of inadequacy and helplessness are more closely related to self-esteem compared to feelings of superiority over others. However, it still remains unclear whether those with high grandiose narcissism levels do in fact have higher self-esteem levels, or whether their underlying need for superiority and exhibitionism results in presenting an overly inflated self view on a self-report measure of self-esteem.

4.2. Narcissism and Instagram Behaviours

Vulnerable narcissism also had the highest degree of correlation with both Instagram Behaviours and Instagram Attitudes although these relationships were not strong. In terms of specific Instagram behaviours, posting up photos of one's physical appearance was more associated with grandiose narcissism, while requests for followers was more associated with vulnerable narcissism. The qualitative data identified those who were high in vulnerable but low in grandiose narcissism showed stronger emotional reactions to Instagram feedback. These findings are broadly consistent with past research that suggests that narcissism is related to self-generated content on social network sites, rather than system-generated content [9]. Those high on vulnerable narcissism appeared to be more interested in increasing their popularity and seeking the approval of others, whereas grandiose narcissists used overt attempts of drawing attention to themselves in order to be admired. That vulnerable narcissists use Instagram as a platform to seek out positive feedback aligns with the notion that people seek validation from others in order to help boost self-esteem [27]. This would also help to explain the strong emotional reactions to negative feedback for individuals high on vulnerable narcissism, which includes the dimensions of reactive anger, need for admiration and shame. In contrast, grandiose narcissists appear to seek out opportunities to engage in behaviours that afford self-promotion (see [4] [6]) in order to maintain their elevated positive self-view [3], which fits with the grandiose dimensions of exhibitionism and seeking of acclaim.

4.3. Implications

The findings from this study have provided theoretical, methodological and practical implications. Firstly, this study provides further evidence for distinguishing between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, and that these two subtypes are differentially related to self-esteem. Secondly, this study has expanded the research on narcissism subtypes and social network use, targeting a social network that specifically focuses on posting images. However despite this specific focus, the study has shown only weak evidence for any relationship between narcissism and Instagram use. This study also developed a survey that aimed to quantify specific Instagram behaviours in an attempt to uncover more nuanced patterns of behaviour relating both to reasons for posting content, and reactions to feedback on content. Even with detailed quantitative and qualitative data on Instagram usage, the weak evidence for any association between narcissism and Instagram suggests that Instagram offers a platform for expression of existing narcissistic tendencies rather than a medium that encourages extremes of narcissistic behaviour in people who do not normally show such tendencies.

4.4. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study was one of the very studies to have attempted to operationalise Instagram behaviours by developing a specific measure that quantifies some of the common Instagram behaviours, it should be noted that

the frequency of particular Instagram behaviours may not accurately reflect the importance placed on these behaviours by the individual participants. The qualitative data collected in this study provided some insights into the way individual participants interpret and react to Instagram content but did not really provide a coherent narrative on why people use Instagram, nor is it clear that such a narrative exists at a psychological level (*i.e.*, at a deeper level than that it offers an easy way to share photos with friends and family).

It is important to note that this study targeted Instagram for its specific emphasis on posting and sharing photos rather than on providing instant messaging for communicating with others. However our data suggest that Instagram is often used in conjunction with other social network sites and most participants had more followers on Facebook than on Instagram. The fact that Facebook has now purchased Instagram may result in a tighter integration of Instagram features into Facebook, or a change in Instagram features that renders some items of the IUBRQ irrelevant. Indeed the primary limitation of most studies on social networking sites is that they only provide a transient snapshot of behaviour patterns as both the technologies and user bases evolve.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the primary finding from this study is that there is only weak evidence for any relationship between narcissism and Instagram usage, suggesting that media concerns about social media giving rise to unprecedented narcissistic behaviour are somewhat exaggerated. However, it appears that there is a complex relationship between narcissism and self-esteem such that vulnerable narcissism is negatively correlated with self-esteem and grandiose narcissism is positively associated with self-esteem albeit more weakly. Vulnerable narcissism appears to be more strongly associated with Instagram usage, with vulnerable narcissists seeking acclaim and being more sensitive to feedback on their posts. In contrast grandiose narcissists appear to use Instagram to exhibit their superiority over others but are not overly sensitive to feedback. Despite the limitations of the study, the findings have provided a better understanding of the associations between narcissism subtypes, self-esteem and Instagram use, and highlight the need for further exploration of the relationship between self-esteem and vulnerable narcissism, which has typically received less attention by researchers than grandiose narcissism.

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Scientific Research

What Is Narcissistic Personality Disorder? Lay Theories of Narcissism

Kirstie Wright[1], Adrian Furnham[1,2]

[1]Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, University College London, London, UK
[2]Norwegian Business School (BI), Olso, Norway
Email: a.furnham@ucl.ac.uk

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Abstract

There are various studies on mental health literacy which examine lay people's knowledge and understanding of various mental disorders. Many are interested in beliefs about cause, manifestation and cure as well as the relationship between those beliefs. This study examines lay beliefs regarding the manifestations, aetiology and treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), and their determinants using a questionnaire divided into three parts. Participants (N = 201) answered 45 attitudinal statements designed for this study regarding NPD. They consisted of 18 manifestation items, 15 aetiology items and 12 treatment items referring to NPD. They also completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. Each section of the questionnaire was factor analysed to determine the structure of those beliefs. Factors derived from a principle component analysis of lay beliefs demonstrate poor knowledge of NPD. Factors derived from the manifestations, aetiology and treatment section were modestly and coherently correlated. No demographic factors correlated with all aspects of mental health literacy and lay theories. People are surprisingly misinformed about NPD. They believed that narcissists manifested superficiality and social problems, business abilities and fragility. No distinction was made between biological and psychological causes or genetics and early negative events. Inability to identify NPD may account for many reports of sub-clinical narcissism being associated with leadership derailment.

Keywords

Narcissism, Mental Health Literacy, Aetiology, Treatment

1. Introduction

The present study concerns lay people's beliefs about narcissism. It is surprising that despite the prevalence of

personality disorders and a rise of narcissism in Western culture (Lasch, 1978) that little research has been carried out into lay theories of NPD. This may be due, in part, to difficulties defining NPD. NPD is found in cluster B of the personality disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-R, there have been few empirical studies investigating whether the DSM criteria are useful in defining NPD as the DSM criteria are based on clinical anecdotes rather than empirical studies (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992). Pincus and Lukowitsky (2010) concluded that relying on DSM-IV criteria may impede the recognition of clinical narcissists.

Lay theories of NPD are of particular interest due to difficulties in defining NPD causing NPD to be controversial and likely to be deleted from DSM-V (Campbell & Miller, 2011). Such doubts are supported by Cain, Pincus and Ansell (2008) who found that the DSM-IV criteria for NPD have low discriminate validity and that a clinical diagnosis of NPD is only moderately stable over time. However, Ronningstam (2011) suggests that NPD should be included into DSM-V but that the criteria should focus on behaviours that are less affected by context changes such as self-esteem regulation. A suggested prevalence rate of 6% (Stinson, Dawson, Goldstein, Chou, Huang, Smith et al., 2008) in the general population suggests that NPD affects many people especially due to the distress that narcissist's cause to those around them (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) and therefore should be kept in DSM-V and NPD is currently included in the draft DSM-V.

1.1. Behavioural Manifestations

The classic literature has focused on narcissist's inability to regulate self-esteem and a satisfying self representation of themselves causing them to demand attention and admiration to feed their self-esteem (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992). A key feature of NPD is a lack of empathy (Ritter, Dziobek, Preisler, Ruter, Vater, Fydrich et al., 2011). This causes narcissists to use others for their own gain and makes close long-term relationships only successful when the narcissist is getting the self-esteem boost that they need from the relationship (De Wall, Buffardi, Bonser, & Campbell, 2011). Grandiosity (exaggerating talents and an unrealistic sense of superiority) has been found to be key in discriminating NPD from other personality disorders (Ronningstam & Gunderson 1991). When a narcissists self-esteem is not gratified by others or they are criticised this can cause them to turn to anger (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1991). Gratification from achievements comes from external praise rather than an inner sense of an achievement being accomplished (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992). These traits vary according to the severity of the narcissism and not every trait will be seen in all cases (Kernberg, 2010).

However, there is disagreement surrounding whether the classical portrayal of NPD is valid. For example narcissists with low self esteem who are threatened show less anger than narcissists with high self-esteem (Thomaes & Bushman, 2011). This disputes the narcissist portrayed in the classical literature that has low self esteem and turns to anger when criticised. This has resulted in the suggestion that the classical account of NPD has two dimensions: Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism (Wink, 1991; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). It has even been suggested that the manifestation of grandiosity of which there is much agreement on could be improved by recognising two different dimensions of NPD and specifying the patterns of grandiosity related to each dimension (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990). Miller, Hoffman, Gaughan, Gentile, Maples and Campbell (2011) argue that the primary feature shared by both dimensions of narcissism is a tendency to act antagonistically towards others and that they differ on many other features. Vulnerable narcissists have grandiose fantasies but are timid, insecure and consequently do not appear narcissistic on the surface. Grandiose narcissists have higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Rose, 2001) and are more exhibitionistic than vulnerable narcissists (Wink, 1991).

The two dimensions of narcissism have been intertwined in many pieces of research with the distinction not consistently made (Miller et al., 2011). This has had "serious consequences for the field as a great deal of unreliability are introduced into our communications, assessments and conceptualizations" of NPD (Miller, Widiger, & Campbell, 2010: p. 641). This is particularly true given the finding that nomological networks of the two dimensions of NPD are unrelated (Miller et al., 2011). Pincus and Lukowitsky (2010) suggest that the poor validity of the DSM-IV criteria is due to overemphasising grandiose traits over the vulnerable traits of NPD.

1.2. Aetiology

Theories on what causes NPD tends to focus on environmental factors over biological factors. The two main environmental theories are those of Kernberg (1975) and Kohut (1977) who focus on the parent-child relationship. Genetics may also play a role in causing NPD because narcissism is highly heritable, although there is a lack of

research demonstrating exactly how genetics causes NPD (Paris, 1996). This is supported by newborns showing differences in temperament (self regulation and reactivity) which is thought to have a biological basis (Rothbart, 1991). Two views have been put forward on how temperament differences can cause personality disorders. One is that the infant's temperament can cause problems for the caregivers which can cause the infants problems to worsen (Rutter & Quinton, 1984). The second is that certain temperaments may put children at risk of certain environmental stressors (Paris, 1996). This demonstrates that an interaction between genes (temperament) and the environment (early parenting) is likely to cause NPD and is further supported by Dunn and Plomin (1990) who found that personality traits are up to 50% genetically determined.

The cause of NPD may be different depending on the different dimensions of narcissism because vulnerable narcissism is strongly related to an anxious model of attachment (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003) whereas grandiose narcissism is related to a secure or dismissive attachment style (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Vulnerable narcissism has been found to be significantly related to child abuse unlike grandiose narcissism (Otway & Vignoles, 2006). More research is needed into how the different theories of what causes NPD relate to vulnerable and grandiose narcissism and may lead to a more adequate explanation of the cause of NPD. Therefore due to the different theories of the cause of NPD (although there is a general consensus in psychoanalytical literature that early parenting plays a role (Otway & Vignoles, 2006)) it is interesting to investigate lay theories on this issue. The findings could be useful to determine what information is most needed in health campaigns regarding NPD.

1.3. Treatment

Treatments of NPD have traditionally come from a psychodynamic and psychoanalytic framework (Adler, 1986). Long term psychodynamic therapies are thought to be the best form of treatment (Turner, 1994). An example of a well used and tested psychodynamic treatment for NPD is that of Kohut's (1971). The aim of the treatment is for the patient to idolize the therapist because they did not get to idolize their parents as a child. Patients also get to see how their child-parent relationship could have led to their NPD.

Behavioural treatments of NPD focus on the contexts in which the narcissistic behaviours occur and the behaviours that cause the individual and those around them harm. Behavioural treatments have started to appear more in the literature (Koerner, Kohlenberg, & Parker, 1996). Cognitive therapies focus on developmental issues and on building a therapist-client relationship to modify the narcissist's beliefs using certain strategies (Oldham & Morris, 1995). Treatment varies with the severity and symptoms present (Kernberg, 2010). Family and couples therapy is also effective in treating NPD (Harman & Waldo, 2004). Pharmaceuticals are not normally used for NPD itself but for illnesses that may co-occur with NPD such as depression (Oldham & Morris, 1995). Due to the range of treatments available for NPD, it is interesting to investigate lay beliefs.

Furnham, Kirby and McClelland (2011) found NPD was the least likely to be seen as in need of treatment and was attributed to psychological rather than biological causes. Their study contained general aetiology and treatment questions that applied to all personality disorders and therefore there is a need for research with questions specific to NPD.

1.4. This Study

This study aims to investigate laypeople's beliefs regarding the manifestations, aetiology and treatment of NPD using three exploratory principle component analyses on attitudinal statements specific to NPD to determine whether laypeople's beliefs can be reduced into interpretable factors. This study also aims to investigate whether laypeople have a monological belief system regarding NPD. No specific predictions were made because this research is largely exploratory.

This study aimed to investigate whether participants own narcissistic traits measured by the NPI-16 (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006), a shortened version of the original NPI related to laypeople's theories regarding the aetiology, manifestations and treatment of NPD, participants identification and likeliness to suggest help for all vignettes. This was to investigate whether people's narcissistic traits affect their lay theories and mental health literacy. It was hypothesised that NPI score would relate to participants lay beliefs, identification and likeliness to suggest help for all NPD vignettes.

This study therefore aimed to investigate the demographics that influence mental health literacy and lay theories regarding NPD. It was hypothesised that the study of mental illness (Furnham, Daoud, & Swami, 2009), personal experience of mental illness (Furnham, Abajian, & McClelland, 2011), qualifications (Lauber, Carlos,

& Wolf, 2005), age (Fisher & Goldney, 2003) and gender (Wang, Adair, Fick, Lai, Waye, Jorm, & Addington, 2007) would correlate with the correct identification of vignettes, participants likeliness to suggest help and lay beliefs regarding the manifestations, aetiology and treatment of NPD.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Two hundred and one participants were recruited opportunistically in public places (N = 130 (65%)), with the assistance of another researcher (N = 24) and online (N = 71 (35%)) via email through contacts of the author. Participation was voluntary and no incentives were given for participating. Of those who answered the relevant demographic questions there were 115 (58%) females and 84 (42%) males. There was an age range of 18 to 85 years (M = 32.8, standard deviation (SD) = 17.1). The majority of participants were of white ethnicity (75.9%, N = 151), with Asian (7.5%, N = 15), Chinese (6.5%, N = 13), Black (5%, N = 10), Mixed (4.5%, N = 9) and other ethnicities (1%) also represented. In relation to qualifications 30.5% (N = 61) had A levels, 19% (N = 38) had undergraduate degrees, 16.5%, (N = 33) had GCSEs, 15% (N = 30) were still in full time education, 6% (N = 12) had other higher qualifications, 5% (N = 10) had no qualifications, 4% (N = 8) had completed a foundation course and 4% (N = 8) had a postgraduate degree. There was a NPI score range of 1 to 7 (M = 4.86, SD = .96). Lastly 19.7% had studied a mental illness (N = 39) and 6.1% had been diagnosed with a mental illness (N = 12).

2.2. Apparatus and Materials

Lay Theories: Forty-five attitudinal statements were presented to participants. They consisted of 18 manifestation items, 15 aetiology items and 12 treatment items referring to NPD. These items were derived from the literature (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992; Kernberg, 2010) as well as from Furnham, Daoud and Swami (2009). They were piloted for comprehensability. Participants were asked to rate on a likert scale (from 7 Strongly Agree to 1 Strongly Disagree) their agreement with each statement.

NPI: Participants completed the NPI-16 (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) which is a measure of narcissistic traits. It consists of 16 items which are pairs of statements; one is the narcissistic choice and the other is the non-narcissistic choice, with participants marking their agreement with the pairs of statements on a likert scale (7 Strongly Agree to 1 Strongly Disagree Statement B). It has been found to have internal, discriminate and predictive validity (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006).

2.3. Procedure

Participants were invited to fill out the questionnaire either online or in person by the experimenter. Half of participants (N = 101, (50%)) filled out the questionnaire which started with a male depression vignette and the other half (N = 100, (50%)) filled out the questionnaire which started with a female depression vignette. The questionnaire took approximately 20 - 25 minutes to complete. All participants gave informed consent and it was explained that their responses were anonymous, confidential and that they had the right to withdraw.

3. Results

3.1. Manifestations

A PCA with varimax rotation was carried out on the 18 behavioural manifestation items. Item 15 was reversed. Upon an initial inspection of the communalities it was discovered that two of the 18 items, Item 9 (The onset of narcissism can occur anytime from early childhood) and Item 17 (Narcissism is not a disorder merely a strong personality) had low communalities (.47 and .48 respectively) and were therefore excluded from the PCA. The communality cut off point was .50. A PCA was then run with the remaining 16 items. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $\chi^2 = 971.90$, df = 120, $p < .001$ which together with the size of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy KMO = .84 demonstrated that the remaining 16 manifestation items had sufficient common variance for a PCA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Inspection of the Scree plot (Cattell, 1966) and factor loadings (Comrey & Lee, 1992) were used to identify appropriate components. The PCA revealed three factors that accounted for 58% of the variance.

The first factor contained seven items referring to Superficiality and Social Problems (Eigen value = 3.85,

accounting for 24% of the variance). The second factor contained three items referring to Business Abilities (Eigen value = 2.04, accounting for 13% of the variance). The third factor contained three items referring to Fragility (Eigen value = 1.75, accounting for 11% of the variance). The factor loadings for each item in each factor are reported in **Table 2**, along with factor scores calculated by taking the mean response associated with a factor. A high mean indicates strong agreement with a factor and a low mean indicates low agreement. Participants rated that NPD manifests itself in Superficiality and Social Problems more than Fragility and Business Abilities. Cronbachs α coefficients were of low to moderate reliability and are also reported in **Table 1** (Kline, 1986).

3.2. Aeitiology

A PCA was carried out using the same criteria as the above PCA with the 15 aetiology items. Item 38 was reversed. The communalities of three items, Item 20 (Delusional beliefs can cause narcissism), Item 24 (People can be predisposed to develop narcissism by having an oversensitive temperament at birth) and Item 27 (Narcissism is a defence mechanism and therefore caused by repressed emotions) were low (.44, .34 and .41 respectively) and excluded from further analysis. A PCA on the remaining 12 items was carried out and demonstrated the existence of three factors accounting for 56% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at $\chi^2 = 672.50$, df = 66, $p < .001$ which together with size of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy KMO = .77 demonstrated that the 12 remaining aetiology items had sufficient common variance for a PCA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The first factor contained six items referring to Social and Cogni-

Table 1. The means, standard deviations, factor loadings, Eigen values and alphas of the 16 manifestation items.

Factor and Items	Eigen Value	Variance/Factor Loading	Mean (SD)	Alpha
1) Superficiality and Social Problems	3.85	24	4.44 (.98)	.60
Narcissists strive for attention.		.79		
Individual's narcissistic traits can vary across a person's lifetime.		.76		
Narcissists can handle criticism well.		.75		
Narcissism is Rife in today's society.		.69		
Having a narcissistic personality can cause problems in many areas of life such as work, relationships and financial matters.		.69		
Narcissists are vain.		.68		
Narcissists are low in Emotional Intelligence.		.61		
2) Business Abilities	2.04	12.7	4.02 (1.12)	.65
Narcissists are visionaries.		.79		
Narcissists are likely to have a high IQ.		.77		
Narcissists make good leaders.		.71		
3) Fragility	1.75	10.5	4.15 (1.07)	.49
Narcissists have a fragile self esteem.		.74		
Narcissists are likely to suffer from other mental disorders.		.63		
Narcissist often set unrealistic goals.		.56		
Non Loading Items				
Narcissists are more likely to be men than women.				
Narcissists cannot have close healthy relationships.				
Narcissists are manipulative.				

tive Explanations (Eigen value = 3.15, accounting for 26% of the variance). The second factor contained two items referring to Genetics and Early Negative Events (Eigen value = 1.83, accounting for 15% of the variance). The third factor contained two items referring to Negative Feelings (Eigen value = 1.74, accounting for 15% of the variance). The factor loadings for each item in each factor are reported in **Table 2**, along with factor scores. Participants rated that the cause of NPD can be explained by Social and Cognitive Explanations more than Negative Feelings and Genetic and Early Negative Events. Cronbachs α coefficients were of low to high reliability (Kline, 1986) and are also reported in **Table 2**.

3.3. Treatment

PCA was carried out with the same criteria as the above two PCAs with 9 of the 12 treatment items. Three of the items, Item 34 (Narcissism can be successfully treated by Freudian psychoanalysis), Item 36 (Group therapy can effectively treat narcissism) and Item 39 (Although some narcissists behaviour can be treated a person's personality cannot be dramatically changed) were excluded due to low communalities (.37, .47 and .31 respectively). The PCA carried out on the 9 items demonstrated the existence of two factors accounting for 56% of the variance. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant $\chi^2 = 525.25$, df = 36, $p < .001$ which together with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy KMO = .78 demonstrated that the remaining nine items had sufficient common variance for a PCA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The first factor consisted of six items referring to Treatability and Less Severe Treatment (Eigen value 3.14, accounting for 35% of the variance).

The second factor consisted of three items referring to Clinical Treatment (Eigen value 1.93, accounting for 22% of the variance). The factor loadings for each item in each factor are reported in **Table 3**, along with factor scores. Participants rated Treatability and Less Severe Treatment as more effective than Clinical Treatment. Cronbachs α coefficients were of low to moderate reliability and are also reported in **Table 3** (Kline, 1986).

Table 2. The means, standard deviations, factor loadings, Eigen values and alphas of the 12 aetiology items.

Factor and Items	Eigen Value	Variance/Factor Loading	Mean (SD)	Alpha
1) Social and Cognitive Explanations	3.15	26.2	4.18 (1.06)	.81
Narcissism can be caused by parenting styles such as excessive pampering and extremely high expectations.		.80		
Narcissism can be caused by learning narcissistic behaviours from parents.		.78		
Narcissism can be caused by distorted cognitions.		.69		
Narcissism can be caused by disruptions to the attachment process with the primary caregiver.		.62		
Narcissism can be caused by a lack of opportunity to gain approval from parents.		.60		
Narcissism is caused by society's approval of boasting about our accomplishments and status.		.65		
2) Genetics and Early Negative Events	1.83	15.3	3.56 (1.30)	.60
Narcissism is hereditary and therefore genetic.		.83		
Narcissism is caused by physical/mental abuse as a child/adolescent.		.69		
3) Negative Feelings	1.74	14.5	3.86 (1.26)	.62
Low self esteem causes narcissistic traits.		.84		
Anxiety causes narcissism.		.77		
Non Loading Items				
Narcissism is caused by purely environmental/social factors.				
Narcissism is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain.				

Table 3. The means, standard deviations, factor loadings, Eigen values and alphas of the 9 treatment items.

Factor and Items	Eigen Value	Variance/Factor Loading	Mean (SD)	Alpha
Treatability and Less Severe Treatment	3.14	34.89	4.22 (.73)	.57
Family therapy can be effective in treating narcissism.		.78		
Narcissism can be improved by environments in which cooperation is necessary.		.75		
Counselling can improve narcissistic behaviour.		.74		
Narcissism can be successfully treated by cognitive behavioural therapy.		.70		
Narcissism cannot be treated.		.70		
Narcissists can improve their behaviour without treatment but by realising the problems that their behaviour causes.		.64		
Clinical Treatment	1.93	21.49	3.79 (1.18)	.63
Narcissism can be effectively treated by medication.		.83		
It is necessary to see a clinical psychologist in order to recover from narcissism.		.73		
Inpatient hospital care can aid the treatment of narcissists.		.64		

3.4. Correlations

Bivariate Pearson correlations were conducted between each of the eight extracted factors, the study of mental illness, personal diagnosis of a mental illness, qualifications, gender age and NPI score to investigate whether participants have a monological belief system regarding NPD and to test the hypothesis that lay beliefs would be affected by the above demographics. As can be seen in **Table 4** the factor scores were not all correlated with each other. Superficiality and Social Problems correlated with Social Cognitive Explanations, Genetics and Early Negative Feelings, Treatability and Less Severe Treatment and Clinical Treatment. Business Abilities correlated with Genetics and Early Negative Events, Negative Feelings and Treatability and Less Severe Treatment. Fragility correlated with Social and Cognitive Explanations, Negative Feelings, Treatability and Less Severe Treatment. Social and Cognitive Explanations correlated with Treatability and Less Severe Treatment and Clinical Treatment. Genetics and Early Negative Events correlated with Clinical Treatment. Negative Feelings correlated with Treatability and Less Severe Treatment.

The study of mental illness correlated with fragility and age. Personal diagnosis of mental illness correlated with Treatability and Less Severe Treatment, Clinical Treatment and Superficiality and Social Problems. Qualifications correlated with Negative Feelings, Age and NPI Score. Gender correlated with Age and NPI Score. Age correlated with Fragility and Social and Cognitive Explanations and NPI Score. NPI Score correlated with Genetics and Early Negative Events, Negative Feelings and Social and Cognitive Explanations. This partly supports the hypothesis that participant's beliefs would be affected by whether people have studied mental illness, personal experience of mental illness and qualifications, gender, age and NPI Score because some beliefs were associated with these demographics but others were not.

4. Discussion

Regarding manifestations laypeople agreed on statements referring to superficiality and social problems, business abilities and fragility. Laypeople's beliefs regarding the aetiology of NPD factored into three components, social and cognitive explanations, negative feelings, and genetics and early negative events. Laypeople do not distinguish between social and cognitive factors suggesting an adoption of social-cognitive explanations by laypeople. No distinction was made between biological and psychological causes or genetics and early negative events. This demonstrates a lack of knowledge of NPD. Psychological explanations of aetiology were rated more positively than genetic explanations (genetic and early negative events) which supports past research

Table 4. Bivariate Pearson correlations between the eight extracted factor scores, study of mental illness, interest in mental illness, qualification, gender, age and NPI score.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1) Superficiality and Social Problems		.00	.00	.26**	−.34**	−.11	.51**	−.45**	.02	−.17*	.00	−.07	.07	−.07
2) Business Abilities			.01	.13	.24**	.16*	.17*	.14	−.08	.02	.04	.04	−.14	.03
3) Fragility				.26**	.04	.20**	.33**	.11	.13*	−.08	.04	.10	−.19**	−.03
4) Social and Cognitive Explanations					.00	.00	.64**	.19*	.03	−.07	−.01	−.11	.17*	−.16*
5) Genetics and Early Negative Events						.00	−.11	.54**	−.10	.07	−.02	−.02	−.07	.14*
6) Negative Feelings							.20**	.13	.06	−.03	.25**	−.03	. 05	−17*
7) Treatability and Less Severe Treatment								.00	.09	−.16**	.08	−.02	.03	.02
8) Clinical Treatment									.05	.14*	.01	.06	−.13	−.09
9) Study of Mental Illness										.14	.05	−.11	.26**	−.03
10) Diagnosed with Mental Illness											−.01	−.00	−.05	−.03
11) Qualifications												−.08	−.16*	−.15*
12) Gender													−.21**	.30**
13) Age														.19**
14 NPI Score														

*$p < .05$; **$p < .001$.

(Furnham, Kirby, & McClelland, 2011; Link, Phelan, Bresnahan, Stueve, & Pescosolido, 1999). Laypeople distinguished clinical treatments from treatability and less severe treatments but not between psychological and biological treatments. Therefore laypeople may think in terms of the severity of treatment rather than making biological or psychological distinctions. This may be useful in everyday life but demonstrates poor knowledge of NPD.

Not all factors correlated with each other, suggesting that laypeople have a multi-logical belief system regarding NPD, with several different belief structures. This differs from Furnham, Daoud and Swami (2009) who found that laypeople have a monological belief system regarding psychopathy. This suggests that beliefs regarding different personality disorders do not all come from the same belief system. Most of the factors had low or moderate alphas and therefore caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from these results. However, the factors, especially when viewed alongside the findings of Furnham, Kirby and McClelland (2011) are useful in guiding our knowledge of laypeople's beliefs and demonstrating a lack of knowledge of NPD.

A limitation is that the current study's results could be due to order effects. Participants may have been less likely to correctly identify N2 and N3 than N1 because they thought that there could not be three NPD vignettes or that it was a test of at what severity narcissistic traits becomes a disorder. However this is unlikely because some participants did identify N3 correctly and the vignettes used appear very different which is supported by the content analysis.

All demographics tested except gender correlated with at least one factor. Diagnosis of a mental illness and NPI Score were the most predictive demographics. Personal experience of a disorder may influence beliefs regarding other disorders. This partly supports Furnham, Kirby and McClelland (2011) who found that personal experience of a mental illness related to lay theories of NPD because the diagnosis of a mental illness was related to three factors but not all factors. The findings also suggest that people's narcissistic traits influence their beliefs regarding NPD and that we form beliefs regarding personality around our own personality traits. This may make changing people's beliefs regarding personality disorders hard because some argue that personality cannot be dramatically changed (Costa & McCrae, 1994) and it is therefore necessary to investigate whether this finding can be replicated and whether it applies to other personality disorders, for example whether peoples Schizotypal traits influence their beliefs regarding Schizotypal personality disorder.

Our results partly confirm the hypothesis that the study of mental illness (Furnham, Daoud, & Swami, 2009), personal experience of mental illness (Furnham, Abajian, & McClelland, 2011), qualifications (Lauber, Carlos, & Wolf, 2005), age (Fisher & Goldney, 2003), gender (Wang, Adair, Fick, Lai, Waye, Jorm, & Addington, 2007) and NPI score would relate to participants opinions of the manifestations, aetiology and treatment of NPD, the identification of vignettes and participants likeliness to suggest help. This is because all demographics tested except gender correlated with lay beliefs. Age, NPI score and the study of mental illnesses related to the correct identification of some vignettes. The findings partly support the past research except Wang, Adair, Fick, Lai, Waye, Jorm and Addington (2007). However demographics were more predictive of lay theories than mental health literacy when the past research that the hypothesis was based on investigated demographics relation to mental health literacy, except Furnham, Daoud and Swami (2009). Therefore the current study's findings do not support previous research in this way.

Overall our results suggest that how "abnormal" people deem certain traits to be is a key factor in identifying and suggesting help for personality disorders and mental illnesses. However, abnormality is not the only factor because differences in abnormality did not always lead to the same pattern of mental health literacy across participants. Knowledge of the specific disorder tested may also influence people's mental health literacy, especially regarding peoples likeliness to suggest help ratings because demographics did not influence this. Laypeople may not be willing to suggest help or label someone with a disorder unless they are sure that they have a problem. This is supported by the most frequent reason for a delay in seeking help is a lack of knowledge (Thompson, Hunt, & Issakidis, 2004).

A limitation is that the current sample is not representative of the wider British population due to the method of sampling used. In addition, some of the items may require modification in subsequent research. This study is therefore useful as preliminary research into laypeople's beliefs regarding NPD but future research should aim to gain a more representative sample.

5. Conclusion

Lay people seem relatively ignorant about the causes, manifestations and treatment of Narcissism. There were few significant correlates of knowledge of NPD which suggests fairly widespread lack of information and data on this disorder.

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Narcissism and Exercise Addiction: The Mediating Roles of Exercise-Related Motives

Virgil Zeigler-Hill [1,*], Avi Besser [2,*], Maor Gabay [3] and Gracynn Young [1]

[1] Department of Psychology, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309, USA; gracynnyoung@oakland.edu
[2] Department of Communication Disorders/School for Sciences, Health and Society, Hadassah Academic College, Jerusalem 9101001, Israel
[3] Department of Physical Education and Sports, Kaye Academic College of Education, Be'er Sheva 8414201, Israel; maorgabaygs@gmail.com
* Correspondence: zeiglerh@oakland.edu (V.Z.-H.); avibe@hac.ac.il (A.B.)

Abstract: The present research examined whether the associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction were mediated by particular motives for engaging in exercise in a large Israeli community sample (N = 2629). The results revealed that each aspect of narcissism was positively associated with exercise addiction. Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had similar positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through the interpersonal motive for exercise. However, these aspects of narcissism diverged in their indirect associations with exercise addiction through psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives for exercise such that these indirect associations were *positive* for narcissistic admiration but *negative* for narcissistic rivalry. Narcissistic vulnerability had positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through body-related motives and fitness motives that were similar to those observed for narcissistic admiration. These results suggest that exercise-related motives may play important roles in the associations that narcissistic personality features have with exercise addiction. The discussion will focus on the implications of these results for understanding the complex connections between narcissism and exercise addiction.

Keywords: narcissism; exercise; motivation; addiction

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1. Introduction

Exercise refers to planned, structured, and repetitive physical activities that are intended to improve or maintain some aspect of physical fitness [1–3]. Regular physical exercise has been shown to contribute to both physical health (e.g., reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes) and psychological well-being (e.g., reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety) which has led to the recommendation that nearly everyone should include at least some level of exercise in their lives [4–6]. However, some individuals may become so focused on exercise that it can actually have negative consequences for them due to issues such as prioritizing exercise to the extent that other areas of life are neglected [7–12]. This has led to concerns that exercise may constitute an addiction for some individuals [13–17]. The purpose of the present research was to examine whether narcissistic personality features were associated with exercise addiction and whether exercise-related motives mediated these associations.

Exercise addiction was initially considered to be relatively harmless given the array of benefits that are associated with exercise [18]. However, the perception of exercise addiction changed as it became clear that exercise addiction was often detrimental to both physical health (due to issues such as overtraining) and psychological functioning (due to issues such as prioritizing exercise over developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships [16]). Exercise addiction differs from simply being highly committed to exercise in various ways including that individuals who are simply *committed* to exercising

tend to engage in exercise because they enjoy the benefits of doing so (e.g., they feel better when they are engaging in regular exercise), whereas those who are *addicted* to exercising are more often motivated by a sense of obligation (e.g., they exercise because they anticipate negative consequences if they fail to do so; [9,19]). Furthermore, exercise addiction is characterized by compulsive tendencies and feelings of dependence which are not commonly observed among those who are simply committed to exercise [9]. These differences may explain why those who are addicted to exercise consider exercise to be a central part of their lives and report experiencing powerful feelings of deprivation—which are similar in many respects to withdrawal symptoms—when they are unable to exercise [9]. It has been suggested that exercise addiction may have features that are similar to other addictions such as salience, mood modification, tolerance, and withdrawal symptoms [9].

The cause of exercise addiction remains unclear but various explanations have been offered, including those based on psychophysiological processes such as the production of endorphins [8]. Estimates for the prevalence rate of exercise addiction have varied across studies but it appears to be approximately 3% in the general population [8,11,20,21]. It is important to note that there has been considerable debate about whether exercise addiction should actually be considered as an addiction. For example, exercise addiction is not included as a disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5* [22]). In fact, the only form of addiction included in the *DSM-5* that does not involve the ingestion of a substance is gambling disorder [1]. In addition, there has been an ongoing debate regarding whether exercise addiction should be considered as a standalone disorder or simply as an aspect of eating disorders [23–25]. For example, excessive exercise behavior is included as a compensatory behavior for bulimia nervosa in the *DSM-5* [22]. However, we believe that exercise addiction is an important issue that warrants empirical attention, even though it is not currently recognized as a standalone disorder.

1.1. Narcissism and Exercise Addiction

The detrimental consequences of exercise addiction suggest that it is important to identify some of its risk factors. One possible risk factor for exercise addiction is narcissism, which refers to a complex and dynamic system of social, cognitive, and affective self-regulatory processes that are characterized by features that include a sense of grandiosity, vanity, self-absorption, feelings of entitlement, a lack of empathy for others, and a willingness to exploit others [26–29]. Initial support for the connection between narcissism and exercise addiction has been observed [1,30], which has led to speculation that narcissism may be one of the key personality features for predicting exercise addiction [31]. The observed connections between narcissism and exercise addiction are consistent with other research showing narcissism to be associated with a range of addiction-related issues including problematic substance use [32–36] and gambling [32,37–39]. In addition, narcissism has been shown to be associated with elevated levels of exercise behaviors [40] and appearance-related concerns [41,42], which are consistent with the possibility that it may serve as a risk factor for exercise addiction.

Narcissism has been found to be associated with exercise addiction but the underlying mechanism that is responsible for this connection remains unclear. One possible mechanism may be particular motives that are related to exercise. This possibility is consistent with previous arguments that motivational factors may mediate the associations that personality traits have with a wide array of attitudes and behaviors [43]. The basic idea is that personality traits may activate motives that are then satisfied by adopting certain attitudes or engaging in particular behaviors. Support for the argument that personality traits are associated with various motives for participating in activities has been observed for a range of behaviors including exercise [44–47]. Furthermore, exercise-related motives have been found to mediate the associations that basic personality dimensions have with exercise-related behaviors [47]. For example, neuroticism was found to be associated with motives concerning the improvement of appearance and regulation of weight which, in turn, were associated with engagement in exercise. Exercise-related motives have also

been shown to be associated with exercise addiction [48–51] but no studies have examined whether the associations between narcissism and exercise addiction are mediated by exercise-related motives.

1.2. Overview and Predictions

The purpose of the present research was to gain a more complete understanding of the associations that narcissistic personality features have with exercise addiction as well as the possibility that exercise-related motives may mediate these associations. Previous studies have examined the connections that narcissism has with exercise-related attitudes and behaviors [1,30] but these studies have often conceptualized narcissism as being unidimensional even though the evidence is abundantly clear that it is actually a multidimensional construct [52,53]. To address this limitation, we adopted the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC [54]) to provide a more nuanced account of the connections that narcissistic personality features have with exercise-related motives and exercise addiction. The NARC model was developed with the intention of clarifying some of the conflicting results that have been previously observed in research concerning narcissism (e.g., narcissistic individuals are considered to be charming by others but they are also perceived as aggressive). The NARC model attempts to resolve some of these issues by distinguishing between *narcissistic admiration* (an agentic aspect of narcissism that is characterized by assertive self-enhancement and self-promotion) and *narcissistic rivalry* (an antagonistic aspect of narcissism that is characterized by self-protection and self-defense). Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry represent two different strategies for maintaining grandiose self-views.

The NARC model has been extremely useful for clarifying some of the confusion and inconsistencies surrounding the connections that narcissism has with various attitudes and behaviors. For example, narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry have both been shown to be similar in terms of their motivation to attain status but these aspects of narcissism are linked with different strategies for pursuing status [55]. More specifically, narcissistic admiration tends to be characterized by agentic approaches to the pursuit of status that focus on earning prestige, whereas narcissistic rivalry is characterized by the exclusive use of antagonistic strategies for the pursuit of status that involve the use of dominance and intimidation. However, it is important to note that the NARC model is not the only model that is used to distinguish between different aspects of narcissism. In fact, there is an emerging consensus regarding the existence of three distinct aspects of narcissism [27,53,56]. The first aspect is *assertive/extraverted* narcissism which is a purely grandiose form of narcissism that is largely consistent with narcissistic admiration from the NARC model. The second aspect is *antagonistic/disagreeable* narcissism which is a blend of the grandiose and vulnerable forms of narcissism that is largely consistent with narcissistic rivalry from the NARC model. The third aspect is *vulnerable/neurotic* narcissism which is a purely vulnerable form of narcissism that is characterized by negative affectivity and psychological distress. This aspect of narcissism is characterized by a heightened sensitivity to potentially threatening events (e.g., comments from others that may be interpreted as criticisms or insults) which has led to vulnerable/neurotic narcissism sometimes being referred to as *hypervigilant* narcissism. The vulnerable/neurotic aspect of narcissism is not represented in the NARC model because it intends to focus on the grandiose expression of narcissism. Recent research has shown that the vulnerable/neurotic aspect of narcissism often diverges from the assertive/extraverted and antagonistic/disagreeable aspects of narcissism in terms of its associations with attitudes and behaviors [57,58]. As a result, we believed it was important for us to distinguish between these three aspects of narcissism when considering the connections that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction through exercise-related motives. This approach is consistent with the recognition that it is important for researchers to distinguish between different aspects of narcissism in order to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of the attitudes and behaviors that characterize narcissism.

Exercise-related motives have been found to be associated with a range of attitudes and behaviors concerning exercise [47,59] as well as exercise addiction [60]. However, there are various approaches available for conceptualizing exercise-related motives [61,62]. The conceptualization of exercise-related motives that we adopted for the present study was developed by Markland and Ingledew [63]. This approach focuses on five higher-order exercise-related motives: *interpersonal motives* (which involve issues surrounding competition, social recognition, and affiliation), *psychological motives* (which deal with stress management, revitalization, and challenge), *health motives* (which reflect concerns with avoiding health problems, seeking positive health outcomes, and health-related pressures), *body-related motives* (which capture concerns revolving around physical appearance and weight management), and *fitness motives* (which involve issues such as the desire for strength, endurance, and agility). A model depicting the proposed associations that narcissistic personality features may have with exercise addiction through particular exercise-related motives is presented in Figure 1. We developed the following hypotheses for the present studies:

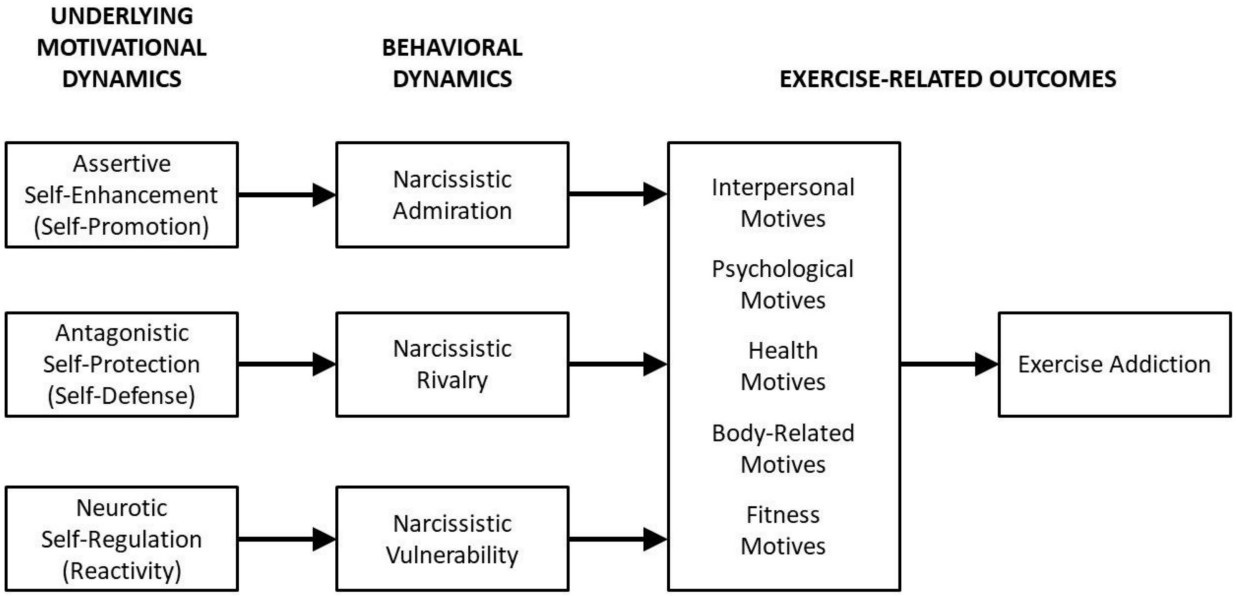

Figure 1. A modified version of the NARC model.

Hypothesis 1a. *We expected narcissistic admiration to be positively associated with exercise addiction. The rationale for this prediction was that narcissistic admiration is characterized by the tendency to engage in self-promotion and self-enhancement which may contribute to the development of exercise addiction due to the benefits that exercise has for a range of outcomes including physical appearance, perceived formidability, and athletic performance. In essence, exercise may be appealing to individuals with elevated levels of narcissistic admiration because it provides them with an avenue to display their worth and value to others. This prediction is also consistent with the results of previous studies that have found narcissism to be associated with exercise addiction* [1,30].

Hypothesis 1b. *We expected the positive association that narcissistic admiration had with exercise addiction to be due, at least in part, to exercise-related motives. That is, we expected narcissistic admiration to activate an array of motives concerning exercise that, in turn, would promote the development of exercise addiction. For example, narcissistic admiration has been shown to be linked with a strong desire for social recognition* [55] *so it seemed reasonable to assume that this aspect of narcissism may be associated with interpersonal motives for exercise that involve gaining recognition from others. It may be the satisfaction of these exercise-related motives—such as gaining recognition*

from others for one's physical appearance—that facilitates the development of exercise addiction for individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration.

Hypothesis 2a. *We expected narcissistic rivalry to be positively associated with exercise addiction. The rationale for this prediction was that narcissistic rivalry may be associated with exercise addiction due to a desire to outperform others. This hypothesis is consistent with previous research showing that narcissistic rivalry is characterized by a heightened sensitivity to competition as well as a desire to demonstrate superiority and dominance over others* [57,58]. *That is, exercise may be appealing to individuals with elevated levels of narcissistic rivalry because it provides them with an opportunity to display their dominance and superiority over others.*

Hypothesis 2b. *We expected the positive association that narcissistic rivalry had with exercise addiction to be explained, at least in part, by the interpersonal motives for exercise. The basis for this prediction was that the interpersonal motives include issues such as outperforming others which would seem to align with the heightened sensitivity to competition that plays a central role in understanding the attitudes and behaviors that characterize narcissistic rivalry. We were uncertain about whether narcissistic rivalry would have indirect associations with exercise addiction through the other exercise-related motives because it was unclear whether individuals with high levels of narcissistic rivalry would be particularly motivated to engage in exercise due to issues such as improving their health or fitness. However, we examined these associations for exploratory purposes.*

Hypothesis 3a. *We expected narcissistic vulnerability to be positively associated with exercise addiction. The rationale for this prediction was that narcissistic vulnerability is characterized by low self-esteem and the desire for external affirmation as well as the tendency to experience negative affect and psychological distress. It seems reasonable to assume these characteristics may contribute to the development of exercise addiction. In addition, narcissistic vulnerability is similar to the basic personality dimensions of neuroticism* [64] *which has been found to be associated with exercise addiction* [15,25,65,66].

Hypothesis 3b. *We expected the psychological motives and body-related motives to mediate the association that narcissistic vulnerability had with exercise addiction. The rationale for this prediction was that narcissistic vulnerability is characterized by a reliance on external factors for self-esteem regulation* [42,53] *which would seem to be consistent with these particular exercise-related motives playing a role in the connection that this aspect of narcissism has with exercise addiction. We were uncertain whether narcissistic vulnerability would have indirect associations with exercise addiction through the other exercise-related motives, but we examined these associations for exploratory purposes.*

2. Materials and Methods

Participants were 2828 Israeli community members who responded to requests asking for volunteers to take part in an online study concerning "personality and attitudes about exercise" via postings on social media. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants provided their informed consent before completing the questionnaires. The appropriate sample size for this study was determined to be at least 250 participants based on a power analysis for the average effect size in social-personality psychology in conjunction with guidelines for reducing estimation error [67,68]. However, we deliberately employed oversampling in an effort to increase the statistical power of the study. More specifically, we used a time-based stopping rule for data collection that involved collecting data from as many participants as possible during a period of four months. Participants completed measures of narcissism, exercise-related motives, and exercise addiction via a secure website. To maintain equivalence of the instruments in the target language, all of the original questionnaires used in the present study were administered in Hebrew after being translated from the original English versions using the back-translation method. Data were excluded for 205 participants due to careless or inattentive responding: 48 participants

were excluded for being univariate outliers, 17 participants were excluded for being multivariate outliers as assessed by Mahalanobis distance [69], 131 participants were excluded for having invariant response patterns as assessed by long-string analysis [70,71], and 3 participants were excluded due to inconsistent responding as assessed by inter-item standard deviation [72,73].

The final 2629 participants (1474 women and 1155 men) had a mean age of 30.22 years (*SD* = 11.43; range = 18–80). The mean body mass index of the final participants was 24.22 (*SD* = 4.30; range = 12.29–58.46 (Median = 23.53)) and they reported exercising an average of 2.21 times per week (*SD* = 1.86; range = 0–14 (Median = 2.00)) with 58% of participants reporting that they engaged in vigorous exercise at least once per week. Participants reported spending approximately 37% of their time exercising engaged in cardiovascular exercise and approximately 33% of their time exercising engaged in activities such as resistance training. The mean number of years of formal education for the final participants was 13.15 years (*SD* = 2.15; range = 10–30) and they were predominantly Jewish (95%) and heterosexual (90%). The self-reported current economic status of these participants was 13% "very good", 46% "good", 34% "moderate", 6% "bad", and 1% "very bad".

Measures

Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire. We used the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire [54] to capture *narcissistic admiration* (9 items; e.g., "I manage to be the center of attention with my outstanding contributions" (α = 0.82)) and *narcissistic rivalry* (9 items; e.g., "I want my rivals to fail" (α = 0.85)). Participants were asked to rate how well each statement described them using scales that ranged from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 6 (*agree completely*). This instrument has been shown to possess adequate psychometric properties in previous studies [54].

Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale. We used the Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale [74] to capture the vulnerable aspect of narcissism. The Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale consists of 11 adjectives (e.g., "Self-absorbed", "Fragile", "Underappreciated" (α = 0.82)) that participants were asked to rate with regard to how well each described them using scales that ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). The Narcissistic Vulnerability Scale has been shown to possess adequate psychometric properties in previous studies [74].

Exercise Motivations Inventory. We used the Exercise Motivations Inventory-2 [63] to capture the following motives for engaging in exercise: *interpersonal motives* (12 items; e.g., "Personally, I exercise [or might exercise] to show my worth to others" (α = 0.92)), *psychological motives* (17 items; e.g., "Personally, I exercise [or might exercise] because it makes me feel good" (α = 0.94)), *health motives* (11 items; e.g., "Personally, I exercise [or might exercise] because it makes me feel good to prevent health problems" (α = 0.89)), *body-related motives* (8 items; e.g., "Personally, I exercise [or might exercise] to help control my weight" (α = 0.90)), and *fitness motives* (8 items; e.g., "Personally, I exercise [or might exercise] to get stronger" (α = 0.92)). Participants were asked to rate how well each statement described them using scales that ranged from 1 (*not at all true for me*) to 6 (*very true for me*). This instrument has been shown to possess adequate psychometric properties in previous studies [63].

Exercise Addiction Inventory. We used the Exercise Addiction Inventory [17] to capture the extent to which participants were addicted to exercise (6 items; e.g., "Exercise is the most important thing in my life" (α = 0.79)). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using scales that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This instrument has been shown to possess adequate psychometric properties in previous studies [17].

3. Results

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 1. Narcissistic admiration had small-to-medium positive correlations with narcissistic rivalry, narcissistic vulnerability, interpersonal motives, psychological motives, health motives, body-related

motives, fitness motives, and exercise addiction. Narcissistic rivalry had a large positive correlation with narcissistic vulnerability as well as small-to-medium positive correlations with interpersonal motives, health motives, body-related motives, fitness motives, and exercise addiction. Narcissistic rivalry also had a small *negative* correlation with psychological motives. Narcissistic vulnerability had small positive correlations with interpersonal motives, body-related motives, fitness motives, and exercise addiction. In addition, narcissistic vulnerability had a small *negative* correlation with psychological motives and it was not correlated with health motives.

Table 1. Intercorrelations and descriptive statistics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Narcissistic Admiration	—								
2. Narcissistic Rivalry	0.36 ***	—							
3. Narcissistic Vulnerability	0.06 **	0.55 ***	—						
4. Interpersonal Motives	0.30 ***	0.34 ***	0.14 ***	—					
5. Psychological Motives	0.15 ***	−0.10 ***	−0.10 ***	0.42 ***	—				
6. Health Motives	0.15 ***	0.07 **	0.03	0.22 ***	0.29 ***	—			
7. Body-Related Motives	0.20 ***	0.07 **	0.08 ***	0.16 ***	0.25 ***	0.34 ***	—		
8. Fitness Motives	0.23 ***	0.06 **	0.04 *	0.38 ***	0.55 ***	0.40 ***	0.41 ***	—	
9. Exercise Addiction	0.16 ***	0.16 ***	0.10 ***	0.42 ***	0.58 ***	0.25 ***	0.25 ***	0.45 ***	—
Mean	3.36	1.90	2.60	2.53	3.97	3.45	4.11	3.88	2.54
Standard Deviation	0.99	0.84	0.98	1.22	1.20	1.12	1.37	1.40	0.94

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Parallel multiple mediation. We were interested in the possibility that the associations the narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction may be due, at least in part, to exercise-related motives. To examine this possibility, we conducted a parallel multiple mediation analysis using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro [75]. One advantage of this parallel multiple mediation analysis is that it allowed us to examine whether the indirect association that an aspect of narcissism (e.g., narcissistic admiration) had with exercise addiction through a particular mediator (e.g., interpersonal motives) emerged when statistically controlling for the other aspects of narcissism and exercise-related motives that were included in the same model. Direct and indirect effects were estimated using a bootstrap resampling process that was repeated 10,000 times in order to generate 95% bootstrap confidence intervals. All variables were standardized prior to analysis in order to enhance the interpretability of the coefficients. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for this analysis were less than 1.92 which suggests that multicollinearity was not an issue [76].

The results of this parallel multiple mediation analysis are presented in Figure 2. These results revealed that narcissistic admiration had small positive unique associations with each of the exercise-related motives: interpersonal motives ($a_1 = 0.20$, $t = 10.24$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.16, 0.24]), psychological motives ($a_2 = 0.21$, $t = 9.92$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.17, 0.25]), health motives ($a_3 = 0.15$, $t = 6.95$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.11, 0.19]), body-related motives ($a_4 = 0.22$, $t = 10.80$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.18, 0.26]), and fitness motives ($a_5 = 0.25$, $t = 12.04$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.21, 0.29]). In contrast, narcissistic rivalry had a small positive association with interpersonal motives ($a_6 = 0.28$, $t = 11.78$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.23, 0.32]) but small negative associations with psychological motives ($a_7 = -0.16$, $t = -6.54$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.21, −0.11]), body-related motives ($a_9 = -0.08$, $t = -3.07$, $p = 0.002$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.12, −0.03]), and fitness motives ($a_{10} = -0.06$, $t = -2.32$, $p = 0.02$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.11, −0.01]). Narcissistic rivalry was not associated with health motives ($a_8 = 0.00$, $t = -0.08$, $p = 0.94$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.05, 0.05]). Narcissistic vulnerability had small positive associations with body-related motives ($a_{14} = 0.11$, $t = 4.77$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.07, 0.16]) and fitness motives ($a_{15} = 0.06$, $t = 2.42$, $p = 0.02$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.01, 0.10]) but was not associated with interpersonal motives ($a_{11} = -0.02$, $t = -1.06$, $p = 0.29$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.07, 0.02]), psychological motives ($a_{12} = -0.02$, $t = -0.75$, $p = 0.45$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.06, 0.03]), or health motives ($a_{13} = 0.03$, $t = 1.07$, $p = 0.28$, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.02, 0.07]). In turn, interpersonal motives ($b_1 = 0.12$, $t = 6.45$, $p < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.08, 0.16]),

psychological motives (b_2 = 0.47, t = 23.92, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.43, 0.51]), body-related motives (b_4 = 0.06, t = 3.42, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.02, 0.09]), and fitness motives (b_5 = 0.11, t = 5.66, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.07, 0.15]) had small-to-medium positive associations with exercise addiction. Health motives did not have a unique association with exercise addiction (b_3 = 0.02, t = 1.08, p = 0.28, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.01, 0.05]).

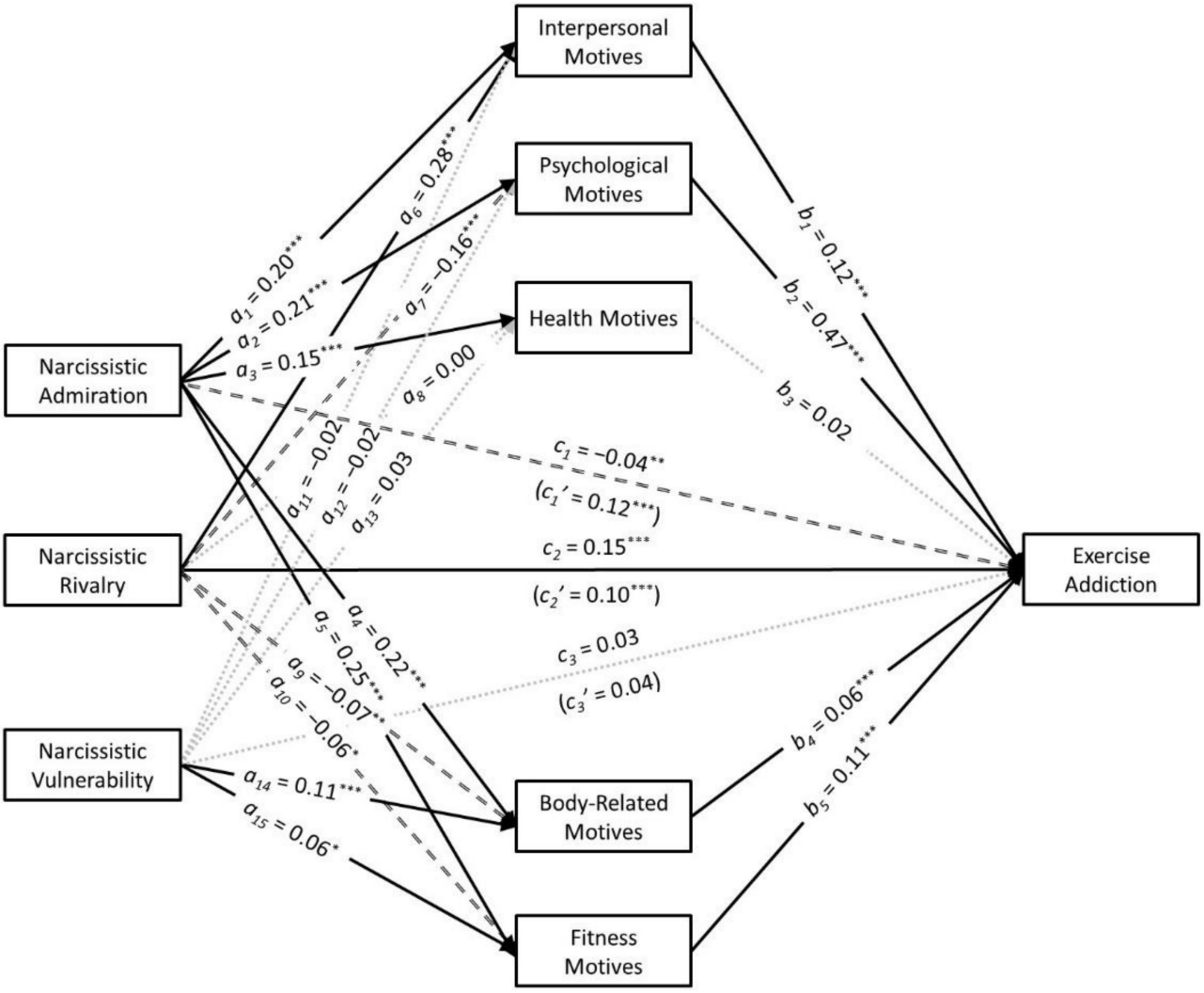

Figure 2. The results of the parallel multiple mediation analyses with the exercise-related motives mediating the associations that narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and narcissistic vulnerability had with exercise addiction. *Note:* The total effects (i.e., $c_{1'}$, $c_{2'}$, and $c_{3'}$) are presented in parentheses. The significant positive associations are indicated by solid black arrows. The significant negative associations are indicated by dashed black arrows. The dotted gray lines represent nonsignificant associations. * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

Tests of mediation found that narcissistic admiration had positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through interpersonal motives (a_1b_1 = 0.02, z = 5.44, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.02, 0.03]), psychological motives (a_2b_2 = 0.10, z = 9.16, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.08, 0.12]), body-related motives (a_4b_4 = 0.01, z = 3.25, p = 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.01, 0.02]), and fitness motives (a_5b_5 = 0.03, z = 5.11, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.02, 0.04]). In contrast, narcissistic rivalry had a positive indirect association with exercise addition through interpersonal motives (a_6b_1 = 0.03, z = 5.64, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.02, 0.05]) but negative indirect associations with exercise addiction through psychological motives (a_7b_2 = −0.08, z = −6.30, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.10, −0.05]), body-related motives (a_9b_4 = −0.01, z = −2.23, p = 0.03, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.01, 0.00]), and fitness motives ($a_{10}b_5$ = −0.01, z = −2.12, p = 0.03, $CI_{95\%}$ [−0.01, 0.00]). Narcissistic vul-

nerability had positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through body-related motives ($a_{14}b_4$ = 0.01, z = 2.74, p = 0.006, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.00, 0.01]) and fitness motives ($a_{15}b_5$ = 0.01, z = 2.20, p = 0.03, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.00, 0.01]).

