The happy and unhappy faces of narcissism

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Abstract

Several theorists have argued in favor of a distinction between overt and covert narcissism, and factor analytic studies have supported this distinction. In this paper I demonstrate that overt narcissists report higher self-esteem and higher satisfaction with life, whereas covert narcissists report lower self-esteem and lower satisfaction with life. I also present mediational models to explain why overt narcissists are relatively happy and covert narcissists are relatively unhappy. In analyses using both partial correlations and structural equation modeling, self-esteem consistently mediated the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness, whereas self-deception did not. These results further demonstrate some of the self-centered benefits associated with overt narcissism and some of the strong psychological costs associated with covert narcissism. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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The study of narcissism has followed a rather confusing course. In many cases it has reached contradictory conclusions about the psychological costs and benefits associated with narcissism. Some theorists have emphasized that narcissism is associated with maladjustment and misery (e.g. Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992; Kernberg, 1975; Lasch, 1979; Reich, 1954), and others have emphasized that narcissism is associated with some indicators of psychological well-being (e.g. Kohut, 1977; Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Watson, Hickman, & Morris, 1996; Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman, 1992). These differing characterizations of narcissism are reflected in the fact that some narcissism measures tend to correlate positively with indicators of well-being, whereas other measures tend to correlate negatively with the very same indicators (e.g. Hickman, Watson, & Morris, 1996; Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996; Wink, 1991).

One reasonable way to make sense of these apparent contradictions is to consider whether two different types of narcissism exist. Several psychiatrists have made this argument by drawing a

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distinction between *overt* and *covert* narcissists (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992; Gabbard, 1989; see also Akhtar & Thompson, 1982). Overt narcissists experience a grandiose sense of self, tend to demand others' attention, and are socially charming even though they are relatively oblivious of others' needs. Covert narcissists, on the other hand, feel profoundly inferior to others, are hypersensitive to others' evaluations, and are generally dissatisfied (Cooper & Ronningstam, 1992; Gabbard, 1989). Both types of narcissists are extraordinarily self-absorbed and arrogant, but in other respects, overt and covert narcissists are distinguishable (Wink, 1991).

The overt–covert distinction has been empirically supported in at least two factor-analytic studies. Wink (1991) analyzed six narcissism scales and demonstrated that the items constituting these scales loaded on two readily interpretable factors: grandiosity/exhibitionism and hypersensitivity/vulnerability. Although Wink (1991) labeled the components differently, he concluded that the factors conformed to the overt-covert distinction that other theorists had proposed. Rathvon and Holmstrom (1996) replicated these results by factor-analyzing the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and five of the scales used in Wink's analysis. Their results also yielded an overt and a covert factor. Both Wink (1991) and Rathvon and Holmstrom (1996) demonstrated that the factors they obtained in their analyses were associated with other measures in a manner that supported the overt-covert distinction.

Other theorists have explained the distinction between overt and covert narcissism in a different way. Watson and his colleagues have developed a hypothesis that suggests that narcissistic personality features vary along a continuum of adjustment (Hickman et al., 1996; Watson et al., 1992, 1996; 1999–2000). From this perspective, features of covert narcissism may lie toward the maladjusted end of the continuum, whereas most features of overt narcissism may lie toward the more adjusted end of the continuum. Consistent with the continuum hypothesis, researchers have noted that some aspects of narcissism are more strongly related to psychological well-being than others (Hickman et al., 1996; Watson et al., 1992, 1996; see also Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Measures of overt narcissism tend to correlate positively with self-esteem (Watson et al., 1992, 1996) and optimism (Hickman et al., 1996), and tend to correlate negatively with depressive symptoms (Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996). Measures of covert narcissism, on the other hand, tend to correlate positively with measures of depression and anxiety (Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996). These results clearly support the hypothesis that narcissistic features vary along a continuum of adjustment, and suggest that overt narcissism has at least some adaptive properties whereas covert narcissism is primarily maladaptive.

