



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid



Are narcissists more accepting of others' narcissistic traits?



William Hart*, John M. Adams

University of Alabama, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 February 2014

Accepted 21 February 2014

Available online 19 March 2014

Keywords:

Narcissism

Person perception

Social cognition

ABSTRACT

Narcissists, relative to non-narcissists, seem to regard their own narcissistic traits (e.g., rudeness and arrogance) more positively and are more motivated to cultivate such traits. That said, should we expect narcissists to regard *others'* narcissistic traits more positively too? In this study, participants ($N = 463$) completed a survey in which they responded on a measure of trait narcissism, rated the likeability of people who possessed various narcissistic traits (e.g., arrogant, rude, self-centered), and then indicated the extent to which they possessed the same narcissistic traits. Interestingly, narcissists – who are generally disagreeable and harsh individuals – rated others who possessed narcissistic traits more positively than non-narcissists. Furthermore, a mediation analysis revealed that this effect of narcissism on ratings was mediated by narcissists' self-reports of possessing the narcissistic traits. Thus, this study provides initial evidence that narcissists are more accepting of others' narcissistic traits, and this study has implications for understanding the interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences of narcissism.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Narcissism is marked by unrealistically positive self-views and an inflated sense of personal importance and entitlement. Narcissists¹ fairly often come across as arrogant, self-centered, rude, and braggarts. Interestingly, recent research suggests that narcissists are accepting of these narcissistic traits *in themselves* (Carlson, 2013). But, should we count on narcissists to be accepting of these same narcissistic traits *in others*? For example, suppose you have a disagreement with a colleague, and this colleague subsequently gossips to others that you are arrogant. In this scenario, your reputation as a nice person might suffer, but would it be *less likely* to suffer among your narcissistic (vs. non-narcissistic) peers? Prior research on narcissism could suggest a variety of well-reasoned answers to this question. Indeed, in prior research, there has been a lack of clear-cut empirical evidence regarding how trait narcissism influences likability perceptions of individuals with narcissistic traits. The present research attempted to address this issue.

On the one hand, a case can be made that narcissists may be less accepting of others with narcissistic traits. First, narcissists might be particularly prone to derogate someone with a narcissistic reputation because narcissists are particularly offended by typical narcissistic behaviors (e.g., aggressive, rude, insensitive behavior; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995, 1998; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). For example, narcissists' self-esteem suffers more as a result of impolite interpersonal feedback (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) and narcissists behave more aggressively toward a rude critic (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Furthermore, narcissists have a better memory for (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003) and find it more difficult to forgive others' transgressions (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004). Second, narcissists may be less accepting because they have a generalized inclination to regard others negatively (Buss & Chiodo, 1991; Holtzman, Vazire, & Mehl, 2010; Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993). Indeed, trait narcissism (indexed via the Narcissistic Personality Inventory [NPI]; Raskin & Terry, 1988) is negatively correlated with trait agreeableness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), positively correlated with a contemptuous mistrust of others (as indexed by the Cook–Medley Hostility Scale; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), and positively correlated with the use of derogatory interpersonal language (Adams, Florell, Burton, & Hart, 2014). Based on narcissists' disagreeable interpersonal style, narcissists might be more punitive when evaluating others' narcissistic traits. Third, narcissists may be less accepting of others with a narcissistic reputation because such others may be perceived as competition for attention and superiority and threaten the

* Corresponding author. Address: Department of Psychology, University of Alabama, P.O. BOX 873048, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487, United States. Tel.: +1 205 348 1930; fax: +1 205 348 8648.

E-mail address: wpheart@gmail.com (W. Hart).

¹ We refer to individuals who score high on dimensional, sub-clinical trait measures of narcissism (typically the Narcissistic Personality Inventory; NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) as “narcissists” and those scoring low as “non-narcissists.” This labeling was chosen because it is conventional and concise. We are not referring to a categorical, clinical distinction.

narcissists' superiority and attention-seeking goals. Due to narcissists' tendency to be easily offended, generally dislike others, and view other narcissists as competitors, it is reasonable to posit that narcissists would be less accepting of narcissistic traits in others.

On the other hand, a case can be made that narcissists may be more accepting of others with narcissistic traits. For example, research suggests that similarity supports interpersonal liking (Byrne, 1997; Park & Schaller, 2005). This similarity-liking principle seems particularly pronounced amongst individuals that like themselves (Klohn & Mendelsohn, 1998), and narcissists, according to some conceptualizations (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey, & Kernis, 2007; cf. Kohut, 1966), like themselves. Moreover, research suggests that narcissists are at least somewhat aware of their own narcissistic traits and reputations (Carlson, Vazire, & Oltmanns, 2011). This finding, coupled with the idea that narcissists may regard their narcissistic identity somewhat favorably (Campbell et al., 2007; Carlson, 2013), could suggest that narcissists might evaluate others with narcissistic traits and reputations more positively. Perhaps consistent with this hypothesis, some research shows that narcissists, relative to non-narcissists, are more likely to seek out individuals who possess qualities such as high status and physical attractiveness (Campbell, 1999; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Tanchotsrinon, Maneesri, & Campbell, 2007). Although this research is generally understood in terms of narcissists seeking people they can show off (e.g., a "trophy wife"), it may also be that narcissists are less repelled by the narcissistic traits that often co-vary with high status (e.g., being aggressive and selfish) and physical attractiveness (e.g., being vain and egotistical); indeed, because narcissists may have a diminished sensitivity to anticipated negative outcomes (Foster, Shenese, & Goff, 2009; Foster & Trimm, 2008), they may be less repelled by others' narcissistic traits. Based on the ideas that people tend to like others who are similar to themselves, narcissists recognize and tolerate their own narcissistic traits, and narcissists are drawn to people with qualities associated with narcissism, it is reasonable to posit that narcissists would be more accepting of narcissistic traits in others.