Moderated mediation. Previous research has revealed that men consistently report higher levels of narcissism than women [77] and gender has sometimes been shown to moderate the associations that narcissistic personality features have with certain outcomes [78]. As a result, we conducted an exploratory analysis to examine whether gender moderated the strength of the indirect associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction through exercise-related motives. This exploratory moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 8 of the PROCESS macro [75]. Results indicated that gender did not moderate the indirect associations that narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, or narcissistic vulnerability had with exercise addiction through any of the exercise-related motives. Although gender did not moderate the indirect associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction, it did moderate the associations that narcissistic admiration had with interpersonal motives (β = 0.07, t = 3.38, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.03, 0.10]) and psychological motives (β = 0.05, t = 2.47, p = 0.01, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.01, 0.09]). The predicted values for the narcissistic admiration × gender interaction for interpersonal motives are presented in Figure 3a. We supplemented this analysis with the simple slopes recommended for describing interactions that involve a continuous predictor [79]. Simple slopes tests revealed that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with interpersonal motives for women (β = 0.14, t = 4.95, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.08, 0.20]) but that this positive association was significantly stronger for men (β = 0.27, t = 10.22, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.22, 0.32]). The predicted values for the narcissistic admiration × gender interaction for psychological motives are presented in Figure 3b. Similar to the results for interpersonal motives, simple slopes tests revealed that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with psychological motives for women (β = 0.15, t = 5.04, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.09, 0.21]) but that this association was particularly strong for men (β = 0.26, t = 8.98, p < 0.001, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.20, 0.31]). These patterns reveal that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with interpersonal motives and psychological motives for both women and men but that these associations were especially strong for men.

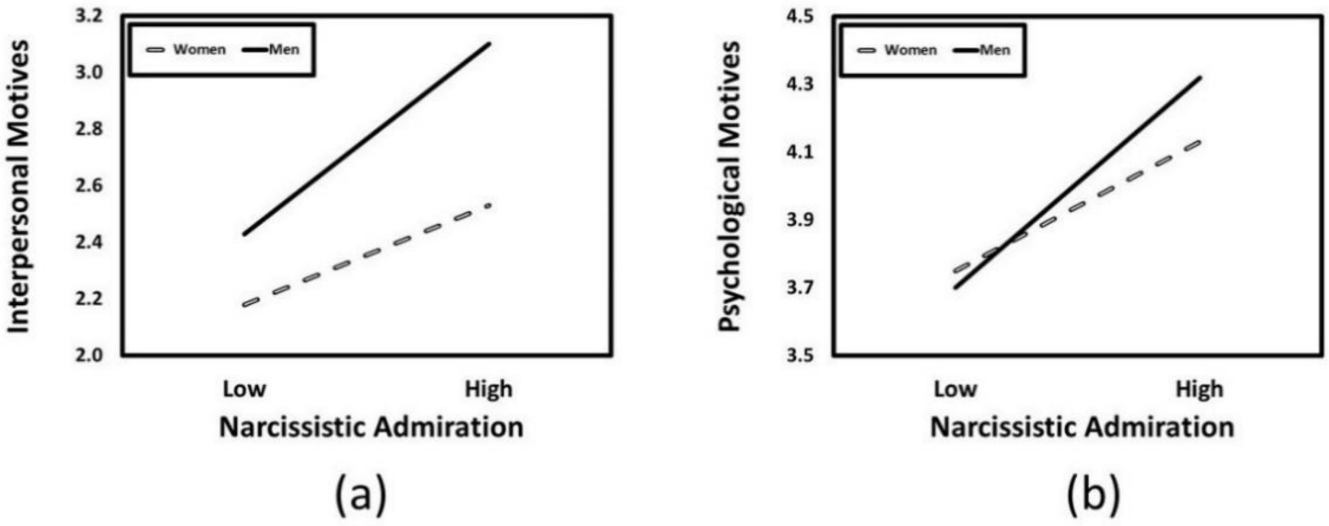

Figure 3. Predicted values illustrating the interaction of narcissistic admiration (at values that are one standard deviation above and below its mean) and gender for interpersonal motives (**a**) and psychological motives (**b**).

4. Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to examine whether exercise-related motives mediated the associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction.

We found partial support for our predictions. For example, our results showed that each aspect of narcissism was positively correlated with exercise addiction as we expected. However, it is important to note that these associations were small in magnitude and that narcissistic vulnerability did not have a unique association with exercise addiction when narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry were included in the same analysis. This suggests that the residual form of narcissistic vulnerability that remains after its overlap with narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry has been statistically removed does not have a direct association with exercise addiction. One possible explanation for this pattern is that the zero-order correlation that narcissistic vulnerability had with exercise addiction may have been due to the common "core" of narcissism that is shared with narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry rather than being specific to this aspect of narcissism.

Despite the associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise addiction being weaker than we anticipated, each aspect of narcissism had indirect associations with exercise addiction through particular exercise-related motives. For example, narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had similar positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through interpersonal motives. These indirect associations were consistent with our predictions and suggest that issues pertaining to competition and social recognition likely play important roles in the connections that these aspects of narcissism have with exercise addiction. That is, narcissistic individuals may be so focused on the interpersonal rewards that are involved with increasing levels of exercise (e.g., outperforming others at the gym) that they fail to recognize the potential costs that are involved with allowing exercise to shape so much of their lives. In essence, narcissistic individuals may use exercise as a means of affirming their value and worth. However, this may unintentionally create an escalating pattern for narcissistic individuals in which their increasingly desperate pursuit of self-worth through exercise makes it even more difficult for them to feel satisfied and secure, resulting in an addiction to exercise. These results align with recent arguments that attitudes and behaviors connected with the pursuit of status may be a central feature of narcissism [26,55,80] because exercise may serve as another means for narcissistic individuals to navigate local status hierarchies by demonstrating their dominance and superiority over others.

Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had similar associations with interpersonal motives, but it is important to note that they had divergent indirect associations with exercise addiction through psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives. More specifically, these indirect associations were positive for narcissistic admiration but negative for narcissistic rivalry. This suggests that the motivational profiles concerning exercise may be quite different for narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. However, it is important to note that narcissistic rivalry actually had positive zero-order correlations with each of these motives and that these associations only reversed their sign and became negative associations when the other aspects of narcissism were included in the same analysis. It is not unusual for the association that an aspect of narcissism has with an outcome to be altered by the inclusion of other aspects of narcissism in the same analysis. These sorts of patterns are sometimes referred to as *suppression effects* [81] and they can involve changes in the magnitude of associations or even changes in the direction of associations, as was observed in the present study. Taken together, these results reveal that narcissistic admiration has clear positive associations with psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives which, in turn, are associated with exercise addiction. In contrast, the nature of the associations that narcissistic rivalry had with these particular exercise-related motives was found to depend on whether the other aspects of narcissism were included in the analysis. Future research should attempt to gain a better understanding of the associations that narcissistic rivalry has with psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives.

Narcissistic vulnerability had positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through body-related motives and fitness motives that were similar to those observed for narcissistic admiration. This suggests that individuals with elevated levels of narcissistic

vulnerability may be motivated to engage in exercise because it provides them with an opportunity to affirm their worth and value in the eyes of others. This is consistent with previous results showing that narcissistic vulnerability is characterized by a reliance on external factors such as physical appearance for self-esteem regulation [42]. These results also align with findings from past studies showing narcissistic vulnerability to be a risk factor for an array of concerns related to body image [82,83]. Taken together, these results suggest that appearance-related concerns likely play an important role in the connection between narcissistic vulnerability and exercise addiction.

We also conducted exploratory analyses that examined whether gender moderated the associations that narcissistic personality features had with exercise-related motives and exercise addiction. These analyses revealed that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with interpersonal motives and psychological motives for both women and men but that these associations were especially strong for men. It is possible that these associations may be particularly pronounced for men because issues surrounding perceived masculinity are often linked with physical fitness [84]. This pattern is consistent with the results of other recent studies showing that men may be particularly susceptible to some problematic attitudes and behaviors concerning exercise [85–88].

The results of the present studies provide additional support for the importance of distinguishing between different aspects of narcissism. There were certainly similarities for these narcissistic personality features (e.g., each had small positive correlations with exercise addiction) but there were also important differences between these aspects of narcissism. For example, the indirect associations that narcissistic rivalry had with exercise addiction through some of the exercise-related motives were quite different than those that emerged for narcissistic admiration and narcissistic vulnerability. Furthermore, narcissistic rivalry had competing indirect associations with exercise addiction through the exercise-related motives (i.e., a positive indirect association through the interpersonal motives but negative indirect associations through the psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives). The complexity of these associations would have been obscured if we had not distinguished between these aspects of narcissism. This suggests that future studies concerning the associations between narcissism and exercise-related constructs should continue to distinguish between these aspects of narcissism in order to allow for a more complete and nuanced understanding of these connections.

The present study provides additional insights into the connections that narcissism has with exercise-related motives and exercise addiction, but it would be beneficial for future studies to expand on these results. For example, it would be helpful to examine whether exercise-related motives may shed light on the associations that narcissism has with other attitudes and behaviors surrounding exercise such as *exercise commitment*. This may be informative because previous research has shown narcissistic personality features to be associated with elevated levels of exercise behaviors [40] as well as appearance-related concerns [41,42]. It is possible that exercise-related motives—especially interpersonal motives for exercise—may provide a better understanding of how narcissistic personality features are able to "get outside the skin" [89] and produce particular patterns of behaviors and attitudes related to exercise.

It is important to note that we focused on "exercise addiction" even though there has been considerable debate about whether it should actually be considered as an *addiction* [1]. However, it has been argued that it is appropriate to refer to this issue as exercise *addiction* because it involves compulsive tendencies and feelings of dependence, which are not commonly observed among those who are simply committed to exercise [9]. Another potential concern is that exercise addiction is not included as a disorder in the *DSM-5* [22]. We decided to focus on exercise addiction because we believe it warrants empirical attention regardless of the debate regarding whether it should be included in future editions of the *DSM*. This is important because research concerning exercise addiction may help inform decisions regarding whether it warrants inclusion in future editions of the *DSM*.

The present study had a number of strengths (e.g., multidimensional view of narcissism, large sample of community members) but it is also important to acknowledge some of its potential limitations. The most important limitation is that we cannot establish the direction of causality between narcissism, exercise-related motives, and exercise addiction due to the correlational nature of the present study. We adopted a process model that was based on the idea that personality traits often activate motives which are then satisfied by adopting certain attitudes or engaging in particular behaviors. Although the present results were largely consistent with the expected indirect associations, this does not necessarily demonstrate the causal pattern implied by the use of a mediational analysis because it is entirely possible that other causal patterns may actually exist between these variables. For example, it is possible that exercise-related motives may actually influence the development of narcissistic personality features rather than these motives being consequences of narcissism. It would be beneficial for future research to use experimental designs or longitudinal studies in order to gain a better understanding of the potential causal links between these variables.

Another limitation is that we relied exclusively on self-report instruments for the present study. As a consequence, it is possible that our results may have been influenced by issues such as individuals engaging in socially desirable responding (e.g., individuals being reluctant to acknowledge symptoms of exercise addiction in order to avoid portraying themselves negatively) or having limited insights into certain aspects of their psychological processes (e.g., individuals not really understanding their own motives for engaging in exercise). It would be beneficial for future research concerning narcissism and exercise to avoid relying exclusively on self-report instruments (e.g., including direct behavioral measures of exercise-related behaviors). The final limitation is that we relied on instruments that were translated into Hebrew for the present study. We followed the back-translation method which is commonly used in similar situations [90] but there are some limitations to this particular translation method [91]. Although the back-translation method is an extensively used translation method, it would be helpful if future studies attempted to replicate the present results using other instruments that were intended for use with those who speak Hebrew. Despite these limitations, the present study extends what is known about the links between narcissism, exercise-related motives, and exercise addiction.

5. Conclusions

The present study examined the associations that narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and narcissistic vulnerability had with exercise addiction as well as whether these associations were mediated by exercise-related motives. Our results showed that each aspect of narcissism had small positive associations with exercise addiction. Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had similar positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through interpersonal motives, but they had divergent indirect associations with exercise addiction through psychological motives, body-related motives, and fitness motives. Narcissistic vulnerability had positive indirect associations with exercise addiction through body-related motives and fitness motives that were similar to those observed for narcissistic admiration. These results suggest that exercise-related motives may play important roles in the associations that narcissistic personality features have with exercise addiction.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are openly available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at https://osf.io/mtczy/ (Accessed date: 12 March 2021).

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Narcissism, risk and uncertainties: analysis in the light of prospect and fuzzy-trace theories

Márcia Figueredo D'Souza[a,*] and Gerlando Augusto Sampaio Franco de Lima[b]

[a]*Departamento de Ciências Humanas e Tecnologia, Universidade Estadual da Bahia, Camaçari, Brasil, and*
[b]*Department of Accountancy, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois, USA*

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the relationship between the nonpathological traits of narcissism and decisions under conditions of uncertainty and risk in light of the prospect (PT) and fuzzy-trace theories (FTT).

Design/methodology/approach – This paper conducted an empirical-theoretical study with 210 Brazilian academics from the business area (accountants and managers), using a self-reported questionnaire to collect data. This paper analyzed the data through descriptive statistical techniques, correlation, test of hypotheses and logistic regression.

Findings – The results point to a lower disposition of respondents to narcissistic traits, although the characteristics of self-sufficiency, authority, exploitation and superiority have been demonstrated. Most participants chose the sure gain in positive scenarios and risk in light of possibility of losses. However, those with high levels of narcissism showed higher propensity to make risky decisions, both in positive and negative scenarios.

Research limitations/implications – The empirical results about risky decision-making behavior of individuals with narcissist traits spur further investigation on the impacts of attitudes and behaviors in organizations as they are affected by psychosocial factors. These attitudes and behaviors, reflected in administrative and financial reports, influence future decisions of investors.

Originality/value – The interaction between the areas of business administration and psychology in regard to the effects of the narcissist personality trait and the FTT is both original and valuable for the business area. The simplest scenario based on the FTT theory can help eliminate issues around the interpretation and complexities of calculations regarding decision-making scenarios in PT format.

Keywords Narcissism, Prospect theory, Fuzzy-trace theory

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1. Introduction

In the business arena, executives make financial decisions to organize, control, leverage and improve business performance. These decisions are reflected in the accounting reports and in the continuity of the company. At times, executives make impulsive, risky and even fraudulent choices to present positive results, sometimes without thinking through the future consequences and implications of these acts in the long run.

Executives' impulsive behavior and pleasure in taking risks can be associated with subjective factors, including narcissistic personality traits. Executives with high traits of narcissism make risky decisions and gambles to gain admiration and praise for their performance. For Amernic and Craig (2010) and Olsen, Dworkis, and Young (2014), the achievement of high corporate profits is the business card of these managers. They influence the work team to adopt an opportunistic attitude and make unethical decisions to inflate business profit so that the company's success becomes a steppingstone for their greater professional growth. When narcissistic executives see photos and stories of successful executives, the narcissists are motivated to commit acts and make choices without measuring the consequences, so that they, too, can be admired by others.

Individuals with nonpathological traits of narcissism are characterized by an excess of superiority, self-sufficiency, authority, vanity, exhibitionism, exploitation and a sense of entitlement (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Narcissism has been the subject of studies on marketing strategy (Reche, Bertolini, & Debona, 2020), the need for power (D'Souza, Oliveira, Almeida, & Natividade, 2019), profile analyses of accounting students (Lima Filho, de Souza, & D'Souza, 2019), cultural values of accounting students (D'Souza & Lima, 2019), career choices in accounting (D'Souza & de Lima, 2018), academic performance (Lima, Avelino, & Cunha, 2018), discourse analysis in administrative reports of companies involved in financial scandals (D'Souza, Aragão, & De Luca, 2018) and academic dishonesty (Avelino & de Lima, 2017).

In studies involving decisions, Yang, Sedikides, Gu, Luo, Wang, and Cai (2018); Meisel, Ning, Campbell, and Goodie (2015); and Buelow and Brunell (2014) investigated risky decision-making and overconfidence, and Buyl, Boone, and Wade (2017) discussed risky decisions regarding corporate governance. Most of these studies on risky decision-making use the prospect theory (PT) as enunciated by Kahneman and Tversky (1979).

According to these authors, decision-making involves preferences that change in the face of positive scenarios (gains) and negative scenarios (losses). Most decision-makers prefer certainty when choosing games, a phenomenon called the certainty effect (or risk aversion). However, individuals change their preferences to the risky option when the possible outcomes involve losses; therefore, there is no unanimity to risk aversion. The shift from risk aversion to risk seeking is called the reflection or framing effect (Kühberger & Tanner, 2010; Reyna & Brainerd, 1995).

However, another theoretical approach also stood out when using, in an adapted way, the decision problem of the PT. Reyna and Brainerd (1991, 1995) found that neither numerical information was necessary nor was it sufficient to produce phenomena of decision framing, given that the memory used to solve problems is represented by two systems: the essence (gist) and the literal (verbatim). Individuals undergoing memory tests are more likely to use literal memory immediately; however, after some time, they switch to the essence memory, which is more diffuse and less precise than literal memory. In this vein, the authors created the fuzzy-trace theory (FTT).

The PT and FTT make the same predictions about the classic framing effect, the former using situations that refer to calculations while the latter does not. When the results are compared by the two theories, Kühberger and Tanner (2010) assert that, in the experiment

based on the FTT, the results were of greater magnitude when the numbers were absent than when they were present.

In view of this contextualization, this paper intends to elucidate the following research problem: What is the relationship between narcissistic traits and decision-making in conditions of uncertainty and risk? We analyze the relationship between narcissism and the framing effect, in light of the PT and the FTT. With this in mind, we surveyed 210 academics in the business arena (accountants and administrators).

The results of the study contribute in theoretical, methodological and practical ways. Theoretically, for allowing the dialogue between the areas of accounting, business administration and psychology, which is still little explored regarding the effects of the narcissistic personality trait and the PT and FTT, especially in the business arena. Our discussion fills a theoretical gap, given that previous discussions about personality traits and the FTT have focused on analyzing HEXACO's personality traits (honesty-humility, emotivity, extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness) (Brunot & Brunot, 2017).

Similarly, most of the personality studies that underpinned investigations into the PT discussed the features of the Big Five (Lauriola & Levin, 2001), HEXACO (Soane & Chmiel, 2005; Weller & Thulin, 2012) and types of Jungian personalities, extroversion and introversion (Braga, 2015).

Furthermore, studies on decision-making and narcissism that developed empirical applications in a national context have discussed opportunistic decisions, with manipulation or management of results (D'Souza, Lima, Jones, & Carre, 2019; Góis, 2017; D'Souza, 2016; D'Souza & Lima, 2015), analyzing, in addition to the narcissistic trait, other dark personality traits: Machiavellianism, psychopathy and sadism.

Therefore, the importance of studying the two theories lies in stimulating more foreign studies and national discussions of risky decision-making and in empirically comparing results of the FTT and PT.

Methodologically, our scenarios based on the FTT can help executives eliminate problems of interpretation and complex decision-making scenarios.

Furthermore, our study inspires a practical analysis of the magnitude of the results, especially when respondents are faced with profit and loss scenarios, with the same objective (one involving numbers and calculations, while the other does not). This analysis will help decision-makers understand the interpretations that lead to assertive decisions in profit and loss scenarios and how decisions are influenced by dark personality traits, which is still little debated in national studies in the business arena.

Still regarding the practical contribution, this study has an empirical application for people in business, as it discusses how human attitudes and behaviors within organizations are affected by personal factors, prompting a reflection on how psychosocial factors impact decisions. According to Moreno, Kida, and Smith (2002), many managerial decisions are made in an uncertain or risky environment. Managers use estimates for future projections, with decisions being reflected in accounting statements, as well as influencing the future decisions of various users of accounting information. Therefore, it becomes relevant to reflect on the impacts the narcissistic personality trait has on the influence of decision-making, as it raises the discussion about impulsiveness and risk propensity, to understand its implications in the business and Brazilian environment.

2. Theoretical framework and development of hypotheses

2.1 Decision-making under risk and uncertainty: comparison of decision theories

According to Baron (2008), "A decision is a choice of action – of what to do or not do. Decisions are made to achieve goals, and they are based on beliefs about what actions will

achieve the goals" (p. 6). In the view of Simon (1963), a decision involves a three-phase process. A decision can be made based on complete or incomplete information. When incomplete, the risks and corresponding probabilities are not fully known, resulting in the making of decisions under uncertainty, which always carries risk (Baron, 2008).

The prediction and perception of uncertain events were first analyzed through two currents of research into decision-making. These currents culminated in the normative (or prescriptive) theory and the descriptive theory, providing scientific support to decision-making, and leading to the development of other theories, such as the PT and FTT, both with a psychological slant.

The normative theory concerns unlimited rationality, where the economic agent seeks to maximize his personal utility by choosing the best alternative in a context of full knowledge of all the possible states of the world. In this respect, Edwards (1954) presented three properties of the economic man: He is completely informed, infinitely sensitive and rational. The rational focus gives him the knowledge to make choices so as to maximize something. Mathematics made a major contribution to the normative current through game theory, as elaborated by Von Neumann and Morgenstern (1944), based on the notion that each individual chooses an alternative with a particular probability of maximizing utility, under conditions of risk and uncertainty.

Further analyzing this normative line of thinking, the studies of Friedman and Savage (1948) suggested that individuals' reactions to risk can be rationalized by means of analyzing utility, whereas Bernoulli (1954) proposed a new theory for measuring risk derived from utility.

Nevertheless, despite the relevance of these propositions, psychologists argued that this rational capacity to make decisions has limitations. Allais (1953) started the discussion about the rationality of the economic man by criticizing the previously postulated axioms and theories about risk. He added that experimental observations about the behavior of supposedly rational people indicated there is no general indicator that leads to an optimal situation that can be defined as a maximum expected value. Also in the 1950s, Simon postulated that human rationality is relative, limited by the lack of complete knowledge.

Simon (1955) compared the previous theories with real decision-making processes, finding discrepancies between the simplified models and reality, especially owing to the difficulty of comparing human intelligence with the capacity of computational processing.

2.1.1 Prospect theory. In 1972, Kahneman and Tversky (1972) published "Subjective probability: A judgment of representativeness," to discuss the heuristic called representativeness. In 1974, the authors expanded the scope of the study by including possible biases caused by heuristics in their paper "Judgment under uncertainty: heuristics and biases." And in 1979, they published the paper "Prospect theory: decision making under risk," to discuss how individuals react to situations of risk and uncertainty, with findings that contradicted the expected utility theory.

According to Kahneman and Tversky (1979), prospects can be understood as a type of contract that produces results through probabilities and bets; therefore, prospects generate the probability of uncertain and risky decisions. The authors conducted an experiment with 72 participants who were presented with choices about gain or loss, involving risk and uncertainty.

With respect to uncertainty, they observed that people opted for certain results as opposed to those considered unlikely. In the presence of this effect, agents are averse to losing and prefer something guaranteed, even with less value, to something uncertain. With respect to the certainty effect, the demonstrated propositions represent sure or uncertain gains, but there are no losses. With the reflection effect, however, losses were possible. In

regard to this phenomenon, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) observed that in facing the possibility of a loss, individuals choose an uncertain option more than a confirmed loss, even if the latter is potentially lesser.

2.1.2 Fuzzy-trace theory. In the psychological line, Reyna and Brainerd (1995) experimented, based on the PT, if decision-makers process numerical information and if this is necessary to produce decisions. Situations of forced choice include the ability to differentiate between options; these options can influence the level of representation, especially when quantitative ambiguities exist and the assimilation of these ambiguities is not identical. The authors argued that reasoning and memory interfere in judgment and decision-making.

Reyna and Brainerd (1995) also contended that memory is represented independently by two systems: the literal (verbatim) and the essence (gist). These systems differ by the content and the precision of details. Gist memory is composed of diffuse representations that incorporate the meaning of an experience, such as affective, cultural and educational aspects, and other factors that interfere with the interpretation and inferences about facts. It is a broader, more robust and lasting memory but only stores unspecific information about the event. In its turn, verbatim memory is formed by precise representations that include details, but these are more susceptible to forgetfulness and to interference, making them inaccessible more quickly than gist memories (Reyna, Lloyd & Brainerd, 2003).

This conception, emerging from various experiments, gave rise to the FTT, which involves a dual model of independence of memory and reasoning (Reyna & Brainerd, 1991). In memory tests, participants are more likely to count on verbatim representations immediately after the original information is presented but switch to gist memory with the passage of time (Brainerd & Reyna, 2002). The representations of the gist are diffuse and less precise than verbatim representations. People can use verbatim or gist representations to resolve problems of reasoning (although they mainly rely on gist). In this vein, numeric information is not necessary, nor is it sufficient to produce phenomena of decision framing (Reyna & Brainerd, 1995).

Therefore, Reyna and Brainerd (1995) postulated that in the FTT, the processes of reasoning unfold in parallel instead of in a series, often operating on the most intimate sense of ideas (the gist of the problem), and are imprecise or qualitative, rather than precise. This is affirmed by traditional approaches that model reasoning in orderly steps (e.g. premises are first understood and then integrated to reach conclusions), with precision being considered a mark of good reasoning.

2.1.3 Prospect theory versus fuzzy-trace theory. According to Kuhberger and Tanner (2010), in recent decades there has been considerable interest in investigating how framing decision problems affects preferences. They reported how the framing effect (frame) involving the presentation of different but equivalent descriptions of a problem of choice can lead to different orders of preference.

A special category of framing effect arises in risky choice tasks with the famous Asian disease problem (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). The experiments involving this problem indicated that the majority of participants prefer the sure option when the options are positively framed but prefer the risky option when the options are negatively framed. When Reyna and Brainerd (1991) applied the problem of Tversky and Kahneman (1981) to a group of subjects, the typical result was that people chose the sure option in the context of gains and the risky option in the context of losses. The authors also produced experimental evidence challenging the traditional claim that the presence of numbers in the discussion of the problem is essential for these effects. They simply removed all the numbers from the standard problems and replaced them with vague statements such as “some people.” The

framing effects were not only still noted; they were greater in magnitude when the numbers were absent than when they were present (Reyna & Brainerd, 1995).

Therefore, numerical information is not only unnecessary to detect these effects but also tends to mask the effects instead of amplifying them. More generally, this non-numerical framing effect demonstrated that crude qualitative distinctions are sufficient to produce the pattern of preferences.

Kuhberger and Tanner (2010) asserted that the PT, on the one hand, represents the traditional approach, proposing a formal model to evaluate and combine probabilities and results, whereas the FTT involves a cognitive process model where information is intuitively processed in a simplified manner. Their study of the theories aimed to identify the difference between the two approaches.

In light of the described studies, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H1. A significant difference exists between the decisions made based on the prospect and fuzzy-trace theories.

We based *H1* on the results presented by Kühberger and Tanner (2010); Reyna and Brainerd (1991, 1995); and Tversky and Kahneman (1981). These decision theories, especially the PT and FTT, are foundations for studies of personality traits, as discussed in Section 2.2.

2.2 Narcissism

Narcissism is a personality trait with characteristics of egocentrism, superiority, exhibitionism, authority, a sense of entitlement, self-sufficiency, vanity and exploitation of others (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The name arises from the legend of Narcissus, a figure of Greek mythology who was so infatuated with himself that he fell in love with his own image in a pool of water and died because of the impossibility of consummating this love. Freud (1914/2010) referred to narcissists as people who look at themselves and who touch and caress themselves for sexual pleasure until they reach full satisfaction from these acts.

The original studies examined the clinical character of this personality trait, considering it to be a personality disorder. However, psychologists Raskin and Hall (1979), after various experiments, developed a personality measurement instrument, including the possibility of nonpathological manifestations, called the narcissistic personality inventory (NPI), still widely used by researchers in various fields of knowledge as an instrument to measure narcissistic traits in individuals in business settings (Majors, 2016; Dworkis, 2013).

Those who exhibit narcissistic traits are vain, sensitive to criticism, self-sufficient, egotistic, omnipotent and feel they have the right to exploit others owing to their superiority (Raskin & Terry, 1988). In the organizational environment, white-collar crimes are related to individuals with strong narcissism, especially because their desire to be better than others leads to self-justification for committing fraud to reach personal objectives (Blickle, Schlegel, Fassbender & Klein, 2006).

2.2.1 Previous studies: personality traits and prospect and fuzzy-trace theories. Studies analyze the relationship between decision-making in conditions of risk and personality or personality traits, in light of the PT and FTT.

Lauriola and Levin (2001) examined the relationships between personality traits of the Big Five (extroversion, affability, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience) and decision-making under risk, through the lens of PT. The applied experimental task contained trials in which individuals could make gains and trials in which individuals could avoid a loss. The effects of personality traits differed in terms of gains and losses. Personality factors predicted risk-taking mainly when the scenario was one of gains. The

high scores of the trait openness to experience were associated with greater risk-taking, whereas high scores of neuroticism were associated with less risk-taking.

Along the same lines, Soane and Chmiel (2005) investigated, among other themes, the relationship between decision-making under conditions of risk and personality traits of the five factors. The authors realized that the most aware participants demonstrated an aversion to risk. The unconscious, on the other hand, are prone to prefer risk in decision-making.

Weller and Thulin (2012) investigated the HEXACO personality traits (especially the honesty-humility dimension and risk preferences), when the decision is presented as a potential gain or loss. The results showed that the honesty-humility dimension is associated with greater risk for both scenarios. Emotivity was associated with less risk in both scenarios, whereas low consciousness was only associated with taking risk to obtain gains.

When considering the FTT to support the investigation, Brunot & Brunot (2017) aimed to identify HEXACO personality traits in individuals who process intuitive risk judgments. The results indicated differences in responses for the essence and literal systems, demonstrating that risk-taking is related to the honesty-humility and impulsiveness traits.

As for the studies that discuss the narcissistic personality trait related to decision-making, the results show that individuals with high traits of narcissism demonstrate impulsiveness and overconfidence in their knowledge and performance by agreeing with risky bets that could result in victory and success, even though they know that the consequences can be harmful to the company (Lakey, Rose, W. K Campbell, & Goodie, 2008; W. K Campbell, Goodie, & Foster; 2004; WK, Campbell, Hoffman, SM Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011), because the courage for risky decisions comes from the need for praise when business performance is higher than expected (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2011).

Meisel et al. (2015) conducted a study of narcissism among American and Chinese college students, involving decisions under conditions of risk and excessive confidence. The Chinese students obtained higher self-confidence and risk exposure scores, whereas the American students accrued higher narcissism averages. Buelow and Brunell (2014) investigated the role of the narcissistic traits of grandiosity, entitlement and exploitation in risky behaviors. A total of 630 undergraduate college students participated, and higher levels of narcissistic grandiosity were associated with risky behavior.

Buyl, Boone, and Wade (2017) investigated how the narcissism of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) affects risky decision-making in their companies in light of the monitoring of corporate governance practices. The authors found that narcissistic traits among CEOs have a positive effect on banks' levels of risk, especially regarding compensation policies that encourage taking risks.

Foster, Shenesey, and Goff (2009) investigated what motivates narcissistic individuals to engage in risky behaviors. The results indicated that the narcissists make risky decisions fueled by heightened perceptions of the benefits of risky behaviors. In other words, narcissists, because of their excessive anxiety, more frequently adopt potentially problematic behaviors, such as assuming risks.

Yang et al. (2018) applied a monetary gambling task to individuals with high and low levels of narcissism, involving choosing between a high-risk and low-risk option, and measured their reactions by recording an electroencephalogram. The results indicated that the subjects with high and low narcissism differed in the high-risk condition but not in the low-risk condition. At the behavioral level, those with high narcissism made riskier decisions.

Based on the studies described above, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H2. Individuals with high narcissism scores are more likely to make risky decisions.

H2 is supported by the studies of Yang et al. (2018); Buyl, Boone, and Wade (2017); Meisel *et al.* (2015), Campbell et al. (2011); Foster et al. (2009), Lakey et al. (2008); and Campbell et al. (2004). Moreover, as stated by Carré and Jones (2016) in evaluating the FTT and Machiavellianism (one of the traits that form the dark triad cluster, along with narcissism and psychopathy), analytical reasoning is influenced by personality traits that affect decision-making under conditions of risk.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach, data collection technique and research sample

We adopted a theoretical-empirical approach, gathering data through a self-reported questionnaire composed of three parts. Part I asked questions related to the demographic profile. Part II had 40 statements from the NPI of Raskin and Terry (1988), validated for Brazil by Magalhães and Koller (1994), to measure the following traits: Authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitation, vanity and entitlement. Part III was comprised of a simulation game adapted from the studies of Tversky and Kahneman (1981); Reyna and Brainerd (1991, 1995); and Kuhberger and Tanner (2010), to compare decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty, based on the PT and FTT. We adapted the scales to address our research problem because they have been examined in previous Brazilian studies (Kimura, Basso, & Krauter, 2006; Yoshinaga & Carvalho, 2014).

We formulated and adapted the simulation game for application in a business setting as described in the following:

You are the CEO of a large multinational company with 1,000 units around the world. At a meeting with the general manager of each unit, it was reported that 600 of these companies are in dire financial straits and might have to be closed. The discussion with your colleagues allowed for the formulation of four programs (1, 2, 3 and 4) to try to save these companies. Therefore, decide which options you would choose from the pairs below:

Scenarios	Options	Alternative	
1	Alternative A – If Program A is adopted, 200 companies will be saved. Alternative B – If Program B is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that 600 will be saved and a 2/3 probability that no companies will be saved.	A	B
2	Alternative A – If Program C is adopted, 400 companies will be closed. Alternative B – If Program D is adopted, there is a 1/3 probability that no companies will be closed and a 2/3 probability that 600 companies will be closed.	A	B
3	Alternative A – If Program A is adopted, some companies will be saved. Alternative B – If Program B is adopted, some companies will be saved or no companies will be saved.	A	B
4	Alternative A – If Program C is adopted, some companies will be closed. Alternative B – If Program D is adopted, some companies will be closed or no companies will be closed.	A	B

It is noteworthy that the narcissistic personality measurement instrument is not a psychological test, and is not intended for clinical diagnosis, but rather for the observation of psychosocial phenomena.

Our sample totaled 210 academics from the business arena (accountants and administrators), who hold or have held management positions, among the 700 participants of

the scientific conference, in December 2018, of the Accounting and Actuarial Department of the Faculty of Economics, Administration and Accounting at the University of São Paulo (FEA/USP), who provided valid e-mails and met the selection criteria for the study. We chose the sample based on accessibility and in a nonprobabilistic way, which did not allow us to generalize the results but did allow us to observe the phenomena related to the study's purpose.

3.2 Research variables, parameterization and statistical analysis

Narcissism is the independent variable, as it impacts *decision-making*, which is the dependent variable. The research design is illustrated in Figure 1:

The NPI (Raskin &Terry, 1988) was parameterized by following the criteria of the original study, with 40 statements indicative of narcissistic traits (each assigned 1 point) and non-narcissistic traits (0 points). For example, Statement 1: A – "Modesty is not my strong suit" (1 point, narcissistic trait) and B – "I'm essentially a modest person" (0 points, non-narcissistic trait). The maximum score on the instrument is 40 points, if the participant chooses all the statements denoting narcissistic traits. The sum of the points is a quantitative variable.

With parameterization of the low and high levels of narcissism, we divided the group into two ranges, such that a score below the median was considered to denote low narcissism and a score above the median, high narcissism. For this qualitative variable, we assigned a score of 1 for low level and 2 for high level. Yang et al. (2018) and Dworkis (2013) adopted a similar procedure.

To parameterize decision-making, we adopted the following criterion, both for the positive and negative scenarios, and for the two methods applied according to the theories (PT and FTT): 0 (zero) for decisions under certainty and 1 (one) for risky decisions. Kuhberger and Tanner (2010) used this procedure.

Regarding the statistical approach, we took the following into consideration: descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum values), the Mann–Whitney and Kruskal–Wallis, owing to the nature of the variables and correlation and logistic regression. We used these techniques to test *H1* and *H2* of this study.

4. Analysis of the results

4.1 Profile of the participants

Of the 210 respondents, 51.9% were women and 36.7% were between the ages of 26 and 35, 68.1% held postgraduate degrees in the area of business and 69.5% had between five and ten years of professional experience in the management area.

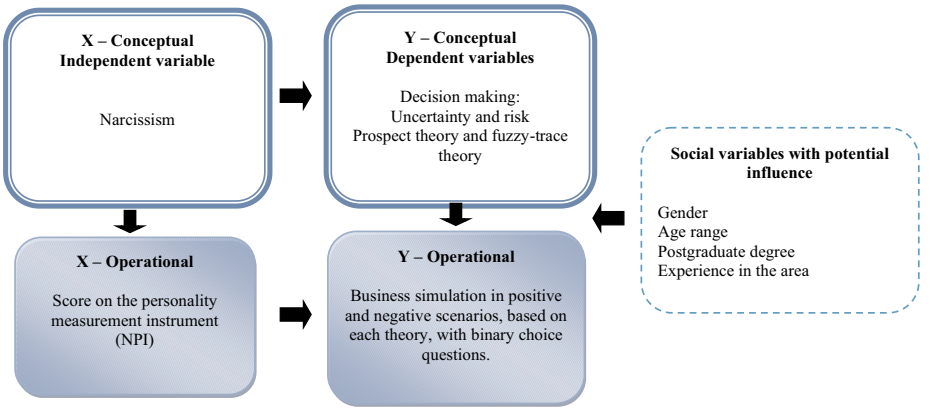

Figure 1.
Narcissism and decision-making

With respect to the narcissism scores, the highest was 29 (out of a possible 40 points) and the lowest was 2. The mean was $\bar{x} = 13.24$. We show these data in Table 1. Comparing Brazilian studies that adopted the same data collection instrument, the investigation by D'Souza, Oliveira et al. (2019) found an average slightly above $\bar{x} = 13.68$ with business students. Lima et al. (2018) found a lower mean, $\bar{x} = 12.62$, with accounting students. This result allows for the inference that business students are more prone to narcissistic characteristics than academic business professionals, with no intention of generalizing the results.

Other Brazilian investigations included narcissism as a topic of study, but used other research instruments, with a different score to verify the disposition for the dark trait. D'Souza, Lima et al. (2019) and D'Souza and Lima (2015) used the short dark triad (SD3; Jones and Paulhus, 2014) to collect nine Likert-type statements (1–5 points) regarding disposition to narcissistic traits. The authors found mean $\bar{x} = 2.8$ with managers and $\bar{x} = 3.01$ with Master in Business Administration (MBA) students, respectively. In a different vein, Góis (2017) used the SD3 (Jones and Paulhus, 2014) but used the Likert scale (1–10 points) and found an average $\bar{x} = 4.81$ with MBA students, proportionally smaller than the ones in previous studies. D'Souza and Lima (2019) – using the same instrument but with the Likert scale (1–7) points – found $\bar{x} = 3.49$ with accounting students.

The results are proportional but with a greater narcissistic disposition for MBA students. The postgraduate academic environment can be a sign of strong competitiveness and vanity that encourages students to feel self-sufficient and superior, implying a rush to achieve good results, such as publications in qualified journals.

When analyzing the disposition of academics in the business arena, by level (low, high) of narcissistic traits, we observed a well-balanced score, although the lowest traits proved to be the majority (51%). When checking in detail the assertions of the applied NPI instrument, we observed that the respondents showed stronger agreement with the following statements: "I am a born leader" (77.6%); "When I feel competent, I take the decision" (64.8%); "I see myself as a good leader" (61.4%); "I have a natural talent for influencing people" (61%); "I will be a success" (55.2%); and "I can decipher people as if they were a book" (55.2%). The analysis of these results points to a greater disposition to self-sufficiency characteristics, followed by authority, exploitation and superiority (Table 2). This implies that respondents feel confident with the power to decide and delegate tasks that will be obeyed by subordinates. This confidence, on the one hand, can benefit companies, as a

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Maximum	Minimum	Variance
Narcissism score	210	13.24	5.779	29	2	33.398

Source: Research data

Table 2.
Frequencies

Levels	Narcissism	
	N	(%)
Low	107	51
High	103	49
Total	210	100

Source: Research data

leader who shows confidence leads a team to achieve goals. However, if confidence and authority are in excess, they prevent participatory leadership and the sharing of ideas with subordinates who carry out operational activities and who closely know the potential and problems of each area of the company.

With respect to decision-making, for both PT and FTT, in the positive scenario, the leading choice was certainty (68.8% and 62.9%, respectively), whereas in the negative scenario the most frequent choice was to assume risk (69.0% and 61.9%, respectively). These results are convergent with the findings of Tversky and Kahneman (1981); Kimura, Basso, and Krauter (2006); Yoshinaga and Carvalho (2014); Reyna and Brainerd (1991, 1995); and Kuhberger & Tanner (2010). This indicates that in positive scenarios, when the participants were faced with the possibility that some of the companies would survive, they tended to choose the option with a safe outcome, whereas in negative scenarios, with the possibility that some companies would fail, they were inclined to assume risk, trying to save more companies than those in the business simulation (Table 3).

Regarding the relationship and significance of the variables, narcissism was associated with all the decisions, in the methodologies of both the PT and FTT, although with different results. In Decision I, of the positive scenario, considering the PT methodology, the correlation was negative ($r = -0.636$, with $p < 0.01$), denoting that an increase in narcissistic traits of the academics was associated with lower propensity to choose the decision with the sure outcome. The correlation was also negative ($r = -0.753$, with $p < 0.01$) with the FTT methodology, indicating that, in positive scenarios, individuals with strong narcissism prefer risk.

In the negative scenario, regarding Decision II and considering the PT method, the correlation was positive ($r = 0.694$, with $p < 0.01$), denoting that an increase of narcissistic traits of the academics increased their propensity to make a risky decision. The correlation was also positive ($r = 0.760$, with $p < 0.01$) in the FTT methodology, and the magnitude was greater when the numbers were absent than when they were present, as also found by Reyna and Brainerd (1995).

The results of this study corroborate the narcissistic characteristics of risk-taking, competitiveness, need for power and glory and impulsiveness. Narcissists bet, even in situations where gains are sure, owing to excess of confidence, search for sensations, arrogance and pursuit of constant attention. Furthermore, our findings converge with those of Meisel et al. (2015), who observed that Chinese students with strong narcissism presented higher self-confidence and exposure to risk scores. Along the same lines, Foster et al. (2009) also perceived that narcissists tend to make risky decisions, expecting possible benefits and gains stemming from these risks. These findings confirm *H2* of this study.

Prospect theory	Choices	*N*	(%)	Fuzzy-trace theory	Choices	*N*	(%)
Decision I Positive scenario	Alternative A	144	68.8	Decision I Positive scenario	Alternative A	132	62.9
	Alternative B	66	31.4		Alternative B	78	37.1
Total		210	100	Total		210	100
Decision II Negative scenario	Alternative A	65	31.0	Decision II Negative scenario	Alternative A	80	38.1
	Alternative B	145	69.0		Alternative B	130	61.9
Total		210	100	Total		210	100

Source: Research data

Table 3. Decision-making based on the PT and FTT

In analyzing the other variables in the study, academics with a postgraduate level in business associated themselves with narcissistic traits. Given this result, we can infer that the degree leads the professional to vanity and the need to always be highlighted in academic and work environments (Table 4).

To confirm the difference in decision-making in the positive and negative scenarios, we performed analysis of variance. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, both in PT and FTT, Decision I and Decision II presented results of $F(1, 209) = 359.189$, $p < 0.001$, and $F(1, 209) = 468.844$, $p < 0.001$, respectively. These results suggest the existence of a difference in decisions between individuals according to the PT and FTT. We can thus infer that the participants differed in their choices when replacing numbers (PT) with words like "some" or "no," as used by the FTT.

According to the FTT, individuals make choices between certainty and risk based more on simpler and less precise representations than on numerical information. We can divide these essential representations according to the context they were presented in to individuals, as done by Brainerd & Reyna (2002). In the gain context, options are reduced to choosing between (a) saving some companies or (b) the chance of saving some companies or not saving any companies at all. The probabilities associated with these two options are again reduced to a dichotomous category in which an option is (a) certain or (b) uncertain. When asked to choose between these two options, it is reasonable to expect individuals to opt for (a) saving the companies or (b) the chance of saving the companies.

Likewise, in every loss context, the options are reduced to (c) some companies will fail, or (d) some companies might fail or none will fail. Here also it is understandable that people choose the option in which no company will fail. Even though this option (d) is uncertain, it is seen as substantially better than the alternative (c) where it is certain that some companies will fail. Although these suppositions are diametrically opposed, both models lead to identical predictions in the classic framing effect (Kuhberger & Tanner, 2010). These findings support *H2* of this study.

Regarding the differences between decision-making and narcissistic traits, Table 7 shows that the academics with stronger narcissism made different decisions in each gain and loss scenario than did those weaker in narcissism, based on the two theories investigated. As stated by Campbell et al. (2011), narcissists make riskier choices out of a desire for victory and praise, even when they recognize that the future consequences can be harmful both for individuals and the group. Jones (2014) had already found that in games of

	Narc	D I PT	D II PT	D I FTT	D II FTT	Sex	Age range	Postgrad degree	Exp
Narcissism	1								
D I PT	−0.636(**)	1							
D II PT	0.694(**)	−0.834(**)	1						
D I FTT	−0.753(**)	0.796(**)	−0.850(**)	1					
D II FTT	0.760(**)	−0.779(**)	0.832(**)	−0.980(**)	1				
Sex	−0.10	−0.015	0.67	−0.050	0.29	1			
Age range	−0.41	−0.043	0.113	−0.052	0.016	0.265(**)	1		
Postgrad	−0.135(*)	0.045	−0.016	0.040	−0.032	0.254(**)	0.254(**)	1	
Experience	−0.10	−0.78	0.121(*)	−0.82	0.042	0.790(**)	0.179(**)	0.179(**)	1

Table 4.
Correlation

Notes: Narc: narcissism; Postgrad: postgraduate degree; Exp: experience. Note 2: $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$
Source: Research data

chance, people with strong narcissism lose more money by taking greater risks than other individuals who exhibit dark traits, such as psychopaths. These findings also support *H2*.

With respect to the other variables with potential influence, such as sex, age range, postgraduate degree and time of experience, the findings showed no difference between individuals with high and low narcissism.

To confirm the previous results and verify the probability of the event occurring, we applied logistic regression, given the dichotomous nature of the variables that represent the four decision scenarios, deemed to be dependent variables, and also because it is a more robust technique for the marginal analysis of the interactive variable between *narcissism*, the independent variable, and *postgraduate degree*, the control variable (Narc*PosGrad), chosen for this test owing to the correlation between the two variables.

The results showed by means of the chi-square test the significance of the model for the four scenarios (sig = 0.000), which allows us to infer that the inserted variables provide an opportunity for the interpretation that the model is able to accurately predict the investigation. According to Table 8, the model is adequate (−2LL), less than 1 for the four

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Between groups	31.049	1	31.049	359.189	0.000*
Within groups	17.980	208	0.086		
Total	49.029	209			

Note: *$p < 0.05$
Source: Research data

Table 5. ANOVA: difference between Decision I of the PT and Decision I of the FTT

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Between groups	34.305	1	34.305	468.844	0.000*
Within groups	15.219	208	0.073		
Total	49.524	209			

Note: *$p < 0.05$
Source: Research data

Table 6. ANOVA: difference between Decision II of the PT and Decision II of the FTT

Dependent variable	Test	Narcissism Sig	Decision
Decision I PT (positive scenario)	Mann–Whitney	0.000(*)	Rejected
Decision II PT (negative scenario)	Kruskal–Wallis	0.000(*)	Rejected
Decision I FTT (positive scenario)	Mann–Whitney	0.000(*)	Rejected
Decision II FTT (negative scenario)	Mann–Whitney	0.000(*)	Rejected
Sex	Mann–Whitney	0.876	Not rejected
Age range	Kruskal–Wallis	0.954	Not rejected
Postgraduate degree	Mann–Whitney	0.177	Not rejected
Experience	Kruskal–Wallis	0.910	Not rejected

Note: *$p < 0.05$
Source: Research data

Table 7. Hypotheses tests

scenarios. It appears that 10%, 12.3%, 12.9% and 13.4% of the probable variations of occurrence are explained by the variable (Narc*PosGrad). And the statistical model is able to explain 14.1%, 17.4%, 17.6% and 18.2%, the variations registered in the decision scenarios based on PT and FTT, respectively.

These results confirm that FTT explains the phenomenon under study more intensely, as in the studies by Kuhberger and Tanner (2010) and Reyna and Brainerd (1991). Note that the simplest and most accurate language proposed by FTT can mitigate problems of interpretation and complexity observed in previous studies and can serve as a good reference for the application of the research with business and accounting students with little maturity and experience in decision-making.

Table 9 shows that the (Narc*PosGrad) variable was positive and significant for the four scenarios, showing that the positive variation contributes to the increase in the likelihood of respondents deciding on risk, both in the scenario of gain and loss. If (Narc*PosGrad) increases by 1, the estimated logit increases by an average of 0.901, 1.126, 0.892 and 1.124, suggesting a positive relationship between risky decisions and narcissism.

These results converge with the findings of Lauriola and Levin (2001), who predicted that individuals open to experiences are more likely to take risks in gains scenarios. Along the same lines, Soane and Chmiel (2005) realized that less aware individuals prefer risk in decision-making. Weller and Thulin (2012) found that individuals with traits that refer to honesty-humility also sought greater risk for the scenarios of gain and loss.

Step 1	Decision I PT (positive scenario)	Decision II PT (negative scenario)	Decision I FTT (positive scenario)	Decision II FTT (negative scenario)
Likelihood (−2LL)	239,221	232.187	248.165	248.868
Cox and Snell R square	10%	12.3%	12.9%	13.4%
Nagelkerke R square	14.1%	17.4%	17.6%	18.2%

Table 8.
Adjustment to the model

Note: Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because the parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001
Source: Research data

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Expected signal	Found signal	Coef. B	Coef. Exp(β)	Wald test p-value
Decision I PT	Narc*PosGrad	+	−	0.104	0.901	0.000
(positive scenario)	Constant	+/−	+	0.012	1.012	0.957
Decision II PT	Narc*PosGrad	+	+	0.119	1.126	0.000
(negative scenario)	Constant	+/−	−	0.083	0.920	0.709
Decision I FTT	Narc*PosGrad	+	−	0.115	0.892	0.000
(positive scenario)	Constant	+/−	+	0.372	1.451	0.095
Decision II FTT	Narc*PosGrad	+	+	0.117	1.124	0.000
(negative scenario)	Constant	+/−	−	0.435	0.647	0.052

Table 9.
Logistic regression

Notes: DI – Decision I; DII – Decision II; PT – prospect theory; FTT – fuzzy-traces theory; Narc*PosGrad: Narcissism*Postgraduate degree; Coef.: Coefficient; $p < 0.05$
Source: Research data

The results of these studies already show that personality traits influence risky interpretations and decisions. The concern is that the risky decisions of narcissistic managers can cause short- and long-term losses for investors and society. A risky decision without calculating the impact on results can have irreversible consequences for the business.

Figure 2 illustrates the comparison of the marginal means estimated for the variables *narcissism* and *decisions* in the gain and loss scenarios, indicating that the higher the level of narcissism, the greater the propensity to make risky decisions and the lower the propensity to choose the sure option, according to the two adopted methodologies.

It is worth discussing here the adverse behavior of the narcissistic individual who contradicts the results of previous studies on the application of the PT and FTT. While individuals without excessive narcissism prefer not to take a risk when there is a probability of sure gains, even if they do not reach 100% of the goal, the impulsiveness of narcissistic individuals impels them to seek the greatest possible gains, even if this compromises the financial and economic health of the company as a whole. The narcissistic manager seeks self-promotion, takes pleasure in risk and is comfortable with uncertain, risky decisions as a strategy, because if successful, they will be recognized as the manager of excellence who leveraged the company to achieve the best results, and consequently, will make the company more attractive in the market. Here, the vanity of recognition emerges, but also the selfishness and arrogance in decision-making that has negative consequences for all those interested in the business if the decision is not successful.

Based on the results, the statistical techniques validated both *H1* and *H2*, consistent with the PT and FTT, indicating that subjective factors – such as personality traits – have an impact on attitudes, interpretations and decision-making.

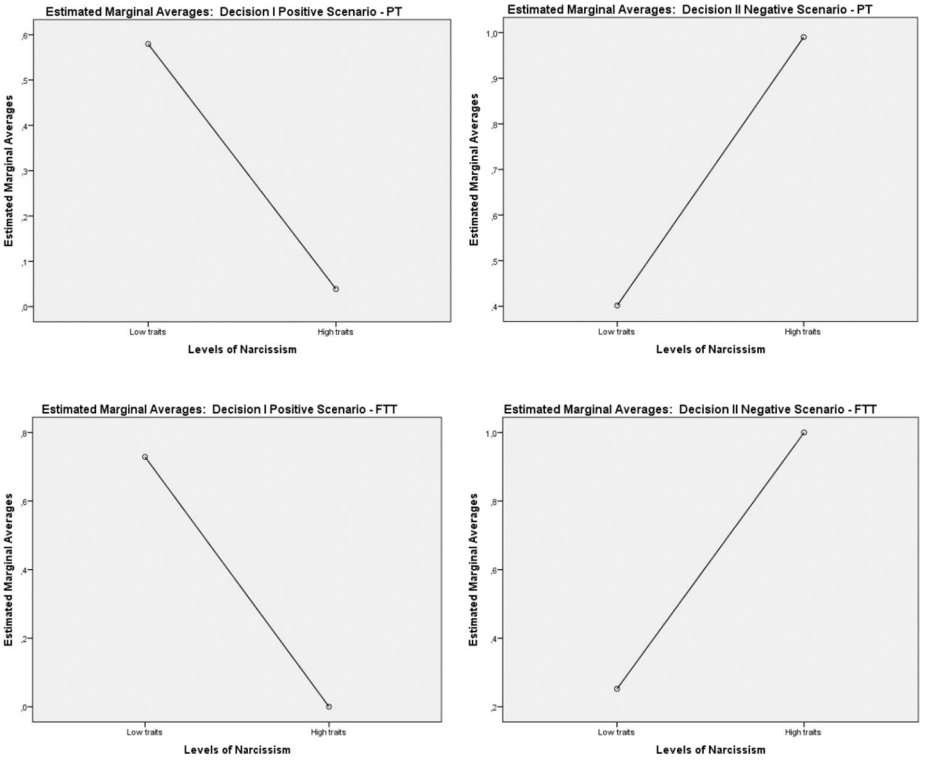

Figure 2.
Graph of the marginal means estimated for the levels of narcissism and decisions in the positive and negative scenarios in the DT and FTT

5. Conclusion

People who have narcissistic traits tend to seek strong sensations and make risky decisions without concern for the long-run consequences. In analyzing the relationship between narcissistic traits and risky decisions, in light of the PT and FTT, this study conducted a survey among academics from the business arena.

The results indicated a lower propensity for narcissistic traits among the respondents, although many strongly agreed with the statements "I'm a born leader," "When I feel competent, I make the decision," "I see myself as a good leader," "I have a natural talent for influencing people," "I'm a success" and "I can read people like a book." These results suggest greater propensity for the traits of self-sufficiency, vanity, authority, exploitation and superiority, marks of individuals with strong narcissism.

While these traits can promote success in business activities, they can also be destructive when present in excess. If the influence over others that narcissists believe to have is used to commit illicit acts and organizational fraud, so that they remain in power as the leaders that achieve the best outcomes, the short- and long-term consequences stemming from their decisions can give rise to problems of business imbalance.

The results also showed a significant difference between the decisions according to the PT and FTT. The replacement of numerical values used in the PT with the words "some" versus "no" in the FTT contrasts with the effects of the PT, although the two theories make similar predictions about the classic framing effect. While the null effect is irrelevant for the PT, it is crucial for the FTT, given that individuals tend to prefer simpler alternatives that involve the gist of the decision, because people only keep unspecific information about events. We also note that the results using the FTT are greater in magnitude and can better explain the phenomenon under study.

In this sense, these findings led us to the answer to the research problem and to achieving our study objective. The hypotheses were not rejected, allowing for the discussion and expansion of studies on the theme. We expect that the findings will spur academics in the business arena to realize that risky decisions can compromise financial health and well-being in the business environment.

Our study contends, therefore, that the proposal of this scientific debate can be fruitful, starting from the idea that organizations become reflections of their main executives, considering that decision-making comprises complex choices and is deeply influenced by personality traits. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary deepening of this theme, in light of the PT and FTT, can improve the understanding of the dynamics of decision-making in organizations, although we recognize the limitation of results owing to respondents' biases in describing their own characteristics and behavior, given the application of a self-reported personality questionnaire.

Thus, it is suggested that future research expand the scope of the work, applying it to business professionals in the market and including the other personality traits that make up the dark triad cluster (Machiavellianism and psychopathy) and then comparing the results.

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***Corresponding author**
Márcia D'Souza can be contacted at: marciafdsouza@yahoo.com.br

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The Cognitive Neuroscience of Narcissism

George FR [1,2] *and Short D[1,3]

[1]Center for Cognitive & Behavioral Wellness, Denver, CO, USA

[2]Department of Psychology, University of Denver, Denver, CO, USA

[3]Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, Phoenix, AZ USA

***Corresponding author:** Frank R. George, Center For Cognitive & Behavioral Wellness, Denver, CO, USA, E-mail: frank.george@cfcbw.org

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Abstract

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a personality disorder that involves a long-term pattern of abnormal behavior characterized by exaggerated feelings of self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, and a lack of understanding of others' feelings. Sadism is an additional factor observed in the most severe type of NPD, malignant narcissism. At the psychological level NPD is usually diagnosed or studied using some type of self-report diagnostic instrument. While there is not a large body of research on the neuroscience of NPD, there are consistencies pointing to abnormalities in certain brain areas, especially the insular cortex, that are associated with features of NPD, especially lack of empathy. The origins of NPD remain unknown, however biological, psychological and social factors all play important roles in the etiology of this disorder. Further clinical and neuroscience studies of empathy disorders, especially NPD and malignant narcissism, are necessary in order to better understand the environmental factors that contribute to this disorder.

Keywords: Narcissism; Narcissistic personality disorder; Cognitive neuroscience; Magnetic resonance imaging; Insular cortex

Introduction

Understanding narcissism

The father of American psychology, William James, believed that, “Phenomena are best understood when placed within their series, studied in their germ and in their over-ripe decay” [1]. Accordingly, if we take the phenomena of self-interest and observe it in its most germinal form, we see a Darwinian instinct that has great survival value. Moving up the series, a more severe form of self-interest, known as selfishness, produces excessive or exclusive concern with oneself. The narcissistic need to maintain a relatively positive self-image underlies individuals’ needs for validation and affirmation as well as the motivation to overtly and covertly seek out validation and self-enhancement experiences from the social environment [2]. This need can produce selfish behaviours, such as cheating and lying, which undermine the efforts of organized society. However, selfishness is not considered pathological. Self-interest reaches its “over-ripe decay” at the point of a narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), which depicts a pathological complex that is self-reinforcing and produces deleterious effects on the individual, close relationships, and possibly the broader social community. These significant functional impairments and related areas of maladjustment include: psychopathy, substance abuse, relational dysfunction, interpersonal conflict and sexual aggression, impulsivity, homicidal ideation, and parasuicidal/suicidal behaviours [2].

History of the Construct

In ancient Greece, this type of behaviour was identified as hubris. There are many stories of honourable people becoming afflicted with hubris and ultimately leading their community to destruction. The problem was illustrated in Ovid’s myth of Narcissus, a handsome Greek youth who rejected the strong advances of the nymph Echo. As punishment, he was doomed to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to consummate his self-love, Narcissus withered away and changed into a flower that bears his name, the narcissus.

In 1898, Havelock Ellis, an English sexologist, used the term "narcissus-like" in reference to excessive masturbation and auto-eroticism, whereby the person becomes his or her own sex object [3]. In 1899, Paul Näche was the first person to use the term "narcissism" in a study of sexual perversions [3]. Not too long thereafter, Otto Rank in 1911 published the first psychoanalytical paper specifically concerned with narcissism, linking it to vanity and self-admiration [3].

In 1914, Sigmund Freud published a paper titled “*On Narcissism: An Introduction”,* in which he suggested that narcissism is a normal part of the human psyche. He argued that narcissism is the desire and energy that drives one’s instinct to survive and referred to it as “primary narcissism” [3]. Freud also conceived of a “secondary narcissism” that he described as a pathological condition, which occurs when the libido withdraws from objects outside the self. Freud put forward two main paths

towards the choice of an object: the narcissistic path: where love is for the image of oneself, what one was, what one would like to be, or someone who once was part of oneself; or the anaclitic (attachment) path: where love is for those who feed or protect us. Freud therefore saw narcissism as an immature self-centered trait, indulged in at the expense of object love. Relinquishing one's narcissism was seen as an important maturational step.

During the 1960s and 1970s, psychoanalysts Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut helped spark renewed interest in narcissism. Kernberg [4] introduced the term "narcissistic personality structure." Kernberg [5] described the relationships of narcissistic personalities as 'exploitative and parasitic:' it is as if they feel they have the right to control others and to exploit them without guilt. Often patients are considered dependent "...but on a deeper level they are completely unable to depend on anybody because…the deep-seated belief is that anything good will vanish" [5].

It was Kohut [6] who first introduced the term narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) and went on to take some of Freud's earlier ideas about narcissism and expand upon them. Narcissism played an important role in Kohut's theory of self-psychology, which suggested that narcissism allows people to suppress feelings of low self-esteem and develop a positive sense of self. Essentially, Kohut's theory centers on the development of two archaic narcissistic configurations: 1) the "grandiose self", an exhibitionistic "I am perfect" image of the self, which represents an archaic "normal" primitive self (not a pathological structure as for Kernberg); and 2) the idealized parent image or omnipotent object, whereby perfection is ascribed to an admired self-object, the "you are perfect but I am part of you" view of the parent [7].