Of course, this does not mean that overt narcissism is a purely adaptive trait—it is obviously maladaptive in several respects (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). Nevertheless, the fact that overt narcissism is related to some indicators of well-being suggests that overt narcissists reap at least *some* personal benefits from their style of self-absorption that covert narcissists do not. For example, by examining the items of the scales that represent each type of narcissism, it is apparent that covert narcissists are anxious people who have very little confidence in themselves (Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979; Serkownek, 1975), whereas overt narcissists are chronic self-enhancers (Emmons, 1987; Paulhus, 1998). Theorists have noted that some degree of even illusory self-enhancement is associated with greater well-being (Baumeister, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Consequently, we might expect overt narcissists to reap some healthy benefits from their self-enhancing tendencies, whereas covert narcissists may forego these benefits because of their profound insecurities.

Even though overt and covert narcissists differ in their degree of general psychological well-being, there is little research on the association between each type of narcissism and one of the cardinal indicators of well-being, subjective feelings of happiness. Soyer, Rovenpor, Kopelman, Mullins, and Watson (2001) recently reported some correlations between measures of narcissism and job and life satisfaction, but the questionnaire items used in their study makes the generalizability of their findings uncertain. Thus, the associations between overt and covert narcissism and happiness are not well established.

Why might both types of narcissism be differentially associated with happiness? Many studies have demonstrated that overt narcissism is positively related to self-esteem (e.g. Emmons, 1984; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Watson et al., 1992, 1996), and other studies have demonstrated that covert narcissism is negatively related to self-esteem (Rose, 2000; Solomon, 1982). Furthermore, it is well-known that self-esteem is strongly associated with feelings of happiness (Myers & Diener, 1995). People with high self-esteem are convinced that they are valuable members of their cultural groups (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997) and a personal sense of value and purpose is an important component of happiness (Compton, 2000). Thus, because overt and covert narcissists differ in their feelings about themselves, they probably differ in their feelings about their lives in general.

The preceding arguments suggest that if both types of narcissism are related to happiness, self-esteem may mediate these associations. However, for the association between overt narcissism and happiness, a competing hypothesis is viable. Past research has demonstrated that overt narcissists tend to be self-deceived (Paulhus & John, 1998), and people who are self-deceived tend to report greater happiness (Hagedorn, 1996). Thus, self-deception may mediate the association between overt narcissism and happiness just as well as (or better than) self-esteem. In the mediational analyses reported below, both self-esteem and self-deception were tested as mediators of the association between overt narcissism and happiness.

1. Method

Two-hundred sixty-two undergraduates (146 female) completed a questionnaire packet in small groups. Participants sat at private desks in a large laboratory room. Participants with missing values on any of the variables of interest were excluded.

1.1. Measures

1.1.1. *Overt narcissism*

Participants completed two measures of overt narcissism: the Raskin and Novacek Narcissism Scale (RNNS; Raskin & Novacek, 1989) and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). The RNNS consists of 42 true-false items derived from the MMPI (e.g. "I am an important person" and "I strongly defend my own opinions as a rule"; $\alpha = 0.66$).

The 37-item version of the NPI (Emmons, 1987) also consists of true-false items (e.g. "I know that I am good because everyone keeps telling me so" and "Everyone likes to hear my stories"; $\alpha = 0.85$). Four subscale scores were computed from the NPI to capture the dimensions identified by Emmons (1987): Leadership/Authority (LA; $\alpha = 0.77$), Self-absorption/Self-admiration

(SS; $\alpha = 0.67$), Superiority/Arrogance (SA; $\alpha = 0.65$), and Exploitativeness/Entitlement (EE; $\alpha = 0.60$; see Emmons, 1987). The EE dimension uniquely captures some of the more maladaptive features of overt narcissism that are also common to covert narcissism (Emmons, 1987).