Keeping in mind these two opposing bodies of thought, we examined how trait narcissism relates to the evaluation of others who possess various narcissistic and non-narcissistic traits. In the study we report here, participants responded on the NPI (a dimensional, subclinical, index of trait narcissism; Raskin & Terry, 1988), and then they were asked to rate how "likeable" and "easy to get along with" a person would be if they possessed a series of narcissistic traits (e.g., *arrogant*, *rude*, *aggressive*, *gentle* [r], *timid* [r]). We subsequently asked participants to indicate the extent to which they possessed each trait. This design allowed us to assess whether trait narcissism influences people's liking toward others with narcissistic reputations. Furthermore, we could explore the relation between self-reports of possessing the narcissistic traits and liking. Because narcissism is related to self-esteem (Campbell, 1999), and because self-esteem can sometimes conceal the effects of narcissism (Holtzman et al., 2010), we measured self-esteem to serve as a covariate in our analyses. Indeed, prior research suggests that narcissism and self-esteem may have different implications on people's willingness to claim possession of various traits (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002).

2. Method

2.1. Participants and design

Four hundred and sixty-five undergraduate students (334 women) were recruited to participate in an online survey. Specifically, these participants were offered a link to the study on

a website that offers research-participation opportunities to psychology students. Participants completed the study in exchange for partial course credit in their Introductory Psychology course. Mean age was 18.78 ($SD = 1.61$; range: 17–30 years). Trait narcissism (continuous) was the independent variable and (a) evaluation of others with narcissistic traits and (b) self-reported possession of the narcissistic traits were the main dependent variables. Trait self-esteem (continuous) was measured and was intended as a covariate in the analyses.

2.2. Materials and procedure

Participants were informed that they would complete two unrelated studies. The first study dealt with personality, and the second study dealt with people's perceptions of their own and others' traits. In the "first study," participants completed the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). For the NPI, participants completed 40 forced-choice items that reflect narcissism (e.g., "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place."). As in prior research, an overall narcissism score was computed by summing responses to all 40 items ($\alpha = .84$; $M = 16.69$; $SD = 6.92$). For the RSE, participants rated their agreement with 10 items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) scale. Responses to the items were summed to create a composite measure of self-esteem ($\alpha = .85$; $M = 29.86$; $SD = 4.59$). We found a correlation between narcissism and self-esteem, $r = 0.24$, $p = .0001$.

As part of the "second study," participants rated the likability of a person who is reputed to possess one of 11 narcissistic traits (*aggressive*, *rude*, *arrogant*, *bossy*, *selfish*, *flashy*, *sensitive* [r], *gentle* [r], *timid* [r], *modest* [r], *submissive* [r]). These narcissistic traits were selected because they were frequently used to describe individuals who scored on the polar ends of the NPI (see Carlson et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988). The task involved 11 trials. Each trial proceeded as follows: Participants were told to imagine learning that a person possessed one of the 11 narcissistic traits (e.g., *rude*) and then indicate how (a) *likeable* they would find the person and (b) how *easy it would be to get along with* the person. Participants responded to the former item using a 1 (*extremely hard to like*) to 9 (*extremely easy to like*) scale and the latter item using a 1 (*extremely difficult to get along with*) to 9 (*extremely easy to get along with*) scale. The 11 narcissistic traits were presented randomly across the trials, and participants were asked to consider each trait independently. Because the two liking ratings were strongly related for each of the 11 traits (r s ranged from 0.58 to 0.78), the two items were averaged into a single "liking for the other" index for each trait (creating 11 such indices). An aggregate "liking of narcissistic others" index was computed by averaging these 11 indices ($\alpha = .68$; $M = 3.37$; $SD = 0.74$). This aggregate index served as our main dependent variable.²

Next, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they possessed the same 11 narcissistic traits using an appropriately labeled 1 (*I'm not at all [trait]*) to 9 (*I'm extremely [trait]*) scale. Prior to analyses, the 11 self-ratings were averaged into a "self-reported possession of narcissistic traits" index ($\alpha = .72$; $M = 3.96$; $SD = 0.97$). At the end of the experimental session, participants completed some demographic items, and were probed for awareness of the study's true purpose with the following questions (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000): "What do you think this experiment was testing?"; "Do you think any of the tasks you completed were related?"; "Do you think any earlier tasks affected your behavior on a later task?"; and

² The task also included other traits (e.g., *spiritual*; *easy-going*; *optimistic*) that were relevant to a separate research question we wished to address. Because these traits were not of interest here, they are not discussed further.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7252397>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7252397>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)