The social psychologist Erich Fromm first coined the term "malignant narcissism" describing it as a "severe mental sickness" representing "the quintessence of evil". He characterized the condition as "...the most severe pathology and the root of the most vicious destructiveness and inhumanity." Fromm's personality theory rests on data he gathered from a variety of sources, including psychotherapy, cultural anthropology, and psychohistory. Fromm applied the techniques of psychohistory to the study of several historical people, including Adolf Hitler--the person Fromm regarded as the world's most conspicuous example of someone with the syndrome of decay, which includes necrophilia, malignant narcissism, and incestuous symbiosis.

Others soon elaborated on this concept of malignant narcissism. Edith Weigert saw malignant narcissism as a "regressive escape from frustration by distortion and denial of reality", while Herbert Rosenfeld [8] described it as "a disturbing form of narcissistic personality where grandiosity is built around aggression and the destructive aspects of the self-become idealized" [9]. Otto Kernberg pointed out that the antisocial personality was fundamentally narcissistic and without morality. He believed malignant narcissism includes a sadistic element creating, in essence, a sadistic psychopath. In his 1970 article, "malignant narcissism" and psychopathy are employed interchangeably, with Kernberg describing malignant narcissism as a syndrome characterized by NPD, antisocial features, paranoid traits, and ego syntonic aggression. Other symptoms may include an absence of conscience, a psychological need for power, and a sense of importance (grandiosity). Similarly, Pollock [10] wrote that the malignant narcissist is pathologically grandiose, lacking in conscience and behavioural regulation with characteristic demonstrations of joyful cruelty and sadism.

Kernberg believed that malignant narcissism should be considered part of a spectrum of pathological narcissism, which he saw as ranging from Hervey M. Cleckley's antisocial character (today's psychopath or antisocial personality) at the high end of severity, through malignant narcissism, and then to NPD at the low end [11]. The malignant narcissist thus represents a less extreme form of pathological narcissism than psychopathy.

While narcissists are common, malignant narcissists are less common. A notable difference between the two is the feature of sadism, or the gratuitous enjoyment of the pain of others. A narcissist will deliberately damage other people in pursuit of their own selfish desires, but may regret and will in some circumstances show remorse for doing so, while a malignant narcissist will harm others and enjoy doing so, showing little empathy or regret for the damage they have caused. People who are high in this trait fail to help others unless there is immediate gain or recognition to themselves for doing so; often think they are above the law and therefore violate it; and readily trample over others in their efforts to rise to the "top," which are where they think they belong. They are generally incapable of forming the kinds of deep, meaningful, lasting relationships with others that we all need in order to live happy, emotionally secure lives.

Current Social Trends

Within popular media there has been a massive upsurge in interest over the issue of narcissism and whether its prevalence rates are trending upward. For example, the cover story for the May 20, 2013 issue of Time magazine entitled "Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation" depicted so-called millennials (a generation spanning the 1980s to 2000) as typical narcissists. The alarmist message of the article contains statements such as, "Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists, who still live with their parents" [12]. Ironically, this use of data to support claims of superiority in the expressed values, valuations, lifestyles and general beliefs of the generation that precedes millennials not only smacks of generationism but also comes across as somewhat narcissistic.

The national dialogue on generational narcissism was sparked by a 2008 meta-analytic study that analyzed college students' NPI scores from 1982 to 2006 and found an upward trend nationwide [13]. When an attempt was made to replicate the study, a different group of researchers found that NPI scores remained unchanged over that time period in samples from the University of California (UC) campuses [13]. Twenge countered that increasing numbers of Asian-Americans at the UC campuses over time may have masked changes in narcissism, because Asians and Asian-Americans score lower on the NPI when compared to Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics [14].

Sampling from a younger age group, that should not be impacted by Asians entering into the UC system, researchers Trzesniewski and Donnellan [15] collected data from a large national sample of high-school seniors, from 1976 to 2006 (Total N=477,380). The results produced little evidence of meaningful change in egotism, self-enhancement, individualism, self-esteem, locus of control, hopelessness, happiness, life satisfaction, loneliness, antisocial behaviour, time spent working or watching television, political activity, the importance of religion, and the importance of social status, over the last 30 years. Trzesniewski concludes that, "Kids today are remarkably similar to previous generations; at least in terms of their traits and behaviours, they are just as narcissistic as we were at their age" [16]. Given the conflicting results, the issue of generational differences in personality traits remains an open debate. As stated by Arnett [17], "There is no persuasive evidence that scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) have risen among college students in recent decades. In any case, the NPI is a dubious measure of narcissism, and college students are a dubious sample of emerging adults" [17]. Looking back in time, when we read historical statements from researchers, such as, "Although the 1970s were characterized as the 'me generation,' interest in narcissism shows no signs of abatement in the 1980s" [18] it causes us to question whether the concern over narcissism in emerging youth is anything new.

What researchers do agree upon is that NPD is more prevalent in males than females for unknown reasons, with about 18% of males presenting with NPD, compared to 6% of females in clinical samples [19]. When studying the general population, researchers have reported a lower lifetime prevalence rate, but still greater rates for men, at 7.7%, versus 4.8% for women [20]. In addition, many romantic partners of narcissists, as well as their parents, children, family members, co-workers and friends are thought to be directly affected by this disorder as well.

Clinical Methods in Narcissism Research

Contemporary Tools for Identifying Narcissism

There are varying levels of narcissism and it exists to some extent in everyone. It is in fact the extent and not the mere presence of narcissism that determines healthy versus pathological. Thus there is a clear need to differentiate pathological narcissism from normal narcissism. This has traditionally been addressed using three methods of assessment: semi-structured interviews, self-report inventories, and projective techniques [21]. One of the first structured interviews developed from and applied to clinically diagnosed narcissistic patients is the Diagnostic Interview for Narcissism (DIN) [22]. In addition to smaller scales that were developed exclusively for measuring narcissism, pre-existent, standardized psychometric tests of personality and psychopathology, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), have also been used to identify narcissism. For example, Ashby, Lee, and Duke [23] reported the development of an MMPI Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale (NPD), consisting of 19 items from the MMPI. Most of these approaches to assessment were developed in part by referencing standardized criteria found in diagnostic manuals (e.g., DSM-III) that have defined the clinical population upon which subsequent structured interviews and self-report measures are based. For this reason, this brief review of contemporary tools to identify narcissism begins with a look at the evolution of this construct within diagnostic manuals, then highlights some of the most frequently used self-report measures.

Diagnostic Manuals

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which was introduced in 1952, was intended to give psychiatrists and other mental health professionals in the U.S. a way to provide diagnoses based on common definitions. However, it was not until 1980 (with the introduction of DSM-III) that specific criteria were enumerated. The purpose of the newer DSM was to aid both diagnosis and statistics, assuming that with clearer labels, clinicians would be able to better estimate the prevalence of major psychiatric disorders.

It is in the DSM-III that the diagnostic category of NPD was first introduced, giving it formal psychiatric recognition as an important concept within the clinical setting. While it did offer some treatment recommendations, there was no description of the disorder beyond identifying these individuals as "self-aggrandizing." In 1984, Kernberg proposed adding malignant narcissism as a psychiatric diagnosis but this never materialized.

In 1987, the DSM-III-R signified a paradigm shift by introducing empirically based, atheoretical and agnostic diagnostic criteria [24]. In this version, NPD was described using three essential features: *grandiosity, hypersensitivity to the evaluation of others, and lack of empathy*. These ideas were further clarified with statements such as, "These people are preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love, and with chronic feelings of envy for those whom they perceive as being more successful than they are" (DSM-III-R, p. 350). This general description was then followed by nine diagnostic criteria that helped establish diagnostic thresholds.

The fourth edition (DSM-IV-TR) was published in 1994 and replaced "hypersensitivity to evaluation" with *need for admiration*. Essentially, the same nine diagnostic criteria were retained. Summarized here in abbreviated form, those items are: 1) grandiose self-importance, 2) fantasies of unlimited success, 3) believes he/she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by special or high status people, 4) requires excessive admiration, 5) has a sense of entitlement, 6) is interpersonally exploitive, 7) lacks empathy, 8) often envious or believes that others are envious of him/her, 9) shows arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes. It is only the 9th criterion that differs from DSM-III-R, which replaced the older criterion of: "reacts to criticism with feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation."

The fifth edition (DSM-5) was published in 2013 and like its predecessor, characterized NPD by two core phenotypic personality traits: *grandiosity* and *attention seeking*. In addition to these, there must be problems with "self-functioning" and

"interpersonal functioning". The dimension of self-functioning, in particular, is used to introduce criteria from research on personality. Statements such as, "exaggerated self-appraisal may be inflated or deflated" provide a more sophisticated view of problems with identity. Statements such as, "often unaware of own motivations" or "personal standards are unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional" provide a more complex view of problems with *self-direction*.

Within the dimension of interpersonal functioning, we find most of the descriptors originally included in DSM-III-R, though with slightly different wording. Descriptors such as "little genuine interest in others" (i.e., exploitive) and "relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation" (i.e., believes he/she is "special") are used to the depict problems with *intimacy*. Descriptors such as "excessively attuned to reactions of others" (i.e., overreacts to criticism) and "impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others" (i.e., lacks empathy) are used to depict problems with *empathy*. The older criteria of grandiose self-importance, sense of entitlement, and arrogant/haughty attitudes are now grouped together under *grandiosity*. The older criterion of "requires excessive admiration" is listed under *attention seeking*. The only item to be omitted from the new nosology is "often envious of others". In addition to a more highly organized format, a dimensional set of criteria with diagnostic thresholds based on empirical data [25-26] can be found in DSM-5 Section III: Emerging Measures and Models. Given the flexibility and comprehensiveness of this new diagnostic system, the DSM-5 functions as an important resource for identifying pathological narcissism.

Self-report Questionnaires

Although researchers have been using self-report measures to assess trait narcissism for nearly five decades, there remain some differences surrounding the conceptualization of pathological narcissism, stemming in part from sampling that is drawn from the general population for social-personality research and from clinical settings for diagnostic instrumentation. What each of these has in common is the conceptualization of narcissism primarily in terms of an antagonistic interpersonal style that values self-pride above all else. This point of commonality is most keenly reflected in the Single-Item Narcissism Scale (SINS), which has only one question: "To what extent do you agree with this statement: "*I am a narcissist." (Note: The word "narcissist" means egotistical, self-focused, and vain*.)." It is extraordinary that this single question correlates positively with other traditional measures of narcissism and has good discriminant validity from common measures of self-esteem [27-28].

Narcissistic Personality Inventory

The most widely used and most researched measure of narcissism is the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) [29-31]. The NPI is based on the DSM-III clinical criteria for NPD, although it was designed to measure these features in the general population and is therefore sensitive to subclinical features of narcissism. Raskin and Terry [30] originally identified seven factors in the NPI: authority, superiority, exhibitionism, entitlement, vanity, exploitativeness and self-sufficiency.

Personality Diagnostic Questionaire-4

The Personality Diagnostic Questionnaire (PDQ-4) (Hyler) was designed for application in clinical settings. When compared to the NPI, the PDQ-4 is more likely to capture an emotionally unstable, negative-affect-laden, and introverted variant of narcissism. In contrast, the narcissism captured by the NPI is an emotionally resilient, extraverted form [32].

Pathological Narcissism Inventory

The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) [2] is a recent self-report questionnaire designed to tease out vulnerability and grandiosity aspects of pathological narcissism. Its' trait profile correlates highly with expert rating on these dimensions [32].

Core Dimensions of Narcissists

The inventories described above make clear that there are certain general personality characteristics contained within the pathological narcissist. One question is the extent to which these characteristics are all part of a single trait group.

Previous research has often portrayed narcissism as a unitary construct, however more recent research suggests it may be multidimensional. Some studies have identified as many as eight dimensions [33], others have identified three: grandiosity, seeking excessive admiration and a lack of empathy [19], and other studies emphasize just two general factors [34] grandiose (overt) and vulnerable (covert) narcissism.

For the purpose of this discussion, it is clear that overall NPD includes an extreme sense of grandiosity and self-confidence, an excessive need for admiration and a reduced or non-existent capability for empathy. It is this last characteristic, a lack of empathy, that has generated much interest within the neuroscience community over the past several years.

Grandiosity

People with NPD tend to exaggerate their skills and accomplishments as well as their level of relationship with people they consider to be important. Their sense of superiority may cause them to monopolize conversations and to become impatient when others talk about themselves. They typically will disparage or devalue the other person by overemphasizing their own success. When they are aware that their statements have hurt someone else, they tend to react with contempt and to view it as a sign of weakness. When their own ego is wounded by a real or perceived criticism, their anger can be disproportionate to the situation, but typically, their actions and responses are deliberate and calculated. Despite occasional instances of insecurity, the self-image they display is usually stable albeit overinflated.

Excessive Need for Admiration

Those who score high in narcissism have been found to overrate their own abilities, to lash out angrily in response to criticism, and to commit white-collar crimes at higher rates than the general population [35]. This constant desire for admiration and excessive response when it does not occur often has severe consequences, e.g., an inability to maintain relationships as they constantly seek something better, or when their lack of empathy becomes apparent to their partners [19].

Low Empathy

One characteristic that clearly distinguishes non-narcissists from narcissists is empathy. Empathy refers to a capacity and tendency to experience life not just from one's own point of view but also from that of others, to feel others' joy and sorrow, and to care about others' wellbeing. Specialists in moral development consider empathy to be the foundation for human compassion and morality. Empathy means understanding another person's situation from their point of view. Often described as seeing through the eyes of another and feeling with the heart of another, empathetic people are much more aware of the world outside of their own ego. For the NPD sufferer, on the other hand, there is little need for empathy since others' points of view are not relevant to them.

Because of their lack of empathy, patients with NPD may exhibit an unforgiving nature and showcase anger and aggression in close relationships [19]. This can also affect work relationships or any close group activities, where consequences to others are not a part of the narcissist's concerns.

Cognitive Neuroscience and Narcissism

Biopsychosocial Models

Psychologists have for some time emphasized a multi-tiered approach to psychological research in what has become known as the Biopsychosocial Model of Behavior [36]. This has become more the case over the past few decades as the area of Cognitive Neuroscience has grown to become one of the most dynamic fields of Psychological study [37]. Recognition that our place in the world can be viewed from perspectives, or levels, ranging from sub-atomic, through organismic to cosmic is a unique feature of the behavioural sciences. The ability as well as the necessity to explore these many levels is required for progress in understanding the nature of brain and behaviour [38].

Incorporation of the Biopsychosocial Model and working to understand the links between brain, behaviour and society is found throughout Psychology. The human brain is life's most complex living organ. It is made up of nerve cells and many of them. Most estimates are that there may be over one hundred billion individual nerve cells, or neurons, in the human brain. Each of them can make up to several thousand connections with other neurons to form what can practically be considered an nearly infinite network of nerve cell activity. These neurons are organized into very specific regions with very specific functions and these regions are also highly interconnected to form an extraordinarily complex series of integrated functional groups.

Neuroanatomical Features Associated With Components of Narcissism

We know that the front part of the brain, the frontal cortex, regulates much of our thinking and reasoning abilities. Similarly, around the lower sides of the brain are areas called the temporal lobes, where we find the keys to controlling many emotional states including fear and anger. We have a growing understanding of how these features relate to NPD, but because those suffering from NPD believe they do not have any behavioural or mental health problems it is difficult to recruit large numbers of these persons for clinical studies. Regardless, there have been some neuroscience studies done with NPD that provide us with a picture of how the brains of these individuals differ from healthy people.

In recent years neuroscience has made great progress in uncovering the brain mechanisms related to how we are able to feel what another person is feeling. It is intriguing to note that consistent evidence shows that sharing the emotions of others is associated with activation of neural areas that are also active during the first-hand experience of that emotion. For example, one recent study showed that patients with lesions caused by removing brain tumors in the anterior insular cortex (AIC) had deficits in explicit and implicit empathetic pain processing [39]. This study provides evidence suggesting that the empathy deficits in patients with brain damage to the AIC are surprisingly similar to the empathy deficits found in several psychiatric diseases, including autism spectrum disorders, borderline personality disorder, NPD and others, suggesting potentially common neural deficits in those psychiatric populations.

The insular cortex is comprised of a complex network of neurons coming into and exiting this brain region and is divided into subsections. It receives input from several sensory systems associated with emotion and empathy and receives projections from the glossopharyngeal nerve involved in the sensation of pain as well as tasting, swallowing and salivary secretions [40]. Insular neurons also respond to stimulation of the vagus nerve [41] that also has important autonomic nervous system functions. Some of these may be related to changes in heart rate associated with emotional events.

In humans, the insular cortex has critical afferent and efferent connections with other regions of the cortex, including the frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes; the cingulate gyrus; and subcortical structures such as the amygdala, brainstem, thalamus, and basal ganglia [42]. In this way, the insular cortex is able to receive, process and transmit signals regulating important emotional functions related to our sensory, motor and autonomic systems.

The insular cortex has been commonly associated with somatotopic representations of bodily states such as itch, pain, temperature, and touch [43-44]. In addition, neuroimaging studies consistently show that AIC activation is associated with disgust [45-46], interoceptive awareness [47], general emotional processing [47-49], intuition, unfairness [50], risk and

uncertainty [51-54], and norm violations [55-56]. It has also been observed that patients with focal epileptic seizures that arise from the AIC report heightened emotional awareness and enhanced wellbeing [57]. The insular cortex overall appears to form an internal image of the physiological state of the person and to relay these states and needs for one's awareness of feelings [44].

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Using MRI to measure brain structural volume, Schulze and colleagues demonstrated a consistent structural deficit in the insular cortex. For the NPD group, this region of the cerebral cortex was markedly reduced in thickness compared to the control group. The amount of empathy was directly correlated to the volume of gray matter in the insular region. Overall, patients with narcissism exhibited a significant reduction of gray matter in the insular cortex [58].

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging

In the past decade scientists have used fMRI to identify several regions in the brain associated with empathy for pain.

Fan, et al. combined assessments of non-clinical subjects on Narcissism inventories with fMRI measurements of empathy. High narcissistic subjects showed higher scores on the Symptom Checklist-90–Revised (SCL-90-R) and the 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) when compared to low narcissistic subjects. High narcissistic subjects also showed significantly decreased deactivation during empathy, especially in the right anterior insula. The neuroimaging data indicates lower activity in the insula in high narcissistic subjects [59-60].

Another recent study firmly establishes that the AIC is where the feeling of empathy originates [61]. A unique cell type-the von Economo neuron (VEN) -- is located there. These rare neurons appear to be linked to empathy and self-awareness [62-63]. It is intriguing that VENs have been found to exist only in humans and great apes [64-66], macaque monkeys Evrard et al., elephants [67], cetaceans and a number of their related terrestrial herbivore species [68-70]. VENs are very large projection neurons well-suited for rapid, long-distance integration of information [66-71].

Diffusion Tensor Imaging

One characteristic of narcissists is that they exude a sense of confidence. However, the brain activity of these persons is inconsistent with their appearance. At a neural level, narcissists appear needy and insecure. Chester, et al. [72] used a method of measuring brain activity called diffusion tensor imaging that measures the amount of connected activity between different brain areas. Such scans produce more accurate wiring diagrams of the brain, in contrast to structural magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans that show the brain's gray matter, and functional MRI scans (fMRI) that measure overall neural activity. Higher narcissism scores were associated with lower connectivity between certain brain areas, including the prefrontal cortex and ventral striatum. These areas are associated with the ability to think positively about oneself and thus low activity in these areas may prompt NPD individuals to repeatedly seek out affirmation from others. This is consistent with theories that state these people have difficulty understanding their own self-concept, and may have low implicit self-esteem underneath their confident and arrogant exterior.

Brain mechanisms of emotional awareness

Empathy is one factor that makes up the large cluster of human emotions. Emotion is usually considered to consist of a physiological–biological component, an experiential–psychological component, and an expressive–social component [73]. One way to simplify this is to think of the dimensions combined into an overall sense of "feelings". It has been shown that emotional awareness typically occurs during the conscious processing of affective or "incoming" stimuli [74]. We also know that the capacity to experience emotions fully significantly increases the likelihood to make an appropriate action or decision [75].

Although several other brain regions are involved in processing and regulating emotions and the insula works closely with other regions, the insula has been singled out as the critical neural substrate for interoceptive and emotional awareness [59, 76-79].

A clinical deficit in emotional awareness is called *alexithymia* [80]. It is commonly seen in conditions associated with functional deficits of the AIC [69, 81-83].

A self-report questionnaire, the 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20), was designed to assess three aspects of emotional deficits: difficulty in identifying emotions, difficulty in describing emotions, and externally oriented thinking style [84]. As assessed by the TAS-20, the prevalence of alexithymia is approximately 10% in the general population and is remarkably high in patients with autism spectrum disorders 85% [85]. In autism, lower AIC activations are correlated with higher TAS-20 scores [86].

Alexithymia is also observed in individuals with depersonalization syndrome [87]. This suggests that impaired emotional awareness interferes with normal social function in both clinical and nonclinical populations. Diminished ability to integrate information rapidly among spatially distinct regions may underlie functional deficits in these conditions and, ultimately, in the inability to make quick and intuitive judgments regarding uncertain and rapidly changing social contexts [71].

Conclusions

NPD is a personality disorder in which there is a long-term pattern of abnormal behaviour characterized by exaggerated feelings of self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, and a lack of understanding of others' feelings. Our recognition of hubris has been around for many centuries, but only in the past sixty years has this become classified as a mental disorder that requires treatment. While not perfectly clear, there is a growing concern in popular media and among some researchers that the general population may be trending toward higher levels of narcissism but this position remains controversial.

Affected individuals typically spend large amounts of time thinking about achieving and maintaining power or success, or about their appearance. They excessively distort reality to confirm their grandiose feelings about themselves and they routinely take advantage of the people around them, knowingly or unknowingly. NPD typically begins by early adulthood, and occurs across a variety of situations and populations.

At the psychological level NPD is usually diagnosed or studied using some type of self-report diagnostic instrument. While results vary, it is clear there are some key dimensions required for NPD including grandiosity, need for attention and lack of empathy. Sadism is an additional factor observed in the most severe type of NPD, malignant narcissism.

While there is not a large body of research on the neuroscience of NPD, there are consistencies pointing to abnormalities in certain brain areas, in particular the insular cortex, that are associated with features of NPD, especially lack of empathy.

Due to the high-functionality associated with narcissism, some people may not view it as impairment in their lives. Indeed, many successful and powerful individuals, whether good or bad, share some degree of narcissism considered to be above the norm. Although overconfidence tends to make individuals with NPD ambitious, it does not necessarily lead to success and high achievement professionally. These individuals may be unwilling to compete or may refuse to take any risks in order to avoid appearing like a failure. In addition, their inability to tolerate setbacks, disagreements or criticism, along with lack of empathy, make it difficult for such individuals to work cooperatively with others or to maintain long-term professional relationships with superiors and colleagues.

Taken together, this work shows that NPD is a serious disorder characterized by lack of empathy, grandiosity and impaired emotional regulation. It is associated, at least in part, with brain irregularities primarily within the insular cortex and also in the frontal lobes of the brain. These are critical areas associated with the ability for empathy and higher level processing, judgment and decision making.

As shown in this review, while the origins of narcissistic personality disorder remain unknown, biological, psychological and social factors all play important roles in the etiology of this disorder. Indeed, additional clinical and neuroscience investigations of empathy disorders, especially NPD and malignant narcissism, are vital in order to clearly ascertain the environmental, genetic, and biological factors that contribute to these impactful but often overlooked disorders.

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PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Does a narcissism epidemic exist in modern western societies? Comparing narcissism and self-esteem in East and West Germany

Aline Vater[1,2,3]*, **Steffen Moritz**[4], **Stefan Roepke**[3]

1 Freie Universität Berlin, Department of Education and Psychology, Berlin, Germany, **2** University of Potsdam, Department of Psychology, Potsdam, Germany, **3** Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Campus Benjamin Franklin, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Berlin, Germany, **4** University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Department for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Hamburg, Germany

* aline.vater@fu-berlin.de

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Abstract

Narcissism scores are higher in individualistic cultures compared with more collectivistic cultures. However, the impact of sociocultural factors on narcissism and self-esteem has not been well described. Germany was formerly divided into two different social systems, each with distinct economic, political and national cultures, and was reunified in 1989/90. Between 1949 and 1989/90, West Germany had an individualistic culture, whereas East Germany had a more collectivistic culture. The German reunification provides an exceptional opportunity to investigate the impact of sociocultural and generational differences on narcissism and self-esteem. In this study, we used an anonymous online survey to assess grandiose narcissism with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) to assess grandiose and vulnerable aspects of narcissism, and self-esteem with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) in 1,025 German individuals. Data were analyzed according to age and place of birth. Our results showed that grandiose narcissism was higher and self-esteem was lower in individuals who grew up in former West Germany compared with former East Germany. Further analyses indicated no significant differences in grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism or self-esteem in individuals that entered school after the German reunification ($\leq$ 5 years of age in 1989). In the middle age cohort (6–18 years of age in 1989), significant differences in vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism and self-esteem were observed. In the oldest age cohort (> 19 years of age in 1989), significant differences were only found in one of the two scales assessing grandiose narcissism (NPI). Our data provides empirical evidence that sociocultural factors are associated with differences in narcissism and self-esteem.

Introduction

Are modern capitalistic cultures nurturing narcissism? Sociocultural changes are frequently proposed to be central mechanisms contributing to increasing narcissism [1]. The majority of

empirical studies on the associations between sociocultural changes and narcissism relied on student samples from the US. In the present study, we examined an exceptional case in human history: The division and reunification of Germany. We investigated whether individuals exposed to these two different social systems (with distinct economic, political and national cultures) differed in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem.

Empirical evidence for the narcissism epidemic

Narcissism is increasing in modern Western societies and this has been referred to as a "narcissism epidemic" [1]. The endorsement rate for the statement "I am an important person" has increased from 12% in 1963 to 77–80% in 1992 in adolescents [2]. Recently published books feature more self-centered language compared with earlier publications. For instance, the personal pronouns *I* and *me* are used more frequently than *we* and *us* [3]. Moreover, the use of narcissistic phrases such as "I am the greatest" has increased between 1960 and 2008 [4]. The rise of narcissism is also reflected in more self-focused song lyrics [5] and a stronger orientation towards fame in TV shows [6]. These observations suggest that narcissistic expressions within individualistic cultures have become more frequent.

Scores of self-reported grandiose narcissism, assessed by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), have increased [7, 8]. Twenge and Campbell reported a significant increase in NPI scores in a cross-temporal meta-analysis of American college students between 1979 and 2006 [9]. NPI scores were 30% higher in the most recent cohort compared with the first cohort. Further analyses between 2002 and 2007 excluded any confounding effects of ethnicity. Taken together with other studies, these findings confirmed that NPI scores are increasing over time in American college students ([10], but also see [13]).

Evidence for an increase in narcissism in Western societies has predominantly been provided by the same research group. In these studies, narcissism was consistently measured using the NPI, which has received much criticism [10–12]. Shortcomings of the NPI include a restriction to grandiose aspects of narcissism [13] and problems with validity [14]. Moreover, the NPI is constructed based on the clinical definition of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) produced by the American Psychiatric Association [15]. Nevertheless, Raskin and Terry developed the NPI to assess individual differences in nonclinical populations. The authors have themselves admitted that the NPI fails to capture important psychological and behavioral dimensions that are inherent to pathological narcissism [7]. This means that high NPI scores may represent a non-distressed, self-confident version of grandiose narcissism [13]. However, recent research shows that the NPI provided a strong match to expert ratings of DSM-IV-TR NPD and grandiose narcissism, compared to other narcissism inventories [16, 17].

The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) has been developed to capture both grandiose and vulnerable aspects of narcissism [13]. PNI scores are thought to be closely related to the clinical diagnosis of NPD, although this has not yet been tested in narcissistic patients. However, recent evidence indicates that the PNI is a useful tool for assessing more pathological aspects of narcissism [18].

Self-esteem, defined as global evaluation of the self [19], is related to narcissism [14, 20–22]. However, recent data provide evidence that narcissism differs from self-esteem in various domains, such as its phenotype, its consequences, its development, and its origins [23]. Self-esteem and narcissism have distinct impacts on outcome measures [21, 24–28]. Narcissism and high self-esteem both include positive self-evaluations, but the entitlement, exploitation, sense of superiority, and negative evaluation of others that are associated with narcissism are

not necessarily observed in individuals with high self-esteem [29]. Self-esteem is increasing in the Western world. Middle school students from the United States had markedly higher self-esteem scores in the mid-2000s compared with the late 1980s [30]. Moreover, the self-esteem of college students increased substantially between 1968 and 1994 [31].

Sociocultural environments and narcissism

The development of personality traits is closely related to the cultural environment [32–35]. Cultural environments can be classified as individualistic or collectivistic [36, 37]. Individualistic cultures encourage a stronger focus on the self, whereas collectivistic cultures emphasize the importance of social values. Narcissism contains a strong focus on the self, accompanied by a high need for admiration, and grandiose fantasies [38, 39]; therefore members of individualistic cultures may be more narcissistic than individuals from collectivistic cultures [40].

Some studies have provided empirical evidence that individualistic values can lead to narcissism [41]. Individuals from the United States, which has a more individualistic culture, have higher grandiose narcissism scores (NPI) compared with individuals from Asian countries and the Middle East, which have a more collectivistic culture [40]. Likewise, Chinese people have lower self-enhancement scores than individuals from more individualistic Western societies, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Europe [42].

Lower self-esteem has been reported in individuals from East Asia than Western cultures [43]. Similarly, Japanese college students had lower self-esteem scores than Westerners [44–47]. Lower self-esteem in collectivistic societies may be due to the fact that importance is not focused on the self but rather given to the group. Taken together, these findings suggest that individual differences in self-esteem and narcissism may be explained by distinguishable characteristics inherent to different cultures.

The effect of age on narcissism

Past research indicates that narcissism decreases with age. Younger individuals have higher narcissism scores [48–50] than older individuals. Wilson and Sibley identified a curvilinear effect of age on NPI scores in the general New Zealand population [51]; 9.4% of individuals in their twenties reported symptoms of NPD, compared with 3.2% of individuals older than 65 years. Hypersensitive narcissism is a variant of pathological narcissism and can be measured by the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale [52]. Scores using this scale correlated negatively with age [53].

Empirical research provides evidence that entering adulthood during a recession tempers later narcissism, i.e., participants who come of age during tumultuous economic times are less likely to endorse narcissism relative to people who enter adulthood in more prosperous times [54, 55]. Bianchi argues that economic conditions shape later attitudes and values that reflect the prevailing concerns of the time. Narcissistic self-focus may be viable only when people are not reliant on others to satisfy their basic needs during economic prosperous times [56, 57]. In line with this, in Finnish 18 year old man born between 1962 and 1976 a steady increase in personality traits that are associated with higher earnings in later life (e.g., self-confidence, sociability, leadership motivation) has been observed [58].

Self-esteem also changes with age. Latent growth curve analyses have revealed that self-esteem increases with age, peaks at 60 years, and then declines into old age ($\geq$ 70 years) [59–61]. According to Orth and colleagues, individuals establish their sense of self, including their roles, values, and interests during adolescence and young adulthood [59]. Self-esteem increases with age as personality traits mature and social roles begin to manifest. It then decreases during old age because individual traits (e.g., physical strength) and social surroundings (e.g.,

empty nest syndrome, loss of partner) begin to change. Another study shows that birth cohort has a measurable influence on self-esteem through its interaction with age. Participants born in later years (e.g., 1960) score higher in self-esteem than participants born in earlier years (e.g., 1920) [62]. Moreover, the authors compared participants of the same age in 1986 versus 2002 from the Americans' Changing Lives (ACL) cohort-sequential study. According to their results, participants of the same age in 2002 scored higher in self-esteem than those in 1986. The authors argue that cultural change in the form of cohort and time period have to be considered when assessing self-esteem in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.

Rationale of the present study

Cultural transformation towards more individualistic values in Western societies has been blamed for the rise in narcissism [34, 63]. However, evidence for an increase in narcissism has largely come from NPI scores of college student cohorts collected between the late 1970s and 2010 [63]. Many researchers have argued that this is insufficient evidence for a narcissism epidemic in Western societies [64, 65]. Moreover, the NPI has been criticized as a measure of narcissism [13, 14]. To address these concerns, we have included evaluation by the PNI in our study, which assesses grandiose *and* vulnerable narcissism and complements information from the NPI [18].

To date, the influence of culture on narcissism has been investigated using cross-temporal birth cohorts [9, 66] or by comparing samples from different cultural environments [40, 42, 67]. These approaches have methodological limitations. Cross-temporal cohorts use the same self-reporting method and can be affected by sampling biases. Trzesniewski and Donnellan reported that population-based inferences cannot be made from cross-temporal meta-analytic studies that are based on convenience sampling [65]. There are also problems with the use of trans-cultural cohorts, including differences in language use and problems with the translation of self-reporting questionnaires used in these studies. Culture is transmitted through language [68]; therefore it is impossible to rule out mediating variables in language use and word meaning between cohorts from different cultures.

To address the methodological restrictions of cross-temporal birth cohorts and cross-cultural comparisons, we used a historically exceptional research setting: reunified Germany. Germany shares the same national culture, but was divided into two independent societies and political systems after World War II. In 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany), was founded on the territory of the Russian sector as a communist society with a collectivistic ideology. In the same year, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany) was founded as capitalist society on the territory of the Trizone (including the American, British, and French sector). Between 1961 and 1989, interchange between these two German regions was heavily restricted. The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, marking the beginning of unification. In October 1990, Germany finally became a unified, capitalism-orientated society.

The reunification of the socialist GDR and the democratic FRG after more than four decades of separation can be considered a "natural experiment" [69–71]. Until 1945, East and West Germany shared central cultural elements, including language, common norms, values, and habits. After 1945, East Germany gradually became a communist society and its people were increasingly exposed to collectivism. In contrast, West Germany retained its capitalistic system and developed a more individualistic culture [72, 73]. As a result, the German population now consists of a younger generation that grew up under the individualistic system and an older population that were raised either in collectivistic East Germany or individualistic

West Germany. Comparing individuals from these two geographical regions may reveal to what degree cultural conditions shape personality across age cohorts.

Aims and hypotheses

Main effect for group. The aim of the current study was to compare grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism and self-esteem between individuals who grew up in former East and West Germany. First, based on previous findings [40, 42], we hypothesized that grandiose narcissism would be more prevalent in individuals from West Germany, who have been exposed to individualistic views compared with individuals from collectivistic East Germany.

Second, we aimed to determine whether individuals from East and West Germany show differences in vulnerable narcissism. Since narcissistic vulnerability in different cultures has not previously been compared, we did not formulate a direct hypothesis on this matter.

Third, based on previous findings that individuals from collectivistic societies have lower levels of self-esteem [44–47], we hypothesized that individuals from East Germany would have lower self-esteem scores (assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, RSE) compared with individuals from West Germany.

Main effect for age cohort. Learning environments can shape personality [74–76]; therefore we used trichotomized age cohorts to analyze narcissism and self-esteem. The youngest age cohort consisted of individuals $\leq$ 5 years of age in 1989. These individuals had not yet entered school in 1989. The middle age cohort included individuals aged between 6 (entered school in 1989) and 18 (the legal age of consent in 1989) years of age. The oldest age cohort contained individuals that were older than 18 years in 1989.

Individuals from the youngest age cohort were socialized within reunified Germany and shared a similar learning environment; therefore we did not expect to find any differences in grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem between individuals from East and West Germany in this cohort.

Based on the theory that learning environments shape personality [76], we hypothesized that differences in grandiose narcissism and self-esteem would be more pronounced in the middle age cohort, because these individuals were exposed to either individualistic or collectivistic conditions during a critical period of personality development. We expected that individuals from West Germany would have higher scores for grandiose narcissism and self-esteem compared with individuals from East Germany in this cohort.

We investigated whether grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem are more or less pronounced in individuals from East and West Germany in the oldest cohort. Two studies have shown that grandiose narcissism decreases [48, 50] and self-esteem increases [60, 61] in later life, suggesting that group differences may be less pronounced in the oldest cohort. However, narcissism and self-esteem have not been compered across age cohorts; therefore we did not formulate a direct hypothesis for the main effects.

Materials and methods

Participants and procedure

A total of 1,025 individuals (age in years: M_{age} = 38.3, SD = 12.48, range: 18–83; males 31.2%, females 68.8%) from Germany were recruited for this study by advertisements on a social networking site. Participants were invited to complete an online study and were given the opportunity to obtain an e-book as an incentive. All procedures were approved by the ethics committee of the Charité Berlin (EA04/065/06). All participants provided written informed consent by checking a box that stated they agreed to participate in the study; participants could only then proceed with the study. Afterwards, all participants had to insert their age,

their level of education (i.e., no school degrees/German: keinen Schulabschluss; secondary modern school qualification 9th class degree/German: Hauptschulabschluss; secondary modern school qualification 10th class degree/German: Realschulabschluss; academic high school degree/German: Abitur; University degree/German: Hochschulabschluss) and town in which they grew up. A research assistant used an online map service to locate whether towns were part of former GDR or FRG.

Three hundred and forty-three participants grew up in the territory of the former GDR and 682 individuals grew up in the territory of the FRG before 1990. Regarding education, two individuals did not have a school degree, 82 had a secondary school degree, 177 had a graduation diploma, 595 had a university degree, and 164 received vocational training. In terms of employment, 72 participants were unemployed, 691 were employed, 223 were students, and 34 were retired. Five individuals did not provide information on their education and occupation.

Trichotomized groups were created based on the age of participants when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. The youngest cohort ($\leq$ 5 years of age in 1989) included 29.7% of the total participants, the middle age cohort (aged 6–18 years in 1989) contained 35.5% of the total participants, and the older cohort (aged 19–41 years in 1989) comprised 34.8% of the total participants.

Measures

Grandiose narcissism (NPI). We used a 15-item version of the NPI [77], which is the most widely used self-report measure of narcissism [7, 8, 78, 79]. The NPI primarily measures grandiose aspects of narcissism [13, 80], based on the criteria for pathological narcissism specified in the DSM III [15]. The coefficient alpha was 0.76.

Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (PNI). We used the German version of the PNI [13, 18], which contains 54 items for measuring grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. The PNI is comprised of seven subscales: exploitativeness (EXP, seven items), grandiose fantasy (GF, seven items), self-sacrificing self-enhancement (SSSE, six items), entitlement rage (ER, eight items), devaluing (DEV, seven items), contingent self-esteem (CSE, 12 items), and hiding the self (HS, seven items). Each item is scored on a six-point scale ranging from zero (not at all like me) to five (very much like me). The coefficient alpha was 0.96 for the total score, 0.71 for the grandiose factor (including the EXP, GF, ER and SSSE subscales [13] and 0.84 for the vulnerable factor (including the CSE, HS, and DEV subscales [13]. The alphas for the subscales ranged between 0.83 (SSSE) and 0.93 (CSE).

Self-esteem. The RSE [19, 79] is a 10-item self-report measure of global self-esteem. Items are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The coefficient alpha in this sample was 0.90.

Results

Descriptive statistics

S1 Table presents the descriptive statistics and group differences between participants from East and West Germany across age classes. S2 Table shows the intercorrelations of all measures. There were no significant differences in gender and years of education between the East and West Germany groups. In both groups, the NPI scores correlated positively with PNI grandiosity scores, but negatively with PNI vulnerability scores. Self-esteem correlated positively with NPI narcissism and negatively with grandiosity and vulnerability assessed by the PNI. Using the Fisher r-to-z transformation, we calculated whether the correlations between NPI, PNI and RSE significantly differ between East and West Germany in each age class. There were no significant differences in correlations for all measures in each age class.

Group differences

Participants who grew up in West Germany had lower self-esteem scores (RSE) and higher grandiose narcissism scores (NPI and PNI-G) compared with participants who grew up in East Germany (see S1 Table). Although the sum score of all facets of vulnerable narcissism did not differ between groups across age classes, participants from West Germany had by trend higher scores in the HS facet of vulnerable narcissism compared with individuals from East Germany. There were no significant differences in other PNI-V subscales between the two groups (i.e., CSE, and DEV).

In summary, individuals from West Germany scored higher on narcissistic grandiosity compared with participants from East Germany, but no differences in narcissistic vulnerability were observed. Participants who grew up in West Germany were significantly older than participants who grew up in East Germany. However, controlling for age and gender did not alter the results for differences in self-esteem, grandiose narcissism, and vulnerable narcissism. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was statistically nonsignificant, which indicates that the group variances are equal in the population.

Age cohort effect

To determine whether narcissism and self-esteem is different between individuals who grew up before or after the German unification, we performed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) according to age (young vs. middle vs. old) and group (East Germany vs. West Germany) (see S3 Table). These analyses revealed that grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem were different between age cohorts. Further, a group-effect was predominant in the middle age group; individuals who grew up in West Germany had higher grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism scores and lower self-esteem scores compared with individuals in the same age group who grew up in East Germany. Individuals in the middle age group from West Germany had higher grandiose narcissism on three different PNI-G subscales (EXP, GF, and ER facets) as well as one PNI vulnerability subscale (HS facet) compared with participants from East Germany in the same age group (see S3 Table).

There were no significant effects in the youngest age cohort. Individuals in the oldest age group from West Germany had higher NPI scores compared with participants from East Germany in the same age group. The principal findings related to grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem in all three age classes are illustrated in S1 Fig. Controlling for age and gender does not alter the pattern of results.

Discussion

This study takes advantage of the natural experiment [69, 70] created by the division and reunification of Germany to examine whether political systems affect narcissism and self-esteem. We compared measures of grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem between individuals who grew up in the territory of former West and East Germany. We hypothesized that individuals who grew up in the individualistic and capitalistic society of West Germany would have higher grandiose narcissism, and self-esteem scores than individuals who were raised in the collectivistic and socialist society of East Germany. By analyzing a large, heterogeneous community sample, we demonstrated that individuals from former West Germany have higher grandiose narcissism scores than individuals who grew up in former East Germany, in agreement with our hypothesis. In contrast to our hypothesis, individuals from former East Germany had higher self-esteem than individuals from former West Germany. These findings were predominantly detected in the middle age cohort and were largely

absent in the youngest and oldest cohorts. In the following, we discuss our findings in relation to the proposed narcissism epidemic [1].

Why were differences in narcissism predominant in the middle age cohort?

Youngest age cohort. Personality traits emerge during childhood and adolescence and become more stable in adulthood [81, 82]. Political systems may affect the educational system, therefore influence personality development [83]. Individuals from the youngest cohort ($\leq$ 5 years old in 1989) grew up under a common political and cultural system in the capitalism-orientated society of reunified Germany. In line with this, we found no significant differences in any study measures between individuals who grew up in East or West Germany.

Middle age cohort. Participants in the middle age cohort (6–18 years old in 1989) grew up either in collectivistic East Germany or individualistic West Germany. Grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism scores were higher in individuals from West Germany compared to East Germany in this age group.

Interestingly, individuals raised in West Germany scored higher on three grandiose subscales of the PNI: EXP (interpersonal manipulativeness), GF (compensatory fantasies of success and recognition), and ER (anger in response to unmet expectations that they feel entitled to).

Moreover, significant differences were observed in the HS subscale (vulnerable subscale of the PNI: concealing faults and needs from others), but not in the other two vulnerable subscales (CSE, DEV). These observations are in line with previous studies arguing that grandiose (but not necessarily vulnerable) narcissism has increased in Western societies [63]. Furthermore, our study sample may represent non-clinical individuals, which may explain why no significant differences were observed in two of the three vulnerable PNI subscales in the middle age cohort. There is previously published data showing that vulnerable aspects of the PNI are more strongly associated with psychopathology than grandiose facets [13, 84]. Moreover, grandiose aspects of the PNI are associated with tendencies to view oneself as active and energetic and one's life as exciting [84].

Increased grandiose narcissism in middle-aged individuals from West Germany may be explained by social learning theory [85]. Overvaluation of children by their parents has previously been hypothesized as the origin of narcissism in children in individualistic societies [85]. In a prospective study, Brummelman and colleagues confirmed preliminary data [86] that parental overvaluation predicted narcissism in the child later in life [87]. It remains to be confirmed whether differences in parental overvaluation existed between the former East and West Germany.

Moreover, the work by Bianchi argues that narcissistic self-focus may be viable during economic prosperous times and tempered by economic recession [54]. Individuals from GDR who came of age during the reunion of Germany faced tumultuous economic times including the loss of job perspectives (e.g., break down of textile industry and agriculture). Moreover, East German wages and pensions continue to be below the West German wage level since unification [88]. Middle-aged individuals from East Germany may score lower on narcissism as they experience lower economic prosperity compared to middle-aged individuals from West Germany.

Finally, data from an internet sample from China assessing sociodemographic factors related to grandiose narcissism (NPI) might help to explain differences in the middle age cohort in our study [48]. The authors found higher socioeconomic status, offspring of one child families compared to multiple children, living in urban area compared to rural area

positively related to grandiose narcissism [48]. Up from the mid-seventies East Germany had higher birth-rates compared to West-Germany [89]. Lower socio-economic status in East-Germany compared to West-Germany has already been described and continues to exist [88]. Furthermore, urbanization in West-Germany was much faster between 1949 and 1989/90 compared to East-Germany [90].

Oldest age cohort. Grandiose narcissism measured with the PNI-G was higher in participants who grew up in West Germany than East Germany in the oldest age cohort, but no significant differences were detected in grandiose narcissism measured with the NPI. Prior data has shown that grandiose narcissism measured with the NPI is widely captured by the exploitative (EXP) subscale of the PNI grandiosity scales which reflects a manipulative interpersonal orientation [91]. In the current study, the exploitative PNI subscale had highest correlation with the NPI score and was by trend higher in the oldest age cohort who grew up in West Germany than East Germany. This discrepancy in grandiose narcissism between the middle and oldest age group may be because narcissism decreases with age [92]. Older individuals have lower narcissism scores [49, 50] and are less susceptible to personality disorders than younger subjects [93]. Individuals from the oldest age group were in their fifties at the time of the study and may have felt an increased sense of empowerment, security, personal growth, and success than younger participants [94]. NPI-assessed grandiose narcissism may be more resistant to change throughout life because of its beneficial aspects. Furthermore, some of the mentioned factors valid for the middle age cohort might be less relevant or not applicable for the oldest age cohort, e.g., differences in birth rate, urbanization, tumultuous economic times during adolescents and early adulthood.

Why was self-esteem higher in participants from East Germany?

Our finding that self-esteem was higher in individuals from East Germany contradicts previous reports that individuals from more collectivistic East Asian countries have lower self-esteem than individuals from Western cultures [43–47]. We conclude that these earlier findings may not apply to East and West Germany. Furthermore, the assumption that individuals from collectivistic East Asian countries have lower self-esteem than individuals from Western cultures has been stressed by theoretical considerations and empirical data. Sedikides and colleagues argue that one cannot conclude that the level of self-esteem is weaker in East Asian individuals compared to Western individuals [95]. They argue that the desire for self-esteem is pancultural (i.e., cross-cultural invariance), with differential manifestations of self-esteem in different cultures (i.e., cross-cultural variability). They propose that more refined theoretical formulations and self-report instruments with a high cross cultural sensitivity are needed to better understand within-culture variations in self-esteem (including differences between East-Asian cultures, Latino and Middle-Eastern cultures and other Eastern countries).

Furthermore, teaching children individualistic virtues may contribute to lower self-esteem. According to Tafarodi and Walters, individualistic societies promote achievement-dependent self-esteem [96], i.e., a self-esteem that is threatened by constant social comparisons and the necessity to achieve more than other individuals. In line with this, narcissists perform better when self-enhancement opportunity is high rather than low, while the performance of participants with low narcissism is relatively unaffected by self-enhancement opportunity [97]. Individuals who grew up in West Germany may have lower, achievement-dependent self-esteem (i.e., which may be unrelated to actual achievement). In contrast, collectivistic societies are directed toward maintaining social harmony [42]. Individuals who grew up in East Germany may experience higher self-esteem, because it appears to be more independent from achievements and social comparisons.

Finally, Brummelman and colleagues demonstrated that parental warmth reported by the child was predicative of the child's self-esteem, whereas parent-reported parental warmth was not [87]. It is possible that child-perceived parental warmth was more prominent in former East Germany compared with former West Germany.

Strengths and limitations

The strengths of this study are the large sample size and the combined assessment of grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and self-esteem. Most importantly, this study takes advantage of the natural experiment [69, 70] created by the German division and reunification. In this setting, participants share important characteristics (such as language), but are distinct in others (such as sociocultural education). Our findings have advanced our understanding of the sociocultural mechanisms underlying individual differences in narcissism.

However, there are some methodological limitations to our study that could be addressed by future research. First, our study is based on associations, and conclusions about causal effects should be tested using longitudinal designs. Second, our methods for assessing narcissism and self-esteem were based on self-reports, which have limited value for assessing personality [98]. In future studies, negative behaviors associated with narcissism in real life situations should be compared between individuals raised in the former East and West Germany [99–101]. Third, we cannot determine whether our participants answered the online questionnaire honestly. This criticism also applies to offline questionnaires; therefore peer reports or naturalistic observation methods might represent a better approach towards investigating the interpersonal behavior of narcissists [102, 103]. Future studies may use paper pencil tests and more conventional sampling methods. Fourth, we cannot exclude confounding differences between the East German and West German cohorts. Individuals who grew up in the former East Germany experienced a transition from a collectivistic communist society to an individualistic society, which may have affected their narcissism and self-esteem. Moderating variables, such as differences in parenting styles should be investigated in future studies [87].

Conclusions

In summary, our study provides preliminary evidence that sociocultural factors contribute to differences in narcissism. Although we cannot pinpoint any causal relationships, we believe that our study sheds further light on sociological trends and justifies further investigation into the alleged narcissism epidemic.

Supporting information

S1 Table. Descriptive statistics and MANCOVA effect for group differences between East and West Germany across age classes (controlled for age). NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory; PNI-G/-V = Pathological Narcissism Inventory grandiose/vulnerable narcissism (according to Pincus et al. 2009); EXP = Exploitativeness; SSSE = Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement; HS = Hiding the Self; GF = Grandiose Fantasy; DEV = Devaluing; ER = Entitlement Rage; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; only RSE, PNI and NPI Scales are controlled for age; d = effect size Cohens d. (DOCX)

S2 Table. Correlations of all variables. N = 1,025; intercorrelations for individuals from former East Germany above diagonal (N = 343), intercorrelations for individuals from former West Germany below diagonal (N = 682); NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory; PNI-G/-V = Pathological Narcissism Inventory

grandiose/vulnerable narcissism; EXP = Exploitativeness; SSSE = Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement; HS = Hiding the Self; GF = Grandiose Fantasy; DEV = Devaluing; ER = Entitlement Rage; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
(DOCX)

S3 Table. Descriptive statistics and MANOVA effect for group differences between East and West Germany across age classes. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory; PNI-G/-V = Pathological Narcissism Inventory grandiose/vulnerable narcissism; EXP = Exploitativeness; SSSE = Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement; HS = Hiding the Self; GF = Grandiose Fantasy; DEV = Devaluing; ER = Entitlement Rage; RSE = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; d = effect size Cohens d.
(DOCX)

S1 Fig. (1a) Age cohort effect for self-esteem (RSE). (1b) Age cohort effect for narcissism (NPI). (1c) Age cohort effect for grandiose narcissism (PNI-G). (1d) Age cohort effect for vulnerable narcissism (PNI-V). NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory; PNI-G/-V = Pathological Narcissism Inventory grandiose/vulnerable narcissism; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.
(TIF)

S1 File. Ethics statement.
(PDF)

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Aline Vater, Stefan Roepke.

Data curation: Aline Vater, Steffen Moritz, Stefan Roepke.

Formal analysis: Aline Vater, Stefan Roepke.

Investigation: Aline Vater, Stefan Roepke.

Methodology: Aline Vater, Stefan Roepke.

Project administration: Aline Vater, Stefan Roepke.

Resources: Aline Vater.

Software: Aline Vater.

Writing – original draft: Aline Vater.

Writing – review & editing: Aline Vater, Steffen Moritz, Stefan Roepke.

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Applied Network Science

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Narcissism and fame: a complex network model for the adaptive interaction of digital narcissism and online popularity

Fakhra Jabeen*, Charlotte Gerritsen and Jan Treur

*Correspondence:
fakhraikram@yahoo.com
Social AI Group, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Abstract

Social media like Twitter or Instagram play the role of fertile platforms for self-exhibition and allow their users to earn a good repute. People higher in grandiosity share their contents in a charismatic way and as a result, they are successful in gaining attention from others, which may also influence their responses and behaviors. Such attention and repute enable them to be a trendsetter or a socially recognized maven. In this paper, we present a complex adaptive mental network model of a narcissist to see how popularity can adaptively influence his/her behavior. To analyze and to support behavior showed by our model, we used some key performance indicators from the literature to study the popularity and narcissism of 30 Instagram profiles. The results of the—both computational and empirical—study indicate that our presented computational adaptive network model in general shows the behavior found from the empirical data.

Keywords: Digital narcissism, Digital reputation, Popularity influence, Complex network

Introduction

Narcissism reflects a personality trait which relates to a certain cluster of human behaviors, which display self-superiority and self-exhibition. These behaviors mostly relate to entitlement seeking and having a messiah complex. Narcissists need admiration and dwell for their own appearance and achievement, which often leads to lack of empathy for others (Bushman and Baumeister 1998; Fan et al. 2011). Social media platforms can help narcissists to achieve popularity and have a feeling of worth for themselves, but this can also increase their vulnerability due to the pervasive nature of social media (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). Different artificial intelligence (AI) techniques were used to detect narcissism from text analysis (Holtzman et al. 2019; Neuman 2016). Also, there are very limited computational studies addressing these behaviors. Moreover, how popularity can influence such behavior was not studied yet in more depth. Extending the preliminary (Jabeen et al. 2019), the current paper addresses this.

The new level of connectivity through social media, provides a new way to become popular. Therefore, media such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram can act as new

channels for self-promotion of a narcissist. They share proactive materials like selfies (Holtzman et al. 2010), or posts with their lifestyle information, which makes them dominant (Alshawaf and Wen 2015). Previous studies explained that there is a relationship between narcissism, excessive usage of social media (McCain and Campbell 2018; Panek et al. 2013) and reward-seeking behavior (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). In a preliminary version of our work, we presented a complex second-order adaptive network model that explains the reactions of a narcissist in case of positive and negative feedback (Jabeen et al. 2019). However, it is also interesting to see how popularity can influence these reactions; this addition is contributed by the current paper, as is a much more extensive empirical study involving 30 social media profiles.

More specifically, in this paper, in addition to network-oriented computational modeling of narcissist behaviour, we address both empirically and computationally (a) how a presumed narcissist earns popularity over time, and (b) how popularity can influence his/her behavior. The paper is organized as follows. In "State of the art literature" section, we discuss the state-of-the-art literature related to narcissistic behaviors, along with popularity over social media. "Methods and methodologies and the obtained adaptive network model" section presents the method and methodologies applied and the obtained adaptive network model. In "Simulation experiments" section simulation results are presented. "Analysis of simulation experiments with reference to real-world data" section discusses how behaviors from real-world relates to the designed computational model, through 30 public Instagram profiles. "Limitations and future work" section discusses the limitations and future work options of the study and "Conclusion" concludes the paper.

State of the art literature

This section presents the related work in two streams: i.e. firstly, it discusses the psychological and neurological aspects of a narcissistic person and his/her expected behaviors. Secondly, it presents the influence of digital reputation over such behaviors. At the end of the section, AI-based approaches are also discussed, which were used to predict a narcissist.

Narcissism

Narcissism is characterized by the mythological figure Narcissus, who passionately fell in love with his own reflection (Brummelman et al. 2015). This complex phenomenon of acute concern of self-admiration can be described in terms of psychological, cognitive, and social processes.

Psychologically, narcissists show a high tendency for self-admiration and self-presentation (Wang 2017). A study indicated that there is a strong association between narcissism and reward-seeking behavior (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). Social media like Instagram is a well-known platform used for self-exhibition (Alshawaf and Wen 2015). A narcissist may receive a compliment and react with kindness and joy (Moon et al. 2016) as an outcome of reward-seeking behavior (Fan et al. 2011), or with a non-empathetic response to a critic (Bushman and Baumeister 1998; Fan et al. 2011).

In cognitive neurological sciences, different brain parts interact with each other for an interpretation and response to feedback. For example, the prefrontal cortex (PFC)

along with the Anterior Insula and temporal lobe evaluates feedback as a compliment (Olsson et al. 2014). As a result, activations in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) along with the ventral striatum show the reward-seeking behavior. Different hormones and neurotransmitters also take part when a person is admired. For example, dopamine is released when a narcissist feels that his target of sharing content is achieved, as (s)he is admired (Daniel and Pollmann 2014). Similarly, γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) receptors are activated, due to anxiety, which results from a negative evaluation of a critic (Sun et al. 2016). This negative evaluation leads to a threat to his/her ego as (s)he feels socially rejected (Bushman and Baumeister 1998). The hippocampus in the brain is affected by psychological stress, which affects, in particular, the memory and the learning capabilities by decreased synaptic plasticity (Schmidt et al. 2013; Sun et al. 2016). This reduction in synaptic plasticity is due to changes in the brain structure caused by stress (Sun et al. 2016). Also, cortisol levels are elevated when a person feels stress (Jauk et al. 2017).

Popularity

Narcissists use social media excessively, to display their charismatic looks and, by their social skills, they can become social mavens or influencers (Moon et al. 2016). Instagram is an ideal platform for an individual to engage him/herself and to gain more visibility. This process of self-promotion involves the visual appearance of a person with a high number of followers who talk about his/her likability (Holtzman et al. 2010) and, digital reputation is earned (Alshawaf and Wen 2015). They proactively gear themselves and their followers, to increase the follower likability and engagement (Bernarte et al. 2015). An example of such behavior can be a selfie with lifestyle information (Alshawaf and Wen 2015), captioned by using hashtags (Page 2012). Often, they follow limited people and, thus, have a high follower to following ratio, indicating their high influence/popularity (Farwaha and Obhi 2019; Garcia et al. 2017). A study also indicated that high numbers of likes can indicate how popular the posts of a person are (Chua and Chang 2016). High popularity may leave a positive impact and give personal satisfaction, along with the sense of achievement (Nesi and Prinstein 2015; Trent 1957).

Among AI-based approaches, a study related to machine learning tried to detect narcissism from text, where text as a vector was compared with personality vectors or dimensions resulting patterns of narcissism in psychological dimension (Neuman 2016). Another textual analysis approach (LIWC) used first-person singular pronouns to detect narcissism (Holtzman et al. 2019). In our previous work, we discussed the vulnerable behavior of a narcissist through a complex network model (Jabeen et al. 2019). Here, we extend our work by studying popularity and its influence on the responses/behavior of a narcissist.

Methods and methodologies and the obtained adaptive network model

Causal network modeling is a well-known approach in the field of artificial intelligence, which is helpful in making predictions about the behaviors of a person or a real-world scenario. Variables in a causal model, act as basic building blocks to represent the occurrence of an event (e.g. "he graduated"), which leads to behavioral changes in a system or a person (e.g. "he got admission") (Scheines et al. 1991). *Temporal-causal network modeling* distinguishes itself from static causal network

modeling, by adding a temporal perspective on causality. In addition, *adaptive* temporal-causal network modeling also addresses that network connections and other network characteristics can change over time. It is applicable to design and simulate a variety of models related to many domains like neural, mental, biological, social network, and many others. This section describes the adaptive temporal-causal network modeling approach using a multilevel reified network architecture (Treur 2020), which was used to design our model.

A reified network architecture is a multilevel network architecture, in which a temporal causal network is presented at the base level and the adaptiveness of the network is represented at (higher) reification levels. The *base level* contains a causal network representation, specified by a directed graph having 'states' as vertices and, 'connections' as edges between them. To illustrate this, consider a connection: $X \rightarrow Y$. This indicates that state Y is influenced by state X. The *activation level* of Y is computed through a *combination function,* which uses the *aggregated causal impact* by all states including X, from which Y has incoming connections. The *aggregated causal impact* depends on the *connection weights* and the *activation levels* of the incoming states. Therefore, for each state Y we have a:

- Connection weight $\boldsymbol{\omega}_{X,Y}$: how strong state X can influence state Y. The magnitude normally varies between 0 and 1, but suppression from a state is specified by a negative connection weight.
- Speed factor $\boldsymbol{\eta}_Y$: how fast state Y is influenced by the impact of incoming states. The range is normally between *low*: 0 and *high*: 1.
- Combination function $\mathbf{c}_Y(..)$: used to determine the aggregated impact of all states with incoming connections to Y. Either an existing combination functions can be used like: the identity function, the advanced logistic sum function, and so on, or a custom function can be defined.

The above introduced $\omega_{X,Y}$, η_Y and $c_Y(..)$ are the *network characteristics* defining a temporal-causal network model. An *adaptive network* model occurs when such characteristics are dynamic and change over time. The adaptiveness of the base level network considered here is represented by *first-order adaptation principles* (modeled at level II) and *second-order adaptation principles* (modeled at level III). An *n*th-order adaptive network model is specified by declarative specifications of an $n+1$ leveled network design and can be represented mathematically as shown in "Appendix A". Here, it is shown how a (three leveled) second-order reified adaptive network architecture was designed to address the complex adaptive mental network model of a narcissist.

Level I: the base network level

This section addresses the base network model (Level I) of a narcissist depicting his mental organization by 39 states (Fig. 1). A categorical explanation of each state is presented in Table 1. A state can have three types of incoming connections:

- Black arrows for a positive connection with weight values between (0, 1].