1.1.2. Covert narcissism

Participants completed two measures of covert narcissism: the Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale (NPDS; Ashby et al., 1979) and the Serkownek Narcissism Scale (SNS; Serkownek, 1975). The NPDS is an MMPI-derived scale that consists of 18 true-false items (e.g. "I have felt embarrassed over the type of work that one or more of my family members have done" and "Once in a while I think of things too bad to talk about"; $\alpha = 0.55$). One item from the NPDS ("I used to like drop-the-handkerchief") was omitted because of its dated content, leaving 17 items total. The SNS is also an MMPI-derived scale that consists of 18 true-false items (e.g. "I frequently find myself worrying about something" and "Most people are honest chiefly because they fear being caught"; $\alpha = 0.66$). Validity evidence for both covert narcissism scales is available in Wink (1991).

1.1.3. Self-esteem

Two measures of self-esteem were included: the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) and the Single-item Self-esteem Scale (SISE; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). The RSES consists of 10 items (e.g. "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "I feel that I have a number of good qualities"; $\alpha = 0.90$) and the SISE consists of the item "I have high self-esteem". For both scales, participants responded using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree").

1.1.4. Happiness

Participants completed two measures of happiness: the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and the Faces Scale (FS; Andrews & Withey, 1976). The SWLS consists of five items (e.g. "In most ways my life is close to my ideal" and "I am satisfied with my life"; $\alpha = 0.87$). Participants responded to the SWLS items using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree"). The FS consists of seven faces that progress from a frowning face to a smiling face, and participants circled the face that best represented how they felt "about their life as a whole".

1.1.5. Self-deception

Participants completed the Self-Deception Subscale (SDS) from Paulhus's (1991) Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). The SDS consists of twenty items (e.g. "I always know why I like things" and "I never regret my decisions"; $\alpha = 0.68$). Participants responded to the SDS using 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree").

1.2. Analysis

The data were analyzed in four stages. First, zero-order correlations were computed between all of the scores obtained using the measures described above. Second, initial tests of mediation were conducted by computing partial correlations between each of the narcissism variables and each of

the happiness variables with self-esteem statistically controlled. Third, further tests of mediation were conducted using structural equation modeling (with AMOS 4.0; Arbuckle, 1999). Fourth, alternative models were analyzed in order to rule out alternative explanations.

2. Results

Table 1 lists the interscale correlations among overt and covert narcissism, self-esteem, happiness and self-deception. As predicted, overt narcissists reported greater happiness and higher self-esteem, whereas covert narcissists reported diminished happiness and lower self-esteem. These results are consistent with the notion that overt narcissists enjoy some psychological benefits that covert narcissists do not enjoy.

Because past research has demonstrated that the NPI subscales capture different dimensions of narcissism that represent different levels of adjustment (e.g. Emmons, 1987; Hickman et al., 1996; Watson et al., 1999–2000), I also computed correlations between each of the NPI subscales and self-esteem and happiness. Consistent with past research that has shown that EE is not associated with some of the more adaptive features of narcissism, EE was not associated with either self-esteem or happiness (see the sixth row of Table 1). Because EE represents features that lie between overt and covert narcissism on the narcissism continuum (Emmons, 1987), this result is perfectly consistent with my predictions. If overt narcissism is positively related to happiness and

Table 1
Zero-order correlations between overt narcissism, covert narcissism, self-esteem, happiness and self-deception ($n = 259$)[a]

	Overt Narcissism					Covert Narcissism			Self-esteem		Happiness		Self-deception
	RNNS	NPI	LA	SS	SA	EE	NPDS	SERK	RSES	SISE	SWLS	FS	SDS
RNNS	1.00	0.65	0.58	0.44	0.52	0.37	−0.05	−0.10	0.42	0.43	0.23	0.27	0.25
NPI		1.00	0.79	0.66	0.83	0.70	0.11	0.13	0.24	0.32	0.15	0.14	0.13
LA			1.00	0.40	0.52	0.35	0.05	0.00	0.20	0.29	0.14	0.13	0.18
SS				1.00	0.39	0.26	−0.05	0.00	0.37	0.42	0.20	0.21	0.14
SA					1.00	0.52	0.06	0.11	0.16	0.22	0.15	0.14	0.13
EE						1.00	0.26	0.29	−0.03	0.03	−0.06	−0.07	−0.10
NPDS							1.00	0.54	−0.52	−0.32	−0.49	−0.47	−0.37
SERK								1.00	−0.46	−0.46	−0.36	−0.38	−0.47
RSES									1.00	0.76	0.69	0.67	0.55
SISE										1.00	0.57	0.55	0.54
SWLS											1.00	0.73	0.42
FS												1.00	0.44
SDS													1.00

[a] RNNS, Raskin and Novacek Narcissism Scale; NPI, Narcissistic Personality Inventory; LA, Leadership/Authority; SS, Self-absorption/Self-admiration; SA, Superiority/Arrogance; EE, Exploitativeness/Entitlement; NPDS, Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale; SERK, Serkownek Narcissism Scale; RSES, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SISE, Single-item Self-esteem Scale; SWLS, Satisfaction With Life Scale; FS, Faces Scale; SDS, Self-deception Subscale of the Balanced Inventory for Desirable Responding. All correlations greater than 0.12 or less than −0.12 significantly deviate from zero, $P < 0.05$, two-tailed test.

covert narcissism is negatively related to happiness (see the eleventh and twelfth columns of Table 1), it follows that narcissistic features that lie between overt and covert narcissism (such as EE) should be unrelated to happiness.

The other three NPI subscales capture features of overt, and not covert, narcissism (Emmons, 1987). As a result, I expected each of these subscales to correlate positively with self-esteem and happiness. The results presented in the third, fourth and fifth columns of Table 1 support these predictions, and show that LA, SS, and SA are all positively correlated with self-esteem and happiness. In the interest of brevity, and because the majority of the NPI subscales correlate with self-esteem and happiness, only NPI total scores will be discussed from this point forward.

The results presented so far are consistent with my predictions: overt narcissism is positively related to self-esteem and happiness, covert narcissism is negatively related to self-esteem and happiness, and features that are common to both kinds of narcissism are unrelated to self-esteem and happiness. I further predicted, however, that the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness would be mediated by self-esteem. As initial tests of these hypotheses, I reanalyzed the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness as partial correlations with self-esteem statistically controlled. To create the self-esteem covariate for these analyses, a composite self-esteem score was generated by computing the mean of SISE and RSES scores.

When mediation is tested through partial correlations, a partial correlation that is noticeably smaller than the original zero-order correlation may be interpreted as evidence of mediation. If the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness approach zero when self-esteem is controlled, it can be inferred that self-esteem accounts for much of the shared variance between narcissism and happiness.

Table 2 presents these partial correlations. Consistent with the hypothesis that self-esteem mediates the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness, the partial correlations between narcissism and happiness listed in Table 2 are noticeably smaller than the corresponding zero-order correlations in Table 1. In fact, none of the partial correlations between overt narcissism and happiness significantly deviated from zero when self-esteem was controlled, which suggests that virtually all of the shared variance between overt narcissism and happiness can be accounted for by self-esteem. There was also a noticeable drop in the associations between covert

Table 2
Partial correlations between overt narcissism, covert narcissism and happiness, controlling for self-esteem ($n = 256$)[a]

	RNNS	NPI	NPDS	SERK	SWLS	FS	SDS
RNNS	1.00	0.60	0.18	0.15	−0.10	−0.03	−0.02
NPI		1.00	0.27	0.33	−0.07	−0.08	−0.06
NPDS			1.00	0.43	−0.31	−0.29	−0.17
SERK				1.00	−0.06	−0.11	−0.27
SWLS					1.00	0.54	0.07
FS						1.00	0.11
SDS							1.00

[a] NPI, Narcissistic Personality Inventory; RNNS, Raskin and Novacek Narcissism Scale; NPDS, Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale; SERK, Serkownek Narcissism Scale; SWLS, Satisfaction With Life Scale; FS, Faces Scale; SDS, Self-deception Subscale of the Balanced Inventory for Desirable Responding. All correlations greater than 0.12 or less than −0.12 significantly deviate from zero, $P < 0.05$, two-tailed test.