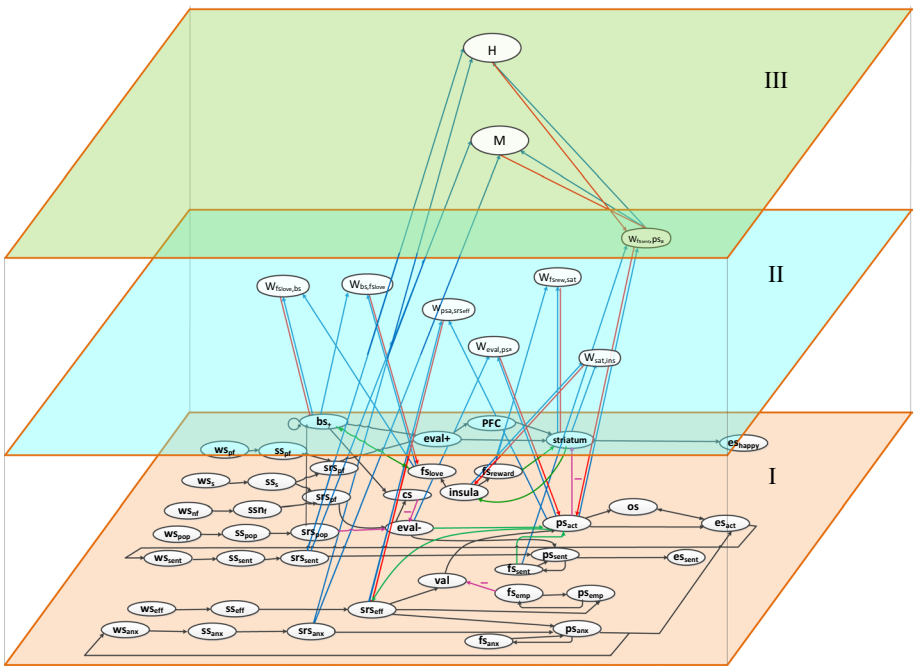

Fig. 1 Reified second-order adaptive network architecture for a narcissist person, consisting three levels: base level I, first-order adaptation level II and second-order adaptation level III

- Purple arrows for a negative connection with weight values between $[-1, 0]$.
- Green arrows show the adaptive connections which lead to an adaptive behavior and will be explained further in "Level II and III: the adaptation levels" section.

The model has three inputs from surroundings: ws_{pf}, ws_{nf} and ws_s. State ws_{pf} shows the positive, while ws_{nf} represents the negative feedback from another peer. State ws_s represents the stimulus, for example, the usage of social media. Three output states: es_{happy}, es_{act}, and es_{sent} represent the reaction of a narcissist. State es_{happy} is an outcome when the person receives positive feedback ($ws_{pf} = 1$, $ws_{nf} = 0$) and es_{act} and es_{sent} are the outcomes for a critic received ($ws_{pf} = 0$, $ws_{nf} = 1$).

When a narcissist shares an attractive post (e.g. his/her selfie with an attractive caption) over social media, he often receives different types of feedback from others. A result of feedback like 'you are awesome' makes him/her feel happy and loved. Based upon the narcissus mythology, here his/her self-belief (bs+) evaluates such feedback as positive (eval+). Therefore, the mental states related to self-enhancement (PFC; Insula) are activated, along with the reward-seeking states: striatum, feelings of self-love (fs_{love}) and reward (fs_{rew}). The feelings of self-love increase the esteem/self-belief state (bs_+) over time, which escalates his or her reward-seeking behavior, making him/her a narcissistic soul.

A narcissist person usually disagrees to a critic due to high ego/self-belief. So, his/her negative feelings arise when $ws_{nf} = 1$, which may result in a non-empathetic/negative response. To explain it further, a remark like 'you are ugly', will be evaluated (eval−) as negative, and can provoke a response like 'go off you loser'. Here, ego/self-belief (bs+)

Table 1 Categorical explanation of states of base network (level I)

Categories		References
Stimulus states		"*the representation of the world external to the body can come into the brain only via the body itself*" (Damasio 2012)
ws_i	World state. i = stimulus s; positive/negative feedback (pf/nf)	
ss_i	Sensory state. i = stimulus; pf/nf	
srs_i	Representation state j = pf/nf	
Attribution/evaluation states		"*Narcissism involves states for self-enhancement and mentalizing*" (Olsson et al. 2014)
eval+	Positive evaluation of feedback	
eval-	Negative evaluation of feedback	
Happiness related states		"*fMRI studies show activations at or near dopaminergic midbrain nuclei and the VS that correlate with both reward expectation and reward prediction errors…*"(Daniel and Pollmann 2014)
bs_+	Self-belief state	
striatum	Ventral Striatum: brain part	
PFC	Prefrontal cortex: brain part	
fs_{reward}	Feeling state of reward (Amygdala)	
fs_{love}	Feeling state self-love (Amygdala)	
es_{happy}	Execution state of happiness	
insula	Anterior Insula: brain part	
Sentiment related action states		"*mind is informed of the actions taken.. the feeling associated with the information signifies that the actions were engendered by our self*" (Damasio 2012)
os	Ownership state	
ps_{act}	Preparation state of action	
es_{act}	Execution state of action	
Body loops: sentiment (sent) and anxiety (anx)		"*The as-if body loop hypothesis entails that the brain structures in charge of triggering a particular emotion be able to connect to the structures in which the body state corresponding to the emotion would be mapped.*" (Damasio 2012)
ws_i	World state for i = sent/anx	
ss_i	Sensor state i = sent/anx	
ps_i	Preparation state for i = sent/anx	
fs_i	Feeling state for i = sent/anx	
es_{sent}	Execution state of sentiment	
Predicted effect of action		"*They need to know that this person will listen to their fears, take them seriously and do something*" (Elliott 2002)
ws_{eff}	World state of effect	
ss_{eff}	Sensor state of effect	
srs_{eff}	Representation state of effect	
Control states		"*the survival intention of the eukaryotic cell and the survival intention implicit in human consciousness are one and the same*". (Damasio 2012)
cs	Control state	
val	Valuation state	
Popularity		"*popularity moderated … depressive symptoms.*" (Nesi and Prinstein 2015)
ws_{pop}	World state of effect	
ss_{pop}	Sensor state of effect	
srs_{pop}	Representation state of effect	

initially tries to suppress this evaluation through control state (cs). However, evaluataion (eval−) is too strong to be suppressed, resulting, (a) stimulation of negative sentiments and (b) a non-empathic reaction to the peer.

Here, we address two categories of negative sentiments/feelings by the sentiment body loop (ws_{sent}; ss_{sent}; srs_{sent}; fs_{sent}; ps_{sent}; es_{sent}): negative and extreme negative (Ntshangase 2018). The negative feelings are the low-intensity feelings like: fear, sadness or rejection. While the extreme/very negative feelings, are the ones with a high intensity such as of anger, humiliation, rage or frustration. Action (ps_{act}; es_{act}), is an aggregate result of negative feelings (fs_{sent}), evaluation (eval−) and valuation (val) states. This may result in a

response like "back off" or deleting and block that peer. It is to be noted, that the valuation state (val) in principle doesn't get activated if the person has empathy (fs_{emp}; ps_{emp}), which is not the case here (as he/she is narcissist (Fan et al. 2019). After activation of ps_{act}, the thought process related to ownership state (os) and predicted effect (ws_{eff}; ss_{eff}; srs_{eff}) is also activated, which induces anxiety (ws_{anx}; ss_{anx}; srs_{anx}; fs_{anx} and ps_{anx}). The body loop of anxiety differs from the body loop of sentiments (Raghunathan and Pham 1999; Weger and Sandi 2018), as it can elevate such reactions (es_{act}) along with experience/learning from the actions (ps_{act}).

Popularity (ws_{pop}; ss_{pop}; srs_{pop}) serves as a moderator to these negative feelings. Thus, popularity lowers the negative evaluation (eval−), negative sentiments and feelings of anxiety(Nesi and Prinstein 2015), so the negative outcomes appear less than before (discussed in "Level II and III: the adaptation levels" section).

Level II and III: the adaptation levels

The reified network architecture used for our network model has two adaptation levels represented by first- (Level II) and second-order (Level III) adaptation (see Fig. 1). The first-order adaptation level (Level II) relates to the ability to learn/adapt certain behavior(s) by experience over time (for example: with age/popularity) known as *neuroplasticity* or *hebbian plasticity/hebbian learning*. In this case, connections in the base network appear not to be fixed in terms of their weights and may change over time (shown by green arrows at Level I). In our model, this change due to hebbian learning principle is modeled by seven reification states: '**W**-states' at Level II (also see Table 2). The second-order adaptation level (Level III) addresses the adaptation of **W**-states, which represents *plasticity of neuroplasticity* or *metaplasticity* (Robinson et al. 2016; Schmidt et al. 2013). It is modeled by adaptive persistence factor **μ** and adaptive learning rate **η** by reification states **M** and **H** respectively at Level III. This shows how synaptic transmission can be influenced and controlled by other factors, for example, through hormones or neurotransmitters (Robinson et al. 2016; Treur 2020, Ch. 4).

In Fig. 1, the inter-level interactions are represented by two types of arrows: red (downward) and blue (upward). The red arrows show the specific causal impact from reification states to a certain state, while the blue arrows are used to create and represent

Table 2 Explanation of states in level II and III

States per level		References
Level II (plasticity/omega states)		1–4: *Potentiation in the striatum depends not only on strong pre- and postsynaptic activation … reward prediction … modify behavior* (Daniel and Pollmann 2014) 5–7: *Presynaptic somatodendritic 5-HT1… people with a high level of aggression, there is a greater density … with impulse control* (de Almeida et al. 2015)
1. $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{love},bs}$	For $fs_{love} \rightarrow bs$	
2. $\mathbf{W}_{bs,fs_{love}}$	For $bs \rightarrow fs_{love}$	
3. $\mathbf{W}_{sat,ins}$	For striatum → insula	
4. $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{rew},striatum}$	For $fs_{reward} \rightarrow$ striatum	
5. $\mathbf{W}_{eval-,ps_a}$	For eval- $\rightarrow ps_{act}$	
6. $\mathbf{W}_{ps_{act},srs_{eff}}$	For $ps_{act} \rightarrow srs_{eff}$	
7. $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{sent},ps_a}$	For $fs_{sent} \rightarrow ps_{act}$	
Level III (meta-plasticity)		*Damage to neurons in hippocampal CA3 area and microstructure of synapse indicates that anger… harms plasticity* …. (Sun et al. 2016)
H	Speed factor for $\mathbf{W}_{fsang,psa}$	
M	Persistance factor for $\mathbf{W}_{fsang,psa}$	

the dynamics of the reification states on the higher levels. For illustration, consider when a person receives negative feedback, (s)he reacts (ps_{act}; es_{act}) after having a negative sentiment about the feedback (connection: eval$-\rightarrow ps_{act}$). The way of reacting after such a feeling is learnt from personal experience. This can be modeled by hebbian learning at Level II. To model Hebbian learning, reification state $\mathbf{W}_{eval-,ps_{act}}$ receives an impact from the pre-synaptic and post-synaptic states, i.e. eval$-$ (relating to stress-related cortisol levels) and ps_{act}; this $\mathbf{W}_{eval-,ps_{act}}$ in turn affects the post-synaptic state ps_{act}, making it a form of circular causation. Similarly, when a positive feedback is evaluated (fs_{reward} relating to dopamine release), this affects $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{rew},striatum}$, with respective pre-synaptic (fs_{reward}) and post-synaptic (striatum) states. A similar pattern of interlevel connections can be observed for Level III. Here, metaplasticity states **H** and **M** receive the respective input from the pre-synaptic (srs_{sent}; srs_{anx}) and post-synaptic (ps_{act}) states, represented in Fig. 1 by blue upward arrows. These states are related to meta-adaptation, which controls (red arrows from **M** and **H** to $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{sent},ps_a}$) the learning and the speed of the state $\mathbf{W}_{fs_{sent},ps_{ac}}$ at Level II (Schmidt et al. 2013; Sun et al. 2016).

A network model can be simulated using the reified network engine designed in MATLAB, by providing a declarative specification in the form of role matrices. A role matrix is a compact specification by the concept of the role played by a state (Treur 2020, Ch. 9). For example, base network matrix (**mb**) enlists all the states with incoming connections to any state. Similarly, connection weight matrix (**mcw**) and speed matrix (**ms**) provide the connection weights and speed factor for each state. The combination function weight (**mcfw**) and combination function parameter matrix (**mcfp**) specify combination functions with their weights, and parameters respectively. Role matrices provide a declarative specification of the adaptive network model. The full specification of the adaptive network model in terms of role matrices can be found online (Jabeen 2020).

Simulation experiments

By simulation experiments the dynamics of the designed adaptive network model can be explored through simulating real-world scenarios. In this section, we present different simulations. First, we will see the two reactions of a narcissist i.e. a happy reaction or a reaction expressing annoyance. Second, we will see how a person gains popularity over social media and how it will influence both of his/her reactions. Third, we will see how a person reacts, when (s)he loses popularity. Therefore, this section is divided into two subsections (a) reactions to a feedback and (b) influence of popularity on the reactions.

Reactions to feedback

Here, we present our two scenarios; i.e. with: (a) a positive reaction or, (b) a negative reaction, along with few example tweets of Donald Trump, who is studied as a 'narcissistic', and to have a 'messiah complex' (Nai 2019).

Reacting a positive feedback

Social media like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram is a platform, where self-confidence of a narcissist speaks by itself (Moon et al. 2016; Wang 2017). For example, the following tweet of Trump:

...my two greatest assets ... mental stability and being, like, really smart ... I went from VERY successful businessman, to top TV Star.... (Tweeted: 1:27 PM – Jan 6, 2018).

Figure 2 shows the simulation results; here the horizontal axis shows the time scale and, the vertical axis shows the dynamic state values ([0,1]) over time. As positive feedback is received ($ws_{pf}=1$), the state eval+ (purple) is activated, which in turn activates the state PFC (golden) around time point $t \approx 5$–10. These two activations along with bs+ (brown), activate the self-rewarding behavior through the striatum state (green-dotted). This activates insula (orange) at t ≈ 12, indicating a self-thinking process. The self-thinking process, boosts the feelings of self-love fs_{love} (dark-brown) and self-reward fs_{reward} (pink), at time point $t \approx 10$. As a result, (s)he expresses gratitude, with such an expression.

Reaction a negative feedback

While observing a negative feedback of another person, a narcissist can react negative or extreme negative. *Negative reactions* may include an expression of sadness, fear, disgust, etc. While *extreme negative* reactions express negative feelings with a stronger intensity and can be expressed through anger, hostility, etc. (Ntshangase 2018). For example, let's consider another tweet of Trump, where he doesn't seem to feel pleasure from another peer, i.e.:

what kind of lawyer would tape a client? So sad! is this a first, never heard of it before? Why was the tape so abruptly (cut)....too bad (Tweeted: 2:34 PM – July 25, 2018).

Or, let's take an example like,

... world class loser, Tim O`Brien, who I haven't seen or spoken ... knows NOTHING about me ... wrote a failed hit piece book... (Tweeted: 6:20 AM – Aug 8, 2019) (Folley 2019).

Figures 3 and 4, shows the simulation results. Certain behavior (e.g. videotaping and cutting in between without any notification) is evaluated as negative, thus eval− (

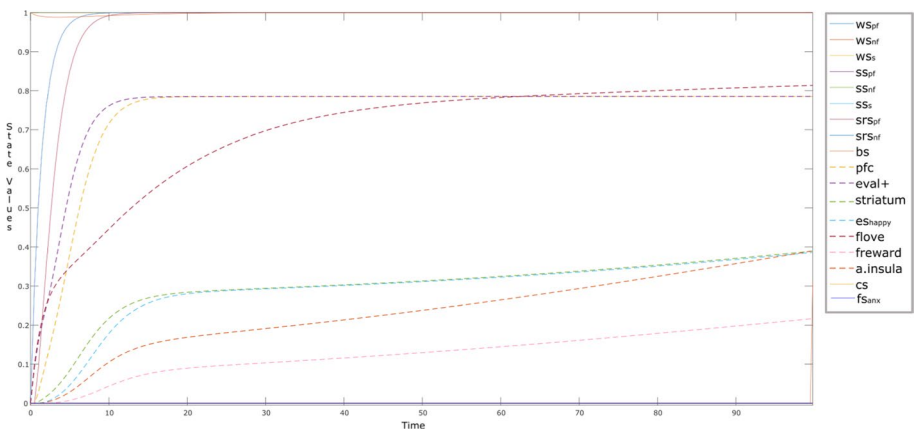

Fig. 2 Simulation of the model when $ws_{pf}=1$ and $ws_{nf}=0$: reaction is cheerful/happy

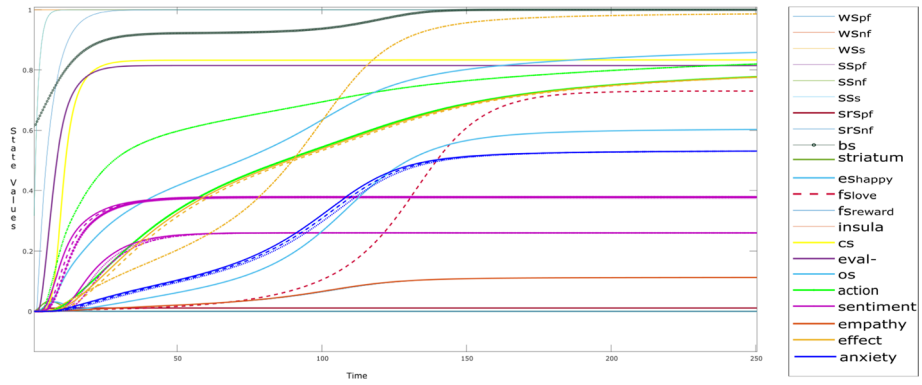

Fig. 3 Simulation of the model when $ws_{pf}=0$ and $ws_{nf}=1$: reaction is negative

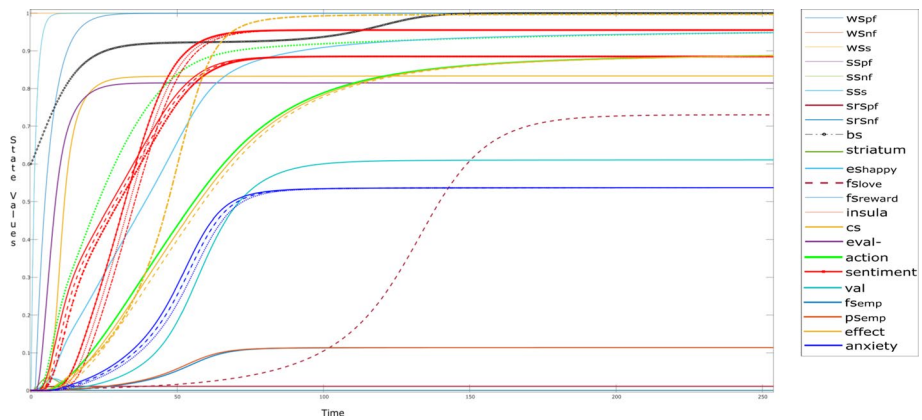

Fig. 4 Simulation of the model when $ws_{pf}=0$ and $ws_{nf}=1$: reaction is extreme negative

) gets activated at time point $t \approx 10$–15. This stimulates the negative sentiments (fs_{sent} , ps_{sent}), along with the re-action states (bright green : ps_{act}; es_{act}) at $t \approx 20$–25. Also, the body loop of sentiments is activated (ws_{sent}; ss_{sent}; srs_{sent}; ps_{sent}; fs_{sent} and es_{sent}: clustered by) around time point $t \approx 20$. This action provokes self-conscious behavior (os) on the basis of some past memories (: ws_{eff}; ss_{eff} and; srs_{eff}) resulting in anxiety (ws_{anx}; ss_{anx}; srs_{anx}; fs_{anx}; and ps_{anx}: clustered by). As the person doesn't have empathy (: ps_{emp}), also anxiety intensifies the action (es_{act}) state. Here, it can be observed, that although self-rewarding states are low (values = 0.03 at time $t=0$–10), the feeling of self-love fs_{love} ( ) continues to grow after $t=100$, intensifying the self-belief/ego (black dotted), indicating his love for himself only grows with the period of time. Figure 4 shows a similar behavior, with higher intensity shown by a body loop of sentiments in red. Here, it is to be noted that the reward related states like striatum ( ) drops immediately at start $t=5$–10.

Influence of popularity on reactions during feedback

In this section, we address two behaviors of a narcissist: i.e. a) how (s)he reacts when (s) he is not popular and b) how does the popularity influence his/her behavior.

When the person is not popular

"Reactions to feedback" section explains the reactions of a narcissist upon a positive or a negative feedback (Figs. 3, 4). Here, we combine them (Fig. 5), to address (a) behavior without popularity and (b) hebbian learning (described further in "Exhibition of learning experience in the model" section). Here, $ws_{pop} = 0$, and the episodes with white background are the episodes whenever a *positive feedback* is observed, for example, the first episode has duration of time points $t = 0$–100. In contrast, the episodes with colored background show the episodes with *negative feedback*, for example, during time points $t = 100$–200. The length of duration and order of occurrences can be interchanged or overlapped, but for the purpose of simplicity, we kept them non-overlapping and with equal intervals. Interestingly, learning from different levels of intensities can be observed through two similar episodes. For example, negative response/action (: ps_{act}; es_{act}) in the earlier episodes is lower ($t = 100$–200) than the later episode ($t = 300$–400). Similarly, anxiety (: ws_{anx}; ss_{anx}; srs_{anx}; fs_{anx}; ps_{anx}) also increases with each episode.

When the person gains popularity

Popularity is not earned overnight, but narcissists who aim to become social maven or influencers often choose tactics related to self-grandiosity and socialization. For example, they use social media to share their selfies and have a high number of likability and followers (Chua and Chang 2016; Folley 2019; Page 2012). Popularity influences the behaviors, and the symptoms related to depression (Nesi and Prinstein 2015), and anxiety are reduced (Trent 1957).

This ongoing process is shown in Fig. 6. For simplicity, only the important curves are presented in the figure. A person starts to earn popularity (—+—) by sharing posts, at time point $t = 450$. This popularity gain lowers the intensity of the negative feelings (fs_{sent}: - - -, es_{sent}:—+—, anxiety:——), which were high before $t < 450$, with no popularity. Here it is to be noted that the popularity of a person is 0 for the minimum and 1 for the maximum.

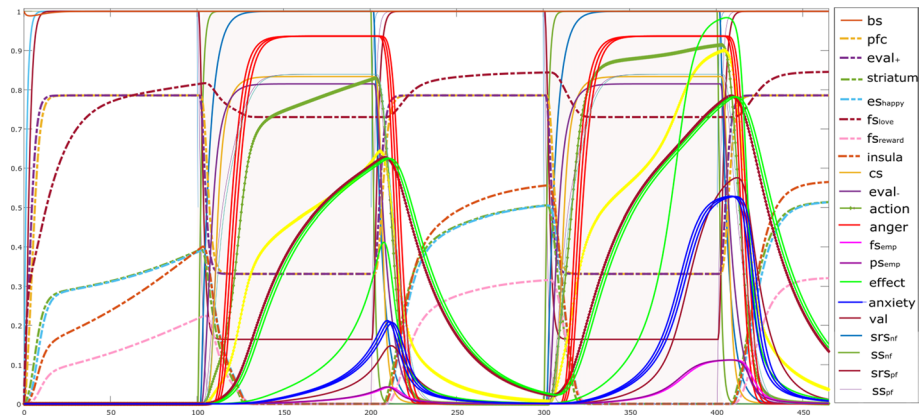

Fig. 5 Simulation of the model with alternative episodes of $ws_{nf} = 1$ or $ws_{pf} = 1$: no popularity

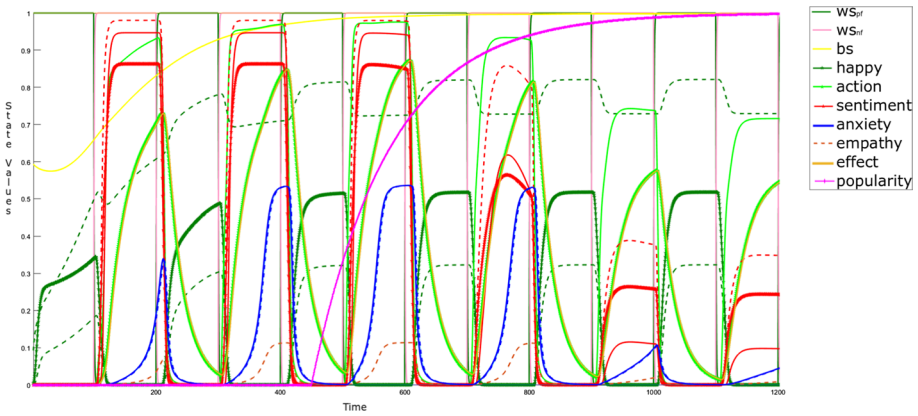

Fig. 6 Simulation of alternative episodes of $ws_{nf}=1$ or $ws_{pf}=1$: with popularity gain

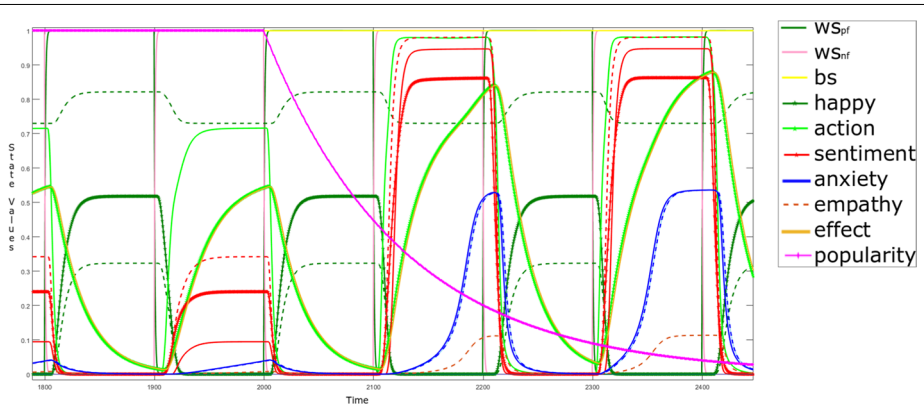

Fig. 7 Simulation of alternative episodes of $ws_{nf}=1$ or $ws_{pf}=1$. With popularity loss

When the person loses popularity

Popularity is not static always, and it is natural that a person can gain/lose popularity over time. The reason can be variation of looks, trends, and so on (Polhemus 2011). As a result, narcissists' vulnerability may lead to negative reactions.

Figure 7 shows, when a person loses/tends to lose popularity, how different feedbacks can influence him/her. First, it can be observed in the duration of $t=1800–1900$, when a positive feedback is received ($ws_{pf}=1$), the person feels rewarded and loved (fs_{love} and fs_{reward}: - - -), so he is happy (es_{happy}: ——). However, in this scenario, his esteem (bs: ——) and fs_{love} are already high, so there is no further learning in the self-rewarding behavior. The reason is that (s)he is aware of his/her self-worth. Second, when a disliking behavior or a critic is observed, (s)he flares up, which activates the negative sentiments (sentiment $=es_{sent}$: ——; action $=es_{act}$: ——) and anxiety (——) for $t>2100$. Here, it is to be noted that predicted effect shows the same behavior due to hebbian learning of ($srs_{eff} \rightarrow ps_{act}$).

Exhibition of learning experience in the model

In this section, we discuss the influence of hebbian learning on the Levels II and III. Previously, we saw the complex learning behavior over time (in episodes). For

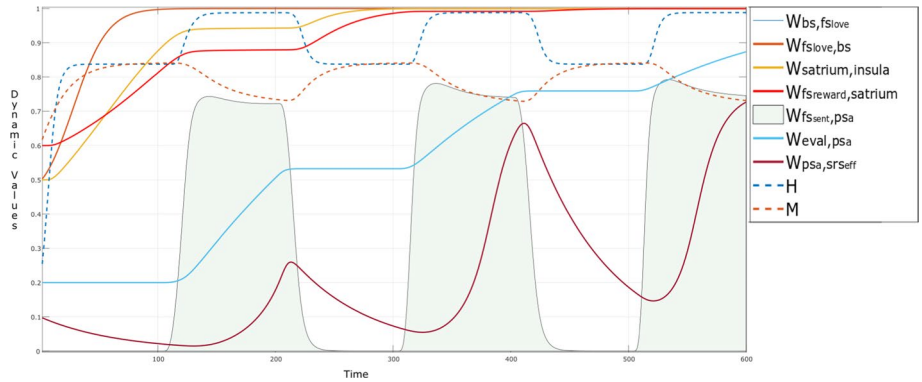

Fig. 8 Effects of plasticity (W states) and metaplasticity for W_{fs_{sent},ps_a} (M and H)

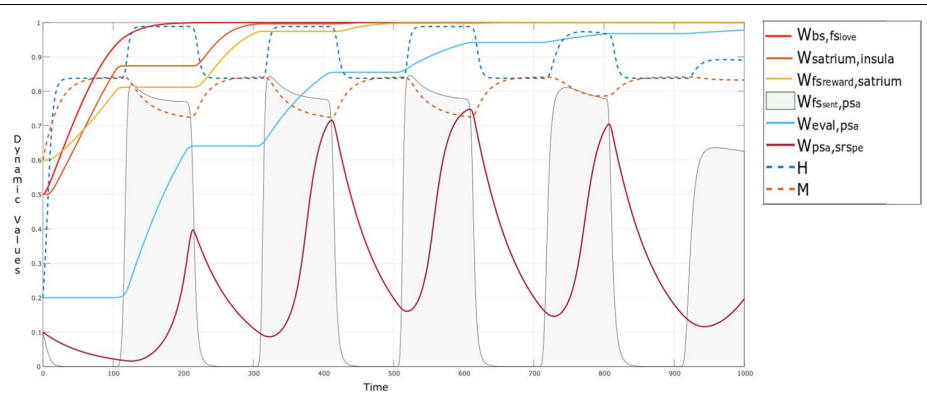

Fig. 9 Effects of plasticity (W states) and metaplasticity (M and H) under influence of popularity

example, in the second episode of positive feedback ($t = 200$–300), the reward-related states (striatum, fs_{reward}, fs_{love}, insula) are elevated more than the first episode ($t = 0$–100) in Fig. 5. Similar behavior is observed when negative feedback is received. Here, we can observe the underlying behavior of hebbian learning (Fig. 8) at other levels: Level II for plasticity (**W**-states) and Level III for metaplasticity (**M** and **H**). For example, consider $\mathbf{W}_{eval-,psa}$ (blue), the initial value of the state is 0.2. During each negative episode the value is increased, so during $t = 300$ to 400 the value is increased almost from 0.5 to 0.76. Similarly, $\mathbf{W}_{psa,srseff}$ is raised compared to the previous episode showing the learning behavior (Sun et al. 2016). However, it can also be observed that due to metaplasticity, the state $\mathbf{W}_{fssent,psa}$ (colored background) was not much raised between two episodes due to **M** and **H** states (dotted) (Sun et al. 2016).

Figure 9 reflects how popularity influence states at Level II and Level III. Here, we can see that the learning in **W**-states related to negative evaluation, action, and sentiments start to reduce after $t > 450$. This is an effect of popularity gain, also we see same behavior for the metaplasticity-related states **M** and **H**. This behavior would be vice versa when a person loses popularity.

Analysis of simulation experiments with reference to real-world data

In this section, we analyze the behavior of our adaptive network model in relation to gathered empirical/real-world data. To accomplish this, we analysed thirty random public Instagram profiles, with presumably some extent of narcissistic traits, in line with literature such as (Chua and Chang 2016; Folley 2019; Page 2012). We compared the behaviors found there to our simulation experiments discussed in the previous section.

Materials and methods

Social media like Twitter or Instagram offer an environment where people tend to share their information, emotions and opinions to get feedback from others. We chose Instagram because: (1) its users have more tendency towards narcissism (Moon et al. 2016), and (2) different types of reactions can be observed in the form of conversations. These profiles were selected using the following criteria:

(1) the participants had at least shared 60 posts and
(2) they tend to share their selfies.

To examine the behavior of the model in correlation with the Instagram data, we used the following hypotheses through few key performance indicators (KPIs) were obtained (see Table 3):

(a) Narcissism/grandiose exhibition

1 Narcissistic people tend to share their selfies more frequently.
2 On appreciation, they feel happy and proud but react negatively otherwise.

Table 3 KPIs to measures for popularity and narcissism along with their relevant literature

KPI	Explanation	Reference
Grandiose exhibition		
selfiepm/otherpicspm	How many selfie/other pictures shared per month	*"Categories emerged … on Instagram. Personal promotion, brand promotion, and sponsored promotion … increase their popularity…* digital reputations" (Alshawaf and Wen 2015)
postfreqpm	Frequency of sharing posts per month	"*narcissists have more Facebook friends and tend to post more provocative material*" (Bernarte et al. 2015)
pconvsspm; nconvspm	How many positive and negative conversations per month	"The relation between narcissism and *disagreeableness increases* when self-esteem is taken into account" (Holtzman et al. 2010)
Popularity		
followerspm	How many followers per month	"Instagram Leaders … have *more followers than they are following*" (Farwaha and Obhi 2019; Utz et al. 2012)
likespm	How many likes per month	We chose *the number of "likes" as the index of popularity* of a post (Zhang et al. 2018)
htagspm	Count the number of posts which had one or more hashtags (boolean)	"… use hashtags to make their *professional identity searchable* … promote their identity as affiliated.. wider professional field" (Farwaha and Obhi 2019, p. 2012)

(b) Popularity

1 They gain popularity through particular behaviors, for example, self-presentation, or by using hashtags (Utz et al. 2012).
2 They have a high number of followers or friends (Utz et al. 2012)
3 More popularity can influence their behaviors:

   (a) They engage more to seek admiration. (Paramboukis et al. 2016)
   (b) Their depression/anxiety is reduced (Nesi and Prinstein 2015; Trent 1957).

Figure 10 briefly describes the algorithm used to formulate the results for the addressed KPIs. First, we extracted basic data of a profile from Instagram (steps 1–4). Second, we extracted data for each post in relation to its duration (5–7). Later, for every month, we extracted the posting frequency, the average number of likes, the selfie count, the number of posts which used hash tags, and the positive and negative conversations (8–13).

For selfie recognition, we used the KNN classifier with face encodings (Adam 2016) with the minimum threshold of 0.4. Moreover, for sentiment analysis, we used the combination of two classifiers: the IBM Watson tone analyzer and the Vader Sentiment Analyzer. The Watson tone analyzer was able to identify three types of sentiments: Cheerful, Negative, and Strong Negative. *Cheerful emotions* were related to happy/neutral reactions: joy, positive analytical. By positive analytical, we mean a neutral/positive discussion with an audience (maybe by telling a product name). This was computed by looking into the sentiment of the previous comment, and based upon its score, it was considered as a non-negative reply (as telling about herself and her products will make her feel happy about herself). The *negative emotions* were related to sadness or fear, while *extreme negative* meant anger, which is a negative feeling with stronger intensity (Ntshangase 2018). It can be an outcome of humiliation, annoyance or hostility. If the IBM Tone Analyzer does not detect any tone (for example, "Nice" without "."), theVader

Algorithm used to formulate the KPIs

Input: The name of the Instagram user

Output: KPIs values: followerspm; likespm; postfreqpm; selfiepm; otherpicspm ; hashtagspm; pconvsspm; nconvspm

```
1   insta = instantiate instaloader
2   login(insta,USER,PASSWORD)
3   profile = getprofileofuser (insta,user)
4   followerspm = extractfollowers (profile)
5   since = date(dd,mm,yyyy)
6   until = date(dd,mm,yyyy)
7   posts = get_sorted_posts_within_duration (profile,since, until)
8   for each month:
9       postfreqpm = countpostspm(posts)
10      likespm = averagenoof_likes_pm(posts)
11      selfiepm = find_selfies_pm(posts)
        otherpicspm = find_nonselfies_pm(posts)
12      hashtagspm = getpostswithhashtagspm(posts)
13    nconvspm = extract_negative_conversations(posts)
```

Fig. 10 Algorithm showing steps to extract data for KPIs

Table 4 Three conversation examples with their sentiments

Type	Feedback/reply	Sentiment
F1	It looks hella face tuned	Neutral
R1	you look hella negative	Negative
F2	Well I think you look gorge! So happy for your family during this time	Joy
R2	thank you!	Joy
F3	You need to blend you highlight a bit more	Neutral
R3	No I want to blind you so you piss off my page	Anger

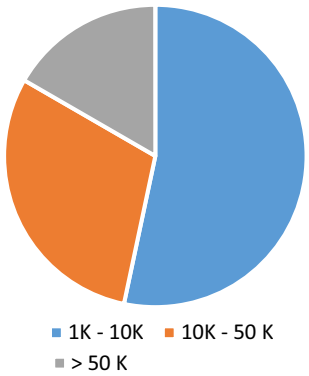

Fig. 11 Distribution of the participants of our study with respect to the number of followers

sentiment analyzer was used. It can detect three type of sentiments: positive, negative, and neutral (Hutto and Gilbert 2014), which were also used in our prior work (Jabeen et al. 2019). Table 4 shows some example conversations in terms of feedback 'F' and reply 'R', as analyzed by the Watson tone analyzer and the Vader sentiment analyzer.

Results and discussion

In this section, we will discuss our results from relevant to deviant cases in relation to the simulation experiments presented in "Simulation experiments" section. Each section will discuss the KPIs of popularity with reference to narcissism (Table 3), i.e.: (a) number of followers per month, (b) the average number of likes obtained per month, and (c) hashtag usage. The obtained results for all 30 considered profiles can be found in "Appendix B".

Followers

Different studies indicate 'followers to following ratio' (ff) and the number of followers (f) as a measure of popularity of a profile (Farwaha and Obhi 2019; Garcia et al. 2017). In our analysis, we used the current number of followers/and related trends to study behaviors in relation with popularity and narcissism. Therefore, we distributed the 30 extracted profiles in three groups with respect to the number of followers (Fig. 11). The first group consists of 5 of the 30 profiles (more than 50 K), the second group had 9 profiles (between 10 and 50 K), and our third group has 16 profiles (less than 10 K).

The collected data was analyzed using a measurement of time in months. It was observed that all users tend to post on a regular basis. As every profile tends to share different numbers of posts per month, so we took the average of posts per month, like posts/selfies per month by a user. It was observed that most participants tend to share more posts with selfies each month over a period of time (See "Appendix B" for the selfies ratio of each user). This can be an indication of self-love. For example: in Fig. 12, P3:CB has a high ratio of followers to following (followers: 262,000, following: 609), indicating this person is popular. Figure 12a shows a normalized distribution of the number of posts, average likes, hashtags, and followers per month. We can see an increase in posting frequency along with the average number of likes and number of followers. We can also see the trendlines indicating a linear increase in the average numbers of likes and the number of followers. This is also addressed by a user like:

> *I don't think that looks nice but the media say it was pretty, so people started following that and they got a lot of likes for it... (Chua and Chang 2016).*

In Fig. 12b, we can see some correlation between sharing selfies and average likes and thus the number of followers in a month. High variations were also observed between the average number of selfies and the number of followers (see "Appendix B"). Therefore in "The average number of likes" section we will discuss our analysis with respect to the average likes as well.

During the conversation analysis, it was observed that 11 out of the 30 profiles actively responded to their followers. Figure 13 shows the distribution of participants with respect to their total response rate ($=\frac{\sum conv}{totalposts}$), with values like:

$$Responserate(p) = \begin{cases} high; & value \geq 0.75, \\ medium; & value > 0.5 \; and \; < 0.75 \\ low \end{cases}$$

On the one hand, it was observed that 5:14 users in the category of < 10 K followers, and 3:9 users in 10–50 K actively responded to their followers. While on the other hand in the

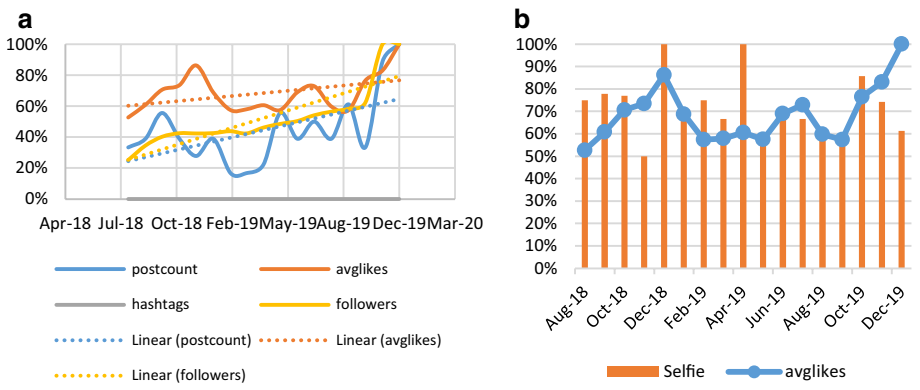

Fig. 12 **a** Posting frequency in relation with the popularity related KPIs. **b** Selfie sharing with average number of likes over time

Fig. 13 Average responses per post with respect to the followers' distribution

more than 50 K category, all users (5:5) actively participated in conversations. In other words, 13 participants participated into the conversations more proactively (Bernarte et al. 2015).

An overall observation of conversations and sentiment analysis, people tend to respond more in a positive or neutral manner (Joy, positive analytical and Positive) than a negative manner (Anger, Fear, Sadness, Negative). Another interesting pattern was that most users with a low number of followers had more cheerful comments than negative ones. This truly doesn't relate to our simulations (i.e., negative behaviors have no/higher intensity with low/less popularity). However, we can assume that they didn't get critics most of the time, another possible reason can be to attract more followers or friends, or they were naïve on Instagram. With reference of the number of followers, there was no significant variation observed for negative or positive conversations (See "Appendix B").

The average number of likes

In this section, we analyze the behavior of Instagram users with respect to an increase/decrease in the average number of likes. As per hypothesis, a user seeks the opportunity of self-promotion to get compliments or likes (Holtzman et al. 2010; Paramboukis et al. 2016; Zhang et al. 2018). As addressed by an Instagram user:

> *It makes me happy, … I think, to me is you are cool, you're pretty, so you get a lot of likes. (Chua and Chang 2016).*

In relation to grandiose self-exhibition, we looked into the selfie ratio, mostly it was observed, that participants have a higher tendency of getting likes if they share selfies (Fig. 12b; "Appendix B"). To investigate it further, we took each profile and computed the pearson correlation coefficient between the number of selfies and the average number of likes shared per month by:

$$corr_p = \frac{\sum \left(selfie - \overline{selfie}\right)\left(likes - \overline{likes}\right)}{\sqrt{\sum \left(selfie - \overline{selfie}\right)^2 \sum \left(likes - \overline{likes}\right)^2}}$$

where $corr_p$ = correlation value of a profile, $\overline{selfie}$ and $\overline{likes}$ are the sample means of selfies and average number of likes in the duration of data collected.

It was observed that most of the profiles had a positive correlation between the two variables, however there were 6 out of 30 profiles, for which this correlation was low (> -0.1). Figure 14 shows the distribution of users with respect to their relation/correlation values where:

$$relation_{(selfie,likes)} = \begin{cases} high; & corr_p > 0.5, \\ medium; & corr_p > 0.3 \; and \; < 0.5 \\ low; & corr_p < 0.29 \end{cases}$$

Here, 12 users (40%) showed a weak linear relationship, while 18 people showed moderate to strong positive relationships (moderate: 7; high: 11). This explains the behavior that people tend to share their selfies more often, as they may find this as an opportunity for approval and likability from their followers (Chua and Chang 2016).

While looking into the reactions of the users, we studied the extracted sentiments in the context of the average number of likes. Mostly, it was observed that in all profiles the users were mostly happy when they received more likes than otherwise. To make an explicit conclusion, we normalized each sentiment also in conversations. Therefore, a sentiment score per month was assigned through:

$$sent(t) = \frac{sent\_score(t)}{\sum sentiments(t)}$$

where *sent_score(t)* = the individual score of a sentiment in a month t and, $\sum sentiments(t)$ = total sentiments found within a month t. *sent(t)* = a value of a sentiment in range of [0,1].

Here, it is to be noted that possible sentiments are the *cheerful* (Joy/Positive, Positive Analytical, Neutral), the *negative* (Fear, Sadness, Negative) and the *extreme negative* (Anger) sentiments. For example, if in a month t, the sentiments of a user are: Joy = 2, Sadness = 1, and Negative = 1, then *sent_score* for each in the month t are: Joy = 0.5,

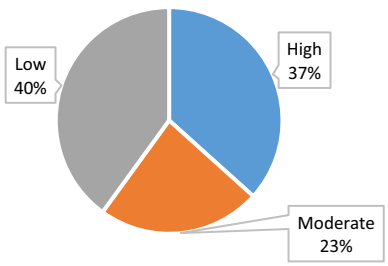

Fig. 14 Distribution of participants with respect to correlation values between selfies and average likes

Sadness = 0.25 and Negative = 0.25. This implies that during conversations in month *t*, the user was 50% filled with 'Joy' and 25% for the rest of two. Similarly, we normalized the average number of likes for each month by dividing average likes obtained in a month by maximum likes received by a user in the duration of extracted data, resulting in a value between [0,1].

We manually analyzed all profiles for the similarities and the differences, mostly positive conversations were observed showing personal satisfaction (Nesi and Prinstein 2015). However, in negative responses/reactions few interesting patterns were observed. For example in Fig. 15 when average number of likes of P2:LV are decreased (June 18, December 18, February 19 and so on) we can observe negative conversations (sadness: green, negative = maroon or anger: silver). Also, positive conversations can be seen when (s)he gets more likes. A similar pattern can be observed for P24:LJ, P30: AB and so on ("Appendix B").

This can be considered as the behavior of a person being similar to the behavior we modeled in "Methods and methodologies and the obtained adaptive network model" section, shown in Fig. 1, (which models the reactions over a feedback as a cheerful response or a negative reply). Also, when a person gets popular (more average likes), then negative expressions are reduced. Here, it is to be noted that in February 18, there are few sudden drops in the average number of likes and conversations. This is possible, because this user did not share any post in this duration (Fig. 16).

For all profiles, we observed few variations in the behaviors in comparison to the designed model. However, here we use notion of 'most of the times' to generalize their behaviors. What we mean to say here is that although in August 18 P2:LV received more likes, we can still see some negative sentiments, but most of the time the person showed behavior similar to our model.

Table 5 enlists the profiles which reflected the indicated behavior most of the time, as well as the profiles which responded positively, and the rest which act more like outliers and show more variations from our simulation experiments. These fluctuating behaviors can be due to multiple reasons like: difference in personalities, their current popularity and time. For example, P10 or P20 seems to be less popular (less number of likes), during the whole time for which data was collected, resulting in fluctuating behavior.

We also tried to look through the patterns of hashtags, however, we were unable to see any patterns in relation to the behaviors, except most of the profiles used hashtags to

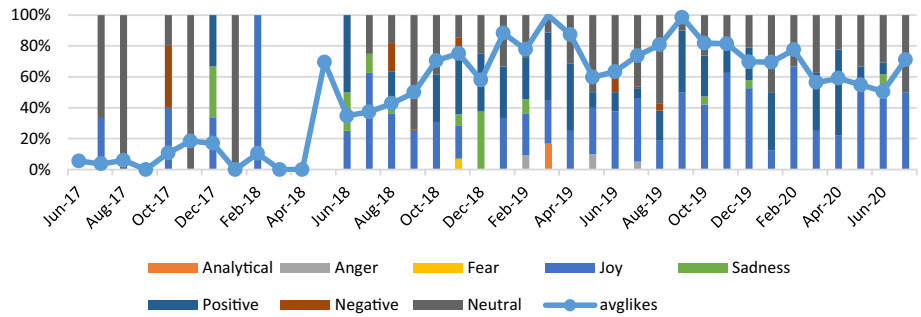

Fig. 15 Relation between the sentiments and the average number of likes (normalized) over time

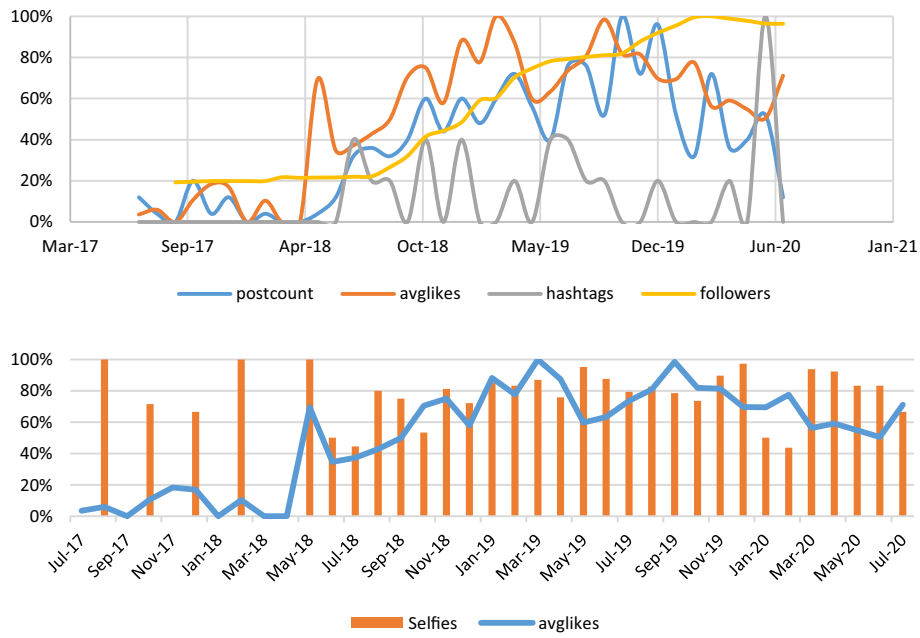

Fig. 16 Sharing behaviors of P2 with average number of likes over time

Table 5 Results showing which profiles are mostly aligned with the simulation results

Aligned profiles			Only positive profiles			Non-aligned profiles			Total
P2	P3	P4	P8	P17	P18	P1	P6	P7	
P5	P9	P12	P25	P28		P10	P11	P13	
P15	P16	P24				P14	P19	P20	
P27	P29	P30				P21	P22	P23	
		P26							
12 = 40%			5 = 16.66%			13 = 43.33%			30 = 100%

gain visibility. In conclusion from Table 5, we saw that almost 60% of the profiles showed behaviors similar to our model, i.e. a narcissist is overwhelmed with joy when they get positive feedback and otherwise. Also, increase in popularity lead to happy reactions with a decrease in negative conversations. In "Limitations and future work" section, limitations and future work of the study are discussed.

Limitations and future work

The Watson analyzer is pretty accurate, also the Vader sentiment analysis gives a high accuracy in sentiment detection and classification (Hutto and Gilbert 2014). However, during the conduction of the study, it was observed that classifiers identified a few responses as negative, although they were positive ('fierce as fuck 🔥') or ('fuck!! love you'). Although we adapted sentiment analysis as per needs of Instagram contents, though, it still can be validated further. Moreover, during selfie detection and analysis, many pictures that were taken from the back or were incomplete (without face), were categorized as others. Improvements in the two can help to improve the results and

study further. We haven't used textual analysis approaches to study narcissism in the text, as they require natural language processing with longer texts, whereas in Instagram bibliography is known as the most long text, but it is not intended for this type of analysis. Also, we encountered messages which didn't have any text but just emojis like '❤❤' or '💋💋'.

Furthermore, in this study, almost all of the profiles in the dataset were presumed as narcissists. However, the authors didn't have their NPI scores or knew them personally. To make our work more concrete, it would be nice to investigate it more, for example, why do they have fluctuating behaviors and their relationship to the personality traits of a narcissist. So, as future work, we aim to set an experiment, which involves studying a person in relevance to his/her NPI score, sensitivity, and overall mood of a person to see this in relation to narcissism. This will help us to study behaviors with the understanding of narcissism in relation to personality traits in more detail. We also aim to study surrounding people like friends and family, who interact to a person with such behaviors.

Conclusion

In this paper, we presented a complex adaptive mental network model, which addresses the adaptive cognitive processes of a narcissist. Moreover, it explains his or her behavior and reactions, when (s)he receives positive or negative feedback. As his/her personality is vulnerable, an ego-threatening message is responded in a negative way, especially when popularity is low. In addition to our prior work, we saw how popularity can influence such a person's behavior. It was studied in how reward-seeking behavior blends with an increase in popularity, and the negative reactions are reduced. In order to compare our adaptive network model with empirical data, we extracted and analyzed data from 30 public profiles. Both from our simulation experiments and from the empirical analysis we observed that popularity acts as a moderator for a person with narcissistic traits. Thus our model indeed displays the real-world behavior of a narcissist, concerning the expression of emotion under the influence of increase/decrease in popularity.

In future work, we aim to incorporate different psychological measures like NPI score, sensitivity, or mood, to monitor narcissists. Moreover, we aim to design an automated system that can support a narcissist by counseling if he is highly vulnerable.

List of symbols and Abbreviations

AI: Artificial intelligence; GABA: γ-Aminobutyric acid; ACC: Anterior cingulate cortex; μ; M: Persistence; Persistence Reification; η; H: Learning rate; Learning Rate reification; ω; W: Connection weight; Connection weight Reification; c_γ: Combination function for a state Y; $P_{i,j}$: Combination function parameter reification; ws: World state; ss: Sensory state; srs: Sensory representation state; fs: Feeling state; eval+: Positive evaluation; eval−: Negative evaluation; bs_+: Belief state; striatum: Ventral striatum; PFC: Prefrontal cortex; es_{happy}: Execution state of happiness; insula: Anterior insula; os: Ownership state; ps: Preparation state; es: Execution state; act: Action; pf: Positive feedback; nf: Negative feedback; anx: Anxiety; sent: Sentiment; eff: Effect/predicted effect; pop: Popularity; cs: Control state; val: Valuation state; $\mathbf{W_{fs_{love},bs}}$: Omega representation state for connection $fs_{love} \rightarrow bs+$; $\mathbf{W_{bs,fs_{love}}}$: Omega representation state for connection $bs \rightarrow fs_{love}$; $W_{sat,ins}$: Omega representation state for connection striatum → insula; $\mathbf{W_{fs_{rew},striatum}}$: Omega representation state for connection $fs_{reward} \rightarrow$ striatum; $\mathbf{W_{eval-,ps_a}}$: Omega representation state for connection eval− → ps_{act}; $\mathbf{W_{ps_{act},srs_{eff}}}$: Omega representation state for connection $ps_{act} \rightarrow srs_{eff}$; $\mathbf{W_{fs_{sent},ps_{act}}}$: Omega representation state for connection $fs_{sent} \rightarrow ps_{act}$; postfreqpm: Posting frequency behavior per month; likespm: Average number of likes per month; selfiepm: Number of selfies shared per month; otherpicspm: Number of other pictures per month; hashtagspm: Number of hashtags used per month; pconvspm: Positive conversations per month; nconvspm: Negative conversations per month; USER: User name to login; PASSWORD: User's password to login; KPI: Key Performance Indicators; w.r.t: With respect to.

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This is an extended version of a paper (Jabeen et al. 2019) that appeared in Complex Networks'19. The new content of this article is a much larger empirical study and an additional focus on the influence of popularity on narcissism, presented along with the analysis of simulation experiments.

Authors' contributions
Fakhra Jabeen being a Ph.D. student presented the idea and completed the experiments and the project, while Dr. Charlotte Gerritsen and Prof. Dr. Jan Treur being supervisors, designed the study and helped towards completion of the project and producing the final manuscript of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials
The data and materials used for analysis and development of results is available in https://github.com/MsFakhra/Mavens.

Competing interests
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Appendix

A. Numerical relevance of the model

The mathematical representation of a reified network architecture in terms of its network characteristics can be explained as follows (Treur 2020):

1 At every time point t, the activation level of state Y at time t is represented by $Y(t)$, with the values between [0,1].
2 The single impact of state X on state Y at time t is represented by $\mathbf{impact}_{X,Y}(t) = \omega_{X,Y} X(t)$; where $\omega_{X,Y}$ is the weight of connection $X \rightarrow Y$. All single impacts for a given state Y are aggregated by a combination function $\mathbf{c}_Y(..)$; see below.
3 Specific states are used to model specific types of network adaptation, where network characteristics such as connection weights and combination functions are dynamic. For example, $\mathbf{W}_{X,Y}$ represents an adaptive connection weight $\boldsymbol{\omega}_{X,Y}(t)$ for the connection $X \rightarrow Y$, while $\mathbf{H}_Y$ represents an adaptive speed factor $\boldsymbol{\eta}_Y(t)$ of state Y. Similarly, $\mathbf{C}_{i,Y}$ and $\mathbf{P}_{i,j,Y}$ represent adaptive combination functions $\mathbf{c}_Y(.., t)$ over time and their parameters, respectively. Combination functions are built as a weighted average from a number of basic combination functions $\mathrm{bcf}_i(..)$ from a library, which take parameters $P_{i,j,Y}$ and values V_i as arguments. For adaptive network models in which network characteristics are dynamic as well, the universal combination function $\mathbf{c^*}_Y(..)$ used for any state Y is defined as:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{c}^*{}_Y(S, C_1, \ldots, C_m, P_{1,1}, P_{2,1}, \ldots, P_{1,m}, P_{2,m}, V_1, \ldots, V_k, W_1, \ldots, W_k, W) \\ = W + S[C_1 \mathrm{bcf}_1(P_{1,1}, P_{2,1}, W_1 V_1, \ldots, W_k V_k) \\ + \cdots + C_m \mathrm{bcf}_m(P_{1,m}, P_{2,m}, W_1 V_1, \ldots, W_k V_k)]/(C_1 + \cdots + C_m) - W]\end{aligned}$$

where at time t:

- variable S is used for the speed factor reification $\mathbf{H}_Y(t)$
- variable C_i for the combination function weight reification $\mathbf{C}_{i,Y}(t)$
- variable $P_{i,j}$ for the combination function parameter reification $\mathbf{P}_{i,j,Y}(t)$
- variable V_i for the state value $X_i(t)$ of base state X_i
- variable W_i for the connection weight reification $\mathbf{W}_{Xi,Y}(t)$
- variable W for the state value $Y(t)$ of base state Y.

4 Based on the above universal combination function, the effect on any state Y after time Δt is computed by the following *universal difference equation* as:

$$\mathbf{Y(t+\Delta t)} = Y(t) + [\mathbf{c}^*{}_Y(\mathbf{H}_Y(t), \mathbf{C}_{1,Y}(t), \ldots, \mathbf{C}_{m,Y}(t), \mathbf{P}_{1,1}(t), \mathbf{P}_{2,1}(t), \ldots, \mathbf{P}_{1,m}(t), \mathbf{P}_{2,m}(t), X_1(t), \ldots, X_k(t), \mathbf{W}_{X_1,Y}(t), \ldots, \mathbf{W}_{X_k,Y}(t),\ Y(t)) - Y(t)]\Delta t$$

which also can be written as a *universal differential equation*:

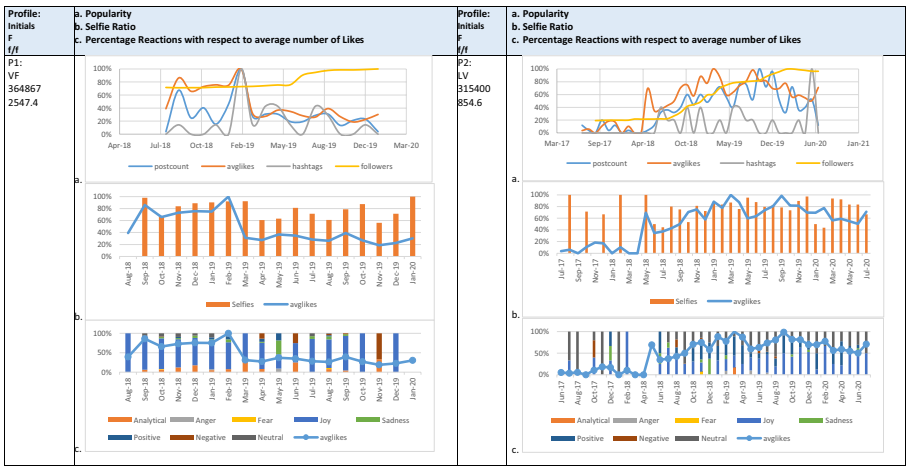
$$\mathbf{d}Y(t)/\mathbf{d}t = \mathbf{c}^*{}_Y(\mathbf{H}_Y(t),\ \mathbf{C}_{1,Y}(t),\ \ldots, \mathbf{C}_{m,Y}(t), \mathbf{P}_{1,1}(t), \mathbf{P}_{2,1}(t), \ldots, \mathbf{P}_{1,m}(t),\ \mathbf{P}_{2,m}(t), X_1(t), \ldots, X_k(t),\ \mathbf{W}_{X_1,Y}(t), \ldots, \mathbf{W}_{X_k,Y}(t),\ Y(t))\ -\ Y(t)$$

B. Dataset

The large table below enlists the data collected from the 30 Instagram profiles. The first and the third column have the information like the profile ID, their name initials, their number of followers (f) and current followers to following ratio (f/f). Here it is to be noted that to keep the anonymity of results, each profile is assigned ID in a pattern like PXX. The second and fourth column consist of the increase/decrease in frequency.

a of posts, followers, average number of likes and hash tags
b ratio between selfies and other pictures
c sentiments related variations

These data were extracted and studied over a period of time for each profile s indicated. Note that this compares to simulation results for the model designed in "Methods and methodologies and the obtained adaptive network model" section aiming at a single person and his/her related behavior.

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P4:
NM
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a.
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followers
Selfie
Selfies
Analytical
Anger
Fear
Joy
Sadness
Positive
Negative
Neutral


P5:
AA
164719
194.5
P6
LN
40000
33.03
a.
b.
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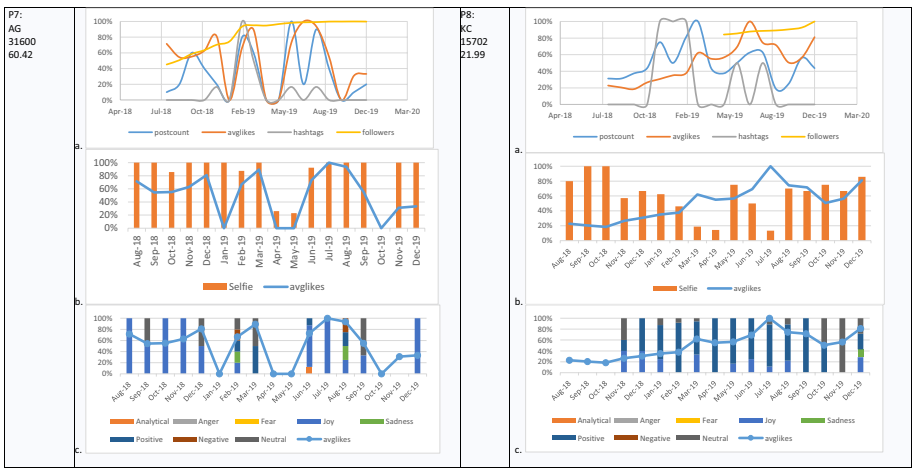
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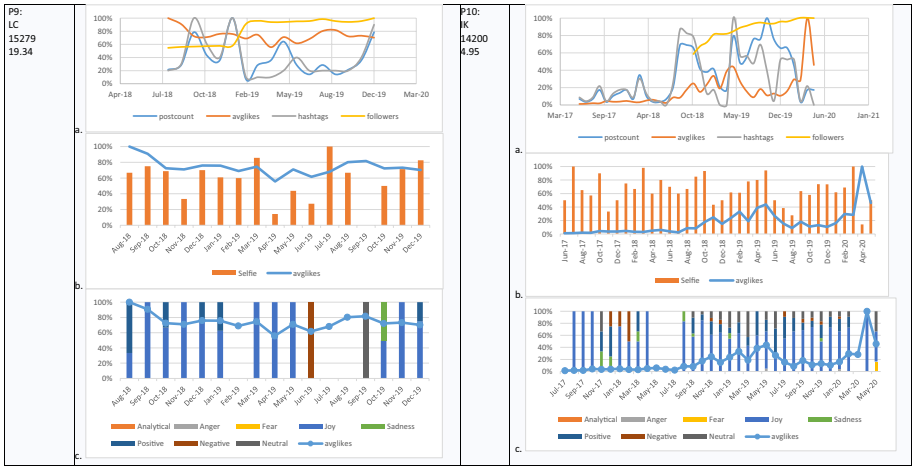
P9:
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Anger
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P11:
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P12:
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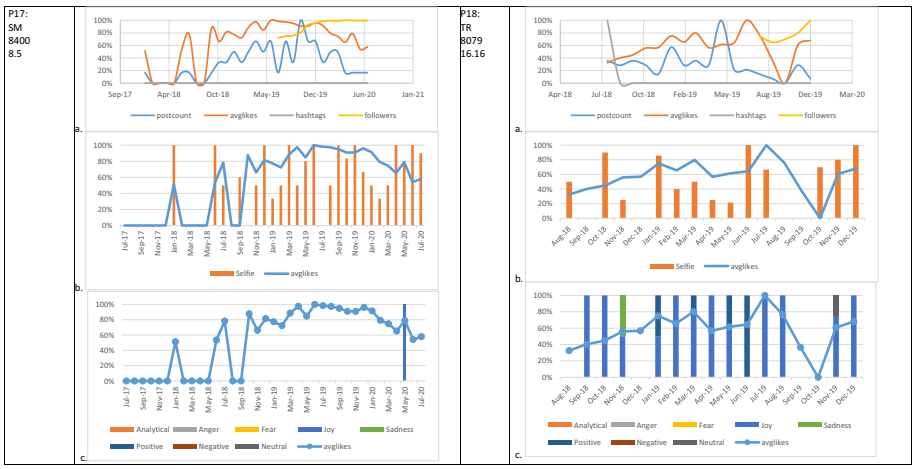
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Anger
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Sadness
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P19:
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P20:
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P21:
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P22:
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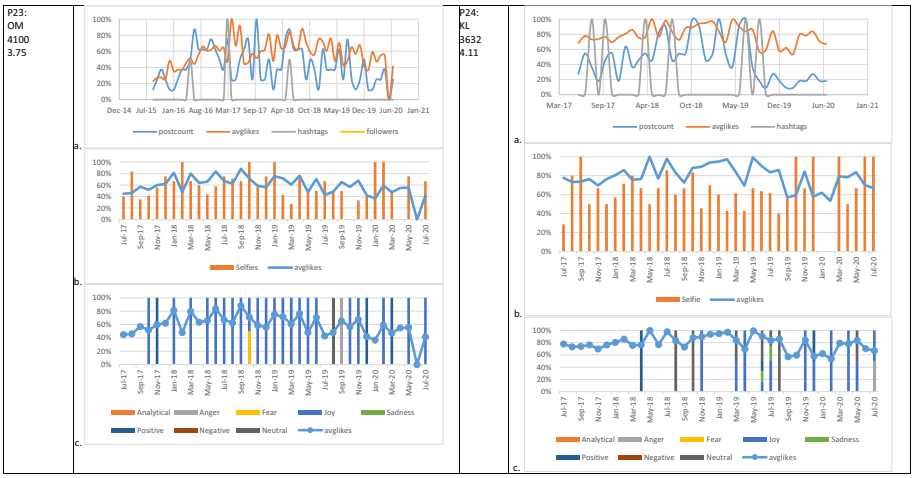
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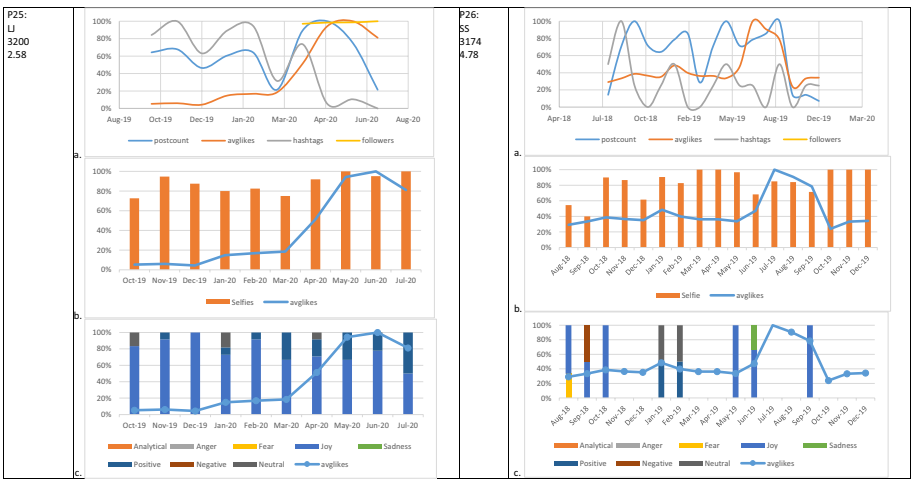
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P26:
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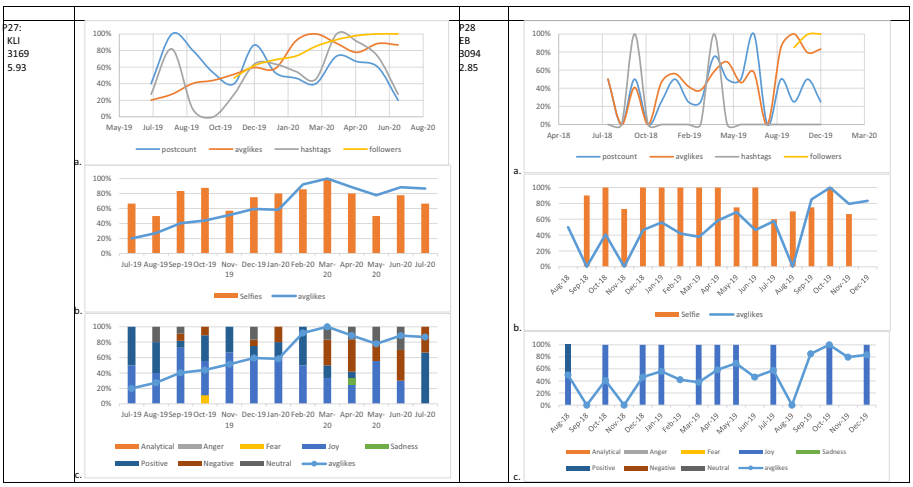

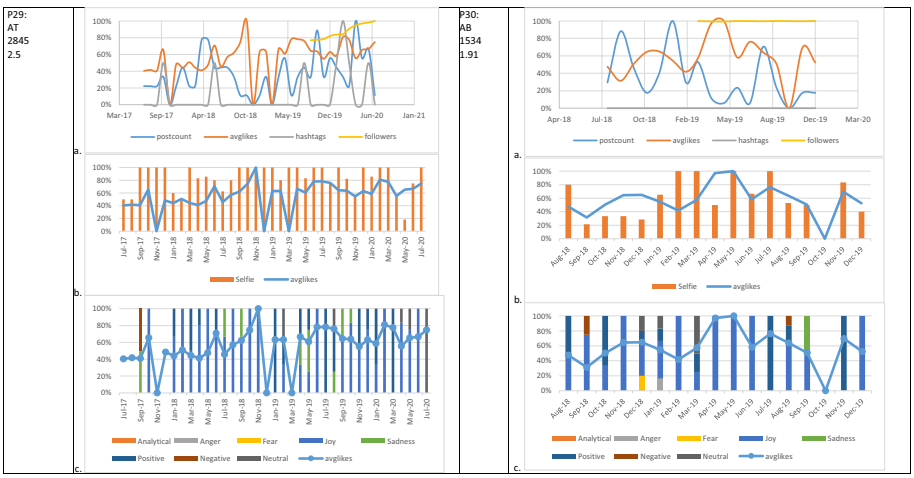

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Through the Looking Glass: The Queer Narcissism of Selfies

Greg Goldberg

Abstract

A number of scholars have recently argued that the selfie needs to be understood outside of the discourse of narcissism. Rather than leaving this discourse behind, this article focuses on the "hype" of selfies as narcissistic in order to identify and ultimately trouble the political unconscious of this diagnosis, and to ask, what is the problem of narcissism such that it can serve as a means of devaluing, and what kind of politics might we find in the behaviors, proclivities, or attributes identified as narcissistic? The article argues that the problem of narcissism is less an exaggerated focus on the self than it is a failure of responsibility for oneself, and/or an insufficient concern for the well-being of others to whom the narcissist ought to be responsible. Drawing from the antisocial thesis in queer theory, the article argues that this normative investment in responsible subjectivity is motivated, rather ironically, by a desire to annihilate difference. As a "solution" to this desire, the article offers queer theorist Leo Bersani's notion of "impersonal narcissism," which it understands in relation to the queerness of the myth from which narcissism takes its name. In short, the article does not aim to evaluate empirically attributions of selfie narcissism—whether to confirm or falsify—but rather to problematize the diagnosis of narcissism as rooted in a normative project that works to produce responsible subjects, and to suggest that this project is compromised by a queer indifference to difference, as critics fear.

Keywords

selfie, narcissism, queer, image, relationality

> When the sun goes down and the moon appears
> You go looking for love in the hall of mirrors
>
> *Stephin Merritt (The 6ths)*

The proliferation of social media over the last decade has caused considerable debate. On one side of this debate, scholars and critics argue that social media are precisely antisocial, engendering a host of behaviors and attitudes that work to the detriment of communal, collective, and responsible forms of relationality. The problem is less that social media disconnect users from each other, though some have made this claim (e.g. Turkle, 2012), but rather that they connect users in the wrong ways, for the wrong reasons, and with potentially disastrous social, political, psychological, and neurological consequences (Goldberg, 2016). On the other side of this debate, scholars and critics maintain that social media are in fact pro-social, democratizing cultural production, invigorating the public sphere, bolstering civic participation, and engendering collective governance (e.g. Benkler, 2006).

In a recent iteration of this debate, some critics have suggested that the taking and sharing of digital self-portraits—selfies—has produced a toxic culture of narcissism, while others have argued that this practice is empowering, particularly for populations historically denied access to public self-representation.[1] But as with the larger debate about social media, what appears to be a substantial disagreement is in fact only an empirical quibble, masking an underlying normative consensus. In short, if critics do not agree about whether the practice of taking and sharing selfies is narcissistic, they do agree that this would be a bad thing were it true; narcissism seems to be a self-evident wrong.[2]

This would appear to be an opportune moment to interrogate this consensus and its constitutive politics. However, many media scholars now seem eager to move beyond talk of narcissism. For example, Theresa M. Senft and Nancy K. Baym (2015) have argued that the practice of taking and sharing selfies is "caught in a stubborn and morally loaded hype cycle" (p. 1588). What is needed, they suggest, is "nuanced

Wesleyan University, USA

Corresponding Author:
Greg Goldberg, Department of Sociology, Wesleyan University, 238 Church Street, Middletown, CT 06459-0012, USA.
Email: ggoldberg@wesleyan.edu

attention" to "break through this hype." The nuanced attention to which Senft and Baym refer is the domain of empirical social science, with the promise that when one observes the actual practices of real people who take selfies, a far more complex picture of these practices and their social and cultural dimensions and implications emerges.

Senft and Baym (2015) write that they interact with journalists and students on a daily basis "who are frustrated by [Senft and Baym's] resistance to explaining selfie culture through language that turns on notions such as self-esteem and narcissism" (p. 1590). The desire to move beyond pathologizing discourses is understandable, insofar as these may distract from or block other ways making sense of the selfie. Furthermore, as Anne Burns (2015) has argued, the ascription of narcissism to the selfie is "a means to an end, as it establishes selfies as not just problematic but as requiring regulation. Therefore, selfies are not simply devalued—they are devalued in order to cause something to happen as a result," that is, the regulation of subjects identified as narcissists (p. 1727). Burns concludes, "Criticism of the selfie ultimately serves to legitimize the patriarchal ordering of society by integrating individuals into accepting being evaluated, governed, and situated discursively." While Burns does not say so explicitly, her argument easily suggests a refusal of the discourse of narcissism insofar as it is the vehicle of this governance.

For scholars, the problem with characterizing selfies as narcissistic is thus not simply that this characterization is empirically inaccurate, but that it is a false *accusation*. Again, while the desire to move beyond talk of narcissism is understandable, this movement leaves unexamined and uncontested the normative investments that underlie narcissism as an accusation or diagnosis. In an effort to examine and ultimately contest these investments, in this article, I focus on the "hype" of selfies as narcissistic or empowering, beginning with a brief examination of a few exemplary texts—primarily popular—of criticism of the selfie as narcissistic and of defenses of the selfie as empowering. This review provides a foundation for the analysis that follows, in which I aim to identify the political unconscious of narcissism as a diagnosis, and to ask, what is the problem of narcissism such that it can serve as a means of devaluing, and what kind of politics might we find in the behaviors, proclivities, or attributes identified as narcissistic?[3]

At first glance, the problem of narcissism would appear to be an exaggerated focus on the self. However, this focus is only rendered problematic insofar as it is understood as either compromising self-sovereignty, or, more commonly, as distracting from particular kinds of valued relations with others—what we might simply call "the social"—built around care, concern, responsibility, accountability, and sacrifice, and constructed as the antithesis of narcissism. In other words, the problem of narcissism is less an exaggerated focus on the self than it is a failure of responsibility for oneself, and/or an insufficient concern for the well-being of others to whom the narcissist ought to be responsible. As Burns suggests, this valuing works to discipline those behaviors, qualities, or ways of being that are identified as narcissistic, and thereby to encourage the formation of responsible subjects, the discursive foil to narcissists.

Drawing from the antisocial thesis in queer theory, particularly work by Leo Bersani, I will argue that this normative investment in responsible subjectivity is motivated, rather ironically, by a desire to annihilate difference—to "eat the other," to use bell hooks' (1992) phrasing. As a "solution" to this desire, I offer Bersani's notion of "impersonal narcissism" (alongside sympathetic theorizations by Tim Dean and Jonathan Flatley), which I understand in relation to the queerness of the myth from which narcissism takes its name. Again, my overall aim is not to evaluate empirically attributions of selfie narcissism—whether to confirm or falsify—but rather to problematize the diagnosis of narcissism as rooted in a normative project that works to produce responsible subjects, and to suggest that this project is compromised by a queer indifference to difference, as critics fear.

The Selfie in Popular Discourse

For cultural critics, there is no more potent expression of the narcissism engendered by social media than the selfie—a self-portrait typically taken with the front-facing camera of a smartphone, and shared through social media, effectively automating the social contact once required to procure efficiently a photograph of oneself. Some selfies have been made famous—Ellen DeGeneres' selfie at the 2014 Oscars, the first few selfies taken with Pope Francis, selfies of astronauts in space—and others infamous—Obama's selfie with David Cameron and Denmark's Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt at a memorial service for Nelson Mandela, selfies of celebrities in various states of undress, selfies collected on the Facebook page "With My Besties in Auschwitz" or the "Selfies at Funerals" tumblr. For the most part, however, selfies are unremarkable, ordinary, and quotidian.

Criticism of the selfie has been generally straightforward, proposing that selfies are both indicative of a toxic culture of narcissism, and work to reproduce that culture. For example, Andrew Keen (2015) writes,

> These "Advertisements for Myself" are actually embarrassing commercials, both for ourselves and for our species. They represent the logical conclusion of a "Personal Revolution" over the last twenty-five years in which everything has degenerated into the immediate, the intimate, and, above all, the self-obsessed. *Hello this is us*, Instagram is saying about our species. And I, for one, don't like what I'm seeing.

In an interview promoting the book in which this passage appears, Keen elaborates,

> The ultimate cultural manifestation of the Internet is the "selfie." The "selfie" as the quintessential, almost inevitable conclusion, where all we are left with is ourselves. We're not able to see

> anything in the world except ourselves. What the Internet has done has placed us at the center of the universe. It's a delusion. (Maddux, 2015)

Here, Keen suggests that "our species" has become too individualistic and ought to be less self-involved and self-centered, taking in the world outside ourselves, and de-centering our position in the world.

In a somewhat more sophisticated and psychologically attuned line of argument, some critics have proposed that the problem is not so much self-centeredness, but more precisely a kind of compensatory self-obsession that requires the approval of others and is thereby pathologically beholden to them. For example, in an interview promoting his book *The Road to Character*, David Brooks states,

> [Social media] creates this broadcasting culture where you create a fake version or avatar of yourself. And you post a highlight reel of yourself on Instagram and make yourself look happier and more glamorous than you really are. And there's a danger that people will mistake the avatar for their real selves or develop an intense desire to get "likes" as you try to market your own personality. (Merritt, 2015)

While this might seem like a straightforward argument in favor of rugged individualism—that is, for developing a strong self in the absence of social influence—Brooks is getting at something else here: rather than establishing relations with others based on one's likeability, people ought to be establishing relations around what he calls "redemptive assistance." In a section of the book titled "The Age of the Selfie," Brooks (2015) writes, "If you humbly believe that you are not individually strong enough to defeat your own weaknesses, then you know you must be dependent on redemptive assistance from outside." In both these passages, the "you" to which Brooks refers is in need of others—in the first case for approval, and in the second for redemption—though the first kind of relation is pathologized while the second is valued, insofar as it yields a proper social attachment.

Similarly, Jonathan Franzen (2011) has argued that to "like" something or someone (in the Facebook sense of the word) is a poor substitute for loving. He writes, "If you . . . imagine a person defined by a desperation to be liked, what do you see? You see a person without integrity, without a center." In contrast, "love," Franzen writes, "is about bottomless empathy, born out of the heart's revelation that another person is every bit as real as you are," even or perhaps especially when that person is profoundly unlikable. To submit to love is to risk rejection and therefore to be vulnerable, whereas being disliked (or not "liked") stings less because it is only about one's "surface," not one's "whole self." The pain of rejection is the price one must pay to "[be] alive in a resistant world," rather being "anesthetized" through self-sufficiency.

In these passages, it becomes clear that understanding social media practices through the lens of narcissism is less about policing individualism per se—these critics are rather invested in a notion of a self with integrity, with a "center" (to use Franzen's term), even as this center is formed through social relations—than it is about policing forms of relationality. The forms of relationality valued here presuppose a kind of original sin in the subject. In order to be redeemed, one must give one's whole self over to another person. This baring of the soul becomes a condition for intimacy, which in turn can be read as a discursive metonym for the social; these arguments are less about identifying psychological roadblocks to intimacy than they are indictments of a culture of narcissism, which have at their end the restoration of the social, in part through the ascription of weaknesses that produce a desire for redemption in the first instance. One might even say that the identification of weakness as such—recognizing an interior that is ugly and more real than a likeable exterior—matters more than any eventual redemption. To put it another way, what may be ultimately so unsettling to critics about a culture of surfaces and likeability is less the refusal to be redeemed than the refusal to recognize those socially prescribed weaknesses (or the interiors in which they are situated) that would provide a warrant for redemption.

This call for redemption may seem less objectionable when the author implicates himself, declaring his own desire to be redeemed, rather than the classic imperial formulation in which the dominant legitimizes his power with the assertion that it is necessary for the redemption of the dominated. Nonetheless, this call works to enact the same valued form of relationality. Whether the reader is called on to redeem or to be redeemed matters little; one can assume that the reader is meant to occupy both positions variably, as recent converts are soon called on to proselytize.

In contrast to popular criticism of the selfie, apologias for the selfie are typically grounded in the assertion that selfies are about connecting with others in ways that reproduce, rather than diverge from, valued forms of relationality, though often with the caveat that selfies might sometimes express narcissistic tendencies. As James Franco (2013) writes in an op-ed for *The New York Times*, "Of course, the self-portrait is an easy target for charges of self-involvement, but, in a visual culture, the selfie quickly and easily shows, not tells, how you're feeling, where you are, what you're doing." He continues,

> Selfies are tools of communication more than marks of vanity (but yes, they can be a little vain). We all have different reasons for posting them, but, in the end, selfies are avatars: Mini-Me's that we send out to give others a sense of who we are.

Here, a modicum of narcissism is permissible on the condition that it accompanies pro-social behavior.

In response to Michael Goodwin's (2013) assertion that president Obama's selfie with Cameron and Thorning Schmidt "symbolizes the greater global calamity of Western decline," art critic Jerry Saltz (2014) quips, "C'mon: the moral sky isn't falling." Saltz cites Franco as well as curator Marina Galperina: "It's less about narcissism—narcissism is so lonely!—and it's more about being your own digital avatar." (Unlike Brooks, both Saltz and Franco use "avatar" in a way that implies fidelity between the real and its representation; perhaps this is why they are less concerned about the prospect of false representation.) The remainder of Saltz's essay is largely dedicated to elevating the selfie as an art form—"a folk art"—with the caveat that "most selfies are silly, typical, boring." Perhaps most tellingly, Saltz ends the essay with a plea for a name change:

> We will likely make great selfies—but not until we get rid of the stupid-sounding, juvenile, treacly name. It rankles and grates every time one reads, hears, or even thinks it. We can't have a Rembrandt of selfies with a word like *selfie*.

The word "selfie" bothers Saltz as a marker of immaturity—a discursive neighbor to narcissism insofar as children have not yet been fully socialized—as if the form (and its practitioners) need to mature.

In another *New York Times* article, Jenna Wortham (2013), like Franco, concedes that "at their most egregious [selfies] raise all sorts of questions about vanity, narcissism and our obsession with beauty and body image," before articulating a series of defenses. First, she suggests that what might appear to be vanity is actually other-oriented behavior. On this point, she quotes Clive Thomson:

> People are wrestling with how they appear to the rest of the world. Taking a photograph is a way of trying to understand how people see you, who you are and what you look like, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Not only is there nothing wrong with that, according to Thompson, it is part and parcel of a "primal human urge to stand outside of ourselves and look at ourselves."

Like Franco, Wortham argues that selfies facilitate connection, restoring a "human element" lacking from text-based communication, in part because the brain is "hard-wired to respond to faces" (as she quotes Pamela Rutledge, director of the Media Psychology Research Center). In support of this argument, Wortham quotes Frédéric della Faille, founder of photo-sharing app Frontback, who says that the app is more about capturing moments and creating stories than it is about being "beautiful." Wortham elaborates,

> In other words, it is about showing your friends and family your elation when you're having a good day or opening a dialogue or line of communication using an image the same way you might simply text "hi" or "what's up?"

On this point, she also quotes Dom Hoffman, a founder of video-sharing app Vine who was initially opposed to the idea of allowing users to create videos using their front-facing cameras, in part because he worried that these videos would be vain and, ultimately, uninteresting, but then changed his mind: "'It wasn't really about vanity at all', he said. 'It's not really about how you look. It's about you doing something else, or you in other places. It's a more personal way to share an experience'."

Wortham also suggests that selfies might work to encourage face-to-face interaction. She writes,

> In fact, I've even noticed that the occasional selfie appears to nudge some friends who I haven't seen in a while to get in touch via e-mail or text to suggest that we meet for a drink to catch up, as if seeing my face on a screen reminds them it's been awhile since they've seen it in real life.

In conclusion, she writes,

> Rather than dismissing the trend as a side effect of digital culture or a sad form of exhibitionism, maybe we're better off seeing selfies for what they are at their best—a kind of visual diary, a way to mark our short existence and hold it up to others as proof that we were here.

A final and generally more academic approach considers the selfie—particularly in the hands of disempowered groups—as a form of radical political agency, of speaking for oneself. For example, writing about young women's selfies, Derek Conrad Murray (2015) argues that "popular forms of female self-imaging may offer the opportunity for political engagement, radical forms of community building—and most importantly, a forum to produce counter-images that resist erasure and misrepresentation" (p. 2). Murray offers this argument to contest the notion that selfies are narcissistic. Similarly, Katrin Tiidenberg and Edgar Gómez Cruz (2015) argue that critics who dismiss selfies as frivolous or self-absorbed have failed to appreciate the ways that they allow female selfie-takers to reclaim their own bodies, contributing to a "body-positive visual discourse." They conclude,

> For our participants, then, despite the occasional negative experience with feeling objectified, self-shooting has been in no way a trivial, vain pursuit, but a self-therapeutic and awareness-raising practice. It has allowed for a new kind of body to emerge—a powerful, sexual, female body. (Tiidenberg and Cruz, 2015, p. 19)

David Nemer and Guo Freeman (2015) reach a similar conclusion, arguing that for the favela-dwellers of Vitória, Brazil, "selfies are not a shallow way to show narcissism, fashion, and self-promotion and seek attention; selfies, rather, empower the users to exercise free speech, practice self-reflection, express spiritual purity, improve literacy

skills, and form strong interpersonal connections" (p. 1833). This kind of argument has also appeared in popular venues. For example, Glynnis MacNicol (2015) writes in *ELLE* that for women to take their own pictures is "to give voice where before there was often none." In reference to the paucity of information about women's lives "in history," MacNicol concludes, "So selfie away this summer, ladies, and do it with pride. Leave as many voices behind as you can." A similar article by Rachel Simmons (2013) in *Slate* is titled "Selfies are Good for Girls."

While apologias for the selfie as empowering appear to be at odds with criticism of the selfie as narcissistic, they remain rooted in a valuing of the same (or similar) forms of relationality. Again, if critics disagree about whether selfies express/engender narcissism, they agree that this would be a bad thing were it true. While my primary focus here is popular discourse, this is also true of much academic work on the selfie, which has tended to foreclose debate about normative investments by bundling these into empirical questions, as if to say: we can all agree on what is good, and can therefore move on to consider the extent to which the good exists or, if not, what transformations might engender the good. In an effort to produce space for this foreclosed debate, I turn now to consider in greater depth the trouble of narcissism, beginning with the myth from which the diagnosis takes its name, and with which it shares a political genealogy.

Pink Narcissus

In Roman poet Ovid's (2000) telling of the myth of Echo and Narcissus—often treated as the definitive version—Narcissus is 16 years old, "both boy and youth," and the object of affection for "many youths" (sometimes translated as "boys") "and many young girls," despite his disinterest in either. Indeed, "[T]here was such intense pride in that delicate form," Ovid writes, "that none of the youths or young girls affected him." Most notably in the myth, Narcissus rebuffs the advances of the nymph Echo: "He runs from her, and running cries 'Away with these encircling hands! May I die before what's mine is yours'." In turn, one of Narcissus' rejected suitors begs the gods for vengeance. Rhamnusia (or Nemesis), the goddess of retribution, grants this request, smiting Narcissus with an insatiable desire for his own form, as if he were his own suitor. Drawn to a still pool of water, Narcissus spies his own reflection and is so enamored with it that he is unable to leave: "How often he gave his lips in vain to the deceptive pool, how often, trying to embrace the neck he could see, he plunged his arms into the water, but could not catch himself within them!" Enraptured by his own reflection, so much so that he does not eat or sleep, Narcissus eventually wastes away and dies, and is metamorphosed into a flower.

Despite the myth's melancholy conclusion, Louise Vinge (1967) has argued that Ovid's telling of the Narcissus myth is not didactic, offering no moral lessons on the dangers of vanity or self-love; these lessons are the product of later, Christian iterations of the myth, ultimately providing discursive fodder for the clinical pathologization of narcissism in the early 20th century. But before this Christian transformation, the myth is fundamentally queer, as Steven Bruhm argues. Referring back to Ovid, Bruhm (2001) proposes that Narcissus be understood first and foremost as "the figure who *rejects*," rather than as a figure trapped in desire for the self/same, which—it should be noted—Ovid narrates as revenge for the rejection of Narcissus' suitors (p. 15). Bruhm (2001) writes,

> As Narcissus rejects Echo and the boys who want him, he rejects not only the dictate to desire another (a socially prescribed and approved other) but also the drive to stabilize a range of binarisms upon which gender in Western culture is founded. (p. 15)

This rejection is significant not only in relation to gender but, insofar as gender *is* alterity in the Freudian tradition, to the project of subjection (Warner, 1990). In other words, in his refusal to desire another being, Narcissus evades his own (gendered) subjection.

Curiously, Narcissus desires no other, yet narcissism as psychopathology is historically linked to the pathologization of homosexuality (a desire for a same other); according to Freud, homosexuality could be considered a "*special case* of narcissism" (Bruhm, 2001, p. 7). This association is possible insofar as homosexuality entails a failure to develop desire for the (gendered) other, a failure manifested through a regressive desire for the same. As Tim Dean (2001) notes, it is precisely Freud's account of homosexuality as a form of self-love in the place of love for another which makes it ripe for pathologization. Bruhm similarly argues that it is no accident that the advent of narcissism as psychopathology coincides with the clinical designation of homosexuality as a distinct form of "inversion" in the early 20th century. Bruhm (2001) locates this intersection in the work of Havelock Ellis, "the first person to refer to a 'Narcissus-like tendency' of autoerotics to become absorbed by their own image" (p. 4). "Narcissus-like tendency" would be translated as *Narcismus*. The term was then adopted by Freud, most famously in his 1914 essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction," though as Dean notes, the concept makes an important appearance in Freud's 1910 essay on Leonardo DaVinci. Bruhm (2001) points to a particularly poignant passage in "On Narcissism":

> We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance, such as perverts and homosexuals, that in their later choice of love objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love object, and are exhibiting a type of object choice which must be termed "narcissistic." In this observation we have the strongest of the reasons which have led us to adopt the hypothesis of narcissism. (p. 4)

To reiterate, the genealogical proximity of narcissism to homosexuality is no coincidence; their intersection is a pathologized absence of desire for the other, expressed through a surplus of desire for the self/same. Importantly, however, desire for the self/same is symptomatic; the real trouble lies not in the surplus of this desire, which can be normalized (as clearly demonstrated by the movement for same-sex marriage), but rather in an originary absence of desire for the other.

This absence of desire threatens the social in two significant ways. First, it amounts to a refusal to enter into social bonds, that is, to participate in the social, insofar as these bonds require an interest in the other, whether as an imminent threat to be excluded or annihilated (as the Right would have it) or as an exploited/oppressed outsider to be assimilated/incorporated (as the Left would have it)—an other that in both cases provides a discursive backdrop against which valued relational bonds can be articulated. The refusal to enter these bonds raises the specter of pleasure, hedonism, and self-gratification. As Stanley Aronowitz (1980) observes,

> The paranoid assertion that narcissism has become rampant in Western, particularly American, culture is not entirely false. We wish to hold onto our youth, if by this we mean the moment when play, the sexual, the "bad'" was the underworld that we inhabited under the fearful and watchful eyes of adults. (p. 70)

Second, an absence of desire for the other threatens the reproduction of the social insofar as this requires biological reproduction and child-rearing. As Aronowitz (1980) observes, "The aim to 'normal' sexuality is a love object with whom procreation and the inscribing of children into the social order is the final object" (p. 67).

Even as Narcissus is condemned to locate his desire in an object (himself, or the image thereof), narcissism thus remains a queer affliction indeed. One might even say that, discursively speaking, narcissism lies at the heart of queerness, insofar as the normal or normative (i.e. the not-queer) requires an interest in and desire for different others. A narcissist/homosexual without desire for the other is essentially a failed subject.

This might help to explain why women are so frequently the target of accusations of selfie narcissism. As Burns (2015) writes, "Selfishness is a particularly barbed insult when directed at women, as it references the subject's transgression of the norm of feminine self-sacrifice" (p. 1729). If the disciplining of women takes place, in part, through norms of self-sacrifice, accusations of narcissism do not simply serve as a mandate for social regulation, as Burns suggests, they speak to the threat engendered by this repudiation of the social, particularly by those subjects most often called upon to do the work of reproducing the social through birthing children and caring for the family.

Rather than hastily dismissing attributions of narcissism as empirically unfounded and/or as an attempt to stigmatize selfie-takers, we might instead consider these discursive constructions and associations as inadvertently disclosing the political potential of narcissism—in a particular form—as a "hygienic" mode of relationality, to borrow phrasing from Leo Bersani (1987). Writing about and within psychoanalytic discourse, Bersani suggests that desire for the similar circumvents the violence that characterizes relations structured by difference. Bersani's argument hinges upon the notion that "difference is the one thing we cannot bear," insofar as difference always threatens to shatter the boundaries of the ego (Bersani and Phillips, 2008, p. viii). The psychic processes—identification, projection, and so on—through which the ego attempts to eliminate difference speaks to this threat. There is thus no innocent interest in difference, including "supposedly disinterested pursuits of knowledge" (ethnography comes to mind, particularly insofar as it has been held up as a corrective to false attributions of narcissism); the desire to know the other is invariably motivated by a desire to eliminate the threat of its difference (Bersani, 2015, p. 2). This is also true of liberal humanism, which masks its violence in the rhetoric of love. As Bersani notes, Freud and Lacan thoroughly demystify the notion that "in love, the human subject is exceptionally open to otherness" (Bersani and Phillips, 2008, p. 74).

Importantly, however, it is not simply that the world is composed of "differential otherness," but rather that the world is seen this way in "a misrecognition of the subject's perception of a differential otherness within the subject's self" (Bersani, 2015, p. 45). In other words, it is not the outside world that is the problem, but the subject itself, hence Bersani's embrace of male bottoming as self-shattering in his canonical essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" As he writes, "An intersubjectivity grounded in the subject-object dualism is perhaps inevitably condemned . . . to a paranoid relationality" (Bersani, 2015, p. 3).

This begs the question, what alternative modes of relationality might escape this dualism and the violence it engenders? In place of relations of difference, Bersani suggests that relations of similitude outside the strictures of identity could undermine or circumvent the motive for violence. More specifically, he offers what he terms "impersonal narcissism" as an alternative to "the limiting and harmful assumption that intimacy necessarily includes, indeed may depend on, a knowledge of the other's personal psychology" (Bersani, 2015, p. 5). He explains that the modifier "impersonal" is meant to clarify that one's interest in another person need not target their unique personality or personal difference, but rather their "universal singularity." In this way, Bersani opens up the seemingly paradoxical notion of a similar (rather than different) other, distinguishing "impersonal narcissism" from the conflict with otherness that characterizes narcissism in psychoanalytic discourse.

Impersonal narcissism is not individualistic, as narcissism is sometimes understood, insofar as individualism is "grounded in the notion of a fundamental opposition, or difference of being, between the subject and the world" (Bersani,

2015, p. 34). Rather, it moves beyond "the very opposition between sameness and difference," subject and world/object, so that this opposition might become "irrelevant as a structuring category of being" (Bersani and Phillips, 2008, p. 86). In short, Bersani suggests that desire for the similar and, perhaps, indifference toward the different ultimately work to undo the same/different binary so fundamental to social relations and their endemic violence.

Similarly, Tim Dean (2001) has stressed the importance of maintaining an analytical distinction between otherness and difference, a distinction often lost in psychoanalytic thought (in which otherness is subsumed under sexual difference) as well as in particular feminist critiques of psychoanalysis. Making this distinction allows Dean to preserve a kind of otherness that does not get collapsed into a same/different binary and is thus spared from intersubjectivity. While it might seem ironic that a desire for the similar would provide a foundation for non-violence, it is precisely an attunement to the simultaneous sameness and otherness of others that for both Bersani and Dean neutralizes what to the ego would otherwise be the threat of difference.

Surface and Depth

There is something else queer about Narcissus: his transfixion by an image. In the myth, Narcissus' desire for himself is wrapped up in his seduction by the image of himself. Similarly, there is a kind of discursive alignment in popular diagnoses of selfie narcissism between what one might call a politics of desire and a politics of images, where the failure to develop desire for the other coincides with and is mapped onto an inability to discern the real from its image, and, ultimately, an insufficient concern with the real, where the real becomes a discursive proxy for the other. Like Narcissus, selfie-takers are imagined as unable to tear themselves away from their own reflections and to attend to others/the real.

In the Ovidian myth, Narcissus is at first deceived by his reflection—"that false image"—thinking it to be a real, other person: "Unknowingly he desires himself, and the one who praises is himself praised, and, while he courts, is courted, so that, equally, he inflames and burns" (Ovid, 2000). Initially, Narcissus is not able to distinguish appearance from reality—"He loves a bodiless dream. He thinks that a body, that is only a shadow"—nor is he able to recognize his own appearance as such. Then, suddenly, the myth changes course. Narcissus says,

> I am he. I sense it and I am not deceived by my own image. I am burning with love for myself. I move and bear the flames. What shall I do? Surely not court and be courted? Why court then? What I want I have. My riches make me poor. O I wish I could leave my own body! Strange prayer for a lover, I desire what I love to be distant from me.

Narcissus is thus able to realize his reflection as a sort of punishment, the impetus for his impossible desire to possess himself: "I am allowed to gaze at what I cannot touch, and so provide food for my miserable passion!" While the image is apart from his being, it is somehow insufficiently distant, such that he desires to leave his own body; distance is required in order to possess one's object of desire. Narcissus' reflection in the pool creates an illusion of distance, but real distance (and possession) requires the presence of a distinct, separate other who one might possess; if Narcissus is his own love object, he is a queer object.

It is because Narcissus rejects his suitors that his subsequent image-fixation can be read as an expression of his disinterest in the real, where the real (in contrast to the image) becomes a proxy for the other and, beyond this, for valued modes of relationality. It is no coincidence that narcissists are thought to be insufficiently concerned both with other people and with the real—those depths that lie hidden beneath the surfaces by which the narcissist has been seduced; the other *is* the real to which the image-obsessed narcissist has failed to attend. When we are scolded for not attending to the "real world" or our "real lives," this invariably means that we are somehow failing our social obligations.

If the real serves as a proxy for valued forms of relationality, the image expresses precisely the opposite: antisocial forms of relationality—irresponsible, unaccountable, and so on. This holds not only for the image but for other forms of surface as well, particularly when these forms are embraced, as in queer cultural practices built around appearance, aesthetic, and costume—practices like drag pageantry and looking for hookups on apps like Grindr. These practices are unapologetically superficial, refusing the heteropatriarchal logic that would deploy "superficial" as an insult, preferring instead to indulge the erotics of spectacle, of looking and being looked at.

This is also to point out that the image is discursively proximate to the object; to be taken with images is to be taken with the object-properties of things. It is also to put oneself into particular kinds of relations with others, in which one might become an object to be regarded, or take pleasure in another's object-properties, or both. To be narcissistic, then, is not only to be self-centered to the point of solipsism, but to be a diminished subject; narcissists, as Christopher Lasch (1991) laments, are self-centered but not self-reliant. It is not simply any self that Lasch values, but a particular self: lead by reason not emotion, immune to the delights of consumer capitalism, and family-oriented. Narcissism thus entails two distinct (though related) failures: a failure to relate to others properly, and to individuate properly. Following Bersani, one might say that the narcissist's "disinterest" in depths indicates a refusal of subject-object dualism, insofar as this dualism is established, in part, through the identification of an unknown depth—the unconscious—that belongs to the subject. One might see this refusal expressed in the way that the selfie-taker is both subject (the arm/eye that takes the photograph) and object (the same arm/eye that appears in the photograph), as I discuss below.

The anxiety surrounding the image—rooted, I am suggesting, in an attempt to discipline forms of relationality—is exacerbated when the image is of the self, or is understood as an extension of the self, rather than as engendering or evidencing proper social ties.[4] There seems to be something particularly unnerving about taking a keen interest in one's own image—an extension, perhaps, of the perversion of being sexually excited by the sight of one's own body in a mirror, as Ellis (2004, p. 188) cites Iwan Bloch—as indexed by the anxiety that surrounds the selfie as an expression of narcissism. Recall that Narcissus is not simply transfixed by any image, but by his own image. The pathologization of this self-interest has been carried discursively through the intertwined diagnoses of narcissism and homosexuality, surfacing now in popular debate surrounding the selfie.

A queer reading of both Narcissus and the selfie might thus find politically compelling the interest in one's likeness which, as Dean points out by way of Jacques Lacan, offers a mode of relation to otherness—the otherness of one's own image—prior to the processes of identification/differentiation. It should be pointed out that Dean (2001) ultimately contends that ethics "depends not on familiarity and likeness, but comes into its own when we confront the other's strangeness" (p. 129), though this confrontation entails a reckoning with our own constitutive otherness. More to the point, as Dean (2001) writes about the other (following Laplanche and Foucault), "In the end there may be no mystery to penetrate"; constituted outside an identical/different binary, the other ceases to be a threat (p. 135). Here, Dean cites Bersani's conceptualization of "homo-ness" as "inaccurate self-replication," suggesting that the ethics Dean is searching for may indeed have something to do with likeness.

Jonathan Flatley's work on Andy Warhol is more helpful in this regard. Flatley draws a connection between Warhol's unusual capacity for liking things—anything and everything, it seems—and his interest in and production of likenesses: images and objects of a similar kind. Following Jean Luc Nancy, Flatley notes that to like the similar is not the same as liking the identical; the similar exceeds the identical/different binary by being both the same and different, as in Warhol's silkscreens. One might think here too of André Gide's novel *The Immoralist*, in which the protagonist Michel finds a new lease on life through an awakened sexual desire for young boys while living in Tunisia. Writing about this novel, Bersani (1996) observes, "Untroubled and unconcerned by difference, [Michel] seeks, in those beautifully healthy Arab boys, nothing more than to touch inaccurate replications of himself, extensions of himself" (p. 124). Resemblance, in Flatley's (2010) framework (as in Bersani's), is a condition for "emotional connection, even affectivity itself" (p. 74). In other words, an attunement to the similar opens us to the world affectively, offering it up as potential material to which we might attach. Difference, in this framework, becomes a "nonthreatening supplement to sameness" (Bersani, 1996, p. 7). Grouped together, the similar does not constitute a society or community, Flatley writes, but rather a kind of assemblage, linked precisely insofar as it is not unified. Again, Bersani's (1996) reading of Gide is instructive in terms of imagining antisocial or simply non-communal forms of relationality:

> Michel's pederasty is the model for intimacies devoid of intimacy. It proposes that we move irresponsibly among other bodies, somewhat indifferent to them, demanding nothing more than that they be as available to contact as we are, and that, no longer owned by others, they also renounce self-ownership and agree to that loss of boundaries which will allow them to be, with us, shifting points of rest in a mobile communication of being. (p. 128)

Conclusion

Is the contemporary proliferation of selfies indicative of a toxic culture of narcissism as critics fear? Or might the practice of taking selfies be empowering in certain contexts? I have framed my argument here to avoid these questions, not because we need to "break through this hype" (as Senft and Baym propose), but because their very asking assumes that narcissism is a problem, and in so doing participates in the valuing and reproduction of particular modes of relationality that ironically pose a much greater threat to otherness than the kinds of impersonally narcissistic sociability Bersani and other queer theorists have imagined. My aim has thus been to interrupt the asking of these questions in order to identify their political unconscious and contest their normative ends; it is this unconscious and these ends that are primarily of interest here, rather than the actual practices or motivations of selfie-takers. My hope is that this interruption might lead scholars not to move beyond the discourse of narcissism, but to entertain this discourse in reformulating and responding to the above questions in new and different ways that appreciate the political utility of what we might think of as selfie-takers' "inaptitude . . . for sociality as it is known" (to borrow phrasing from Bersani, 1996, p. 76).

To begin to theorize this inaptitude, we might consider Geoffrey Batchen's observation that selfies enact a shift in popular photographic practices, from using photographs to remember, to using them to communicate (Colman, 2010). For my purposes here, it is useful to read this shift through Jean Baudrillard's argument in *Simulacrum and Simulation*. Baudrillard essentially queers the relation between the real and its so-called representation, inverting this relation so that the representation—or "simulacrum" as it is renamed to accommodate this inversion—could be said to produce the real, rather than holding a mirror to it. If the prospect of a distorted representation produces discomfort for those invested in the idea of the real, this prospect at least preserves the reality principle. As Baudrillard (1994) writes, "One can live with distorted truth" (p. 5). The notion of the simulacrum, of a "real without origin," on the other hand,

does not preserve the reality principle, and thus can engender a kind of "metaphysical despair." What the selfie suggests, then, in its drift away from a memorializing function and toward a communicative function, is that photographs produce the real, rather than representing it. Or perhaps more accurately, for critics, the selfie unsettlingly undermines the concept of the real by removing its discursive partner, representation. Insofar as the real is a discursive proxy for the social, this is a disturbing proposition indeed.

The "reality" produced by the selfie-taker places them at the center not only of the photograph but of the universe, as Kate Losse (2013) writes. This produced self is not stable, but rather "enacted" or "post-authentic," as Paul Frosh (2015) and Rob Horning (2014) have argued. If photographic technology previously allowed for a boundary between the photographer and the person photographed, a boundary that provided a material foundation for the concepts of the real and its representation, not to mention subject and object, the selfie makes explicit its own construction, in part through the visible arm that reaches to the camera—the arm of the photographer/photographed. This seemingly minor detail creates a significant rift between a photograph that says "see this, here now," and a selfie that says "see me showing you me," as Frosh (2015) writes (p. 1610). For this reason, Frosh calls the selfie a "gesture of mediation."

As a gesture, the selfie produces not only the enacted, post-authentic self at its center, but a particular mode of relationality as well. This mode is established, in part, through stimulating and evoking an "outside point of view" through which a desired self can temporarily congeal (Horning, 2014). In other words, the selfie constructs a momentary self through constructing the perspective from which that self becomes legible, a perspective that viewers are invited to occupy. This is reminiscent of Bersani and Phillips's (2008) discussion of "virtual being" as an alternative to distinct identify formation:

> In the generous narcissism of the exchange between Socratic lovers, each partner demands of the other . . . that he reflect the lover's type of being, his universal singularity (and not his psychological particularities, his personal difference), by recognizing and cultivating that singularity as his own most pervasive, most pressing potentiality. If we were able to relate to others according to this model of impersonal narcissism, what is different about others (their psychological individuality) could be thought of as merely the envelope of the more profound (if less fully realized, or completed) part of themselves which is our sameness. (p. 86)

The word "reflect" is evocative here, reminiscent of Narcissus gazing at his own image, and suggests a visual dimension to the relations of similitude established through impersonal narcissism. The selfie not only invites us to see others as they want to be seen—lingering on their superficial, object qualities, rather than their subjecthood, psyche, or "voice"—but to become like them, not just in terms of resemblance but also in finding pleasure in similar modes of appearing/being and relating. Furthermore, we may have no supplementary knowledge of the selfie-taker to contest or "disprove" their image; they are as they appear—image is everything. Again, this is politically interesting insofar as it is the attraction to similitude (and indifference to difference) that circumvents psychosocial motives for violence, as Bersani suggests.

Perhaps, then, what so rankles critics about the selfie is its invitation to reflect others' "types of being" and little else: no relations of responsibility, accountability, or sacrifice; no knowledge of the other's illicit desires or innermost psychological truths; no ugly interior to expose in exchange for love or redemption; and no threatening difference to be assimilated, deported, or otherwise annihilated. In the selfie, critics see not only a vehicle for our superficiality but also, alongside this, a mechanism for our detachment from social bonds. Far from being anti-relational, though, the selfie disturbs in the kinds of perverse attachments it solicits: irresponsible, unaccountable, fickle, and fleeting, where social bonds are responsible, accountable, dedicated, and sustained.

Given this, how should we respond to the charge that selfies are narcissistic? In her book *Willful Subjects*, Sara Ahmed offers the provocation that subjects charged with willfulness might not contest, but rather accept this charge. She writes,

> As with other political acts of reclaiming negative terms, reclaiming willfulness is not necessarily premised on an affective conversion, that is, on converting a negative into a positive term. On the contrary, to claim willfulness might involve not only hearing the negativity of the charge, but insisting on retaining that negativity: the charge after all is what keeps us proximate to scenes of violence. (Ahmed, 2014)

The word "queer," Ahmed observes, can work in the same way. Following Ahmed, I offer that there may be something to be gained in indulging the discourse of narcissism, rather than leaving it behind. Instead of arguing against attributions of narcissism as a means of exclusion from the public sphere, as Burns does—an argument that contains an implicit valuing of the public sphere, its speaking subjects, and the society served by these—this would mean allowing for a more sweeping refusal of the social. This is not to say that selfies are always antisocial, or an expression of narcissism. Nor is it to say that we ought to value the selfie as narcissistic, shifting narcissism from the "bad" column to the "good" column. Rather, it is simply to say that narcissism may be the selfie's most radical political accomplishment.

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Notes

1. This pattern of analysis (narcissism vs empowerment) has been noted by a number of scholars, including Ori Schwarz (2010), Ilija Tomanić Trivundža (2015), Alice Marwick (2015), and Theresa M. Senft and Nancy K. Baym (2015).
2. The concept of narcissism has long been used to explain, diagnose, and rectify a variety of troubling social and cultural phenomena: the emergence of mass society and the concomitant marketization of social relations, the decline of the family, the rise of fascism, the advent of identity politics, and now the breakdown of social relations at the hands of social media. The concept has been ideologically elastic enough to accommodate both the Right—as in work by Daniel Bell (1976), Christopher Lasch (1991), and David Brooks (2015)—and the Left—as in work by Theodor Adorno (1968), Richard Sennett (1977), Luce Irigaray (1985), and Julia Kristeva (1987). Contemporary analyses of the selfie as an expression of narcissism are the most recent expression of this discursive strategy (see Hanson, 1992).
3. For the purposes of this article, I am interested in narcissism primarily as it is popularly understood and maligned, that is, as the condition of being excessively vain, self-centered, self-absorbed, ego-driven, and so on. As Ellen Willis (2012) has observed, "narcissistic" is jargon for "selfish and irresponsible" (p. 151).
4. Of course not all image-interest is cause for anxiety. Family photographs, for example, serve precisely as a defense against anxiety, as Susan Sontag (1973) notes (p. 8).

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Author Biography

Greg Goldberg (PhD, City University of New York Graduate Center) is an assistant professor of sociology at Wesleyan University. His research interests include social theory, political-economic relations, mediation, and normativity.

“Do your own thing” was the mantra on the lips of the passengers in Ken Kesey’s bus when it erupted from the La Honda commune deep in the redwoods between Palo Alto and the Pacific. The message came blasting from the Merry Pranksters’ PA system across the heartland—a suggestive slogan for drive-by shouting and no doubt meant to disturb mindless conformism in the unhip, Fordist suburbs. But could any proverb be a better motto for yuppies in training or for late capitalist narcissism? And so, the editors of this volume have tried to be mindful of the cunning of history.

One of the more complex, contradictory legacies of the [19]’60s in California is to be found in the culture of Silicon Valley, which drew deeply from the communal wells of the Bay Area counterculture, refracted through the utopian globalism of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, bible of the rusticating hippies and back-to-the-landers who imagined an alternative green world powered by appropriate technics, available for purchase by mail order. The historian Fred Turner, in an illuminating study of digital utopianism, has shown how this unlikely trajectory has depended on the transvaluation of the computer from a Cold War accessory to omnicide and “soul murder” into a convivial tool of personal

liberation, from an icon of disembodiment and dehumanization into the means to new forms of equality and transformation. Lee Worden, in his essay on counter/cyber culture, peers behind the Friday dresscode and the dissimulation of hierarchy spawned within the military-industrial-academic complex, where hierarchies have been replaced by flattened structures, long-term employment by short-term, project-based contracting, and professional positions by complex, networked forms of sociability; the current state of the art can be found at Google headquarters. Worden, a systems biologist and student of cybernetics, reviews the material and historical links between the counterculture and the emergent cyberculture as well as the forms of commoning that lie in the hidden roots of the Silicon Valley hacker community.

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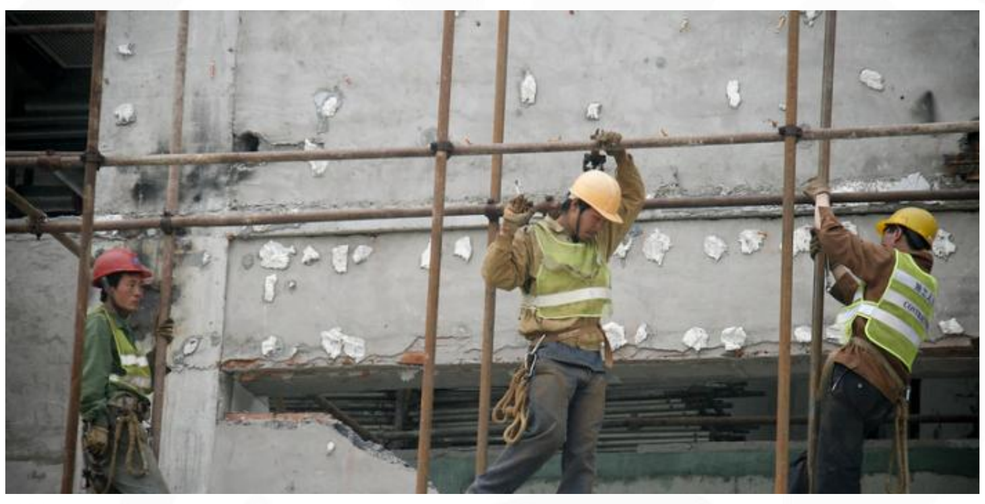
May First Movement Technology: Statement on the coronavirus situation



By May First Movement Technology

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This statement was originally published on the website of APC member organisation May First Movement Technology.

The Corona Virus outbreak has become a major concern for people globally. Not surprisingly, movements for fundamental change reflect this. Announcements of suspended, postponed or cancelled events (including major conferences) are increasing daily. If the trend continues, our movement may literally stop meeting in person completely at least for the forseeable future. That would enormously undermine our greatest strength - our community built of vision, determination, care, and commitment.

We have always counted on personal interactions to discuss and analyze situations and plan our activities. As part of a global movement that values humanity over capital, we don't have the resources to do things any other way; therefore, our response to this situation is vitally important in this moment and in the future.

Part of the problem is the remarkably muddled and obfuscating response by governments to the epidemic. The situation has revealed capitalist society to be particularly ill-equipped, under-informed and insufficiently organized to deal with any kind of major population-affecting threat. At the same time, the response we have seen from the U.S. government has been predictably class- based, white-preferencing, and brazenly dismissive of poor people. For example, telling people to "stay home" means one thing to 10 percent of the workforce comprised overwhelmingly of people from privileged backgrounds who can do their jobs from home and thereby mitigate impact of this pandemic. Compare that to the majority of workers who are less than $400 from houselessness in the US. These precarious workers are also less likely to have employer provided healthcare and absenteeism would mean a total loss of income. The President's primary concern for the stock market and the hospitality industry, presents a bizarre and heartless spasm of capitalist narcissism.

If things continue this way, the threat that exists from the virus will be magnified by the anxiety, hysteria and social dysfunction that looms large. This crisis presents an opportunity to movement formations and we at May First Movement Technology feel we have a particular responsibility to respond. Or movement needs to do something about this situation.

Let's be clear: the Corona Virus is very real and it spreads with unprecedented speed and ease. That the World Health Organization has declared it a "pandemic" should be sufficient evidence of its seriousness. People should take care of themselves and do what they can to avoid spreading this disease. In some cases, that will involve canceling convergences or smaller meetings.

As a movement, however, we have to do a lot more than cancel things.

For example, we need to explore more actively and expansively using currently available forms of communication. At May First, our members use mumble (an audio meeting program with the capability of multiple rooms and unlimited users) and Jitsi meet (an audio/video program with more limited users). We offer these resources, which enable any organization to hold on-line meetings, to all movement people and organizations. All you have to do is contact us at info@mayfirst.org and we'll help you get set up.

But we also feel we have to do more such as to develop new meeting software that is so critical for our movement. We also know that foundations are already thinking about ways to funnel money to for-profit and corporate- connected development groups and companies to look for solutions. Those solutions aren't going to be movement solutions and, at some point, they won't be free. They don't seek to keep us or our data safe, rather, they will ultimately exploit our communities. We have to pressure foundations to start investing in the development of free and open software by funding the people who are working on its development.

Finally, we have to change movement culture. Whether or not you feel you can hold large convergences right now, you are going to be challenged in holding them in the future. In-person gatherings have always excluded people who cannot afford to come or who have disabilities excluding them from certain venues, travel or accommodations. As our movement grows and becomes more economically and socially diverse, these challenges will also grow, excluding more and more people. Additionally, as the impact of climate change becomes more central in our struggle, the use of air travel to attend gatherings is an increasingly important factor in our planning. In the new more just world we seek, accessibility across all identities matters. Lastly, large gatherings increase our dependence on foundations for money and the government for protection and that makes us extremely vulnerable to disruption.

If we're to be successful as a movement, we must solve these problems. What are we going to do?

May First thinks that the answer is, in part, to use tried and tested technology we have developed thus far and will continue to develop in the future.

We also need to continue to fight for a free and liberatory internet. Our movement needs to talk about this and how to make our meeting and discussion culture more accessible and resistant to these types of disruptions. If we are always dependent on someone else's infrastructure for liberation, how complete will that liberation be?

We think our movement should start planned conversations about these issues now and May First Movement Technology is willing to be involved in helping make that happen.

Visit the May First Movement Technology website for tips on alternatives to face-to-face meetings and more.

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Narcissism normalisation: tourism influences and sustainability implications

Brendan Canavan

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Narcissism normalisation: tourism influences and sustainability implications

Brendan Canavan

Department of Logistics, Operations and Hospitality Management, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

The concept of narcissism normalisation suggests that individuals and societies are becoming more narcissistic due to various cultural influences. Tourism is reviewed here as one such possible influence. Exploitative, entitled and exhibitionistic tendencies associated with narcissism are well-established in tourism. Yet tourism is also an intimate, communal and satisfying activity which may counteract narcissism. Increases in narcissism have significant implications from a sustainable tourism perspective. Narcissism is associated with exploitative and entitled behaviours that over time cause significant harm to those people and landscapes that come into contact with. Narcissism appears to be incompatible with principles of sustainability and the challenges this poses for the industry are reviewed, while the opportunities are also explored. There are signs that narcissism, particularly those aspects relating to exhibitionism, can be co-opted to benefit sustainable development.

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Introduction

This article is interested in increases in narcissism amongst individuals and societies, the role of tourism within this, and implications for sustainability of the industry. As such it focuses not on clinical or pathological narcissism, a recognised personality disorder, but rather on culturally informed narcissistic attitudes and traits (Ackerman et al., 2010). Narcissism, involving exploitative tendencies, heightened sense of entitlement and exhibitionism, is a personality dimension for all humans heritable like any other (Golomb, 1995; Walters & Horton, 2015). However, individuals may be pushed towards lesser or greater levels of narcissism by various environmental factors also (Walters & Horton, 2015).

One environmental factor may be tourism. Discussion of the tourist self and tourism act within the literature has touched upon the inherent narcissism therein, alongside the problematic consequences of this (i.e. Cohen, 1982; MacCannell, 2002; Wheeller, 1991). Tourism has always contained exploitative, entitled and exhibitionist elements (i.e. Dann, 1977, 1981; Fennell, 2008; Wheeller, 2004). Narcissistic exploitation, entitlement and exhibitionism may henceforth be readily indulged through tourism. Yet tourism is also a source of intimacy, community and contentment (see Brown, 2013; Canavan, 2016; Cohen, 2011) which can act as counter-balances to these components of narcissism (Golomb, 1995; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). As such tourism may both contribute to and counteract narcissism normalisation.

Longstanding debate has suggested that gradually there has been a shift in what is considered a normal level of narcissism towards that which is increasingly narcissistic (MacDonald, 2014; Twenge

CONTACT Brendan Canavan B.Canavan@hud.ac.uk

& Campbell, 2009; Tyler, 2007; Wolfe, 1976). There is some evidence to suggest that tourism is likewise becoming more narcissistic. We are arguably witnessing a growth of tourist self-objectification (see Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016), such as travel being undertaken for purposes of self-presentation via social media (i.e. Lo & McKercher, 2015; Lo, McKercher, Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2011). Simultaneously noted however is the expansion of conservation, green, eco and simple tourism movements, as well as growing demand for deeper, more meaningful, involved and co-created experiences (i.e. Davis, 2016; MacCannell, 2002; Richards, 2011). These types of tourism may not be ego-free (Wheeller, 2005), but they in some forms at least suggest a less self-centric, superficial or narcissistic focus.

Shifts in cultural narcissism are significant because while less markedly unhealthy than full-blown narcissistic personality disorder, overly high (and too low) levels of narcissism do share the serious negative implications associated with the pathological condition over time (Fox & Rooney, 2015; MacDonald, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Weiser, 2015). In particular, there are potentially severe consequences from a sustainability perspective in terms of the harmful effects of narcissistic exploitation and entitlement on host communities and landscapes. Reductions in empathy (Golomb, 1995), collaboration and society building (Szalavitz & Perry, 2010), disassociation from cultural and natural landscapes (Holifield, 2010), and increases in selfish behaviours (MacCannell, 2002), challenge sustainable development principles. Narcissism seems to be incompatible with these, yet opportunities may also arise from increases, relating to the co-opting of narcissistic exhibitionism as a means of promoting green products (Naderi & Strutton, 2014).

Recent research studies and media coverage have picked up on narcissism as a lens for analysing various social, such as increasing plastic surgery consumption (i.e. Shakespeare, 2016), and business, such as leadership styles of chief executives (i.e. Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), issues. A similar positioning of narcissism within tourism studies or consideration of the implications for sustainability is lacking however, and has been absent from recent theoretical calls (i.e. Cohen & Cohen, 2012). There has until recently been a dearth of attention paid to the emotional sides of tourism more generally (Tucker, 2016). The contribution of this article is accordingly a threefold attempt to address this gap. First, a review of the literature relating to cultural narcissism and its normalisation. Second, placing tourism in this context as a potential environmental factor influencing both for and against this normalisation. Third, considering the potential impacts of narcissism normalisation on tourism industry sustainability in terms of the challenges and opportunities that might result. Such research may contribute to the enrichment of sustainable tourism theory (see Bramwell, 2015; Buckley, 2012) and narcissism might be more overtly positioned within tourism studies as a result.

Narcissism

Narcissism may be described as a continuum between extremes of healthy and unhealthy, with a range of narcissistic responses from the mild and transient to the fixed personality disorder (MacDonald, 2014, p. 145). A degree of narcissism can be healthy, as with a steady sense of self-worth and ability to recover from disappointments (Horwitz, 2000). Self-confidence, esteem and pro-social behaviours such as leadership qualities may be associated with (Carpenter, 2012). At the extreme however, narcissistic personality disorder is a diagnosable pathological state; one which involves seriously disproportionate preoccupation with personal competence, power and superiority, and the potential for various antisocial behaviours and unhealthy associations such as alienation (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Various constituents of narcissism have been reported (i.e. Ackerman et al., 2010; Weiser, 2015). It is perhaps useful to think of narcissism as containing three components however: entitlement which relates to the self, exploitation regards interpersonal relationships and exhibitionism in terms of self-promoting and regulating strategies (see also Campbell, Campbell, Hoffman, & Marchisio, 2011).

First, entitlement relates to the sense of self, which is in the case of the narcissist over-inflated and absorbing (Duchon & Burns, 2008). Reality as the narcissist sees it revolves around them to the exclusion of all others (Roberts, 2014). Narcissism can additionally work at a group level, whereby unrealistic and grandiose beliefs may be about the significance and status of a group (Duchon & Burns,

2008). A strong sense of being special, unique and superior accompanies the narcissist individual or group, with implications for moral decision-making regarding and behaviour towards others.

Second is exploitation. Noted is the narcissist's inability to connect with or maintain loving relationships with others. The central symptom of the disorder is the narcissist's failure to achieve intimacy with anyone. This is the result of them seeing other people like items in a vending machine, using them to service their own needs and never being able to acknowledge that others might have needs of their own still less guess what they might be (Golomb, 1995). Relationships to people and to brands are more or less the same, with both treated instrumentally as objects for superficial admiration, enjoyment and self-aggrandisement until they outlive their usefulness and are discarded (Lambert & Desmond, 2013). Narcissists tend to be highly manipulative, coercive, deceitful, cold, uncaring and aggressive towards others (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Fox & Rooney, 2015).

Third, narcissists develop exhibitionistic behaviours and narratives to prioritise and protect the self. Narcissists need to be the centre of attention and will take any opportunity to fulfil this craving, even to the extent of being deliberately shocking, provoking or over-sharing (Carpenter, 2012; Hawk, Ter Bogt, Van Den Eijnden, & Nelemans, 2015). They tend to be attention seeking and highly concerned with physical appearance (Sorokowski et al., 2015). Self-obsession and vanity intersect within narcissism and physical beauty is often seen as the only way to define the self (MacDonald, 2014). This has consequences for those who do not fit into beauty norms such as the physically different (Shakespeare, 2016), as it does for attitudes towards ageing and mortality (MacDonald, 2014). This exhibitionism is moreover often defensive and used to deflect from, build up or compensate for a poor sense of self. Grandiosity can be summarised as a defence against deep feelings of inferiority, neither constant nor consistent, which leave the individual torn between feeling wonderful and worthless (MacDonald, 2014). Narcissists unconsciously deny an unstated and intolerably poor self-image through inflation, turning themselves into figures of grandeur. The goal of this self-deception is to be impervious to greatly feared external criticism and to their own rolling sea of doubts (Golomb, 1995). Behind facades such as social media profiles or acquisition of possessions, feelings of worthlessness, lack of confidence, fragility, shame, insecurity and anxiety can lurk (Bergman, Westerman, Bergman, Westerman, & Daly, 2013; Duchon & Burns, 2008; MacDonald, 2014). The belief in one's own extraordinariness will sooner or later abut the world and the result will be disillusionment in the best case scenario or ever greater fake grandeur in the worst (Williams, 2016).

Narcissism normalisation

Although narcissistic personality disorder remains rare, narcissistic traits involving vanity, arrogance, feeling special, lacking empathy and having little regard for others are arguably becoming increasingly common (Young & Pinsky, 2006). Twenge and Campbell (2009) use the term "age of entitlement" to describe the attention-seeking and narcissistic traits prioritised in modern culture and society. MacDonald (2014, p. 144) summarises:

> While Narcissistic Personality Disorder remains a severe and fairly rare clinically diagnosed condition, sub-clinical narcissism or narcissistic traits have reached epidemic proportions with serious consequences. Ever increasing levels of greed, self-obsession, superficial relationships, arrogance and vanity are everywhere apparent and not making us any happier, with common mental health problems on the increase, especially among the young.

There are various studies which point to this increasing narcissism. Research applying the narcissistic personality inventory (NPI), the most widely recognised and adopted measurement tool, has identified progressively higher scores amongst participants (Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013). Albeit the NPI is limited in its scope (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012). Research has also looked at cultural changes. In one interesting study, American song lyrics from 1980 to 2007 were analysed, with self-references found to be increasingly common (DeWall, Pond, Campbell, & Twenge, 2011). Meanwhile studies concerning generation Y have highlighted their strong sense of being unique and special (Howe & Strauss, 2009). The term "entitlement generation" has been coined

by Debevec, Schewe, Madden, and Diamond (2013) when researching young millennials' consumption practices which demonstrate a high sense of self and expectation. Increasing narcissistic traits are said to be particularly prevalent amongst the young, who tend to score more highly on the NPI for example (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011; Rosen et al., 2013). As such this may be an emergent issue which could influence individuals and societies into the future.

Nonetheless caution needs to be applied to claims for increasing narcissism. Vanity, self-absorption, grandiosity and group superiority are of course not new. Ovid's telling of the classical Greek myth of Narcissus is over 2000 years old after all. Criticisms of increasing narcissism have historically often come from a patriarchal perspective and have been used to denigrate identity politics and forms of sexual behaviour deemed to be counter-normative (Tyler, 2007). It is also easy to overestimate or too readily identify increasing narcissism (Pearce & Moscardo, 2015). Social media for example, one possible environmental factor much discussed in the literature, perhaps makes more visible timeless human desires to look good, interconnect, gain attention or approval. Its contents may not be as narcissistic as can initially appear. The pouting "duckface" seen so often in selfies for instance, is arguably often a self-conscious, ironic and self-parodying pose appropriate to the medium (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Selfies are arguably not considered portraits, but rather portraits of the self in the act of portrayal (Levin, 2014). Motivations for taking and posting selfies meanwhile are suggested to include engaging in communication with significant others (Kwon & Kwon, 2015), building and maintaining social relationships (Peek, 2014), and sharing in group bonding and identity building (Opel, 2014). Thus, the evidence emerging from research challenges the simplistic view that selfies are a result of narcissism and offers instead insights into a communicative and transformative practice reflecting various social connections and self-expression needs of individuals (Pearce & Moscardo, 2015).

Narcissism environmental factors

Various environmental factors have been proposed as influencing increasing prevalence of narcissistic traits (Fox & Rooney, 2015). Seemingly, irreversible alterations to family life, technological development including social media, attitudes to death and dying and celebrity worship; all feature in the rise of our narcissistic society and are interconnected trends (MacDonald, 2014). The change has been associated with western cultures and their greater emphasis on individuality (i.e. Twenge & Campbell, 2009) and their predominance of political-economic systems which prioritise individualism (i.e. Szalavitz & Perry, 2010). However, the phenomena have been noted in diverse locations. In China for example, where it is associated with rapid economic, social and cultural transformation (Cai, Kwan, & Sedikides, 2012).

Consumer culture appears as significant. Freud (1975) alerts us to the narcissistic strand running through consumption whereby purchases are made to satisfy desires and add to idealised images of selves (Cluley & Dunne, 2012). Consumer culture in general may be linked to the mobilisation of a narcissistic self-identity (Wearing, McDonald, & Wearing, 2013) as selves are increasingly fashioned and differentiated through aesthetic consumption practices (Shields, 2003). Meanwhile lifestyle practises including leisure become decisions about who to be (Giddens, 1991). Consumption can be linked to the pursuit and display of external appearances and outward signs of success and power (Freud, 1975) and hence may be relied upon by the narcissist as a means of self-affirmation (Lasch, 1979; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Likewise narratives of success and power, often wealth related, may be important to the narcissist's self-definition (Lasch, 1979).

Social changes related to new technologies are a particular area of study. Online communities have been described as particularly fertile ground for narcissists to self-regulate, as this setting offers a gateway to many shallow and detached relationships and also materials for self-presentations (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010). Findings have shown that narcissism, exhibitionism and superiority may be displayed using social media, albeit with differences therein according to particular sites or user demographics (Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2013; Rosen et al., 2013). Similarly,

findings suggest that spending time on social media profiles causes young people to endorse more positive self-views, although the specific form this takes depends on the site (Gentile et al., 2012). Whilst narcissists in the millennial generation do not appear to use social media more often than non-narcissists their reasons for doing so are different, including seeking as many online friends as possible and using profiles to project a positive image (Bergman et al., 2011). Some reports moreover find a (not always strong) link between narcissism and the number of selfies[1] posted to social media (i.e. Chan & Tsang, 2014; Fox & Rooney, 2015; Weiser, 2015). Others however have found no link between selfie behaviour and narcissism (i.e. Banjanin, Banjanin, Dimitrijevic, & Pantic, 2015).

Relating to tourism, technological changes such as the development of internet enabled camera smartphones which facilitate selfie taking, have pushed focus onto the tourist as the background has simultaneously been cropped and emphasised away (Lo & McKercher, 2015; Lyu, 2016). Selfies are a way of touristic looking directed at the self and are an increasingly important part of tourism for many tourists (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). With such developments the relative importance of the self versus the tourist attraction reverses and tourists become more central than the tourist attraction in the photograph (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Where tourist's once went on holiday to see and photograph sites, they now go to photograph themselves with sites as backdrops (Lyu, 2016). "Rather than the camera extending outward to capture a destination, the camera is now not only more often pointed at the self than before, but often pointed at the self by the self" (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016, p. 131). Thus, the extraordinary nature of tourist destinations that tourists seek to visually consume and photograph is now in large part provided by tourists themselves (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

Also highlighted is growing celebrity culture which emphasises fame, success and beauty. Longing to enter such circles individuals, particularly those with narcissistic tendencies, many may think they are entitled to fame and will do anything to achieve it (Young & Pinsky, 2006). Lasch (1979) argued that the narcissist divides society into two groups: the rich, great and the famous on the one hand and the common herd on the other. This is something which celebrity culture nurtures and promotes. Celebrities, many of whom are more narcissistic than the general population, have become role models with negative consequences (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). The growing appeal of celebrity in tourism may be noticeable (i.e. Lee, Scott, & Kim, 2008). The influence of media and pop-culture may promote more passive and superficial forms of tourist consumption (Mansson, 2011).

Narcissism and tourism

The prospective influence of tourism as an environmental factor which might contribute to or counteract narcissism normalisation is an interesting one, heretofore overlooked. Tourism is a potentially useful means for indulging the exploitative, entitled and exhibitionist traits which characterise the narcissist. Alternatively, tourism is noted for providing intimacy, community and contentment. The following will briefly outline these considerations before moving on to look at the sustainability implications.

Exploitation – intimacy

The exploitative nature of tourism may be observed through criticisms of parts of the industry as short-term and transitory; moving on once local resources and host goodwill are exhausted (Aramberri, 2010; Poon, 1993). Many tourist experiences and relationships can also be characterised as shallow and transient (Boorstin, 1964). Tourists may reside within a bubble to protect the ego, avoiding deep and enduring relationships because of the risks of these to fragile underlying self (MacCannell, 2002). The transience of tourism means that tourist relationships are frequently of the fleetingly narcissistic type (MacCannell, 2002). Some tourists may build few relationships at all amongst themselves or with locals (narcissistic young tourists in Thailand for example; Cohen, 1982). Similarly, tourism can be a source of transient and tourist-dominant relationships of the sort that support and flatter the ego (MacCannell, 2002). As such tourism may be attractive to narcissists reluctant

to risk depth in terms of experiences or relationships due to the threat these potentially pose to the ego.

Nevertheless, various authors have challenged the conceptualisation of tourism social exchanges as shallow and contrived, highlighting instead depth, authenticity and meaning (i.e. Mura & Tavakoli, 2014). Research has illustrated the many positive economic partnerships, friendships and romantic relationships that tourism can facilitate between hosts (i.e. Mundet & Coenders, 2010), tourists (i.e. Cohen, 2003; Komppula, Ilves, & Airey, 2016), and between hosts and tourists (i.e. Canavan, 2013). These pleasurable and mutually rewarding experiences illustrate the potential for tourism to bring people together; at times in profound and long-lasting ways (Canavan, 2016). Such intimacy is important to countering narcissism. The person who loves has so to speak forfeited a part of his or her narcissism (Freud, 1975).

Many tourists do furthermore get deeply involved in local landscapes; choosing to a greater or lesser extent to acculturate and become closely involved with host cultures for example (Rasmi, Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2014). Evidence is that tourists frequently and increasingly seek to get closely involved in local lifestyles (i.e. Ateljevic, 2000; Richards, 2011). Increasing creative collaboration by and co-creativity of hosts involved deeply in the co-production of experiences is recognised (Richards, 2011; Suntikul & Jachna, 2016). Deep and meaningful experiences are said to be what modern tourists prioritise, particularly those within the generation Y cohort, and co-creation is an expected means of obtaining (Valentine & Powers, 2013; Vaux Halliday & Astafyeva, 2014). Alternative forms of less narcissistic holiday-making are suggested to emphasise this involvement and depth (see MacCannell, 2002). Likewise, those alternative and ethical forms which promote reciprocal altruism; providing deep and meaningful experiences in return for tourist involvement, commitment and creativity (i.e. Chen & Chen, 2011; Pan, 2012). The well-documented growth of special-interest niche tourists engaged with and concerned for particular sites, landscapes and experiences (i.e. McKercher, 2002; Robinson & Novelli, 2005) illustrates the widespread desire for more intimate travel.

Entitlement – community

Tourism is an activity where the emphasis on self is well established throughout (Sin, 2009). Self-obsession, isolation and grandiosity may all be observed in tourist behaviour and motivations preoccupied with hedonism and relaxation, often in solitude (Cohen, 1982). Tourism can be depicted as a self-focussed pursuit prone to selfish behaviour which prioritises the individual over surrounding landscapes and peoples (Wheeller, 1991, 1993). Tourism is essentially a pleasure-seeking activity (Gnoth, 1997). Although hedonism is not incompatible with ethical forms of tourism, themselves pleasure-seeking activities (Malone, McCabe, & Smith, 2014), life spent in the pursuit of enjoyment alone is devoid of any deep meaning or commitment to anything beyond self (Rohde, 1968). Consumer entitlement, in tourists' case towards hedonistic pleasure, may outweigh moral norms with negative consequences for host communities and landscapes (i.e. Diken & Laustsen, 2004).

Hence, MacCannell (2002) suggests that tourists can be described as egomaniacs. He sees tourism in certain forms as supplying the energy for: "autoeroticism, narcissism, economic conservatism, egoism, and absolute group unity or fascism" (MacCannell, 2002, p. 66). The tourist self in this view remains rigid or static and turned in on oneself, shrinking rather than expanding. In such cases, tourism may be a pastime which reinforces and protects the ego, furthering the narcissistic traits and problems associated with (MacCannell, 2002).

Alongside the individual however, tourism is a highly interconnected pursuit. Social, cultural and economic exchange is a characteristic of the service-intensive tourism industry which essentially engenders large scale interactions between people and between people and landscapes (Dieke, 2003). Making friends, interacting with others who share common interests and mutual learning motivate and enhance many tourism experiences (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Ooi & Laing, 2010). Social dimensions take precedence during holiday planning (Decrop & Snelders, 2004). What is perhaps really

being purchased is not a place but rather time for togetherness with significant others (Trauer & Ryan, 2005).

Tourism additionally offers opportunities to become part of particular travel communities, such as those of backpackers, who frequently share close bonds, codes and cultural practises (Cohen, 2003, 2011; Sørensen, 2003). Tourism is an experience that creates and strengthens social relationships among family members, friends and acquaintances (Mura & Tavakoli, 2014). Holidays provide opportunities for relationship reaffirmation and social bond building (Edensor, 2000). For Obrador (2012, p. 412): "coastal mass tourism was for the majority of participants an intensely family time, largely devoted to the cultivation of togetherness and the strengthening of family bonds". It is worth noting the role that social media may play as a vehicle for forming and strengthening such relationships and communities (i.e. Bosangit, Hibbert, & McCabe, 2015).

There is significance in tourism stimulating community because interpersonal and human-environmental interactions facilitated by tourism may counter narcissistic detachment (Holifield, 2010). Conversely as traditional communal bonds decline place-bound communities, place-based ties and connectivity are also weakened (Shim & Santos, 2014). A loss of diversity and singularity may lead to psychological or physical displacement (Fullilove, 1996). In a subsequent attempt to wrest back some level of control, the individual retreats into personal preoccupations such as psychic and bodily improvement (Giddens, 1991). The narcissistic sufferer often experiences a deep-seated loneliness and a narcissistic society where self-promotion and individuality seem to be essential may not be what people actually want in terms of community, support and a sense of belonging (MacDonald, 2014).

Exhibitionism – contentment

As with other forms of consumption tourism may be just another stage for exhibiting the ego and source of materials for building grandiose narratives. However, due to tourism's considerable conspicuous consumption potential it is perhaps an especially significant way to gain the attention the narcissist so craves and feels is deserved (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Travel originally intended for trade and conquest has shifted over time to focus on pleasure and to serve as a symbol of social status and improved social standings among family and peers (Chen & Chen, 2011; Vogt, 1976). Cultural capital can be gained through travel to be flaunted amongst other travellers or upon return home (Dann, 1977).

This is something perhaps heightened by the social media-friendly materials tourism produces. Just as early the twentieth century, tourism was linked to and shaped by emergence of tourist photography as a means to own, collect and display consumer prowess (Snow, 2008), so social media may be being used in the early twenty-first century. There has been significant uptake of social media by tourists to curate and share vacations, present and manage certain desirable self-narratives and images (Bosangit et al., 2015; Lo et al., 2011; Qiu, Lu, Yang, Qu, & Zhu, 2015). There is evidence that people posting selfies are aware of their audience and adjust behaviour in order to gain positive reaction and avoid censure (Hogan, 2010; Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Social media is used for image management as photographs fit into narratives of the self and the quest for identity management (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). These are kept in mind by the tourist throughout a trip with satisfactory photographs deliberately posted on social media in order to convey desirable impressions to others (Lo & McKercher, 2015). Many tourists strategically adjust photographic images to manage their impressions (Lyu, 2016).

If tourism can be a source of exhibitionist materials utilised to prop-up and hide underlying weaknesses, then it can also be a source of personal reflexivity, development, growth and actualisation that could contribute to a stronger sense of self and contentment. Although tourism can be self-orientated, this may be in terms of reflexive self-analysis and personal growth of the sort likely to challenge the lack of introspection narcissists are associated with (Golomb, 1995; MacDonald, 2014). Tourism is noted as an important source of deep self-exploration, expression and search for the

authentic self (i.e. Bosangit et al., 2015). Tourists expose themselves to new and challenging situations, foreign cultures and people, in a quest for personal growth and understanding (Cohen, 2003; Vogt, 1976). Challenging life experiences can offer stimulation to one's thoughts and promote self-learning (Wang, 1999). It has been suggested that tourists may reappraise own and community attitudes, values and perceptions as a result of travel experiences. Tourism provides opportunities for intense cross-cultural interactions that may lead to an increased awareness of global issues and inequalities (Lepp, 2008), sense of increased tolerance (Noy, 2004), reduced ethnocentrism (Wei, Crompton, & Reid, 1989), more cosmopolitan attitudes (Cohen, 2011) or greater global consciousness (Yasothornsrikul & Bowen, 2015). Tourism may act as a catalyst for existential authenticity (Brown, 2013), whereby authenticity may be interpreted as an ideal state of fulfilment in which people can be true to themselves (Wang, 1999). "The unique and central function of tourism in offering not an occasional chance to be truly oneself, but a reflective space that is conducive to self-insight and to the examination of life priorities, and that could be a stimulus for the choice of a life of good faith" (Brown, 2013, p. 179).

Narcissism, tourism and sustainability challenges

The implications of narcissism are especially significant from a sustainability perspective. As noted narcissism can have severe negative consequences for the individual. Ultimately however, although it causes significant harm to and unhappiness for the sufferer, narcissism causes most damage over time to those surrounding and who come into contact with the narcissist (Golomb, 1995). Unhealthy narcissism has potentially damaging implications for societies, cultures and the planet as a whole (MacDonald, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

The strongly anti-social aspects of narcissism relating to exploitation and entitlement (see Ackerman et al., 2010) are particularly relevant in this context. Exploitation challenges concepts central to the achievement of sustainable tourism in terms of fairly distributing and conserving natural and cultural resources into the future. Narcissists are interested only in short-term gain, using brands and people and discarding once no longer useful (Lambert & Desmond, 2013). In an interesting simulation looking at usage of a common resource (a renewable forest in this case), Campbell et al. (2005) found that those with higher narcissism scores were more likely to select short-term personal gain even at the expense of long-term depletion. Such inferences suggest that the social and environmental costs of narcissism may be high (Bergman et al., 2013).

Moreover the superficiality inherent in such exploitive interactions with peoples and landscapes appears incompatible with the awareness of natural and cultural landscapes that is arguably a prerequisite to their protection (i.e. Almeyda, Broadbent, Wyman, & Durham, 2010; Reimer & Walter, 2013). Tourists who make commitments to giving back to host communities and landscapes have been described as those with a genuine interest in experiencing and learning about nature and with a personal commitment to protection and conservation of environments (Perkins & Brown, 2012). Yet Holifield (2010) links narcissism with disassociation from cultural and natural landscapes and loss of connection to and concern for the natural world and its conservation. Without opportunities for deeper involvement in cultural and natural landscapes or more meaningful exchanges between stakeholders, the commitment to and co-creation of sustainability initiatives (i.e. Canavan, 2016; Suntikul & Jachna, 2016) may be lost.

The self-absorbed narcissist is less likely to be concerned for the well-being of others (Brummelman et al., 2015), or environments (Naderi & Strutton, 2014). Gaining an interest in and commitment to sustainable principles may therefore be less likely (Holifield, 2010). Indeed pro-environmental motives seem incompatible with narcissists' dearth of concern for others as findings have illustrated inverse relationships between narcissism and altruistic behaviours including pro-environmental consumption (Naderi & Strutton, 2014). Bergman et al. (2013, p. 494) explain: "at the level of the individual, empathy and altruism are often considered central to environmental concern. The capacity to feel an emotional response based on the perceived welfare of another, and the desire to help others and act in the

interest of others, should be directly related to the concern one has for the natural environment… Such egoistic concerns make it unlikely those high in narcissism will worry much about the consequences of their behaviour on the environment".

What is more, negative, inconsiderate and unsustainable behaviours which undermine quality of landscapes and goodwill of hosts may be increased amongst more selfish tourists (i.e. Wheeller, 1991, 1993). The state of tourism suspends morality by its nature which is to emphasise the value of one over the value of others (Fennell, 2008). The new narcissists care only about self-gratification now rather than future thinking altruism (Tyler, 2007). Perkins and Brown (2012, p. 800) summarise: "Tourists with stronger egoistic values were significantly less interested in ecotourism-related experiences and more interested in hedonistic pursuits… Egoistic values were also associated with less environmentally sensitive attitudes including a greater sense of personal entitlement in using resources for enjoyment purposes during tourism experiences and less willingness to curb personal freedoms or to consider personal impact on nature and cultures when making travel decisions". Thus, MacDonald (2014) concludes that most troubling consequence overall of narcissism normalisation is our selfish attitude to the planet that supports us as we play a part in the destruction of much of the environment and many of the species that share the earth with us.

Entitlement also poses challenges to sustainable development. A narcissist individual or group displays a sense of self-importance, fantasises obsessively about success and power, assumes a strong sense of uniqueness, lacks empathy and often exploits or takes advantage of others (Campbell et al., 2011; Golomb, 1995). Consequences of the narcissistic sense of superiority over others may include a unique sense of purpose which allows for no debate or tolerance (Navarro, 2013). Narcissism supports individuals and their in-groups in a worldview of their being special, distinctive and entitled (Navarro, 2013). Sensitivity to criticism and lack of empathy can become entrenched problems (Campbell et al., 2011). Narcissists may act aggressively towards those who block their goals (Lambert & Desmond, 2013) and exhibit disproportionate anger towards those with different opinions (Navarro, 2013).

In addition, self-aggrandisement, entitlement and denial can replace rational, reality-based decision-making, leading to selfish, unethical or bad decisions with ramifications (Duchon & Burns, 2008). Group greed and grandiosity have led to wide-scale corruption and cover-ups (MacDonald, 2014). To illustrate, Duchon and Burns (2008) highlight the ill-effects of extreme narcissism by discussing how this was a central and enduring trait at Enron; one which informed commonly shared assumptions about what constituted acceptable, appropriate, even necessary behaviour. Here, institutionalised narcissism enabled unethical and illegal practices which ultimately destroyed the firm and caused severe hardships for its many stakeholders. These characteristics are clear obstacles to the processes of stakeholder collaboration and planning closely associated with developing and implementing sustainable development (Almeyda et al., 2010; Hardy & Beeton, 2001; Marcouiller, 1997; Reimer & Walter, 2013).

Narcissism, tourism and sustainability opportunities

Alongside sustainability challenges there may be opportunities to use narcissism to advantageous effect. Not all ego-enhancement is a bad thing. Tourism may be able to contribute positively to a sense of individual and group identity through the fulfilment of motivations and by contributing to an increased sense of quality of life, well-being and happiness (see Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2012). People may also travel as a means of escape after encountering personal troubles or failures, with the gained travel experience also helping to improve damaged intra and inter-personal esteem and social status (Dann, 1977, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982). Thus, the role tourism can play in (re)building healthy ego.

Narcissistic exhibitionism (noted as the least anti-social of narcissistic characteristics by Ackerman et al., 2010) offers particular opportunities from a sustainable tourism perspective. Ego-enhancement and altruism are not mutually exclusive (Ooi & Laing, 2010). Volunteering for example usually

contains both altruistic and self-interested motives (Grimm & Needham, 2011). Volunteers offer something back to the social and natural environments of their host destinations, something perceived as altruism, and in doing so are engaged in processes of self-discovery and development which may be interpreted as an act of egoism (Pan, 2012). In some cases, the narcissists' need for praise and admiration is covert and manifests as apparently self-sacrificing devotion (Rodin & Izenberg, 1996). Even ostensibly ethical forms such as eco-tourism, voluntourism or backpacking, have been established as being driven to a great extent by individual's desire for ego-enhancement. Seemingly, selfless contributions to local communities and environments may in fact be self-serving attempts to boost own image (Ooi & Laing, 2010). "Ego-tourists" have for instance been described as occasional consumers of ecotourism more interested in acquiring social status (Wheeller, 2005).

Various authors have suggested this tendency could be exploited for sustainable advantage (i.e. Bergman et al., 2013). Naderi and Strutton (2014, p. 387) conclude with the proposal that environmentalists should view the struggle to persuade, cajole or seduce inherently and deeply self-interested consumers through new marketing lenses which can manipulate narcissists' self-absorbed tendencies in ways that ultimately benefit the environment and society. One interesting industry response is the increasing number of sites, attractions and service providers offering designated selfie locations where the tourist is encouraged to photograph the self and upload on social media (see Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). This technique may be used to publicise sustainable products. It additionally gives development opportunities to less spectacular or well-known destinations; something that might help to distribute positive tourism impacts more broadly, and lessen concentration of negative impacts in fragile locations.

Similarly, consumers' desire for attention might be utilised to sell sustainable tourism products. Rao and Schaefer (2013) highlight how because niche products are clearly distinguished from other products, they can thus be used to achieve social visibility, serving the desire for conspicuous consumption and satisfying social needs. Consumer demand for differentiation from the mainstream is growing (Vesanen, 2007). It is plausible that green products can meet this demand with local, small scale and tailored offerings. The act of green consumption might also be positioned as high-status consumption (Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006) with opportunities to flaunt the ability to afford costs associated with going green (Naderi & Strutton, 2014). Care would need to be taken however that sustainable tourism targeted towards exhibitionists does not simply use the "cheater strategies" popular amongst narcissists (Fox & Rooney, 2015). Green-washing for instance is a well acknowledged limitation of many sustainable tourism products (i.e. Stronza and Gordillo, 2008) and may appeal to the narcissistic consumer interested in image rather than genuine commitment.

Conclusion

Although there may be a tendency to overdramatise (Pearce & Moscardo, 2015), it appears that narcissistic traits are becoming more prevalent amongst individuals and groups in modern society. Interrelated social and technological factors have facilitated the normalisation of narcissistic traits (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). As individuals and groups become more narcissistic traits that would once have been deemed as such are no longer, but rather become accepted and widespread. Celebrities, societies, organisations and individuals reflect off each other and are indulged in doing so by the latest technology (MacDonald, 2014).

Tourism seems to be one such environmental factor intertwined with these. It may be especially appealing to narcissists looking to enhance, project and protect fragile egos. Tourism can be a source of superficial and transitory exploitative exchanges, of entitled consumption which selfishly prioritises the individual ego and hedonistic pleasure over surroundings, and conspicuous consumption suited to exhibitionistic self-presentations. There is some evidence to suggest that tourism, long noted as potentially narcissistic (MacCannell, 2002; Wheeller, 2005), might be becoming increasingly so. Research proposes for example that the tourist gaze is progressively being directed literally at the tourist's navel (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Trends in tourism being used for exhibitionist purposes of

producing, curating and sharing identities online (Lo et al., 2011; Lyu, 2016) somewhat mirrors those regarding the use and influence of social media on cultural narcissism more broadly (i.e. Rosen et al., 2013; Weiser, 2015). Nevertheless, tourism can also be a means of gaining quite the opposite. Intimacy, community and self-exploration related contentment, have been much associated with (i.e. Brown, 2013; Cohen, 2003; Wang, 1999). Such values stand in stark contrast to narcissism and thus its pursuit may counteract.

Hence, the role of tourism in contributing to or countering narcissism normalisation is debateable. This is a debate worth having however, because narcissistic entitlement and exploitation appear to have the potential to significantly undermine industry sustainability. Sustainability from a consumption and production perspective typically requires greater investment (Tao & Wall, 2009). Narcissism may undermine the impetus to make this. The effects of individual perceptions of responsibility towards sustainability issues are important to driving forward market demand for ethical alternatives; demand which has often been lacking, leaving sustainability to be pushed forward through a regulatory approach (Buckley, 2012). People have intrinsic reasons for not behaving in a responsible manner related to habits, convenience and personal preferences (Budeanu, 2007). Narcissists may be more likely to feel such reasons. Lack of empathy, awareness of or care for others might mean that amongst narcissistic tourists ethical investments have limited appeal, at the same time that harmful selfish behaviours are more likely. Sustainability also requires creative solutions to the challenges therein (Tao & Wall, 2009), and sophisticated planning processes to implement and manage (Marcouiller, 1997). Stemming as these do from proximity and collaboration (Canavan, 2016; Go & Govers, 2000; Hardy & Beeton, 2001), narcissism risks undermining these processes because entitlement and exploitation will likely contribute to anti-social actions, superficial, detached, transitory and even hostile relationships.

Consideration therefore needs to be given to the challenges narcissism normalisation might bring. Given the threat unhealthy narcissism poses to sustainability it is arguably in the long-term interests of the tourism industry to prioritise forms of tourism which counteract. Confronting and changing narcissistic traits is difficult (Horwitz, 2000). Embedded in narcissistic cultures it is hard to step outside of these, but there are ways of countering narcissistic tendencies (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Tourism can provide intimacy, strengthen community and provoke reflections that provide the mindfulness, gratitude, modesty, compassion and contentment which can counter narcissistic traits (MacDonald, 2014). Forms of tourism which promote these may be an important source therefore of rebalancing what is accepted as a normal level of narcissism. In addition, there may be opportunities associated with increasing narcissism, particularly that relating to exhibitionism. Sustainable tourism practitioners may be able to take advantage of the tourist ego by offering reciprocal exchanges of ego enhancement in return for particular inputs. For example, materials for self-presentations as a global good citizen could be provided by tourism practitioners in exchange for purchasing sustainable alternatives.

Limitations and further research

The narcissisation of society and tourism may imply opportunities and challenges for the sustainability of tourism. This paper takes a first step in drawing attention to narcissism and developing discussion surrounding. Nevertheless, this is a theoretical article only and as such its contribution is limited to the seeding of debate. There is now a need for original research to develop, modify or reject the ideas proposed here. In particular, research may look into whether narcissism is indeed increasing amongst tourists specifically, perhaps replicating studies seeking to do similar amongst other research groups (e.g. Campbell et al., 2002; Carpenter, 2012; Qiu et al., 2015). Moreover to look at the implications, this might have for sustainability in terms of entitled or exploitative tourist behaviours (as per Campbell et al., 2005). Research might also explore industry responses to narcissism, as authors such as Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) have indirectly done, and begin to evaluate the sustainability of these. Links between narcissism and terrorism (Navarro, 2013) could be one particularly

important area for elaboration from a tourism perspective given the increased targeting of tourists and destinations by terrorists. Research in these areas would help to turn a somewhat speculative argument into something more concrete and actionable.

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Note

1. Selfies are a type of self-portrait photograph taken by oneself of oneself. The individual has control as both subject and photographer.

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Notes on contributor

Brendan Canavan is a lecturer in marketing at the University of Huddersfield. His research explores sustainable tourism with a particular focus on small islands.

ORCID

Brendan Canavan http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8249-8492

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Narcissism and Autism

*Sam Vaknin**

Department of Psychology and Finance, Southern Federal University, CIAPS (Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies), Russia

Abstract

While the narcissist avoids pain by excluding, devaluing, and discarding others - the autistic patient achieves the same result by withdrawing and by passionately incorporating in his universe only one or two people and one or two subjects of interest. Both narcissists and autistic patients are prone to react with depression to perceived slights and injuries - but Autistic patients are far more at risk of self-harm and suicide.

Research Note

Asperger's Disorder (renamed in the DSM V Autistic Spectrum Disorder Level 1) is often misdiagnosed as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), though evident as early as age 3 (while pathological narcissism cannot be safely diagnosed prior to early adolescence).

Personality disorders cannot be safely diagnosed prior to early adolescence. Still, though frequently found between the ages of 3 and 6, Asperger's Disorder is often misdiagnosed as a cluster B personality disorder, most often as the Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

The Asperger's Disorder Patient

The Asperger's Disorder patient is self-centered and engrossed in a narrow range of interests and activities. Social and occupational interactions are severely hampered and conversational skills (the give and take of verbal intercourse) are primitive. The Asperger's patient's body language - eye to eye gaze, body posture, facial expressions - is constricted and artificial, akin to patients with the Schizoid, Schizotypal, and Narcissistic Personality Disorders. Nonverbal cues are virtually absent and their interpretation in others lacking.

Yet, Asperger's and personality pathologies have little in common

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is often misdiagnosed as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), though evident as early as age 3 (while pathological narcissism cannot be safely diagnosed prior to early adolescence).

In both cases, the patient is self-centered and engrossed in a narrow range of interests and activities. Social and occupational interactions are severely hampered and conversational skills (the give and take of verbal intercourse) are primitive. The autistic patient's body language - eye to eye gaze, body posture, facial expressions - is constricted and artificial, akin to the narcissists. Nonverbal cues are virtually absent and their interpretation in others lacking.

Yet, the gulf between autism and pathological narcissism is vast

The narcissist switches between social agility and social impairment voluntarily. His social dysfunctioning is the outcome of conscious haughtiness and the reluctance to invest scarce mental energy in cultivating relationships with inferior and unworthy others. When confronted with potential Sources of Narcissistic Supply, however, the narcissist easily regains his social skills, his charm, and his gregariousness.

Many narcissists reach the highest rungs of their community, church, firm, or voluntary organization. Most of the time, they function flawlessly - though the inevitable blowups and the grating extortion of Narcissistic Supply usually put an end to the narcissist's career and social liaisons.

The autistic patient often wants to be accepted socially, to have friends, to marry, to be sexually active, and to sire offspring. He just doesn't have a clue how to go about it. His affect is limited. His initiative - for instance, to share his experiences with nearest and dearest or to engage in foreplay - is thwarted. His ability to divulge his emotions stilted. He is incapable or reciprocating and is

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Correspondence:
Sam Vaknin, Department of Psychology and Finance, Southern Federal University, CIAPS (Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies), Russia, E-mail: samvaknin@gmail.com

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largely unaware of the wishes, needs, and feelings of his interlocutors or counterparties.

Inevitably, autistic patients are perceived by others to be cold, eccentric, insensitive, indifferent, repulsive, exploitative or emotionally-absent. To avoid the pain of rejection, they confine themselves to solitary activities - but, unlike the schizoid, not by choice. They limit their world to a single topic, hobby, or person and dive in with the greatest, all-consuming intensity, excluding all other matters and everyone else. It is a form of hurt-control and pain regulation.

Thus, while the narcissist avoids pain by excluding, devaluing, and discarding others - the autistic patient achieves the same result by withdrawing and by passionately incorporating in his universe only one or two people and one or two subjects of interest. Both narcissists and autistic patients are prone to react with depression to perceived slights and injuries - but Autistic patients are far more at risk of self-harm and suicide.

The use of language is another differentiating factor

The narcissist is a skilled communicator. He uses language as an instrument to obtain Narcissistic Supply or as a weapon to obliterate his "enemies" and discarded sources with. Cerebral narcissists derive Narcissistic Supply from the consummate use they make of their innate verbosity.

Not so the Autistic patient. He is equally verbose at times (and taciturn on other occasions) but his topics are few and, thus, tediously repetitive. He is unlikely to obey conversational rules and etiquette (for instance, to let others speak in turn). Nor is the autistic patient able to decipher nonverbal cues and gestures or to monitor his own misbehavior on such occasions. Narcissists are similarly inconsiderate - but only towards those who cannot possibly serve as Sources of Narcissistic Supply.

The Use of Language

Patients with most personality disorders are skilled communicators and manipulators of language. In some personality disorders (Antisocial, Narcissistic, Histrionic, Paranoid) the patients' linguistic skills far surpass the average. The narcissist, for instance, hones language as an instrument and uses it to obtain Narcissistic Supply or as a weapon to obliterate his "enemies" and discarded sources with. Cerebral narcissists actually derive Narcissistic Supply from the consummate use they make of their innate loquaciousness.

In contrast, the Asperger's patient, though verbose at times (and taciturn on other occasions) has a far more limited range of tediously repetitive topics. People with Asperger's fail to observe conversational rules and etiquette (for instance, let others speak in turn). The Asperger's patient is unaware and, therefore, unable to decipher body language and external social and nonverbal cues and gestures. He is incapable of monitoring his own misbehavior. Psychopaths, narcissists, borderlines, schizotypals, histrionics, paranoids, and schizoids are similarly inconsiderate - but they control their behavior and are fully cognizant of reactions by others. They simply choose to ignore these data.

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Original Research Reports

The Relationship Between Collective Narcissism and Group-Based Moral Exclusion: The Mediating Role of Intergroup Threat and Social Distance

Márton Hadarics*[a], Zsolt Péter Szabó[bc], Anna Kende[a]

[a] Social Groups and Media Research Lab, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. **[b]** Department of Organizational and Leadership Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. **[c]** Department of Ergonomics and Psychology, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Budapest, Hungary.

Abstract

In our study, we investigated the relationship between collective narcissism and group-based moral exclusion. Since collective narcissists are motivated to see their group as unique and superior, and tend to show hostility towards outgroups threatening this presumed superiority, we hypothesized that perceived intergroup threat and social distance can mediate the relationship between collective narcissism and group-based moral exclusion. We tested this assumption in two intergroup contexts by investigating the beliefs of members of the Hungarian majority population about Muslim immigrants and Roma people. Our results showed that collective narcissism had a positive indirect effect on group-based moral exclusion in the case of both outgroups. Furthermore, both threat and social distance were significant mediators in the case of Muslim immigrants, but mostly social distance mediated the indirect effect of collective narcissism on moral exclusion of the Roma. These results indicate that collective narcissists tend to rationalize their intergroup hostility by the mechanism of motivated moral exclusion, and to find suitable justifications for doing so.

Keywords: collective narcissism, moral exclusion, intergroup threat, social distance, Muslims, Roma people

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*Corresponding author at: Department of Social Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, 1064, Budapest, Izabella utca 46, Hungary. E-mail: marton.hadarics@ppk.elte.hu

Growing global inequality, violent conflicts, and climate change increasingly draw attention to questions of intergroup solidarity between the citizens of the world and dilemmas about which groups of people are worthy of support, help, and fair treatment, or quite the contrary, which groups deserve indifference or retaliation. The recent rise of right-wing populism across Western democracies, or the outcome of the Brexit vote are closely related to the dilemma about where to draw the borders of one's moral community, about whether ethnic minorities, immigrants, or refugees from war zones are entitled to the same moral treatment and concern as "regular" citizens. It seems, decisions about these dilemmas partly depend on beliefs about the ingroup (i.e., the nation), as glorification or narcissistic beliefs about the nation are closely associated with intergroup hostility and exclusion (Kende, Hadarics, & Szabó, 2019; Marchlewska, Cichocka, Panayiotou, Castellanos, & Batayneh, 2018).

In this paper we show evidence supporting the assumption that narcissistic national ingroup identification is connected to the moral exclusion of outgroups (i.e., decisions about fair treatment or the lack thereof). By integrating the theoretical frameworks of collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009) and moral exclusion (Opotow, 1990), we demonstrate that collective narcissists, who develop their national identity for self-defensive purposes rather than for prosocial ones, tend to deny basic moral guidelines of support and fairness from outgroups because these outgroups are perceived as threatening and/or psychologically distant from them.

Collective Narcissism and Intergroup Attitudes

The definition of collective narcissism consists of two interconnected beliefs about the ingroup: one is about its exaggerated greatness and the other is the insufficient recognition and admiration of this greatness by others. Collective narcissists believe that their group is special and therefore deserves special treatment and respect (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Research shows that collective narcissism is strongly related to a wide array of negative intergroup attitudes and behavioral intentions (for reviews see Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Dyduch-Hazar, & Lantos, 2019).

Among others, a great deal of evidence shows that narcissistic ingroup attachment is closely connected to an exaggerated level of perceived intergroup threat. At least partly, it is based on collective narcissists' continuous need for approval by others and the validation of the superiority of their group. Seemingly, if they feel that they do not get this recognition, they tend to perceive it as a hostile act on the behalf of others, that is why they are more sensitive to perceived insults, criticism, or the lack of proper recognition than other group members. Empirical studies have shown that collective narcissists express hostile intergroup intentions in the presence of ingroup image threat (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). Furthermore, collective narcissists are hypersensitive to ingroup insult, so they respond with aggression even to minor incidents, which otherwise would fall well beyond the definition of insult (Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra, & Baran, 2016).

Nonetheless, it seems that collective narcissism is related to perceived intergroup threat in a broader sense that is beyond direct ingroup image threat, and collective narcissists tend to perceive the otherwise neutral or equivocal acts of other groups as intentional hostilities that threaten the well-being, central values, or goals of the ingroup. One line of research demonstrates this by showing a strong link between collective narcissism and a general tendency to believe in conspiracies against the ingroup (e.g. Cichocka, Marchlewska, Golec de Zavala, & Olechowski, 2016; Marchlewska, Cichocka, Łozowski, Górska, & Winiewski, 2019). Furthermore, collective narcissism was also identified as a significant predictor of perceived intergroup threat and hostile attribution (Cichocka et al., 2016; Dyduch-Hazar, Mrozinski, & Golec de Zavala, 2019; Golec de Zavala, Guerra, & Simão, 2017). In sum, one of the most important consequences of collective narcissism is an exaggerated perception of threat to the ingroup (Cichocka, 2016).

Other evidence suggests that collective narcissism results not just in a higher level of intergroup threat but also in an elevated perception of social distance. As we saw, one of the core constituents of collective narcissism is an exaggerated sense of ingroup greatness (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), which implies vertical distancing from other groups. In order to satisfy the egoistic need for a positive self-esteem, collective narcissists are motivated to perceive other groups as inferior (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). In accordance with this idea, collective narcissism has been found related to ingroup glorification, which is a belief in the superiority of one's ingroup (Cichocka et

al., 2016). Furthermore, collective narcissism predicts also a preference for hierarchical social arrangements (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2017), and explicit outgroup derogation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020).

Group-Based Moral Exclusion

Moral exclusion happens "when individuals or groups are perceived as outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply" (Opotow, 1990, p. 1). When members of an outgroup are placed beyond this scope of moral concern, they are not considered to be entitled for just and morally appropriate treatment anymore, consequently, neither withdrawal of prosocial behavior, nor implementation of harmful and unjust behavior is viewed as morally wrong. Accordingly, targets within this scope of moral regard are indeed perceived to be entitled to positive treatment and considerations for their well-being, whereas negative treatment is more acceptable towards those who are excluded from this moral circle (Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Lima-Nunes, Pereira, & Correia, 2013; Opotow, 1990, 1994; Passini & Morselli, 2017).

People have a tendency to deny positive and fair treatment from members of outgroups that they cannot identify with, or perceive them endangering the ingroup's well-being, goals, or cultivated norms and values. Therefore, perceived characteristics of the outgroup (i.e., target perceptions) can contribute to their moral exclusion by justifying their moral disregard (Bandura, 2016; Opotow, 1990). Specifically, previous research has shown that psychological distance from outgroups and perceived intergroup threat are associated with moral exclusion.

In this context, social distance refers either to the perceived similarity between the ingroup and the outgroup (Brockner, 1990; Olson, Cheung, Conway, Hutchison, & Hafer, 2011; Opotow, 1994) or the closeness between the groups (Brockner, 1990; Leite, Dhont, & Hodson, 2019; Singer, 1999). Perceived threat on the other hand, refers to the perception of the harmful behavior of the target, conflicts related to group-level goals, and negative stereotypes about the outgroup emphasizing norm-violating misbehaviors (Hadarics & Kende, 2019; Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2011; Opotow, 1994).

When people engage in group-based moral exclusion (i.e., accept immoral behavior toward members of the outgroup), they nevertheless want to maintain a sense of personal moral integrity. On the one hand, this positive moral self-image is maintained if the outgroup is not regarded as worthy of moral concern (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Pereira, Vala, & Costa-Lopes, 2010). On the other hand, moral exclusion can be justified by serving the ingroup's goals as it is described by the dual-process model of prejudice (Duckitt, 2001). According to this theory, the source of prejudice is either the perceived threat to the ingroup's security or group-based dominance. Evidence shows that group-based moral exclusion is associated with both of these motivational goals, that is, members of outgroup can be morally excluded either because they represent a threat to the ingroup's sense of security and conventional values, and also to maintain existing social hierarchies (Hadarics & Kende, 2019; Passini & Morselli, 2017). This connection suggests that the justification of immoral treatment and aggression toward outgroups can satisfy both of these social needs.

A Potential Link Between Collective Narcissism and Moral Exclusion

As we have seen, collective narcissists may be especially sensitive to intergroup threat and may be motivated to maintain intergroup distance. Therefore, we can assume that moral exclusion can serve as a strategic tool for collective narcissists to justify intergroup aggression. Since perceived social distance and intergroup threat are of the most important bases of group-based moral exclusion, it is reasonable to assume that the relationship between

collective narcissism and moral exclusion is mediated by intergroup threat and social distance, two characteristics being very likely to be perceived by collective narcissists.

Our hypothesis about this mediation process is further supported by the assumed directions of the relationships between these variables both in the moral exclusion and the collective narcissism literature. In the former, perceived outgroup characteristics are often called as *"precursors"* (Hafer & Olson, 2003) or *"antecedents"* (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2011; Opotow, 1990) of moral exclusion, and the same direction from threat and social distance to moral exclusion is also supported by experimental studies that found a stronger tendency for moral exclusion after manipulating these perceived outgroup characteristics (Brockner, 1990; Olson et al., 2011; Opotow, 1994). In their longitudinal study, Leite and colleagues (2019) also found that perceived threat and ingroup supremacy predicted moral exclusion over time, but not the other way around.

Meanwhile, in the collective narcissism literature, variables related to intergroup threat and social distance are much more considered as consequences of collective narcissism. In her extensive review, Cichocka (2016) mentions intergroup threat as a *"consequence"* of collective narcissism which induces an *„exaggerated perception of threat to the in-group"* (p. 291). Accordingly, both Cichocka and colleagues (2016), and Golec de Zavala and colleagues (2017) considered perceived intergroup threat as a result of collective narcissism, and as such, a mediator between collective narcissism and other intergroup beliefs. There is also indicating evidence about the direction of the relationship between collective narcissism and social distance. In their 4-wave longitudinal study, Golec de Zavala et al. (2020, Study 6) found that the longitudinal relationships from collective narcissism to social distance were always significant, but the reversed relationships were weaker and not always significant.

The Study

We investigated the mediating role of perceived intergroup threat and social distance between collective narcissism and group-based moral exclusion. These relationships were tested in two intergroup contexts: between ethnic majority Hungarians and Muslim immigrants on the one hand, and Roma people on the other. These two intergroup contexts can be characterized by important similarities and differences. Roma people have lived in Hungary for centuries, they are the largest ethnic minority group in the country, making up 5 to 8% of the population (Pásztor & Pénzes, 2013). Nevertheless, they continue to be severely discriminated and marginalized. Roma people are mainly rejected based on negative stereotypes about laziness and criminality (Enyedi, Fábián, & Sik, 2004), and the perceived lack of efforts they make about integration and assimilation (Cooper, 2002). In contrast, the number of Muslim immigrants living in the country remains extremely low. Nevertheless, immigration from Muslim countries have become the main topic of right-wing populist political propaganda since 2015, mainly presenting Muslim immigrants as a threat to security by equating immigration with terrorism (Simonovits & Bernát, 2016). Despite the differences, prejudice against the Roma and Muslim immigrants (previously measured as anti-Arab and general xenophobia) are and have been similarly high, shared by the majority of the population, and expressed in blatant and explicit ways (Bruneau, Kteily, & Laustsen, 2018; Kende, Hadarics, & Lášticová, 2017). According to a recent opinion poll by the Pew Research Center (2016) 64% of the majority Hungarians maintained unfavorable views about the Roma, and 72% did the same about Muslims, which were among the highest rates within the 10 investigated countries. Another recent Eurobarometer (2019) study showed that 22% of Hungarians would feel uncomfortable if they had a Roma colleague, and 34% in case of a Muslim colleague. Among the respondents, 44% answered the same if one of their children had a Roma partner, and the rate was even higher (49%) in case of a Muslim person. These rates were among the highest ones within the EU.

Method

Sample

Our sample consisted of 1080 participants from an online participant pool using a multiple-step, proportionally stratified, probabilistic sampling method. Due to this method our sample was demographically similar to the Hungarian population in terms of age, gender, type of residence, and level of education. The recruitment was carried out by a professional public opinion company. Our survey was part of an omnibus survey where other research questions were tested parallelly.[i] We report all measures and data exclusions related to the variables of the research question.

All participants reported Hungarian as their nationality, no participants indicated that they were Muslim, ten respondents reported that they were Roma, and 11 participants did not wish to report their ethnicity. These 21 participants were removed from the analysis, since our main focus was on the beliefs of the Hungarian majority population. Our respondents did not receive any material reward for their participation, and they completed the anonymous questionnaire after accepting an informed consent form on the first page of the questionnaire. The sample was randomly split: half of the respondents completed the questionnaire related to the Roma (N = 512; 52.1% women; age: 46.60 ± 15.39), and the other half related to Muslim immigrants (N = 547; 52.3% women; age: 47.14 ± 15.49). In terms of education level of the first group, 33% had a higher education degree, 44.8% had secondary education, and 22.2% lower than secondary education. In the second group, 35.1% had a higher education degree, 43.9% had secondary education, and 21% lower than secondary education.[ii]

Measures

Social Distance

We used two standard items from the Eurobarometer (2015, 2019) survey, where respondents indicated how comfortable they would feel if they had a Roma/Muslim immigrant colleague or one of their children had a Roma/Muslim immigrant partner *(1 = not at all comfortable; 10 = totally comfortable)*. Higher scores on this scale indicated a lower level of social distance, however as our predictions were phrased about distance, we reversed the scores of this scale so that higher means indicated larger social distance.

Intergroup Threat

Threat was measured by 3 items adapted from Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, and Cotterill (2015). ("Roma people / Muslim immigrants pose a health threat to Hungarians", "The cultural values of Roma people / Muslim immigrants are in opposition with Hungarian values", "Roma people / Muslim immigrants endanger the physical safety of Hungarians."; *1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree)*.

Moral Exclusion

We measured moral exclusion of the Roma and Muslim immigrants with Opotow's (1993) *Moral Exclusion Scale* (adapted to Hungarian by Hadarics & Kende, 2018, 2019; items: "I believe that considerations of fairness apply to Muslim immigrants / Roma people too"; "I am willing to make personal sacrifices to help or foster Muslim immigrants' / Roma people's well-being"; "I am willing to allocate a share of community resources to Muslim immigrants / Roma people"; *1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*). Higher scores on this scale indicated a higher level

of moral inclusion, however as our predictions were phrased about moral exclusion, we reversed the scores of this scale so that higher means indicated higher level of moral exclusion.

Collective Narcissism

We measured collective narcissism with the 5-item version of the *Collective Narcissism Scale* with reference to the national ingroup as "Hungarians" (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). As this measure was not available in Hungarian, we applied a translation-backtranslation technique (Brislin, 1980) to obtain it. Answers were measured on a 7-point scale in this case too (*1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*).[iii]

Analytic Strategy

First, we checked the adequacy of our measures by setting up a measurement model in the case of both groups. These measurement models were estimated using confirmatory factor analysis. To test the mediating role of perceived intergroup threat and social distance between collective narcissism and moral foundations we applied structural equation modeling (SEM) with the SPSS AMOS 25.0 software (Arbuckle, 2017). The amount of missing data was low in both samples (0.77% in Muslim group and 2.97% in the Roma group), and missing values were replaced with imputed values calculated with the regression method (Byrne, 2010).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The hypothesized four-factor solution, with collective narcissism, social distance, intergroup threat, and moral exclusion represented as separate factors, fitted the data adequately in both groups (Muslim: χ^2 = 177.36; *df* = 59; CFI = .979; RMSEA = .061; SRMR = .037; Roma: χ^2 = 217.18; *df* = 59; CFI = .957; RMSEA = .072; SRMR = .048). Besides, this fit was significantly better than either a two-factor solution with collective narcissism and outgroup beliefs representing two separate factors (Muslim: $\Delta\chi^2$ = 593.52; Δdf = 5; $p < .001$; Roma: $\Delta\chi^2$ = 335.45; Δdf = 5; $p < .001$) or a three-factor solution with the items measuring social distance and intergroup threat loading on the same factor (Muslim: $\Delta\chi^2$ = 279.71; Δdf = 3; $p < .001$; Roma: $\Delta\chi^2$ = 155.17; Δdf = 3; $p < .001$). The standardized factor loadings of all items were above .60 in the four-factor solutions. We also performed a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis to check for structural equivalence across the two groups, and in this way to test whether the four-factor solution is adequate in the case of both groups in one common multigroup model. This multigroup model showed an adequate fit indicating structural equivalence across our two groups (χ^2 = 394.48; *df* = 118; CFI = .970; RMSEA = .047; SRMR = .038).

The four latent variables were checked for internal consistency (composite reliability), construct validity and divergent validity in the case of both CFA models. The composite reliability (CR) values of all latent variables were between .80 and .91, showing an adequate internal consistency. Average variance extracted (AVE) was then calculated to confirm constructs' convergent validity, and we found that all AVE values ranged between .63 to .79 confirming the convergent validity for all latent variables. After establishing convergent validity, discriminant validity of each construct was evaluated by contrasting the square root of AVE values (ranging from .79 to .89) for each construct with the values of intercorrelations between constructs (ranging from .19 to .78, see Table 1), which were all smaller than the square root AVE values verifying the discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1

Correlations Between the Latent Variables

Variable	1	2	3
Group 1 (Muslim)			
1. Collective Narcissism	–		
2. Social Distance	.60***		
3. Intergroup Threat	.71***	.76***	
4. Moral Exclusion	.52***	.78***	.77***
Group 2 (Roma)			
1. Collective Narcissism			
2. Social Distance	.30***		
3. Intergroup Threat	.29***	.73***	
4. Moral Exclusion	.19***	.75***	.63***

***$p < .001$.

Hypothesis Testing

We set up a structural model for the two subsamples separately to test how collective narcissism is related to moral exclusion, and to what extent this relationship is mediated by social distance and intergroup threat. All these variables were set up as latent variables, and we controlled both models with the effects of respondents' gender, age, education level, subjective financial status, and left-right political preference.

Subjective financial status was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *significantly below average*; 5 = *significantly above average*; Group 1: $M = 2.45$; $SD = 1.06$; Group 2: $M = 2.50$; $SD = 0.98$), while political-ideological preference was measured on a 7-point left-right scale (1 = *left*; 7 = *right*; Group 1: $M = 4.34$; $SD = 1.64$; Group 2: $M = 4.12$; $SD = 1.70$). Highest educational level was indicated according to the following 4 levels: 1 = *primary education or lower*; 2 = *vocational education*; 3 = *high school diploma*; 4 = *university/college education* (Group 1: $M = 3.07$; $SD = 0.80$; Group 2: $M = 3.12$; $SD = 0.79$).

Political preference was incorporated in the models because both collective narcissism and negative beliefs about culturally different outgroups are more closely associated with the political-ideological right (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Our goal was to avoid a potential spurious correlation between collective narcissism and outgroup attitudes that is only due to their mutual connection to political preferences. This was especially important in the Hungarian context, since anti-Roma rhetoric and anti-Muslim rhetoric had been an integral part of Hungarian political communication in the years preceding this study (Glózer, 2013; Vidra, 2017). Control variables were built into the models as predictors for each latent variable.[iv]

Results of the hypothesized models testing (see Figure 1) revealed that both models showed an acceptable fit (Muslim: $\chi^2 = 257.71$; $df = 104$; CFI = .974; RMSEA = .052; SRMR = .033; Roma: $\chi^2 = 301.11$; $df = 104$; CFI = .951; RMSEA = .061; SRMR = .039). Collective narcissism had a positive total effect on moral exclusion in both models, although it was only marginally significant in the Roma model (Muslim: $\beta = 0.39$; $b = 0.30$; $SE = 0.05$; $p < .001$; 95% CI [0.21, 0.40]; Roma: $\beta = 0.11$; $b = 0.06$; $SE = 0.03$; $p = .061$; 90% CI [0.01, 0.12]). More importantly, a positive overall indirect effect was revealed between collective narcissism and moral exclusion in both models, which supports our assumptions about the mediated effects (Muslim: $\beta = 0.51$; $b = 0.40$; $SE = 0.04$; $p < .001$; 95%

CI [0.32, 0.49]; Roma: β = 0.21; *b* = 0.12; *SE* = 0.03; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.07, 0.18]). Furthermore, beside the positive indirect effect, collective narcissism had also a weak negative direct effect on moral exclusion in both samples (Muslim: β = -0.13; *b* = -0.10; *SE* = 0.04; *p* = .008; 95% CI [-0.19, -0.01]; Roma: β = -0.10; *b* = -0.06; *SE* = 0.03; *p* = .025; 95% CI [-0.11; -0.00]).

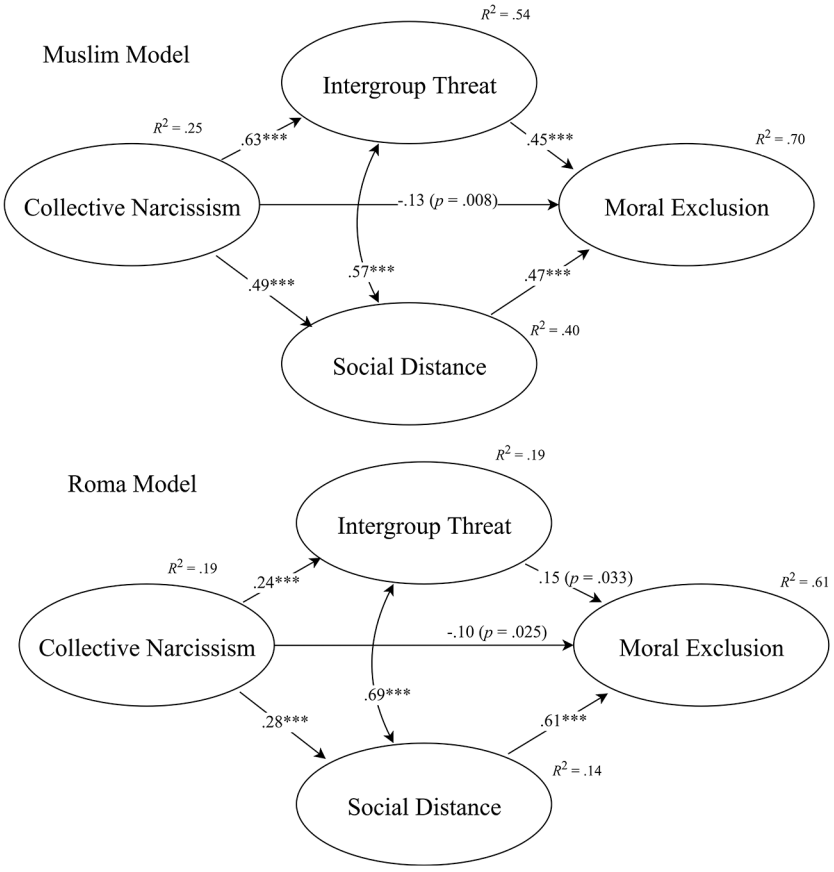

Figure 1. SEM models testing the mediating role of social distance and intergroup threat between collective narcissism and moral exclusion.

Note. Only the latent variables are charted for a clearer display. A detailed summary of the model results can be found in the Supplementary Materials. Relationship strengths are indicated by standardized regression coefficients.

***p < .001.

Probing the bases of the hypothesized mediations further, we found that collective narcissism showed a positive relationship with both intergroup threat (Muslim: β = 0.63; *b* = 0.66; *SE* = 0.05; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.55, 0.76]; Roma: β = 0.24; *b* = 0.23; *SE* = 0.05; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.12, 0.35]) and social distance (Muslim: β = 0.49; *b* = 0.91; *SE* = 0.09; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.72, 1.08]; Roma: β = 0.28; *b* = 0.45; *SE* = 0.09; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.26, 0.62]). Besides, we found also in both models that moral exclusion was predicted by both social distance (Muslim: β = 0.47; *b* = 0.20; *SE* = 0.03; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.13, 0.27]; Roma: β = 0.61; *b* = 0.22; *SE* = 0.03; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.15, 0.31]) and perceived threat (Muslim: β = 0.45; *b* = 0.34; *SE* = 0.05; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.22, 0.46]; Roma: β = 0.15; *b* = 0.09; *SE* = 0.04; *p* = .033; 95% CI [0.02, 0.20]).

To reveal the extent to which the relationships between collective narcissism and moral exclusion is mediated by social distance and threat, a series of mediation analyses was conducted with the bootstrapping technique as suggested by Macho and Ledermann (2011), where we requested 95% confidence intervals using 5000 resamples. We found that collective narcissism had an indirect effect on moral exclusion mediated by social distance in both models (Muslim: β = 0.23; *b* = 0.18; *SE* = 0.03; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.12, 0.25]; Roma: β = 0.17; *b* = 0.10; *SE* = 0.03; *p* = .033; 95% CI [0.05, 0.16]). Furthermore, the indirect effects mediated by perceived threat were also positive in both models, but only marginally significant in the Roma model (Muslim: β = 0.28; *b* = 0.22; *SE* = 0.04; *p* < .001; 95% CI [0.14, 0.31]; Roma: β = 0.04; *b* = 0.02; *SE* = 0.01; *p* = .065; 90% CI [0.002, 0.05]).

We also tested the equivalence of each pathway between the main variables across the two models. For this purpose, we set up a multigroup model, and constrained the pathways one by one to be equal across the two groups. After that, based on $\Delta\chi^2$-tests and AIC fit values, we checked whether the fit indices of these constrained models were significantly worse than the fit of the original non-constrained multigroup model (fit of the non-constrained multigroup model: χ^2 = 558.83; *df* = 208; CFI = .964; RMSEA = .040; SRMR = .034; AIC = 898.83). The results of these analyses can be seen in Table 2. These show that the relationships between collective narcissism on the one hand, and intergroup threat and social distance on the other were significantly stronger in the Muslim group compared to the Roma, just like the pathway from intergroup threat to moral exclusion. The relationship between collective narcissism and moral exclusion turned out to be invariant, just like the pathway from social distance to moral exclusion.

Table 2

Change in the Fit Indices of the Constrained Multigroup Models

Constrained path	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p* ($\Delta\chi^2$-tests)	ΔAIC
CN-ME	0.87	1	.351	1.13
CN-IT	35.21	1	< .001	33.21
CN-SD	13.34	1	< .001	11.34
IT-ME	14.75	1	< .001	12.75
SD-ME	0.44	1	.507	1.60

Note. CN = Collective Narcissism; IT = Intergroup Threat; SD = Social Distance; ME = Moral Exclusion.

Finally, we tested whether it is more reasonable and parsimonious to consider perceived threat and social distance as mediators between collective narcissism and moral exclusion than to treat either collective narcissism or moral exclusion as mediators. We set up three models in both groups for this purpose. In the first pair of models, perceived threat and social distance were mediators between collective narcissism and moral exclusion but the direct relationship between these latter two variables was erased to test the importance of the mediator variables. The fit of these models was only slightly worse than the fit of the original ones reported above. (Muslim: χ^2 = 265.04; *df* = 105; CFI = .973; RMSEA = .053; SRMR = .034; AIC = 433.04; Roma: χ^2 = 306.22; *df* = 105; CFI = .950; RMSEA = .061; SRMR = .040; AIC = 474.22).

In the second pair of models, collective narcissism was set as mediator between the two perceived outgroup characteristics and moral exclusion, and direct relationships were erased again. These models showed a much worse fit to the data compared to the fit of the original ones, and even to the fit of their counterparts with the outgroup characteristics as mediators (Muslim: χ^2 = 545.08; *df* = 106; CFI = .925; RMSEA = .087; SRMR = .086; AIC =

711.08; Roma: χ^2 = 534.52; *df* = 106; CFI = .893; RMSEA = .089; SRMR = .115; AIC = 700.52). Finally, in the third pair of models, we set moral exclusion as a mediator between the two perceived outgroup characteristics and collective narcissism, and direct relationships were erased again. Once again, these models showed worse fit than the models with the outgroup characteristics as mediators (Muslim: χ^2 = 381.74; *df* = 106; CFI = .953; RMSEA = .069; SRMR = .064; AIC = 547.74; Roma: χ^2 = 325.13; *df* = 106; CFI = .945; RMSEA = .064; SRMR = .051; AIC = 491.13). These findings support that it is the most parsimonious model to assume that perceived threat and social distance mediate the effect of collective narcissism on moral exclusion.

Discussion

We found that collective narcissism was related to group-based moral exclusion, and perceived intergroup threat and social distance were important mediators in this relationship. We collected evidence from two intergroup contexts, between the Hungarian majority population on the one hand, and the Hungarian Roma and Muslim immigrants on the other. Although some differences could be observed between these two cases, similarities in the results suggest that collective narcissists tend to perceive outgroups in a more negative way what makes their moral exclusion more probable.

It has already been known that collective narcissists tend to treat outgroups with a certain extent of hostility (e.g. Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the relationship between collective narcissism and moral exclusion implies that they tend to justify this negative treatment by placing these outgroups without the boundaries of moral regard. Furthermore, we were able to identify mediated effects between collective narcissism and moral exclusion through social distance and intergroup threat, which suggests that these perceived group characteristics enable collective narcissists to rationalize their moral disregard and their subsequent hostile behavior.

Beside the generally similar pattern of relationship between the variables, we also found some differences between the intergroup contexts. Most importantly, three of the four relationships involved in the mediations were stronger in the case of the Muslim model, and both social distance and intergroup threat were important mediators in that model, whereas it was mainly social distance that mediated the indirect effect of collective narcissism on moral exclusion in the Roma model. These differences fit with the dominant stereotypes about these two target groups in the Hungarian contexts. While Roma people are generally treated with hostility on the basis of stereotypes of laziness and petty criminality, and a preference for low contact with them (Enyedi et al., 2004; Kende et al., 2017), Muslim immigrants are mostly talked about as posing a security threat to the nation, and a cultural threat to European way of living and values.

The most important difference between these two intergroup contexts, that can be relevant to our results, is probably their salience within the Hungarian public thought. It is worth highlighting that immigration from Muslim countries has become a central topic within the Hungarian domestic political discourse since the beginning of the European Refugee Crisis started in 2015, and it was also the most emphasized topic by the Hungarian government party (Fidesz) during the parliamentary elections campaign in 2018 (Bíró-Nagy, 2018). It is also worth noting that the media framing on Muslim immigrants is rather negative, and it emphasizes the threat related to this outgroup (Vidra, 2017). The salience of this issue is also shown by the fact that anti-Muslim attitudes were high but stable until 2015, but started an increase related to the political events in the post-2015 period. On the other hand, prej-

udice against the Roma has been high but much more stable over time (Eurobarometer, 2015, 2019; Simonovits & Bernát, 2016).

To highlight the differences between the two intergroup contexts in terms of salience at the time of data collection, we checked the number of hits for the expressions *"roma"* and *"cigány"* for Roma people and *"bevándorló"*, *"migráns"*, and *"muszlim"* for Muslim immigrants on Google within the period from 1 January to 31 March, when we conducted the data collection. This test estimated 51.600 hits for the Roma, and 503.000 hits for Muslims.[v]

The threat of Muslim immigration has dominated public discourse in Hungary since 2015. This context may have increased the strength of the relationship between collective narcissism and perceived threat of Muslim immigrants. This is in accordance with the approach of ideological thinking as motivated social cognition (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), which argues that any kind of individual motivation can only lead to political preferences that are offered by the political environment. Since immigration from Muslim countries dominates the Hungarian political discourse, Muslim immigrants serve as a more available target for collective narcissists to satisfy their self-protective and self-enhancing needs. Nevertheless, the same relationships could be observed also in the case of the Roma group, although in a weaker form.

The salience and the framing of the issue of Muslim immigration can also offer a possible explanation to our finding that both perceived outgroup characteristics mediated the effect of collective narcissism on moral exclusion in case of the Muslim outgroup, but it was mainly social distance that served the same function in the Roma model. Although previous research on moral exclusion emphasizes the importance of social distance and intergroup threat as antecedents of moral exclusion (Opotow, 1990), this does not necessarily mean that both of these perceived characteristics are equally relevant in all intergroup contexts. Dominant public discourse can prime those target characteristics that subsequently direct people's behavior (Semetko, 2007; Valentino & Nardis, 2013), and consequently, it can prime justifications for moral exclusion. Specifically, in a media environment where the threatening behavior of Muslims and the importance of defending the nation's boundaries is continuously emphasized, perceived intergroup threat can easily get highlighted as a plausible justification for moral exclusion. Nonetheless, this extensive media framing was absent in the case of the Roma, which can explain why intergroup threat was not a strong predictor of moral exclusion in their case. On the other hand, in the case of social distance-based moral exclusion, members of the excluded outgroup do not do anything specific to make others exile them from the boundaries of moral regard, but they have not been considered within those boundaries in the first place (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Olson et al., 2011). This latter mechanism might be less sensitive to media priming and framing effects, since in such a case, the media is not required to frame the behavior of the outgroup as threatening or immoral in some other ways. This moderating role of media coverage and exposure should be tested by further research in the future.

After interpreting our results, it is necessary to highlight some limitations in our study. We have to stress that our study was a cross-sectional survey study, and as being such, it is not suitable to conclude on the directions of the investigated relationships. Although our model comparison procedure supports that it is reasonable to handle social distance and intergroup threat as mediators in the relationship between collective narcissism and moral exclusion, based on a correlational study we cannot say it with certainty that it is collective narcissism per se that makes people perceive outgroups as either threatening or being psychologically distant.

Although as we saw, intergroup threat and social distance is mostly considered as antecedents of moral exclusion (e.g. Hafer & Olson, 2003; Lima-Nunes et al., 2013) and consequences of collective narcissism (Cichocka, 2016),

and there are experimental and longitudinal studies that also verify the directions of the relationship (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020; Leite et al., 2019; Olson et al., 2011; Opotow, 1994), other causal directions are also worth considering. For example, the literature of moral justification suggests that people tend to rationalize their immoral behaviors not just before but also after their occurrence (Shalvi, Gino, Barkan, & Ayal, 2015). We can therefore assume that perceived outgroup characteristics can function as posterior justifications for moral exclusion, and in such a case the direction between perceived outgroup characteristics (e.g. perceived threat and social distance) and moral exclusion might turn around, because people can be motivated to see the excluded target group in a more negative way in order to justify the exclusion itself. This would result in a model where moral exclusion is placed in the mediator position.

In another possible model, collective narcissism can be the mediator between intergroup threat and moral exclusion. This can be based on the fact that one important antecedent of collective narcissism is a frustrated need for personal control (Cichocka, 2016; Cichocka et al., 2018). According to the relevant theoretical explanation, if one lacks control over private life events, a narcissistic social identity can be constructed for self-defensive purposes to restore the sense of control. The source of this sort of frustration is mostly considered unrelated to intergroup relations, but if it is a specific outgroup that seemingly frustrates these personal goals, then perceived intergroup threat, as a source of this frustration, might also function as an antecedent rather than a consequence of collective narcissism. This assumed mechanism would implicate a model where collective narcissism is a mediator between intergroup threat and moral exclusion.

Future research might verify these other possible directions between the investigated constructs, but we have to stress that these potential alternative directions and mechanisms do not falsify the mechanism described in our study, and our mediation tests based on different models did not support these alternatives.

Furthermore, we have to note that some indicators of secure or positive national identity is also measured in several studies about the influence of defensive national identity on intergroup relations, but our study did not include such a measure. However, these positive indicators are typically not related or negatively related to negative outgroup attitudes if their negative or defensive counterpart is controlled for (e.g. Cichocka, 2016; Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006; Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999). Because of this, we assume that the revealed positive relationships between collective narcissism and the measured outgroup attitudes wouldn't be essentially different by incorporating positive national identity, or they might have been even stronger by partialling out the effect of positive national identity. Besides, there is a good chance that the remaining negative direct (non-mediated) relationship between collective narcissism and moral exclusion in both models is due to the suppressing effect of positive national identity (see Cichocka, 2016), and these relationships wouldn't have even appeared with positive national identity incorporated into the models.

Finally, we conducted our study in the context of Hungary which has some unique characteristics that are relevant to the current research. Although both anti-Roma and anti-immigrant attitudes are prevalent in all East-Central European countries, and these issues can be found in the Western European context as well, democratic institutions and media freedom have been severely weakened in the country resulting in an uncontrolled level of governmental propaganda. This context may therefore be unique, and generalizations limited. However, with the growing populism and growing anti-immigrant movements around the world, insights from Hungary may carry important messages outside the country and the region, and highlight the specific importance of understanding the consequences of an inflated but fragile national identification.

Conclusion

In our study, we integrated the literatures of collective narcissism and moral exclusion, and collected empirical evidence to the link between these constructs. Our findings support the idea that the darker side of national identification does not only increase the willingness to commit hostile acts towards certain outgroups as previous research suggested, but it also enhances the chances of the moral justification of these acts. Nonetheless, these justifications do not emerge randomly, but they are the results of motivated social cognition, as it is shown by collective narcissists' tendency to use perceived social distance and threat - two characteristics they are especially sensitive to - to rationalize their moral indifference.

Notes

i) Study 1 from the publication of Kende, Lantos, and Krekó (2018) was carried out by analyzing data from the same omnibus database, but the hypotheses we tested and the theoretical constructs they were based on were different and unrelated to those tested by Kende and colleagues, since they investigated how the ethnic vs. civic perception of citizenship predicts group-based collective action preferences. The only construct that was used in both studies was intergroup threat, what was considered as a mediator between ethnic perception of citizenship and collective action preferences in the cited study.

ii) For more information on the demographic characteristics of the Hungarian population see: http://www.ksh.hu/mikrocenzus2016/kotet_3_demografiai_adatok

iii) Descriptive statistics and correlations between the items can be found in the Supplementary Materials (Table S1).

iv) All correlations, pathways, and factor loadings within these models can be found in the Supplementary Materials (Tables S2-S4).

v) We also have to note that many hits for "roma" included items related to the capital of Italy (Rome), what might easily led to an overestimation of relevant hits for the Roma.

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Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgments

The authors have no support to report.

Supplementary Materials

The online supplementary material contains descriptive statistics of all the analyzed variables and the correlations between them (Table S1), and all the correlations (Table S2), regression coefficients (Table S3), and factor loadings (Table S4) from our Muslim and Roma SEM models (for access see Index of Supplementary Materials below).

Index of Supplementary Materials

Hadarics, M., Szabó, Z. P., & Kende, A. (2020). *Supplementary materials to "The relationship between collective narcissism and group-based moral exclusion: The mediating role of intergroup threat and social distance"* [Additional information]. PsychOpen. https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.4352

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NARCISSISM AND PHILOSOPHY

by

Steven James Bartlett

Visiting Scholar in Philosophy and Psychology, Willamette University
and
Senior Research Professor, Oregon State University

Website: http://www.willamette.edu/~sbartlet

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NARCISSISM AND PHILOSOPHY*

by

STEVEN J. BARTLETT

Department of Philosophy
Saint Louis University
Saint Louis, MO 63103, USA

1. *Introduction*

The condition we call narcissism began when Nemesis made a handsome youth fall in love with his reflection in a fountain. The lovely maiden Echo was grief-stricken by Narcissus' self-absorption, and gradually pined away until only her voice remained.

Narcissism today is not only a synonym for self-infatuation; it is the name for a clinical psychiatric disorder.

In recent years, psychiatrists and psychotherapists have devoted much attention to narcissism. Patients are being diagnosed in increasing numbers as narcissistic, in part probably because of a heightened sensitivity to the phenomenon.

Narcissism, from a psychological point of view, is an interesting thing. It bears unmistakable similarities to one philosophical position, solipsism. And from a general point of view, as I will try to show, psychological narcissism is descriptive both of certain aspects of personality of many philosophers, and of the nature of many of the positions they propound.

* Two earlier papers examine related topics. One, "Philosophy as Ideology", forthcoming in *Metaphilosophy*, seeks to study ways in which philosophical positions become self-encapsulating ideologies, and to understand resulting blocks to communication between different philosophical standpoints.
A second paper, "Psychological Underpinnings of Philosophy", attempts to develop a general psychological profile of the predominant philosophical personality.
Psychometrists have demonstrated that members of any profession tend to share identifiable attributes of personality.

2. *Narcissism Defined*

I want to preface the following observations by saying that the use I make of psychological categories stems from a desire to encourage psychological self-examination in philosophy. It is unfortunate that many descriptive names for styles of personality have acquired derogatory overtones. This has probably been due to their use by a psychologically distrustful public, for whom psychotherapeutic concepts are unfamiliar and intimidating. The psychological understanding of narcissism began with an awareness of its central characteristic, self-absorption. We are all narcissists to a degree: If we enjoy our work, our families, our lives, we feel a degree of self-involvement which is desirable and healthy. Narcissism becomes of concern to the psychotherapist when the degree of self-absorption of the patient stands in the way of his or her consciousness of the personal needs, intentions, and subjective feelings of others. Extreme narcissism precludes any awareness of this kind; such an individual is unable to see or appreciate the boundaries of others, and so others become mere extensions of self; the separateness of another person is not noted or respected. A narcissist becomes a windowless monad which contains a universe that exists only for it. Similarly, an autistic child is imprisoned by an extreme form of narcissism.

This is the familiar conception of narcissism. Our understanding of the phenomenon has been extended by recent studies in psychiatry; it is my intention here to bring together certain conclusions which they suggest, in an effort to shed light on the psychology of the philosophic enterprise.

Erich Fromm has devoted attention to what he called 'malignant narcissism'.[1] He characterized this condition in terms of an '*unsubmitted will*'. Fromm believed that all healthy adults submit themselves in a variety of ways to something higher than themselves – be it God, truth, love, or another ideal.

Narcissism, he believed, becomes malignant when an individual's willfulness becomes extreme, when self-involvement reaches a degree that a person is totally uncritical of self and is incapable of responding in a mature

1. *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*, New York: Harper and Row, 1964. See also his *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973.

and constructive way to criticism. When narcissism reaches the stage of malignancy, the individual stands in fear of external criticism because criticism is experienced as an implicit challenge to his or her self-isolation and withdrawal, and, as we will see, threatens the internal dynamics of the narcissist's lonely world of self.

Psychologists since Fromm have identified other defining characteristics of narcissism. Three of these qualities of personality may be grouped together: *the need to be always right, pride,* and *denial of personal fallibility or fault.*

It is inherent in the condition of narcissism for an individual to believe that whatever way he or she happens to perceive things is the right way, without the need for further study or reflection. It is typical for the person to resent any attempt to question his or her perceptions; indeed, the usual response is one of surprise followed by indignation and impatience.

The narcissist is keenly sensitive to disagreement, and reacts defensively with an intolerant and overweening pride, which claims a privileged comprehension of exactly how things are.

Clinical narcissism is further characterized by '*scapegoating behavior*' – a tendency to blame others and the environment, to construe many things which are beyond personal control as obstacles to the individual's functioning, and to situate responsibility for personal disappointments in the shortcomings of others. The narcissist has a blameful outlook, carries with him or her a record of past pains and bitterness, and will frequently engage in 'finger-pointing', underscoring the culpability of others when there is disagreement or a question of fault.

Pretense is a less easily recognized characteristic of the narcissist. There appears to be a need to camouflage reality, to 'dress up' what may be somewhat colorless or drab, to exaggerate what is already worthy of note, to oppose the common perception, to ignore inner feelings and to distort them. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck has devoted a book to a study of this inclination of the narcissist to *dissimulate,* to lie, about realities of self, others, and world.[2]

It is this tendency more than any other that makes narcissism difficult to treat in psychotherapy. The narcissist appears to be so caught in a net of

2. M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

his own fabrications and lies that he has lost, or has given up, the ability to detect his own *pretense*. The halls of the narcissist are filled with masks: If one mask comes no longer to serve its purpose, there is another to take its place. In the process, the narcissist's sense of identity is dissolved, or rather it is absorbed by the range of masks at his disposal. 'Being true to oneself' ceases, from this perspective, to have any meaning.

The pretense maintained by the narcissist is accompanied by overt pretentiousness: for example, the narcissist will disclaim having hateful feelings or vengeful desires. The narcissist's self-image is one of intrinsic inner perfection and faultlessness.

Under stress, the narcissist will demonstrate a degree of *intellectual deviousness* that can be quite incredible. Her or she is, as we have noted, uncommitted to any higher principle or authority; hence, there is available a freedom, even a facility, to dodge, to deny, to distort, and to confuse others. This deviousness or slipperiness is interpreted as a desire to avoid direct confrontation or engagement in personal relationships with others; it is an escape, a retreat from honesty.

Deviousness and evasiveness of this kind are associated with schizophrenia: the individual has an impaired ability to 'meta-communicate' – to label accurately the intentions behind the communications and behavior of others.[3] It is believed that an inability to discriminate on a meta-communicative level leads to a mix-up in the schizophrenic's capacity to distinguish levels of discourse. This is one reason, among others, that schizophrenia is characterized by a kind of disorganization of thought and of expression (appropriately called 'schizophrenic salad'). There seems to be a characteristic resistance to linear, coherent thought and expression, frustrating to a therapist in its almost deliberate-seeming qualities of avoidance and deviousness.[4]

Narcissism is further associated with a desire for *power*: The narcissist is motivated by a need to win, to come out 'on top', if necessary at the expense of others. There is frequently an urge to be in a position of authority. And there is an inclination to treat others as objects, or as mere appendages of

3. See, for example, Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* New York: Ballantine Books,1972, which contains several seminal papers on the theory of schizophrenia.
4. M. Scott Peck, *ibid.,* p. 129n, relates narcissism to 'ambulatory schizophrenia', in which the individual may function successfully in the world, yet exhibits this sort of disorganized thinking when under stress.

self due to an inability or unwillingness to recognize the boundaries of others – to accept and respect their separateness, the fact that others are persons in their own right. The authority therefore sought by the narcissist is particularly grandiose: it was exhibited by Hitler; it is manifested by nationalistic groups intoxicated by blind ideological self-love. Forms of this same grandiose authoritative style victimize innumerable families in which the personhood of a spouse or of a child is ignored, denied, abused, and perhaps eventually undercut.

The last characteristic of narcissism I will mention here is a kind of *psychological laziness*. The narcissist appears to feel it just is too much trouble and work to become involved in self-examination. A narcissistic mother or father will usually refuse to enter family therapy. To do so compromises the narcissist's unsubmitted will, his or her need for control, power, authority. Therapy is fundamentally a process in which individuals are encouraged to dispense with masks; the narcissist feels that submitting his or her will to the authority of a therapist would be a form of personal suicide. To recapitulate, pathological narcissism is characterized by:

- self-absorption to a degree that walls the individual off from himself, others, and the world;
- a refusal to submit one's will to a higher principle or to the authority of another; hence, a tendency to react with pronounced defensiveness to criticism;
- a need to be always right, coupled with a sense of comparative personal faultlessness displayed in a prideful, arrogant way;
- scapegoating behavior: the inability to accept that one is sometimes in error, and hence a noticeable pattern of blaming others and situations for personal disappointments, along with a habit of self-consciously keeping a record of past injuries;
- the maintenance of pretense: a compulsion to wear masks, to dissimulate, and to believe in one's actual perfection;
- intellectual deviousness, displayed especially when under stress, and taking the form of ingenious dodging, denials, distortions, and a resulting ability to 'throw up so much dust' that others become confused;
- a 'white-knuckled need' always to be in control; an urge to exercise power and authority over others; and
- a type of psychological laziness to engage in self-examination; resistance to real self-questioning.

3. *Causes of Narcissism*

Before going on to relate the preceding discussion of narcissism to philosophy, it is natural to want to ask how narcissism comes about. For many of us, it is incredible that such a psychological condition is possible, that it is possible for individuals to become so tragically cut off from others and

from themselves, and for this to occur in such a manner that a person becomes incapable or unwilling to admit that this is so.

As yet, clinical narcissism has not been studied extensively or in depth; much remains unknown about the condition, and its genesis.

There are several hypotheses which have so far been suggested: that narcissism is caused by the impact of a childhood trauma which drives a child to build rigid fortifications to protect against further pain. Habits become engrained, and the complex defenses that may have served a child's needs are never given up.

There is also the hypothesis that narcissism comes about in reaction to, or in subjugation to, the unreality of a 'schizophrenogenic' parent. The child attempts to insulate himself from the parent's confused and conflicting messages, draws in, and walls himself off in a world of his own.

Some psychologists have suggested that narcissism may be transmitted: a narcissistic parent's self-absorption blocks the expression of love and security needed by a child who, as a consequence, turns inward and develops patterns of thought and behavior that characterize narcissism.

In all these hypotheses *fear* plays a central role in maintaining the condition of narcissism. Behind the pretense, the dissimulations, the mask-wearing, the denials, the exaggerations, the blaming, deviousness, hunger for control and infallibility, willfulness and resistance to self-questioning – behind these run-away habits that have taken over the personality, lies fear: fear of reality, fear of truth about oneself and one's fallibility, fear of the separateness of others, fear of past events and suffering – fears we all have, but not to the heightened degree of the narcissist. Fears perpetuate the condition; they stand in the way of its acceptance and treatment. The narcissist is fundamentally a victim of his own fears, which seem so terrible and overwhelming they cannot even be thought of; he is lost in an unrecognized labyrinth of his own unacknowledged fashioning.

4. *Narcissism and Philosophy*

Philosophers, like other people, are subject to human frailties. Some are probably clinical narcissists. I do not know if a larger proportion of philosophers is narcissistic than are theologians, poets, composers, artists, or writers. But probably, for reasons I will try to make clear, a greater proportion of the philosophical population suffers from characteristics of

unacknowledged narcissism than do, for example, scientists.

I believe that the nature of philosophic activity promotes and is encouraged by many qualities of personality which closely resemble qualities that define narcissism. Since I am a philosopher, I am especially concerned with the philosophic profession and its future prospects. I suspect that some of the points I make are true of other professions in which individual expression is encouraged, or in which a system of belief is made a central focus, as in religion or political ideology. However, I want to limit what I have to say here to a discipline in which I have worked for a long time.

Resistance to a unitary, evaluative framework

In spite of occasional attempts during philosophy's long history to develop a unitary, evaluative methodology, the practice of most philosophy has opposed this objective. Divergent philosophical positions are propounded; there is no shared universe of discourse in which to assess competing views. Indeed, there is no consensus among philosophers as to the desirability of reaching agreement. The activity of philosophers is itself evidence of a resistance to establishing universal criteria of philosophical evaluation; the possibility of such criteria is raised as a philosophical question from the standpoints of competing, specialized positions. The world of philosophical reflection ultimately therefore turns into a monadology.

I submit that this tradition has not come about by accident. After thinking about this for more than two decades, with care and whatever impartiality I have been able to acquire, I have come to suspect that much of philosophy's history reveals the phenomenon of an unsubmitted will which we encountered in our examination of narcissism. Resistance to standards of external evaluation, a desire for freedom from unitary methodological constraints – these are expressions of a willfulness that rebels against submission to a higher discipline, authority, rules of arbitration, or principles of progressive construction.

There are two things involved: the profession of philosophy, with a tradition, momentum, and indeed a will of its own, and individual philosophers, who come and go, transient contributors to historical succession. The nature of the field exerts an attraction upon men and women who, to varying degrees, share certain psychological characteristics. Certainly, if

philosophy gives approval to an unsubmitted will, the profession is likely to attract individuals who seek the freedom from methodological constraint it offers. It would then be predictable that many individual philosophers will display subjective willfulness, a will that refuses to submit to a higher authority.

The work of science, in contrast, is inspired by a *willingness* to submit to criteria of evaluation with which any investigator's efforts may be judged. Science is the enemy of intellectual narcissism, for it countenances no private privilege, and accords positive judgment only when consensus of the scientific community is reached.

The occasionally expressed desire that philosophy become scientific is no more nor less than a recommendation that it submit its willfulness to agreed-upon, unitary tenets of reason.

Uncritical self-acceptance

Paul Arthur Schilpp, Editor of the Library of Living Philosophers, observed that only once in his long editorship, which brought him into close contact with many well-known philosophers, did he meet a philosopher who acknowledged having made a mistake.

Philosophers seem 'possessed' by a need to be always right. They attempt dialogue, but as Henry W. Johnstone, Jr., has noted, what normally ensues are soliloquies in which each appears to own faultless judgment. Philosophical positions pass each other like ships in the night. Philosophers, Schilpp once remarked,[5] do not *want* to understand one another.

Criticisms of a philosopher's publicly read paper tend to reveal more of a desire for one-upmanship than for constructive communication. Husserl noted that, at philosophy congresses, "philosophers meet but, unfortunately, not the philosophies. The philosophies lack the unity of a mental space in which they might exist for and act on one another."[6]

Perhaps Husserl was overly sanguine: perhaps neither the philosophies *nor* the philosophers actually meet. Schilpp and Johnstone seem to have reached this conclusion.

5. In a talk for the Department of Philosophy, Saint Louis University, in September, 1980.
6. Edmund Husserl, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science", translated by Quentin Lauer in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy,* New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p. 5.

Contentiousness

The dynamics, the life blood, of philosophical position-taking is contention. Contention is a two-pronged strategy: its objective is to show that one is right, and that the other man is wrong. Philosophers, if they cannot accomplish both, try at least to do one of these. Philosophical argument tends to oscillate between self-demonstration and undermining the opposition. From this point of view, it has long been recognized that training in philosophical argumentation can be useful background for law students. In philosophical contention, the effort to undermine one's opposition is an expression of a kind of scapegoating behavior: destructive criticism is finger-pointing in which blame is ascribed. Philosophical contention seems fundamentally to be motivated by a desire for power. It is a motivation that is now called 'win-no-lose'.

The Pretense

Philosophy traditionally has espoused Socrates' dictum, 'Know thyself'. However, like people in any age, Athenians of his time, or men and women of the present, there are many things we prefer not to hear, and many things we say which are less than true.

The impulse to do philosophy is the search for truth. Philosophy is *not* a cafeteria offering a variety of positions from which we may choose to fit our prejudices and belief-systems. (Although one may get this impression after years of teaching freshmen and sophomores, and observing how it is that they come to adhere to a particular philosophic approach.)

In any pretense, there is the requirement that one maintain ignorance of the existence of the dissimulation, and that one become *invested* in it.

If much philosophic activity claims to be a search for truth, but is motivated by a narcissistic interest in building a conceptual home for intuitively accepted beliefs and biases, then its practitioners are involved in pretending.

Intellectual deviousness

It is impossible in the practice of therapy to *force* the recognition of pretense. An endless array of masks is available to the committed narcissist. As we have remarked, the position-taking of the narcissist can be so 'slippery', shifting, evasive, or productive of confusion, that pretense becomes

impermeable. The condition of narcissism is inspired by perhaps an outgrown, but not discarded, need for self-defense.

Unlike psychological narcissism, philosophical positions do not have available an endless corridor of pretense, nor do they wish it. A philosophical position has an identity: a propounder of that position is committed to certain claims, which are held constant.

Nonetheless, many philosophical positions function in practice so as to evade criticism. They do this by means of terminological or ideational obscurity, a thick smoke-screen in which only initiates can navigate confidently. They do this by means of vagueness, which serves as a shelter when the going gets rough, and by means of rhetorical deftness.

Together, these devices can resist a critical onslaught for a long time, certainly for the duration of a paper's public reading, and sometimes for centuries.

Intellectual lassitude

Intellectual lassitude finds its way into philosophical position-taking in subtle ways.[7] For purposes here, it is sufficient to consider that *philosophical narcissism* – for this is the phenomenon I have in view – is a highly effective intellectual system of defenses. It has, in a multitude of instances in the history of the discipline, demonstrated its strength: Philosophical positions are, as a result, I propose, effectively resistant to change. It is a tribute to their genius and to their indomitable narcissism that we are still able to discuss seriously Plato's Theory of Forms and St. Thomas' *anima*, while we become, pleasantly or frustratingly, lost in Heidegger's vocabulary, or devote years to clawing a way through Husserl's conceptual jungle. Because the dynamics of narcissism *works so well*, there can be no felt pressures to encourage change.

And so, as we have seen, one of the characteristics of psychological narcissism is a kind of laziness – an inertial resistance to self-examination which, if psychologists are correct, serves to mask fear.

The challenge to change, to 'grow up', to place pretense to one side and move into reality – these are easily expressed, but difficult, sometimes impossible, to accomplish in therapy when narcissism is involved.

7. This phenomenon is discussed more fully in "Psychological Underpinnings of Philosophy" (to appear).

Perhaps all disciplines, like individuals, must go through an early phase of infantile narcissism. But if this initial phase becomes an epoch, direct confrontation of the pretense is the approach recommended in therapy.[8] And yet, it must be admitted, this works but seldom.

Jung has said that evil arises out of a failure to acknowledge it. Fromm believed that narcissism and evil are linked. Peck suggests that the pretense of narcissism is its cause and its expression, and that pretense, the tendency to lie, convincingly, to oneself and others, is at the root of human evil. Evil is, Peck maintains in the tradition of Christian thinkers, anti-life. Narcissism is anti-growth; it stands in the way of constructive change, of development, of the natural succession of better adaptations which replace earlier ones.

Philosophia perennis may be less a thing to admire than an admission of arrested growth.

5. *Conclusion*

If some of the observations I have proposed correspond to facts about the profession, they need to be discussed openly. On the one hand, it is certainly possible to argue that, in a world becoming increasingly obsessive about technologies, quantification, rules, and methods, philosophy, along with other liberal fields, affords a needed respite. And yet, on the other hand, one may wonder: If philosophy and its practitioners *are* caught in a mad, i.e., unrecognized, self-destructive circle perpetuated by the spirit of narcissism, we can break free only if we will face the reality squarely, acknowledging our fears, but refusing to give them sway over us. If to a significant degree philosophy is an incarnation of a kind of narcissism, then, in the courage we summon to admit this, the blind habits of narcissism will gradually lose their power over us.

8. M. Scott Peck, *ibid.*, pp. 178ff.

Dr. Bartlett was born in Mexico and received his Ph.D. from the Université de Paris. He has taught at the University of Florida, the University of Hartford, and was Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University until 1984, when he left teaching to devote himself full-time to research and writing. He has published five books and monographs and more than thirty papers in professional journals. Dr. Bartlett is currently working on a book, a guide to psychotherapy.

Narcissism and Defending Self-Esteem. An Exploratory Study based on Self-characterizations

Guido Veronese[1,*], Rossella Procaccia[2], Giovanni M. Ruggiero[3], Sandra Sassaroli[3] and Marco Castiglioni[1]

[1]*Department of Human Sciences, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy*

[2]*University e-Campus, Novedrate (LC), Italy*

[3]*Studi Cognitivi, Psychotherapy School, Milano, Italy*

Abstract: The present qualitative study aims at investigating the role of socio-relational variables in the construction of threats to self-esteem, grandiosity, and relaxation in a non-clinical sample of 35 young university students. The work provides fresh experimental evidence of the structural analogy observed in clinical settings between constructions of threat to self-esteem and grandiose fantasies. We hypothesize that the relational dimension would be more strongly present than either biological or psychological dimensions.The results show that descriptions of relaxation differ significantly from their characterizations of the other two domains. Specifically we found greater continuity and narrative connection between the aspects of threat and grandiosity, while the domain of relaxation showed a more "isolated" pattern.

Keywords: Grandiose fantasies, threat to self-esteem, non-pathological narcissism, self-characterzation, qualitative methods.

INTRODUCTION

As defined by DSM IV-TR [1], the distinctive traits of patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) include grandiose fantasies of power, success and/or superiority; a feeling of entitlement; and an inability to appreciate the successes and good qualities of others [2]. Horowitz [3] suggested that grandiose states are actually a defensive manoeuvre with the function of mitigating feelings of low self-esteem and masking a deep-lying sense of inferiority and shame. Through their grandiose fantasies, narcissists attempt to protect themselves from criticism and humiliation, both of which they experience as intolerable [4-13]. All narcissistic subjects perceive themselves at some level to be excluded, despised and ostracized [2, 14, 15].

Veronese and colleaugues [16] reported empirical evidence of an interconnection between grandiose fantasies and fantasies of threats to self-esteem in a study with a non-clinical sample; in contrast, evoking relaxing scenarios has been found to distract subjects from narcissistic contents [17].

The current study was underpinned by a systemic-constructionist perspective, which attributes a primary role to intersubjectivity and social (particularly familial) relations in the origin, development and maintenance of the self and identity, whether typical or atypical. In this approach, the relational context is viewed as "complex", including in addition to "traditional" dyadic relationships, interactions among three or more participants [18-23].

The aim of the study was to conduct a qualitative exploration of how narcissistic defensive structures may contribute to increased risk of loss of self-esteem in non-pathological individuals. Specifically, we examined the construct system of a sample of university students, with a view to advancing understanding of non-pathological narcissistic mechanisms and informing theoretical reflection on analogous traits of pathological narcissism [6, 24].

One of the peculiar traits of narcissism, whether in the context of a healthy and balanced personal identity [25] or of a pathological personality type [2, 6] is a marked difficulty in building and maintaining significant "warm" relationships with others. Narcissistic individuals' preoccupation with rank and their continuous monitoring of relationships perceived as threatening prevents them from committing to warm relationships or forming strong relational bonds. This also explains why one of the key challenges in psychotherapy with persons affected by NPD is building a satisfactory therapeutic alliance between patient and therapist. The primary outcome of this difficulty in establishing relationships is the tendency to exploit relationships to achieve the narcissist's own ends in cases of non-pathological narcissism, and a self-perpetuating cycle of rupture and repair of the psychotherapist-patient therapeutic alliance in the case of pathological narcissism [26]. Both in

*Address correspondence to this author at the Department of Human Siences, Univesity of Milano-Bicocca, Piazza dell'Ateneo Nuovo 1, 20126, Milano, Italy; Tel: +39 2 64484800; Fax: +39(0)264484863;
E-mail: guido.veronese@unimib.it

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the case of NPD and in that of non-pathological narcissistic traits, a fear of relationships perceived as threatening appears to have a crucial influence on the construct systems of individuals. Nonetheless, few studies reported in the literature have explored the narcissistic personality from a relational perspective or attempted to explain the relational characteristics of the narcissistic personality [24, 27, 28]. It would almost appear that the relational domain is treated as a superordinate category mediated by individual variables of the psychological, emotional and behavioural kinds [7-9].

Given the theoretical background just outlined, our research aim was to investigate the role of socio-relational variables in the construction of threats to self-esteem, grandiosity, and relaxation. Specifically, we hypothesized that the relational dimension would be more strongly present than either biological or psychological dimensions.

A further aim was to provide fresh experimental evidence, in a non-clinical sample of young university students, of the structural analogy observed in clinical settings between constructions of threat to self-esteem and grandiose fantasies; we also hypothesized that participants' descriptions of relaxation would differ significantly from their characterizations of the other two domains. Specifically we expected that there would be greater continuity and narrative connection between the aspects of threat and grandiosity, and that the domain of relaxation would present a more "isolated" pattern.

Thus, we set out to use qualitative analysis of self-characterizations [29], to verify whether, and to what extent, relational aspects prevail over psychological and biological aspects in the defence strategies that individuals normally activate to protect themselves from threats to their self-esteem. In our view, threats themselves are also more relational in nature than psychological and biological. Thus, structural similarities between the threatening and "protective grandiose" contents of the self in individuals' self-characterizations would suggest the hypothesis that a coping strategy of using grandiose fantasies to protect the self from threats to self-esteem is ineffective and counterproductive. We therefore also set out to explore via the self-characterization task whether, as suggested in the literature, relaxation strategies may not represent a valid alternative to the use of the grandiose self in coping with threats to self-esteem.

METHOD

Instrument and administration procedure

A purposive convenience sample of 35 university students (average age 22.5; *sd* 3.2) was asked to write a self-characterization [30]. In order to protect participants' anonymity and privacy, they were asked to identify themselves with a nickname that did not reveal their true identity. They were given as much time as necessary, in practice between 25 and 45 minutes, to compose their self-description.

The specific instructions provided were as follows:

> "First of all, please choose a nickname for yourself (for example your initials followed by your date of birth). Write your nickname on each of the sheets that you are given. Try to choose an "original" nickname to prevent you from being confused with another respondent.
>
> Now, please write a character sketch of yourself, just as if you were the main character in a play. Write it as it might be written by a friend who knew you very intimately, perhaps better than anybody else. Be careful to use the third person. For example, begin by saying " X (= nickname) is …".

The task was administered to all participants at one sitting.

Data analysis

The self-characterization texts were subjected to content analysis. We used the software for textual analysis Atlas-Ti to define the relationships between semantic nodes ascribable to our three preordained families (or clusters) of threat, grandiosity and relaxation and to a further three families of codes predefined on the basis of the bio-psycho-social model [31]. Thus nine families of codes were created in all: the families of biological, psychological and relational codes (dimensions), distributed across three macro-families or domains: threat, grandiosity and relaxation.

Atlas-Ti is a software for the coding and analysis of texts. The analytical procedure involves importing the text, reading it closely, and then selecting words, phrases or paragraphs (*quotations*) to link to a series of conceptual categories (*codes*). The data may subsequently be exported to statistical packages such as Spss for the purposes of quantitative investigation. One of the advantages of Atlas-Ti is that aggregate codes, individual codes or citations may be easily retrieved in real time. This function is useful both during the analysis phase and for the purposes of calling up fragments of text for inclusion in the research report. As well as allowing analysis to be conducted rapidly and flexibly, the programme is suited to the treatment and manipulation of large quantities of data. In the present study, after a first *"free" coding* stage carried out by a researcher whose brief was to stay as closely as possible to the text, the initial codes were classified and relabelled (e.g., "strong self-esteem"; etc..) via inter-judge discussion, and then grouped into three clusters: the first cluster contained all the fragments of text ascribable to a semantic universe of threat to self-esteem, namely descriptions, adjectives or nouns that could be perceived as undermining a positive self-image (e.g., "feels inadequate", etc.); the second cluster was related to the semantic universe of *"grandiosity"*, that is to say, all descriptions that could be read as attempts to defend the self from threat by defining it positively, in terms of self-efficacy, relational success, etc.; the third cluster was made up of nouns, adjectives and descriptive phrases that reflected an attempt on the part of the respondent to relax without invoking either positive or negative definitions of self (e.g., "winds down while painting"). The coders then subdivided each of the three clusters of threat, grandiosity and relaxation into three dimensions: the first grouped together descriptions focusing on the body and physiological states (*biological dimension*), the second contained references to inner and psycho-emotional experience *(psychological dimension)*, while the third contained fragments of text describing

respondents' social and relational lives (*relational dimension*). Finally the coders defined a series of logical-semantic connections (such as code A is related to B, A is part of B, A causes B, A is a property of B, etc.) among the codes from the three bio-psycho-social dimensions and the three domains of self-description (self under threat, grandiose self and "relaxing" to distance the self from threat).

RESULTS

The self-characterizations reflected a tendency for individuals to describe themselves predominantly in psychological and relational terms (see Table **1**). The tendency to describe the self in terms of the bodily dimension was far more limited (see Fig. **1**). The relational dimension was slightly more prominent than the psychological dimension in terms of number of occurrences (*quotations*) and frequency of codes. References to the biological dimension were far less numerous and frequent. The frequency of psychological and relational codes in the threatening and grandiose domains was almost equal, whereas these domains contained drastically fewer references to the biological dimension.

The domains of threat and grandiosity were characterized by highly similar semantic structures. In both cases, the semantic network of the psychological dimension revolved around the "node" of "self-esteem" (see Figs. **2** & **3**), and that of the socio-relational dimension around nodes concerning significant relationships and themes of social belonging and loneliness.

In contrast, the domain of relaxation was characterized by a completely different semantic structure and self-descriptive modes to the other two domains: the prevalent meanings were those related to the sphere of religion and self-liberating practices, which allowed respondents to "*detach*" from the issues of belonging and self-esteem. Thus this dimension appeared to be totally independent of those of threat and grandiosity. The attempts to relax described in the self-characterizations were never relational in nature (see Fig. **3**) [32].

Thus, in general, the threatening and grandiose descriptions formed similar semantic networks, as though personal identity were in constant and unstable equilibrium between a threatened self and a grandiose form of narcissistic defence. It appears that the more individuals try to defend themselves from threats to their identity by raising the shield of narcissistic grandiosity, the more the self feels threatened by the failure of this strategy of "positive self-description". Subjects become trapped in a vicious cycle that does not allow them to distance themselves from the continuous battle between their need to define themselves positively and humiliating attacks on their self-esteem [7-9].

Table 1. Frequency of biological, psychological and relational codes in the domains of grandiosity, relaxation and threat.

Domain/Dimension	Grandiosity	Relaxation	Threat	Tot.
Biological	10	3	11	24
Psychological	44	5	41	90
Relational	48	0	50	98
Tot.	102	8	102	212

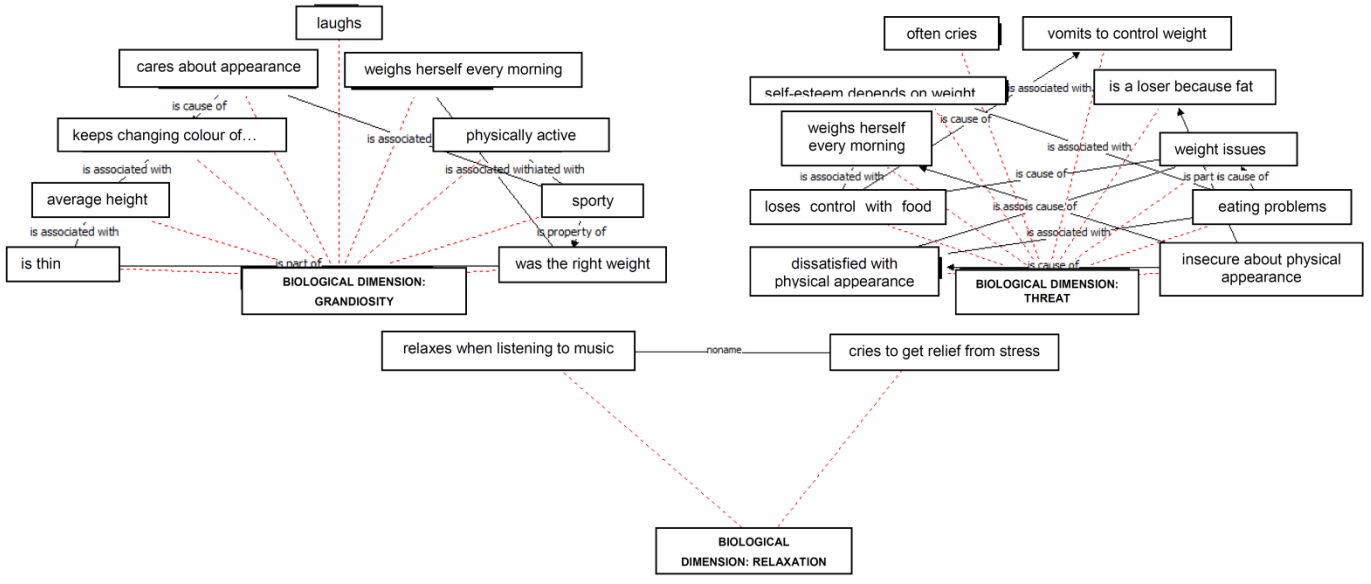

Fig. (1). Graphic representation of grandiose traits, threat and relaxation in the biological dimension.

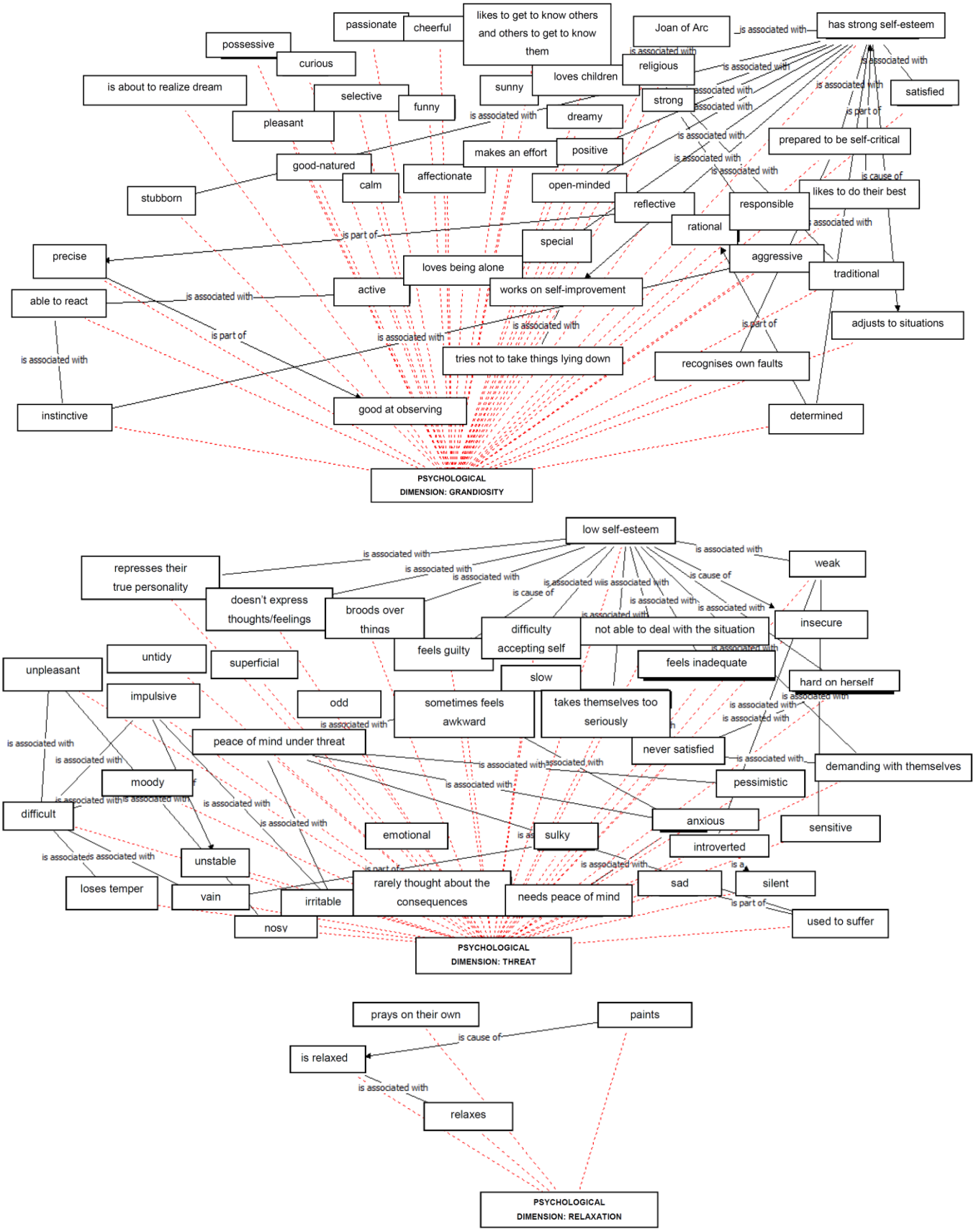

Fig. (2). Graphic representation of grandiose traits, threat and relaxation in the psychological dimension.

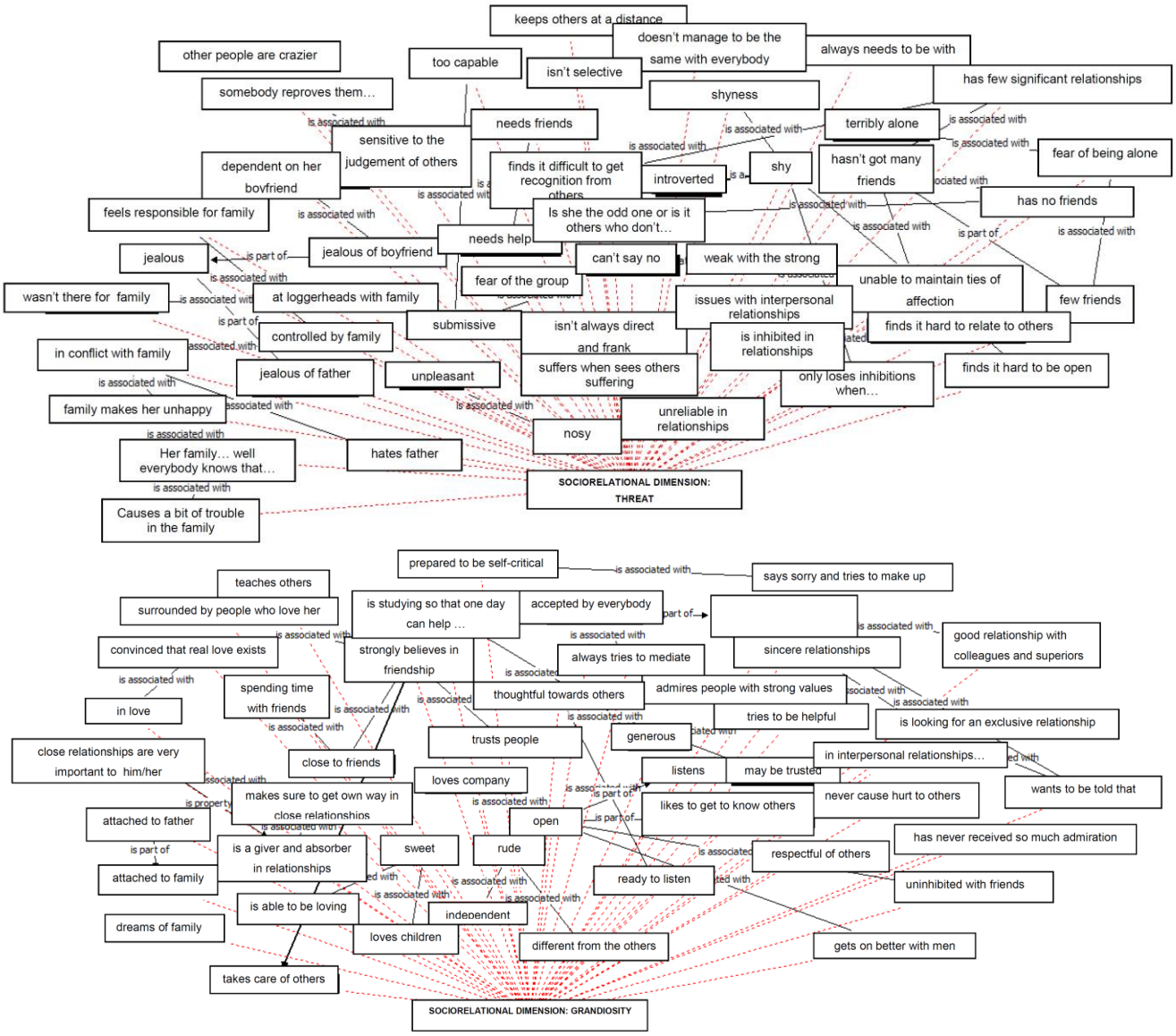

Fig. (3). Graphic representation of grandiose traits, threat and relaxation in the relational dimension.

CONCLUSION

The results appear to confirm our hypothesis regarding the key importance of the socio-relational dimension in relation to threat and grandiosity. This dimension also plays a key role in the domain of relaxation, although in this context bodily and physiological contents are equally present and salient.

At the clinical-interpretative level it would appear that the "public" (whether made up of one or more other persons) is of vital importance, both in situations of threats to self-esteem and in grandiosity [33, 14, 15]. In contrast, when subjects wish to relax they focus on fantasies that involve the physical-bodily and psychological dimensions rather than the relational one.

With regard to triadic/polyadic interactions, our results confirm that triadic contexts do not feature in people's "common sense" schemas [34]: subjects tend to think of interactions predominantly in dyadic terms. However it is interesting to note that the highest frequency of triadic/polyadic interactions occurs in relation to threats to self-esteem.

In sum, our findings provide further evidence for the structural similarities between the domains of grandiosity and threats to self-esteem hypothesized in the literature [3, 35, 36]. In contrast, relaxation appears to follow a pattern of its own. This suggests that narcissists' attempts to protect their self-esteem via grandiose manoeuvres only reinforce the very sense of threat and feelings of inadequacy from which they are desperately trying to protect themselves. A more effective distancing strategy could be to progressively train themselves to focus on whatever they find relaxing. It is most likely that narcissists seek "refuge" in grandiose fantasizing because they have difficulty protecting themselves from threats to their self-esteem by drawing on strategies that help them to relax [32].

Naturally some limitations of the present work should be noted. Firstly, while our findings provide useful guidance for

the formulation of hypotheses to be extended to patient populations, they may not be reliably generalized in that the data was drawn from a non-clinical sample. The low numerosity of the sample, and the uneven gender distribution and young age of the participants, also prevents us from viewing the results as definitive. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in the qualitative research samples must be large enough to provide a set of data to explain the phenomenon we want to study, but at the same time if the sample is too large data becomes redundant and superfluous. Summing up in this study the authors followed the principle of saturation [37]; that is when new data are not able to add any further explanation on the research's questions under investigation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that this article content has no conflicts of interest.

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Declared none.

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Narcissism

Narcissism is the pursuit of gratification from vanity or egotistic admiration of one's idealised self-image and attributes. The term originated from Greek mythology, where a young man named Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water. Narcissism or pathological self-absorption was first identified as a disorder in 1898 by Havelock Ellis[1] and featured in subsequent psychological models, e.g. in Freud's *On Narcissism* (1914). The American Psychiatric Association has listed the classification narcissistic personality disorder in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) since 1968, drawing on the historical concept of megalomania.

It is distinct from concepts of distinguishing the self (egocentrism or egoism) and healthy forms of responsibility and care for oneself ("primary narcissism"). Narcissism by contrast is considered a problem for relationships with self and others and for maintaining a functional culture. In trait personality theory it features in several self-report personality inventories including the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory. It is one of the three dark triadic personality traits (the others being psychopathy and Machiavellianism).

Contents

History

The term *narcissism* comes from the Greek myth about Narcissus (Greek: Νάρκισσος, *Narkissos*), a handsome Greek youth who, according to Ovid, rejected the desperate advances of the nymph Echo. This caused Narcissus to fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to consummate his love, Narcissus "lay gazing enraptured into the pool, hour after hour," and finally changed into a flower that bears his name, the narcissus.[2] The concept of excessive selfishness has been recognized throughout history. In ancient Greece the concept was understood as hubris. It is only since the late 1800s that narcissism has been defined in psychological terms.[1]

The myth of Sisyphus tells about a man punished for his hubristic belief that his cleverness surpassed that of Zeus himself. He has to push a stone up a mountain each day, only to have to recommence the task on the next day.

- In 1752 Jean-Jacques Rousseau's play *Narcissus: or the Self-Admirer* was performed in Paris.[3]
- In 1898 Havelock Ellis, an English psychologist, used the term "Narcissus-like" in reference to excessive masturbation, whereby the person becomes his or her own sex object.[1]
- In 1899, Paul Näcke was the first person to use the term "narcissism" in a study of sexual perversions.[4]
- Otto Rank in 1911 published the first psychoanalytical paper specifically concerned with narcissism, linking it to vanity and self-admiration.[1]
- Sigmund Freud published a paper on narcissism in 1914 called "On Narcissism: An Introduction".[5]
- In 1923, Martin Buber published an essay "*Ich und Du*" (I and Thou), in which he pointed out that our narcissism often leads us to relate to others as objects instead of as equals.[6]

Traits and signs

> Life is a stage, and when the curtain falls upon an act, it is finished and forgotten. The emptiness of such a life is beyond imagination.
>
> —Alexander Lowen describing the existence of a narcissist[7]

Four dimensions of narcissism as a personality variable have been delineated: leadership/authority, superiority/arrogance, self-absorption/self-admiration, and exploitativeness/entitlement.[8]

Numerous studies (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Russ, Shedler, Bradley, & Westen, 2008; Wink, 1991) have demonstrated that narcissism has two or more variants, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. The grandiose variant, which is usually measured using the NPI is strongly linked to the DSM-IV conceptualization and is the variant associated with NPD, a Cluster B personality disorder which reflect traits related to self-importance, entitlement, aggression, and dominance. Vulnerable narcissism reflects a defensive and fragile grandiosity, which functions mainly as a cover for feelings of inadequacy. Vulnerable narcissism characterized by hypersensitivity, defensiveness, and withdrawal and is strongly associated with BPD, which is characterized by the fear of abandonment, interpersonal and affective instability, impulsivity, chronic feelings of emptiness, suicidal ideation, and self-mutilation. Pathological narcissism is when both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism is concurrent, which is linked to poor self-esteem, lack of empathy, feelings of shame, interpersonal distress, aggression, and significant impairments in personality functioning across both clinical and non-clinical samples. Pathological narcissism, as measured by the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), is embedded within the personality disorders organized at the borderline level, which include antisocial, borderline, narcissistic personality disorders. PNI scales exhibited significant associations with parasuicidal behavior, suicide attempts, homicidal ideation, and several aspects of psychotherapy utilization.[9] Despite the phenomenological and empirical distinction between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, there is experimental evidence from studies that have employed direct or indirect ego-threat to suggest that grandiose narcissists have also a fragile, vulnerable core.[10]

Clinical and research aspects

Narcissistic personality disorder

Narcissistic personality disorder affects an estimated 1% of the general population.[11][12] Although most individuals have some narcissistic traits, high levels of narcissism can manifest themselves in a pathological form as narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), whereby the individual overestimates his or her abilities and has an excessive need for admiration and affirmation. NPD was revised in the DSM-5. The general move towards a dimensional (personality trait-based) view of the Personality Disorders has been maintained. Some narcissists may have a limited or minimal capability to experience emotions.[13]

Treatment and management

The Cochrane Collaboration has commissioned two reviews of the evidence for psychological and medical treatments for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).[14] In both cases, they suspended their initiatives after the authors had made no progress in over a year. There are no clear treatment strategies for NPD,[15] neither medication nor psychotherapy.[16] There is evidence that therapies effective in the treatment of other personality disorders do not generalise to NPD.[17]

Required element within normal development

Karen Horney saw the narcissistic personality as a temperament trait molded by a certain kind of early environment. She did not see narcissistic needs and tendencies as inherent in human nature.[18]

Normal or healthy narcissism is an essential component of mature self-esteem and basic self-worth.[19][20][21] Dr. Craig Malkin describes a lack of healthy narcissism as echoism, a term inspired by the nymph Echo in the mythology of Narcissus.[22]

Freud said that narcissism was an original state from which the individual develops the love object.[23] He argued that healthy narcissism is an essential part of normal development.[5] According to Freud, the love of the parents for their child and their attitude toward their child could be seen as a revival and reproduction of their own narcissism.[5] The child has a megalomaniac omnipotence of thought;[23] the parents stimulate that feeling because in their child they see the things that they have never reached themselves. Compared to neutral observers, parents tend to overvalue the qualities of their child. When parents act in an extreme opposite style and the child is rejected or inconsistently reinforced depending on the mood of the parent, the self-needs of the child are not met.

Freud contrasted the natural development of active-egoistic and passive-altruistic tendencies in the individual with narcissism, in the former, and what Trevor Pederson referred to as echoism, in the latter.[24]

> This is the place for two remarks. First, how do we differentiate between the concepts of narcissism and egoism? Well, narcissism, I believe, is the libidinal complement to egoism. When we speak of egoism, we have in view only the individual's advantage; when we talk of narcissism we are also taking his libidinal satisfaction into account. As practical motives the two can be traced separately for quite a distance. It is possible to be absolutely egoistic and yet maintain powerful object-cathexes, in so far as libidinal satisfaction in relation to the object forms part of the ego's needs. In that case, egoism will see to it that striving for the object involves no damage to the ego. It is possible to be egoistic and at the same time to be excessively narcissistic—that is to say, to have very little need for an object, whether, once more, for the purpose of direct sexual satisfaction, or in connection with the higher aspirations, derived from sexual need, which we are occasionally in the habit of contrasting with 'sensuality' under the name of 'love'. In all these connections egoism is what is self-evident and constant, while narcissism is the variable element. The opposite to egoism, altruism, does not, as a concept, coincide with libidinal object-cathexis, but is distinguished from it by the absence of longings for sexual satisfaction. When someone is completely in love, however, altruism converges with libidinal object-cathexis. As a rule the sexual object attracts a portion of the ego's narcissism to itself, and this becomes noticeable as what is known as the 'sexual overvaluation' of the object. If in addition there is an altruistic transposition of egoism on to the sexual object, the object becomes supremely powerful; it has, as it were, absorbed the ego." (Freud, *Introductory Lectures* (1919), pp. 417–18)

Where the egoist can give up love in narcissism, the altruist can give up on the competition, or "the will," in echoism. The individual first has a non-ambivalent relations of *fusion* with authority or love figures, which are characterized by the egoistic or altruistic drives. Second, the individual can move to *defusion* from authority or love figures which leads to repetitions of ambivalent, narcissistic or echoistic relations. In the third movement, the individual becomes the dead or absent parental figure that never returned love to the echoist, or the perfect, grandiose parental figure in narcissism.[24] While egoism and narcissism concern dynamics of power and inferiority/superiority, Pederson argues that altruism and echoism concern dynamics of belonging and inclusion/exclusion. Pederson has two types of echoists: the "subject altruist" and the "object altruist", with the former being concerned with the belonging of others and loving them, and the latter being concerned with their own belonging and being loved. The subject altruist is self-effacing, a people pleaser, and sacrifices her

desire to help others who are outsiders become insiders, or to be the submissive helper of an insider. The object altruist is gregarious, a people person, and wants to be interesting which is based on wanting to fit in and not be an outsider or wanting to be unique as an insider. Both types of echoists show issues with being submissive, having problems saying no, and avoiding conflict.[24]

In relation to the pathological condition

Freud's idea of narcissism described a pathology which manifests itself in the inability to love others, a lack of empathy, emptiness, boredom, and an unremitting need to search for power, while making the person unavailable to others.[25]

Healthy narcissism has to do with a strong feeling of "own love" protecting the human being against illness. Eventually, however, the individual must love the other, "the object love to not become ill". The individual becomes ill as a result of the frustration created when he is unable to love the object.[26] In pathological narcissism such as the narcissistic personality disorder, the person's libido has been withdrawn from objects in the world and produces megalomania. The clinical theorists Kernberg, Kohut and Theodore Millon all saw pathological narcissism as a possible outcome in response to unempathic and inconsistent early childhood interactions. They suggested that narcissists try to compensate in adult relationships.[27] The pathological condition of narcissism is, as Freud suggested, a magnified, extreme manifestation of healthy narcissism.

Healthy narcissism has been suggested to be correlated with good psychological health. Self-esteem works as a mediator between narcissism and psychological health. Therefore, because of their elevated self-esteem, deriving from self-perceptions of competence and likability, high narcissists are relatively free of worry and gloom.[28]

Other researchers have suggested that healthy narcissism cannot be seen as 'good' or 'bad', but that it depends on the contexts and outcomes being measured. In certain social contexts such as initiating social relationships, and with certain outcome variables, such as feeling good about oneself, healthy narcissism can be helpful. In other contexts, such as maintaining long-term relationships and with outcome variables, such as accurate self-knowledge, healthy narcissism can be unhelpful.[29]

Commonly used measures

Narcissistic Personality Inventory

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) is the most widely used measure of narcissism in social psychological research. Although several versions of the NPI have been proposed in the literature, a forty-item forced-choice version (Raskin & Terry, 1988) is the one most commonly employed in current research. Another shorter version, a sixteen-item version NPI-16 (Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2013) is also present. The NPI is based on the DSM-III clinical criteria for narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), although it was designed to measure these features in the general population. Thus, the NPI is often said to measure "normal" or "subclinical" (borderline) narcissism (i.e., in people who score very high on the NPI do not necessarily meet criteria for diagnosis with NPD).

Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory

The Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) is a widely used diagnostic test developed by Theodore Millon. The MCMI includes a scale for Narcissism. The NPI and MCMI have been found to be well correlated, $r(146) = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$.[30] Whereas the MCMI measures narcissistic personality disorder (NPD),

the NPI measures narcissism as it occurs in the general population. In other words, the NPI measures "normal" narcissism; i.e., most people who score very high on the NPI do not have NPD. Indeed, the NPI does not capture any sort of narcissism taxon as would be expected if it measured NPD.[31]

Empirical studies

Within the field of psychology, there are two main branches of research into narcissism: (1) clinical and (2) social psychology.

These two approaches differ in their view of narcissism, with the former treating it as a disorder, thus as discrete, and the latter treating it as a personality trait, thus as a *continuum*. These two strands of research tend loosely to stand in a divergent relation to one another, although they converge in places.

Campbell and Foster (2007)[29] review the literature on narcissism. They argue that narcissists possess the following "basic ingredients":

- Positive: Narcissists think they are better than others.[32]
- Inflated: Narcissists' views tend to be contrary to reality. In measures that compare self-report to objective measures, narcissists' self-views tend to be greatly exaggerated.[33]
- Agentic: Narcissists' views tend to be most exaggerated in the agentic domain, relative to the communion domain.[32][33]
- Special: Narcissists perceive themselves to be unique and special people.[34]
- Selfish: Research upon narcissists' behaviour in resource dilemmas supports the case for narcissists as being selfish.[35]
- Oriented toward success: Narcissists are oriented towards success by being, for example, approach oriented.[36]

Narcissists tend to demonstrate a lack of interest in warm and caring interpersonal relationships.[29] There are several ongoing controversies within narcissism literature, namely: whether narcissism is healthy or unhealthy; a personality disorder; a discrete or continuous variable; defensive or offensive; the same across genders; the same across cultures; and changeable or unchangeable.

Campbell and Foster (2007) argue that self-regulatory strategies are of paramount importance to understanding narcissism.[29] Self-regulation in narcissists involves such things as striving to make one's self look and feel positive, special, successful and important. It comes in both intra-psychic, such as blaming a situation rather than self for failure, and interpersonal forms, such as using a relationship to serve one's own self. Some differences in self-regulation between narcissists and non-narcissists can be seen with Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides & Elliot (2000)[37] who conducted a study with two experiments. In each experiment, participants took part in an achievement task, following which they were provided with false feedback; it was either bogus success or failure. The study found that both narcissists and non-narcissists self-enhanced, but non-narcissists showed more flexibility in doing so. Participants were measured on both a comparative and a non-comparative self-enhancement strategy. Both narcissists and non-narcissists employed the non-comparative strategy similarly; however, narcissists were found to be more self-serving with the comparative strategy, employing it far more than non-narcissists, suggesting a greater rigidity in their self-enhancement. When narcissists receive negative feedback that threatens the self, they self-enhance at all costs, but non-narcissists tend to have limits.

Sorokowski et al. (2015) showed that narcissism is related to the frequency of posting selfie-type pictures on social media. Sorokowski's study showed that this relationship was stronger among men than women.[38]

A 2020 study found that females scored significantly higher on vulnerable narcissism than males, but no gender differences were found for grandiose narcissism.[39]

Research indicates that being in a devalued social group can encourage narcissism in some members of that group, as said individuals attempt to compensate for their low social status (due to being a member of a stigmatised group) by exaggerating their own self-worth by engaging in narcissism, which may also help them psychologically cope with negative treatment at the hands of others, though it may also cause them to engage in behaviour detrimental to themselves.[40][41]

Heritability research using twin studies

Livesley et al. concluded, in agreement with other studies, that narcissism, as measured by a standardized test, was a common inherited trait.[42] Additionally, in similar agreement with those other studies, it was found that there exists a continuum between normal and disordered personality. The study subjects were 175 volunteer twin pairs (ninety identical, eighty-five fraternal) drawn from the general population. Each twin completed a questionnaire that assessed eighteen dimensions of personality disorder. The authors estimated the heritability of each dimension of personality by standard methods, thus providing estimates of the relative contributions of genetic and environmental causation. Of the eighteen personality dimensions, narcissism was found to have the highest heritability (0.64), indicating that the concordance of this trait in the identical twins was significantly influenced by genetics. Of the other dimensions of personality, only four were found to have heritability coefficients of greater than 0.5: callousness, identity problems, oppositionality and social avoidance.

Stigmatising attitude towards psychiatric illness

Arikan found that a stigmatising attitude to psychiatric patients is associated with narcissistic personality traits.[43]

In evolutionary psychology

The concept of narcissism is used in evolutionary psychology in relation to the mechanisms of assortative mating, or the non-random choice of a partner for purposes of procreation. Evidence for assortative mating among humans is well established; humans mate assortatively regarding age, IQ, height, weight, nationality, educational and occupational level, physical and personality characteristics, and family relatedness.[44] In the "self seeking like" hypothesis, individuals unconsciously look for a "mirror image" of themselves in others, seeking criteria of beauty or reproductive fitness in the context of self-reference. Alvarez et al. found that facial resemblance between couples was a strong driving force among the mechanisms of assortative mating: human couples resemble each other significantly more than would be expected from random pair formation.[45] Since facial characteristics are known to be inherited, the "self seeking like" mechanism may enhance reproduction between genetically similar mates, favoring the stabilization of genes supporting social behavior, with no kin relationship among them.

Narcissistic supply

Narcissistic supply is a concept introduced into psychoanalytic theory by Otto Fenichel in 1938, to describe a type of admiration, interpersonal support or sustenance drawn by an individual from his or her environment and essential to their self-esteem.[46] The term is typically used in a negative sense, describing a pathological or excessive need for attention or admiration in codependents and the orally fixated, that does not take into account the feelings, opinions or preferences of other people.[47]

Narcissistic rage and narcissistic injury

Narcissistic rage is a reaction to narcissistic injury, which is a perceived threat to a narcissist's self-esteem or self-worth. *Narcissistic injury* and *narcissistic scar* are terms used by Sigmund Freud in the 1920s. *Narcissistic wound* and *narcissistic blow* are other, almost interchangeable, terms.[48]

The term *narcissistic rage* was coined by Heinz Kohut in 1972. Narcissistic rage occurs on a continuum from aloofness, to expressions of mild irritation or annoyance, to serious outbursts, including violent attacks.[49]

Narcissistic rage reactions are not limited to personality disorders. They may also be seen in catatonic, paranoid delusion, and depressive episodes.[49] It has been suggested that narcissists have two layers of rage. The first layer of rage can be thought of as a constant anger towards someone else, with the second layer being a self-aimed anger.[50]

Narcissistic defenses

Narcissistic defenses are those processes whereby the idealized aspects of the self are preserved, and its limitations denied.[51] They tend to be rigid and totalitarian.[52] They are often driven by feelings of shame and guilt, conscious or unconscious.[53]

Narcissistic abuse

Narcissistic abuse was originally just defined as a specific form of emotional abuse of children by narcissistic parents – parents who require the child to give up their own wants and feelings in order to serve the parent's needs for esteem.[54] The term emerged in the late twentieth century due to the works of Alice Miller and other Neo-Freudians, rejecting psychoanalysis as being similar to the poisonous pedagogies.[55]

Self-help culture assumes that someone abused by narcissistic parenting as a child likely struggles with codependency issues in adulthood. An adult who is or has been in a relationship with a narcissist likely struggles with not knowing what constitutes a "normal" relationship.[56]

In recent years the term has been applied more broadly to refer to any abuse by a narcissist including in adult to adult relationships.[57]

Types

Masterson's subtypes (exhibitionist and closet)

In 1993, James F. Masterson proposed two categories for pathological narcissism, *exhibitionist* and *closet*.[58] Both fail to adequately develop an age- and phase- appropriate self because of defects in the quality of psychological nurturing provided, usually by the mother. The exhibitionist narcissist is the one described in DSM-IV and differs from the closet narcissist in several important ways. The closet narcissist is more likely to be described as having a deflated, inadequate self-perception and greater awareness of emptiness within. The exhibitionist narcissist would be described as having an inflated, grandiose self-perception with little or no conscious awareness of the emptiness within. Such a person would assume that this condition was normal and that others were just like him. The closet narcissist seeks constant approval from others and appears similar to the borderline in the need to please others. The exhibitionist narcissist seeks perfect admiration all the time from others.

Millon's variations

In 1996 Theodore Millon identified four variations of narcissist.[11] Any individual narcissist may exhibit none or one of the following:

- unprincipled narcissist: including antisocial features. A charlatan—is a fraudulent, exploitative, amoral, disloyal, deceptive and unscrupulous individual.
- amorous narcissist: including histrionic features. The Don Juan or Casanova of our times—is erotic, tantalizing, enticing; clever, glib and pathological lying.
- compensatory narcissist: including negativistic (passive-aggressive), avoidant features: admirable, exceptional, noteworthy; creating illusions of being superior.
- elitist narcissist: variant of pure pattern. Corresponds to Wilhelm Reich's "phallic narcissistic" personality type.

Other forms

Acquired situational narcissism

Acquired situational narcissism (ASN) is a form of narcissism that develops in late adolescence or adulthood, brought on by wealth, fame and the other trappings of celebrity. It was coined by Robert B. Millman, professor of psychiatry at the Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University. ASN differs from conventional narcissism in that it develops after childhood and is triggered and supported by the celebrity-obsessed society. Fans, assistants and tabloid media all play into the idea that the person really is vastly more important than other people, triggering a narcissistic problem that might have been only a tendency, or latent, and helping it to become a full-blown personality disorder. "Millman says that what happens to celebrities is that they get so used to people looking at them that they stop looking back at other people."[59] In its presentation and symptoms, it is indistinguishable from narcissistic personality disorder, differing only in its late onset and its support by large numbers of others. "The lack of social norms, controls, and of people telling them how life really is, also makes these people believe they're invulnerable,"[60] so that the person with ASN may suffer from unstable relationships, substance abuse and erratic behaviour. A famous fictional character with ASN is Norma Desmond, the main character of *Sunset Boulevard*.

Codependency

Codependency is a tendency to behave in overly passive or excessively caretaking ways that negatively impact one's relationships and quality of life. Narcissists are considered to be natural magnets for the codependent. Rapport identifies codependents of narcissists as "co-narcissists".[61]

Collective or group narcissism

Collective narcissism (or group narcissism) is a type of narcissism where an individual has an inflated self-love of his or her own ingroup, where an "ingroup" is a group in which an individual is personally involved.[62] While the classic definition of narcissism focuses on the individual, collective narcissism asserts that one can have a similar excessively high opinion of a group, and that a group can function as a narcissistic entity.[62] Collective narcissism is related to ethnocentrism; however, ethnocentrism primarily focuses on self-centeredness at an ethnic or cultural level, while collective narcissism is extended to any type of ingroup beyond just cultures and ethnicities.[62][63]

Conversational narcissism

Conversational narcissism is a term used by sociologist Charles Derber in his book, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life*. Derber observed that the social support system in America is relatively weak, and this leads people to compete mightily for attention. In social situations, they tend to steer the conversation away from others and toward themselves. "Conversational narcissism is the key manifestation of the dominant attention-getting psychology in America," he wrote. "It occurs in informal conversations among friends, family and coworkers. The profusion of popular literature about listening and the etiquette of managing those who talk constantly about themselves suggests its pervasiveness in everyday life." What Derber describes as "conversational narcissism" often occurs subtly rather than overtly because it is prudent to avoid being judged an egotist. Derber distinguishes the "shift-response" from the "support-response," as in the following two hypothetical conversation fragments:

> John: I'm feeling really starved.
> Mary: Oh, I just ate. (shift-response)

> John: I'm feeling really starved.
> Mary: When was the last time you ate? (support-response)

Cultural narcissism

In *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch defines a narcissistic culture as one where every activity and relationship is defined by the hedonistic need to acquire the symbols of wealth,[64] this becoming the only expression of rigid, yet covert, social hierarchies. It is a culture where liberalism only exists insofar as it serves a consumer society, and even art, sex and religion lose their liberating power. In such a society of constant competition, there can be no allies, and little transparency. The threats to acquisitions of social symbols are so numerous, varied and frequently incomprehensible, that defensiveness, as well as competitiveness, becomes a way of life. Any real sense of community is undermined—or even destroyed—to be replaced by virtual equivalents that strive, unsuccessfully, to synthesize a sense of community.

Destructive narcissism

Destructive narcissism is the constant exhibition of numerous and intense characteristics usually associated with the pathological narcissist but having fewer characteristics than pathological narcissism.[65]

Malignant narcissism

Malignant narcissism, a term first coined in a book by Erich Fromm in 1964,[66] is a syndrome consisting of a cross breed of the narcissistic personality disorder, the antisocial personality disorder, as well as paranoid traits. The malignant narcissist differs from one suffering from narcissistic personality disorder in that the malignant narcissist derives higher levels of psychological gratification from accomplishments over time (thus worsening the disorder). Because the malignant narcissist becomes more involved in this psychological gratification, in the context of the right conditions, the narcissist is apt to develop the antisocial, the paranoid, and the schizoid personality disorders. The term malignant is added to the term *narcissist* to indicate that individuals with this disorder have a severe form of narcissistic disorder that is characterized also by features of paranoia, psychopathy (anti-social behaviors), aggression, and sadism according to Kernberg and colleagues.[67]

Medical narcissism

Medical narcissism is a term coined by John Banja in his book, *Medical Errors and Medical Narcissism*.[68][69] Banja defines "medical narcissism" as the need of health professionals to preserve their self-esteem leading to the compromise of error disclosure to patients. In the book he explores the

psychological, ethical and legal effects of medical errors and the extent to which a need to constantly assert their competence can cause otherwise capable, and even exceptional, professionals to fall into narcissistic traps. He claims that:

> ...most health professionals (in fact, most professionals of any ilk) work on cultivating a self that exudes authority, control, knowledge, competence and respectability. It's the narcissist in us all—we dread appearing stupid or incompetent.

In the workplace

Narcissism as a personality trait, generally assessed with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, is related to some types of behavior in the workplace. For example, individuals high in narcissism inventories are more likely to engage in counterproductive work behavior (CWB, behavior that harms organizations or other people in the workplace).[70] Although individuals high in narcissism inventories might engage in more aggressive (and counterproductive) behaviors, they mainly do so when their self-esteem is threatened.[71] Thus narcissistic employees are more likely to engage in CWB when they feel threatened.[72] Individuals high in narcissism have fragile self-esteem and are easily threatened. One study found that employees who are high on narcissism are more likely to perceive the behaviors of others in the workplace as abusive and threatening than individuals who are low on narcissism.[73]

The narcissistic manager will have two main sources of narcissistic supply: inanimate – status symbols like company cars, company-issued smartphone or prestigious offices with window views; and animate – flattery and attention from colleagues and subordinates.[74]:143 Teammates may find everyday offers of support swiftly turn them into enabling sources of permanent supply, unless they are very careful to maintain proper boundaries.[74]:143, 181 The need to protect such supply networks will prevent the narcissistic managers from taking objective decisions;[75] while long-term strategies will be evaluated according to their potential for attention-gaining for the manager themself.[74]:122 Organizational psychologist Alan Downs wrote a book in 1997 describing corporate narcissism.[76] He explores high-profile corporate leaders (such as Al Dunlap and Robert Allen) who, he suggests, literally have only one thing on their minds: profits. According to Downs, such narrow focus actually may yield positive short-term benefits, but ultimately it drags down individual employees as well as entire companies. Alternative thinking is proposed, and some firms now utilizing these options are examined. Downs' theories are relevant to those suggested by Victor Hill in his book, *Corporate Narcissism in Accounting Firms Australia*.[77]

Primordial narcissism

Psychiatrist Ernst Simmel first defined primordial narcissism in 1944.[78] Simmel's fundamental thesis is that the most primitive stage of libidinal development is not the oral, but the gastrointestinal one. Mouth and anus are merely to be considered as the terminal parts of this organic zone. Simmel terms the psychological condition of prenatal existence "primordial narcissism." It is the vegetative stage of the pre-ego, identical with the id. At this stage there is complete instinctual repose, manifested in unconsciousness. Satiation of the gastrointestinal zone, the representative of the instinct of self-preservation, can bring back this complete instinctual repose, which, under pathological conditions, can become the aim of the instinct. Contrary to Lasch, Bernard Stiegler argues in his book, *Acting Out*, that consumer capitalism is in fact destructive of what he calls primordial narcissism, without which it is not possible to extend love to others.[79] In other words, he is referring to the natural state of an infant as a fetus and in the first few days of its life, before it has learned that other people exist besides itself, and therefore cannot possibly be aware that they are human beings with feelings, rather than having anything to do with actual narcissism.

Sexual narcissism

Sexual narcissism has been described as an egocentric pattern of sexual behavior that involves an inflated sense of sexual ability and sexual entitlement. In addition, sexual narcissism is the erotic preoccupation with oneself as a superb lover through a desire to merge sexually with a mirror image of oneself. Sexual narcissism is an intimacy dysfunction in which sexual exploits are pursued, generally in the form of extramarital affairs, to overcompensate for low self-esteem and an inability to experience true intimacy.[80] This behavioral pattern is believed to be more common in men than in women and has been tied to domestic violence in men and sexual coercion in couples.[81][82] Hurlbert argues that sex is a natural biological given and therefore cannot be deemed as an addiction. He and his colleagues assert that any sexual addiction is nothing more than a misnomer for what is actually sexual narcissism or sexual compulsivity.[83] While Hurlbert writes mainly of sexual narcissism in men, Schoenewolf (2013) describes what he calls "gender narcissism" which occurs in both males and females who compensate for feelings of sexual inadequacy by becoming overly proud and obsessed with their masculinity or femininity.[84]

Narcissistic parents

Narcissistic parents demand certain behavior from their children because they see the children as extensions of themselves, and need the children to represent them in the world in ways that meet the parents' emotional needs. This parenting 'style' most often results in estranged relationships with the children, coupled with feelings of resentment and self-destructive tendencies.[61] They would intentionally create a situation to collect Narcissistic supply.

Narcissistic leadership

Narcissistic leadership is a common form of leadership. The narcissism may be healthy or destructive although there is a continuum between the two. A study published in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* suggests that when a group is without a leader, a narcissist is apt to take charge. Researchers found that people who score high in narcissism tend to emerge as group leaders.[85]

In culture and society

> According to recent cultural criticism, Narcissus has replaced Oedipus as the myth of our time. Narcissism is now seen to be at the root of everything from the ill-fated romance with violent revolution to the enthralled mass consumption of state-of-the-art products and the 'lifestyles of the rich and famous'.
>
> Jessica Benjamin (2000), "The Oedipal Riddle," p. 233[86]

Some critics contend that pop culture has become more narcissistic in recent decades.[87] This claim is supported by scholarship indicating some celebrities hire "fake paparazzi",[88] the frequency with which "reality TV" programs populate the television schedules,[87] and the growth of an online culture in which digital media, social media and the "will-to-fame" are generating a "new era of public narcissism [that] is mutating with new media forms."[89] In this analysis, narcissism, rather than being the pathologized property of a discrete personality type, has been asserted as a constituent cultural feature of an entire generation since the end of World War II.[90][91][92]

Supporting the contention that American culture has become more narcissistic and that this is increasingly reflected in its cultural products is an analysis of US popular song lyrics between 1987 and 2007. This found a growth in the use of first-person singular pronouns, reflecting a greater focus on the self, and also of references to antisocial behavior; during the same period, there was a diminution of words reflecting a focus on others, positive emotions, and social interactions.[93][94] Similar patterns of change in cultural production are observable in other Western states. A linguistic analysis of the largest circulation Norwegian newspaper found that the use of self-focused and individualistic terms increased in frequency by 69 per cent between 1984 and 2005 while collectivist terms declined by 32 per cent.[94] References to narcissism and self-esteem in American popular print media have experienced vast inflation since the late 1980s.[94] Between 1987 and 2007 direct mentions of self-esteem in leading US newspapers and magazines increased by 4,540 per cent while narcissism, which had been almost non-existent in the press during the 1970s, was referred to over 5,000 times between 2002 and 2007.[94]

Cross-cultural studies of differences in narcissism are rare. Instead, as there is a positive association between narcissism and individualism and a negative one between it and collectivism, these traits have been used as proxies for narcissism in some studies.[95] This approach, however, risks the misapplication of the concepts of individualism and collectivism to create overly-fixed, "caricature-like",[96] oppositional categories.[97] Nonetheless, one study looked at differences in advertising products between an individualistic culture, America, and a collectivist one, South Korea. In American magazine advertisements, it found, there was a greater tendency to stress the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the person; conversely the South Korean ones stressed the importance of social conformity and harmony.[95] This observation holds true for a cross-cultural analysis across a wide range of cultural outputs where individualistic national cultures produce more individualistic cultural products and collectivist national cultures produce more collectivist national products; these cultural effects were greater than the effects of individual differences within national cultures.[95]

In fiction

- Maisie Farange, in Henry James' novel *What Maisie Knew* (1897), is neglected by her vain and self-absorbed parents. After her parents divorce, find new partners, and ultimately cheat again on their new partners, Maisie finally decides to move in with the morally strong family maid.
- Mavis Gary, Charlize Theron's character in *Young Adult* (2011), who conspires to return to her hometown to steal back her high school sweetheart, despite his being married with a child, embodies many narcissistic traits–including the emptiness she feels when she is not receiving attention or praise from her writing.
- Jay Gatsby, the eponymous character of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), "an archetype of self-made American men seeking to join high society", has been described as a "pathological narcissist" for whom the "ego-ideal" has become "inflated and destructive" and whose "grandiose lies, poor sense of reality, sense of entitlement, and exploitive treatment of others" conspire toward his own demise.[98]
- Gordon Gekko, the fictional character in the film *Wall Street* (1987) and its sequel *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (2010),[99] has become a symbol in popular culture for unrestrained greed and self-interest (with the signature line, "Greed, for lack of a better word, is good"), often in fields outside corporate finance.
- Charles Foster Kane, a fictional character and the subject of Orson Welles' film *Citizen Kane* (1941), which explores the life of the titular character, who is widely believed to be based on the publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Welles played Kane (receiving an Oscar nomination) in addition to producing, co-writing, and directing the film, while Buddy Swan played Kane as a child. In 1871, Kane's mother puts him under the guardianship of a New York City banker named Walter Parks Thatcher, who raises him in luxury. As an adult, Kane takes control of a newspaper, which he uses to advance businesses in which Kane holds stock. Kane also hires staff members away from the rival *Chronicle* newspaper, regarding them as

collectibles. To finance the fledgling *Inquirer*, Kane uses his personal resources, which allowed him to operate it, even at a million dollar annual loss, for decades.

- In George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and its television adaptation, *Game of Thrones*:
  - The Lannisters have been deemed a "family of narcissists".[100] Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) Colleen Jordan has said the incestuous twins Cersei and Jaime have a combination of borderline personality disorder and narcissistic personality disorder, and their younger brother Tyrion is an alcoholic narcissist.[101][100] Additionally, a clinical psychologist posted as Redditor Rain12913: "People seem to be falling into the trap of thinking that Cersei really does genuinely love her brother and her (late) children. While she certainly says that she does quite a bit, and while her behaviour may seem to suggest that she does, it is highly unlikely that such a narcissistic character is capable of true love."[102] About the family's patriarch, Jordan observes that "Tywin Lannister is actually the worst of them".[100]
  - Of Lord Petyr Baelish (nicknamed "Littlefinger") Jordan observes: "If you look at Littlefinger, we know he's not remotely personally interested in Lysa, but he likes the attention. And he needs her. Narcissists use people for functions, which he does.".[100]
- Suzanne Stone-Maretto, Nicole Kidman's character in the film *To Die For* (1995), wants to appear on television at all costs, even if this involves murdering her husband. A psychiatric assessment of her character noted that she "was seen as a prototypical narcissistic person by the raters: on average, she satisfied 8 of 9 criteria for narcissistic personality disorder... had she been evaluated for personality disorders, she would receive a diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder".[103]

See also

- Codependency
- Counterdependency
- Dark triad
- Dorian Gray syndrome
- Ego ideal
- Egotism
- Ethical egoism
- Gender differences in narcissism
- Illusory superiority
- Jointness (psychodynamics)
- Megalomania
- Narcissism of small differences
- Narcissistic elation
- Narcissistic mortification
- Narcissistic personality disorder
- Narcissistic withdrawal
- Narcissistic supply
- Optimism bias
- Pride
- Psychopathy
- Selfishness
- Superiority complex
- True self and false self
- Vulnerable narcissism
- Grandiose narcissism

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External links

- A Field Guide To Narcissism, Carl Vogel – feature writer for Psychology Today magazine (https://web.archive.org/web/20081221154139/http://www.psychologytoday.com/rss/pto-20051209-000005.html)
- Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice (http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/eecearchive/books/selfe/index.html), Lilian G. Katz
- The Impact of Narcissism on Leadership and Sustainability, Bruce Gregory Ph.D. (https://web.archive.org/web/20090503034208/http://ceres.ca.gov/tcsf/pathways/chapter12.html)
- Information for people who are, or have been in relationship with Narcissists. (http://www.selfinexile.com/)
- Why Nothing Is Simple Around A Narcissist (https://psychcentral.com/blog/why-nothing-is-simple-around-a-narcissist/) PsychCentral

Article

The Effects of Anticipated Negative Feedback on Psychological States Among Narcissists

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Akiko Matsuo[1] and Eros R. DeSouza[2]

Abstract

Although narcissism has long been researched in relation to anger, previous research examined narcissistic anger toward negative feedback that had already occurred. In this study, we investigated the effects of anticipation of evaluation (present vs. absent) and negative feedback (present vs. absent), using a creativity task paradigm, on state anger scores among 231 U.S. undergraduates (76% White, 60% women). We also measured undergraduates' narcissistic tendencies and impressions of the creativity task. Multiple regression analyses revealed a significant interaction between narcissism and negative feedback on total anger scores, with narcissists responding with more anger than non-narcissists in the condition of negative feedback. We also found a significant two-way interaction between narcissism and anticipation of evaluation on total enjoyment scores. Anticipation of feedback inhibited narcissist-prone individuals from enjoying the task in the anticipation condition, but this pattern was not present in the no-anticipation condition. Implications and recommendations to better understand the nature of narcissism are discussed.

Keywords

narcissism, anger, gender differences

Although empirical and theoretical links between narcissism and anger are well established, existing research has focused only on narcissistic anger that results from negative feedback that has already occurred. We examined the effects of anticipated negative feedback on narcissistic anger in a nonclinical sample of U.S. college students to test experimentally for the first time the "paradox of narcissism" theory developed by Elliot and Thrash (2001). They argue that narcissistic competitiveness includes a desire to both gain mastery of the task and to perform better than others, which implies the need to achieve.

Narcissistic tendencies may be defined as a personality type characterized by a high and unstable self-esteem (cf. Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Although narcissism overlaps with self-esteem in its definition, narcissism has two distinctive characteristics that are not formally associated with the concept of self-esteem: competitiveness (Elliot & Thrash, 2001; Ziffer, 1991) and the need for admiration (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Thus, narcissism involves maintaining high self-esteem by constant comparison with others. Non-narcissists with high self-esteem are able to think of their self-worth as measured on an absolute scale, without comparing their performance with others' performance. In contrast, narcissists are only satisfied when they outperform others or are given lavish praise by their admirers.

Narcissism and Anger

In their original "threatened egotism model," Baumeister et al. (1996) explained that there is a dark side of high self-esteem. They also consider the case of high but unstable self-esteem, which is one aspect of narcissism (cf. Baumeister, 1993; Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989). According to their model, when those with high and unstable self-esteem receive negative evaluations, a perceived threat (i.e., "threatened egotism") emerges because their inflated but uncertain self-worth has already been derogated or may be derogated in the future. Consequently, they attempt to reestablish and maintain a favorable view of self by rejecting all negative feedback. This process involves a negative emotion (i.e., anger) toward the source of the threat (i.e., negative feedback) and leads people with high/unstable self-esteem to express their anger in the form of aggression.

Thus, anger can be provoked when narcissists' aggrandized, but fragile self-worth, is threatened by negative

[1]Nagoya University, Japan
[2]Illinois State University, Normal, USA

Corresponding Author:
Akiko Matsuo, Department of Psychology, Nagoya University, B4-1 (780) Furo-cho, Chikusa, Nagoya 464-8601 Japan.
Email: matsuo.akiko@k.mbox.nagoya-u.ac.jp

feedback from others. In addition, anger is not only a response to threatened self-esteem but also a means of regaining and retaining one's sense of superiority. That is, anger and aggressive behavior often function as a symbolic dominance over others (Baumeister et al., 1996).

Paradox in Narcissists and Unexplored Areas

Although previous researchers have investigated the underlying cognitive processes in narcissism, they discuss just one side of narcissists' competitiveness and the need for admiration, which is their active involvement in competition and interactions with others to flaunt their superiority over them.

Regarding this notion, Elliot and Thrash (2001) pointed out the "paradox of narcissism." Thus, poor performance may result in negative feedback from others or lowering self-esteem, but narcissists must actively get involved in competition because that is the only way to maintain their self-esteem. Elliot and Thrash refer to the paradox of narcissism as the "fear of failure," in which narcissists compete to validate their ideal self, but simultaneously fear negative feedback. Therefore, to protect their self-esteem from possible threats, narcissists become sensitive to feedback-related situations, which results in fragile high/unstable self-esteem. When narcissists perceive a situation as an ego-threatening event, they feel distressed and may become angry even before the actual feedback is provided (cf. Barry, Chaplin, & Grafeman, 2006; Baumeister et al., 1996). That is, if narcissists anticipate that they might not perform well even when failure has not actually happened, they are frustrated and may become angry. This anger stems from narcissists' notion that they are afraid of failure and want to reject all actual and possible events that may cause a reduction in self-esteem.

However, scant research has been done about the paradoxical characteristic (i.e., "fear of failure") in narcissists in relation to anger. The existing literature has focused only on the performance-based threat that has already happened. In addition to emphasizing private events (i.e., one's performance) alone, most of the literature has only manipulated the positive or negative feedback condition and focused on the outcome of the feedback brought by others (e.g., Barry et al., 2006; Bond, Ruaro, & Wingrove, 2006; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). This methodology lacks the perspective of the "fear of failure" that accompanies anticipation of negative results. It also lacks variation in experimental conditions, because it is based on the anger effect elicited by feedback that has already been given. However, narcissistic anger, which is an expression of "fear of failure," should also be observed before actual feedback is given.

The anticipation of negative feedback can possibly elicit narcissists' anger by the frustration that stems from perceived internal threat when they judge they are unlikely to surpass others in a given task.

It is possible that they would become angry just by the anticipation of negative evaluation, which would evoke as strong reaction as actual negative evaluation about their performance. If narcissists' anger might come just from anticipation, it might potentially be directed at anyone around them, not just the individuals who would give them negative evaluation. The anticipation-based anger would then possibly hurt narcissists' interpersonal relationships because others would be unwilling to interact with narcissists whose anger would appear to happen for no good reason. Consequently, others would be unwilling to interact with narcissists.

Gender is also an understudied area in the narcissism–anger link, although some previous research suggested the importance of taking gender differences into consideration. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), up to 75% of those diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder are men. The literature on narcissism indicates that men tend to show more narcissistic characteristics than women as ways to control the situation, dominate others, and exhibit their excellence (Carroll, 1987; Philipson, 1985; Richman & Flaherty, 1990), which are congruent with traditional male gender roles. Also, narcissists' affective states about a task depended on participants' gender in relative evaluation situations (Morf, Weir, & Davidov, 2000). Morf et al. (2000) found that male narcissists experienced more enjoyment and positive emotions in the conditions where performance evaluation was implied, but this pattern was not found among female narcissists, using a college student sample scoring in the top and bottom third score range on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981).

Few studies examined gender differences regarding narcissism and anger, which is of interest to us. For example, Hibino, Yukawa, Kodama, and Yoshida (2005) examined narcissism as one of the possible variables involving anger expression in a Japanese junior high school student sample. In a class period, participants voluntarily answered a retrospective questionnaire on an anger-triggering event. They found that a narcissistic characteristic (excessive need for admiration) took different paths to aggressive behavior by gender. For boys, the link was straightforward; excessive need for admiration led to anger, which motivated them to engage in aggressive behavior (e.g., revenge on the person who caused the event, complaint about the event to others, and displacement of anger toward objects). However, girls' excessive need for admiration led to a cognitive process that emphasized their victimhood, which motivated them to act aggressively. That is, unlike boys, girls tended to overestimate the seriousness of an anger-triggering event; they perceived being treated poorly, resulting in aggressive behavior.

In addition, Barry et al. (2006) found a strong positive relationship between narcissism and expressed aggression, with men showing this trend more strongly than women in a

college student sample. Similarly, Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, and Nezlek (2011) found that male, but not female, narcissists expressed anger when humiliated in Study 2. Thus, men and women express anger differently.

Concerning violence (i.e., a more serious form of expressing aggression) in heterosexual dating relationships, Ryan, Weikel, and Sprechini (2008) found that significant relationships between college students' scores on physical assault/sexual coercion and three subcategories of narcissism (i.e., overt narcissism, covert narcissism, and sexual narcissism) depended on gender; only men showed significant correlations between covert narcissism and physical assault and between sexual narcissism and sexual coercion.

Considering that narcissists desire to participate in competition and expected to win, the investigation of narcissists' psychological states about such competition is also of interest to us. Some previous work found that narcissism is related to positive psychological states (e.g., enjoyment) and negative ones (e.g., fear) simultaneously (Rose, 2002; see also Wink, 1991). Narcissists think positively about their own performance (albeit unrealistically). However, they are also nervous about their performance and damaging their self-image, which causes them to be vulnerable to threat. These conflicting psychological states should be observed when asked about the task they have engaged in. It is possible that they feel negative about the task itself (that brought unfavorable feedback) because the task is the source of their frustration. Their negative internal states would be a contributor to support narcissists' "fear of failure."

The Current Study

We experimentally tested the narcissistic paradox of "fear of failure." Along with anger and gender, we also examined enjoyment, interest, and boredom. We argue that anticipation of negative feedback from others activates narcissists' ambivalent attitudes (i.e., activating both their participation in a task and their reluctance to engage in it due to fear of failure). Narcissists are not intrinsically motivated to engage in the task (cf. Morf et al., 2000); therefore, they would not enjoy it.

Likewise, because they cannot accept anything that casts doubt on their superiority, they would not find the task interesting when evaluation is announced beforehand. Then, in the case of anticipated outcomes, to protect their self-esteem, we expect narcissists to view the task as unenjoyable.

Based on the extant literature and the rationale above, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: College students who score high on narcissistic tendencies will respond to anticipated negative feedback with more anger than college students who score low on narcissistic tendencies,

Hypothesis 2: Those who score high on narcissistic tendencies will also respond to actual negative feedback with more anger than those who score low on narcissistic tendencies,

Hypothesis 3: Male narcissists will show the above patterns more strongly than female narcissists, and

Hypothesis 4: Narcissists will enjoy the assigned task less (i.e., show less interest and more boredom) than non-narcissists when they anticipate being evaluated.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 237 (n = 143 or 60% women) undergraduates enrolled in general education classes at a large U.S. Midwestern public university with a mean age of 19.36 years (SD = 1.76). The majority of participants self-reported to be White (n = 181, 76.4%). Participation was voluntary. There was no financial compensation given, but students were offered the opportunity to earn extra credit points for their participation.

Measures and Task

NPI. Originally constructed as a 54-item scale aiming at measuring one's narcissistic tendency, the NPI is composed of sentences that are answered in a "yes" (coded 1) and "no" (coded 0) format. Responses are summed to create a narcissistic tendency score. Higher scores indicate higher levels of narcissism. A sample item includes, "I have a natural talent for influencing people" (Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981). Unlike instruments that are designed to measure pathological narcissism, the NPI identifies individual differences in narcissistic tendencies in a nonclinical population (cf. Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Raskin and Hall (1981) reported a strong correlation between the 40-item NPI with its 54-item version (r = .98). del Rosario and White (2005) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 with a sample of college students for the 40-item NPI. We used the 40-item short version of the NPI in the current study, which had a Cronbach's alpha of .76.

State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI). We used the 10-item State Anger subscale (Spielberger, 1988). Each item is rated on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all/almost never*) to 4 (*very much/almost always*). Responses are summed, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anger. A sample item includes, "I feel like hitting something." Using a college sample, Fuqua et al. (1991) reported an alpha of .91 for the State Anger subscale. In our study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the STAXI was .88.

Creativity test. The "Lange-Elliot Creativity Test" asks participants to come up with as many uses as possible for a brick (Part 1) and a candle (Part 2), and each of the two task lasts about 5 min (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1998). In

the current study, we only used Part 1 (i.e., uses of a brick) for the sake of time. In the feedback-anticipating conditions, there was a clear statement regarding feedback. Although participants were led to believe that this creativity test was an established measure of one's creativity level, this bogus test served as an unfamiliar task without practice, which was new to everyone and seemed rather difficult (i.e., threat for narcissists).

Impressions of the task. Based on Sedikides et al.'s (1998) study, we asked participants three questions about their impressions of the task: (a) How much they enjoyed the creativity task, (b) how interesting it was, and (c) how boring it was. They rated each question on a 4-point, Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all/almost never*) to 4 (*very much/almost always*). We summed their scores (the boring item was reverse-scored), creating a total enjoyment index score that ranged from 3 to 12 ($\alpha = .79$).

Experimental Manipulations

There were four experimental conditions: feedback-anticipation/negative feedback given, feedback anticipation/no negative feedback given, no anticipation/negative feedback given, and no anticipation/no negative feedback given. In all conditions and before the creativity task began, participants were informed that the experimenter had already obtained reliable norms concerning the task at 130 students from the same university and had found a strong relationship between high scores on the task and high IQ level (i.e., intelligent students did well on the task). This cover story was intended to give participants a good opportunity to show evidence of their intellectual ability and also to stimulate their competitive motivation. The experimenter added that they were now collecting more data.

In the feedback-anticipating condition, at the time the directions of the task was given (i.e., before the task), participants were told that they would receive the evaluation of their performance after the task in the form of percentile rank. The instructions for the no-anticipation condition did not include any possibility of feedback.

Concerning actual feedback, after the creativity task, participants in the no-negative feedback condition received nothing, whereas participants in the negative feedback condition received a bogus performance evaluation sheet, which indicated that they performed poorly on the task and clearly showing that their score was on the 31st percentile (significantly below the norm). The experimenter also verbally told them that they did poorly on the task.

Procedure

All participants in each session (one to two same-sex students) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The participants signed the consent form and completed the demographic questionnaire and the NPI in the same room. After that, we took each participant to a separate room where he or she worked individually on the creativity task with the manipulations described earlier. Next, participants responded to the 10-item State Anger subscale that was embedded randomly with other items that asked about enjoyment, interest, and boredom about the creativity task (cf. Sedikides et al., 1998).

On completion, all participants were thoroughly debriefed, emphasizing that the feedback sheet was created to make the performance appear negative, and performance was not actually evaluated. They were told that the experimenters would examine participants' reactions to the task after some were led to believe that they had performed poorly. Also, participants were told that the task they performed was not a legitimate test of creativity and that confidentiality would be kept at all times.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Total Rating Scores on NPI and STAXI.

Gender	*M*	*SD*	*n*
NPI			
Men	22.87	5.38	87
Women	19.51	5.13	132
Total	20.84	5.47	219
STAXI			
Men	12.59	4.38	93
Women	10.93	2.19	138
Total	11.60	3.35	231

Note. Higher scores indicate greater provocation of anger. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; STAXI = State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory.

Results

Six participants were excluded from the data analysis because three were suspicious about the true purpose of this study, two did not follow the directions on the creativity task, and one had a session that was seriously interrupted by another participant who arrived late, reducing the data set from 237 to 231. Of these, 57 participants were assigned to the anticipation/no-negative feedback condition, 59 to the anticipation/negative feedback condition, 58 to the no anticipation/no-negative feedback condition, and 57 were to the no anticipation/negative feedback condition. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the total rating scores by gender.

Three multiple regression analyses were performed after centering, with each condition of anticipation/no anticipation, negative feedback/no negative feedback, and man/woman dummy coded. We conducted separate analyses focusing on negative feedback and anticipation because such investigation would show the clearest effects. Concerning the first analysis, the top half of Table 2 shows significant main effects of the total NPI score and negative feedback. The interaction of negative feedback and the total NPI score was also significant; the interaction of negative feedback with gender was not significant; last, three-way interaction

Table 2. Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Total Anger Score (N = 231).

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*b*	*p*
NPI total score	0.20	0.10	0.32	.04
Negative feedback	8.11	3.04	1.22	.01
Gender	1.32	2.73	0.19	.63
Feedback × NPI	−0.31	0.13	−1.03	.02
Feedback × Gender	−6.93	3.76	−0.96	.07
NPI × Gender	−0.12	0.12	−0.34	.32
NPI × Feedback × Gender	0.30	0.17	0.82	.08
Full model R^2		0.11		
NPI total score	−0.02	0.10	−0.02	.87
Anticipation	−2.26	3.11	−0.34	.47
Gender	−3.27	2.65	−0.48	.22
Anticipation × NPI	0.10	0.13	0.33	.47
Anticipation × Gender	2.62	3.84	0.36	.50
NPI × Gender	0.08	0.12	0.26	.50
NPI × Anticipation × Gender	−0.12	0.17	−0.33	.51
Full model R^2		0.07		

Note. NPI total score was centered at its mean. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

was not significant. A simple slope test revealed that non-narcissists experienced significantly greater anger when negative feedback was given than when the feedback was not presented, but no difference was observed for narcissist about the level of anger between no-negative feedback condition and actual-negative feedback condition. For the anticipation condition (see bottom half of Table 2), we did not find any significant main effects, two-way interactions, or three-way interaction on the total anger score.

These results supported Hypothesis 2, with narcissists having higher anger scores than non-narcissists in the actual-negative feedback condition. However, Hypothesis 1 (anticipation of negative feedback) and Hypothesis 3 (gender differences) were not supported.

Finally, we ran a separate multiple regression analysis (after centering) with the total NPI score anticipation, and their interaction as predictors and the total enjoyment score as criterion variable. Table 3 shows that the interaction of the total NPI score and anticipation was statistically significant, supporting Hypothesis 4. That is, high NPI scorers reported feeling less enjoyment in the task when they were informed that they would be given feedback (anticipation condition) than low NPI scorers. However, this pattern was not present in the case of the no-anticipation condition.

A series of post hoc power analyses were conducted using the software package, G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Along with our sample size of 231, we found the observed power for the effects of the first analysis about negative feedback, the second about anticipation, and the third about enjoyment were .97, above .99, and above .93, respectively.

Table 3. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Total Enjoyment Score (N = 231).

Enjoyment (R^2 = .05)	*B*	*SE B*	*b*	*p*
NPI	0.03	0.04	0.08	.93
Anticipation	0.02	0.27	0.01	.40
NPI × Anticipation	−0.16	0.05	−0.30	.01

Note. NPI total score was centered at its mean. Total enjoyment score is the sum of enjoyment, interest, and boring (reverse-scored) items. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

Discussion

We found that narcissists' anger was provoked by actual negative feedback about their performance on the creativity task, which is in keeping with previous studies (e.g., Barry et al., 2006; Baumeister et al., 1996; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). We did not find support for the anticipation of feedback hypothesis. We speculate that having told all participants that the creativity task was valid and was related to intelligence may have prompted some anticipation of evaluation or judgment in all four conditions; in addition, presumably the experimenter would know the "results" of the creativity task for each participant regardless of feedback given. Future studies should ask participants how much they anticipated feedback and how negative the feedback was to them to ensure that such manipulations are indeed relevant to our participants.

It is also feasible that our fear of failure model may need to be modified, as third variable(s) may be acting as mediators or moderators, affecting the narcissism–anger relationship. For example, Stucke and Sporer (2002) indicated that self-concept clarity is an important factor in considering possible interactions between narcissism and performance feedback on anger expression.

Our study still contributes to the literature because it revealed that anticipation of being evaluated affected participants' reactions to the task, suggesting that narcissist-prone individuals were sensitive to the situation and showed their psychological states differently from non-narcissist-prone individuals. It is noteworthy that anticipation of evaluation prevented narcissist-prone individuals from enjoying the creativity task. We speculate that this pattern reflects narcissists' inner ambivalence between active participation in a competitive situation to validate their greatness and reluctance to engage in an unfamiliar task that might cause failure. When narcissists feel bored about a task and do not enjoy it, they may be actually reluctant to engage in it because they do not want to experience unwanted outcomes (i.e., fear of failure). However, they need to get involved in the competitive situation anyway because of their desire to obtain admiration from others. As discussed earlier, narcissism features competitive motivation and need for admiration. These two characteristics could result from their tendency to participate actively, which is one aspect of narcissism. Furthermore, narcissists want to be in the public eye and involve themselves in competitive

situations with others because these situations offer opportunities to boast of their greatness and superiority over others.

We cast light on the "paradox of narcissism" theory developed by Elliot and Thrash (2001) and empirically tested it for the first time. No current theory predicts our findings on anticipation of negative feedback, but our attempt was at least a good starting point to examine unexplored areas of narcissism. That is, our findings captured narcissists' impression of a task before, not after, receiving feedback about the task. As the previous research (e.g., Morf et al., 2000; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998) focused on the psychological states caused by performance feedback (i.e., after feedback), the current study did cast light on a possible cognitive process when narcissists are waiting for feedback.

Narcissists are often described as having such confidence about their competency that they eagerly participate in competitive situations (cf. Morf et al., 2000). Yet, the current findings suggest that they do not enjoy these situations because of upcoming feedback. Together with the psychological unstableness of narcissists' self-esteem, their inner ambivalence between the undesirable self (possibly performing poorly) and their desire to do better than others emerge when they anticipate evaluation. Narcissists' derogation of the task could be a manifestation of their ambivalence between taking advantage of competitions (approach) and avoiding such opportunities for the purpose of protecting their self-esteem.

We recommend that future studies examine the "paradox of narcissism" by experimentally manipulating approach (e.g., desire to show off one's abilities) and avoidance (e.g., fear of anticipating/receiving negative feedback) conditions separately, and possibly showing their simultaneous activation. It might also be helpful to test whether the effect of feedback anticipation on anger by manipulating how many people would know the results of the creativity task (e.g., just the experimenter, as was the case in the current study, vs. many individuals, such as other research participants or confederates) and to include self-concept clarity (Stucke & Sporer, 2002) as a possible mediator/moderator.

Although the current study did not find evidence of significant gender differences concerning the narcissism–anger link, future research should continue to examine the dispositional aspect of narcissism by gender. According to Morf and Rhodewalt (2001), it is possible that narcissists try to achieve their goals in different and unique ways suitable to their gender roles. In the United States, hegemonic masculinity reinforces success, power, and competition, which have been linked to aggression and violence (Crowther, Goodson, McGuire, & Dickson, 2013), whereas "emphasized femininity" reinforces feminine submissiveness (DeSouza, 2013). Following such gender roles, narcissistic characteristic(s) and expressiveness of anger may be different for women and men (Ryan et al., 2008), especially in Latin countries where *machismo* and *marianismo* (emphasized femininity) seem to be even stronger than in North America (Baldwin & DeSouza, 2001). Thus, gender differences may be pronounced in more traditional cultures than in more egalitarian cultures such as in Scandinavia. We recommend a cross-cultural investigation to test for gender differences in the narcissism–anger link.

Conclusion

Our study provided theoretical insights into personality psychological science by identifying variables in narcissism that were affected by anticipation of negative feedback. Narcissists are situation-sensitive; their unexpected anger and reactions (witnessed by other people) are likely to have negative effects on their engagement in tasks, actual achievement, and interpersonal relationships. Narcissists' sensitivity to their social worlds (i.e., reactions about their performance from others) originally comes from the paradoxical concept they bear—they want to be superior to others, but they are worried about possible negative feedback. Their self-evaluation derives not from themselves, but from their environment, which results in high/unstable self-esteem. As Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) discussed, narcissism should be viewed as a self-regulatory processing system with paradoxical features.

Future research on narcissism should be interwoven with other self-related concepts and attitudes toward the external world in cognitive processes working for establishing narcissists' self-understanding and their interpersonal relationships to better understand the complicated mechanisms of narcissism and its dynamism.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Author Biographies

Akiko Matsuo earned her Matser's degree in social and I/O psychology from Illinois State University. She is currently persuing a PhD at Nagoya University in Japan. Her research interest is in social and personality psychology, in relation to culture.

Eros R. DeSouza is currently professor of Psychology at Illinois State University. He earned his PhD in Community Psychology from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. His research focus is on organizational and social psychology.

narcissistic

Contents

English

Etymology

narcissist + *-ic*

Pronunciation

- (*UK*) IPA(key): /ˌnɑː.sɪˈsɪs.tɪk/
- (*US*) IPA(key): /ˌnɑɹ.sɨˈsɪs.tɪk/
- Audio (US) (file)

Adjective

narcissistic (*comparative* **more narcissistic**, *superlative* **most narcissistic**)

1. Having an inflated idea of one's own importance.

2. Obsessed with one's own self image and ego.

   - **2016**, Tim Carvell; Josh Gondelman; Dan Gurewitch; Jeff Maurer; Ben Silva; Will Tracy; Jill Twiss; Seena Vali; Julie Weiner, “Third Parties”, in *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, season 3, episode 26, HBO, Warner Bros. Television:

     > Anyone who goes into a voting booth on November the 8th and comes out saying, “I feel a hundred percent great about what I just did in there!,” is either lying to themselves, or did something unspeakable in that booth! And that means, as uncomfortable as this is, everyone has to own the floors of whoever you vote for, whether they are a lying handsy **narcissistic** sociopath, a hawkish Wall Street-friendly embodiment of everything that some people can’t stand about politics, an ill-tempered mountain molester with a radical dangerous tax plan that even he can’t defend, or a conspiracy-pandering political neophyte with no clear understanding of how government operates and who once recorded this folk rap about the virtues of bicycling.

Antonyms

- nonnarcissistic

Related terms

- narcissism
- narcissistic personality disorder

See also

- megalomania

Translations

having an inflated idea of one's own importance

- Catalan: narcisista
- Chinese:
  - Mandarin: 自大 (zh)
- Esperanto: memama
- Finnish: narsistinen (fi)
- French: narcissique (fr) *m* or *f*
- German: narzisstisch (de)
- Polish: narcystyczny *m*
- Russian: нарцисси́ческий (ru) (narcissíčeskij)
- Spanish: narcisista
- Swedish: narcissistisk (sv)

obsessed with one's image and ego

- Catalan: narcisista
- Chinese:
  - Mandarin: 自恋 (zh)
- Esperanto: memama
- Finnish: narsistinen (fi)
- German: narzisstisch (de)
- Maori: whakatāupe
- Navajo: ayóó’ádó’ní
- Polish: narcystyczny *m*
- Russian: нарцисси́ческий (ru) (narcissíčeskij)
- Spanish: narcisista

- French: narcissique (fr) *m* or *f*
- Swedish: narcissistisk (sv)

Noun

narcissistic (*plural* **narcissistics**)

1. A narcissist.
    - **1996**, Susan B. Gall, Bernard Beins, Alan Feldman, *The Gale encyclopedia of psychology* (page 247)

        Because **narcissistics** cannot handle failure, they will take great lengths to avoid risks and situations in which defeat is a possibility.

See also

- God complex