<mark>narcissism and happiness when self-esteem was controlled,</mark> although most of these partial correlations were still significantly different from zero.

Earlier I proposed that self-deception might be an alternative mediator of the association between overt narcissism and happiness, because self-deception is associated with both variables (Hagedorn, 1996; Paulhus & John, 1998). To test this possibility, I computed partial correlations with self-deception statistically controlled (Table 3). Although the correlations between overt narcissism and happiness were slightly diminished when self-deception was controlled, the evidence for mediation in this case was not especially convincing (i.e. the partial correlations were still generally greater than zero).

The partial correlations presented in Tables 2 and 3 generally favor the conclusion that self-esteem, and not self-deception, mediates the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness. However, more sophisticated tests of these hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM) were appropriate for several reasons. Because SEM permits the analysis of associations among latent variables, much of the measurement error associated with observed variables is removed with SEM. Measurement error was a concern in these data, because several of the MMPI-derived scales had internal consistency coefficients somewhat below 0.70. Furthermore, the results of the partial correlations presented in Tables 2 and 3 were mostly, but not perfectly, consistent with each other. By analyzing latent variables rather than observed variables, I anticipated that I would be able to provide clearer tests of the mediational hypotheses I outlined earlier.

In the structural equation model that posited self-esteem as a mediator of the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness, two observed variables were associated with each latent variable. RNNS and NPI scores were associated with overt narcissism, NPDS and SERK scores were associated with covert narcissism, SWLS and FS scores were associated with happiness and RSES and SISE scores were associated with self-esteem.

As a start, I analyzed the *mediational model* depicted in Fig. 1. Next, I compared the size of the direct paths (i.e. the paths connecting both types of narcissism to happiness) in the mediational

Table 3
Partial correlations between overt narcissism, covert narcissism, self-esteem, and happiness, controlling for self-deception ($n = 256$)[a]

	RNNS	NPI	NPDS	SERK	RSES	SISE	SWLS	FS
RNNS	1.00	0.64	0.05	0.02	0.35	0.37	0.14	0.18
NPI		1.00	0.17	0.21	0.20	0.30	0.11	0.09
NPDS			1.00	0.45	−0.41	−0.15	−0.39	−0.37
SERK				1.00	−0.27	−0.27	−0.20	−0.22
RSES					1.00	0.66	0.61	0.58
SISE						1.00	0.45	0.42
SWLS							1.00	0.67
FS								1.00

[a] RNNS, Raskin and Novacek Narcissism Scale; NPI, Narcissistic Personality Inventory; NPDS, Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale; SERK, Serkownek Narcissism Scale; RSES, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SISE, Single-item Self-esteem Scale; SWLS, Satisfaction With Life Scale; FS, Faces Scale. All correlations greater than 0.12 or less than −0.12 significantly deviate from zero, $P < 0.05$, two-tailed test.

model to the size of the direct paths in a direct-effects-only model. The *direct-effects-only model* included only the paths connecting both types of narcissism to happiness; it excluded all paths connected to self-esteem.

As a first step, I tested the fit of the mediational model and found that it had acceptably good fit, χ^2 (15) = 66.27, $P <$ 0.05, GFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.95. All factor loadings (i.e., standardized betas corresponding to the paths connecting latent variables to observed variables) in this model exceeded 0.68.

As a second step, I tested whether the inclusion of self-esteem in the model significantly diminished the size of the paths connecting both types of narcissism to happiness. To do this, I first obtained the direct path values from the direct-effects-only model. In the direct-effects-only model, the effect of overt narcissism on happiness (shown in Fig. 1 as the uppermost value in
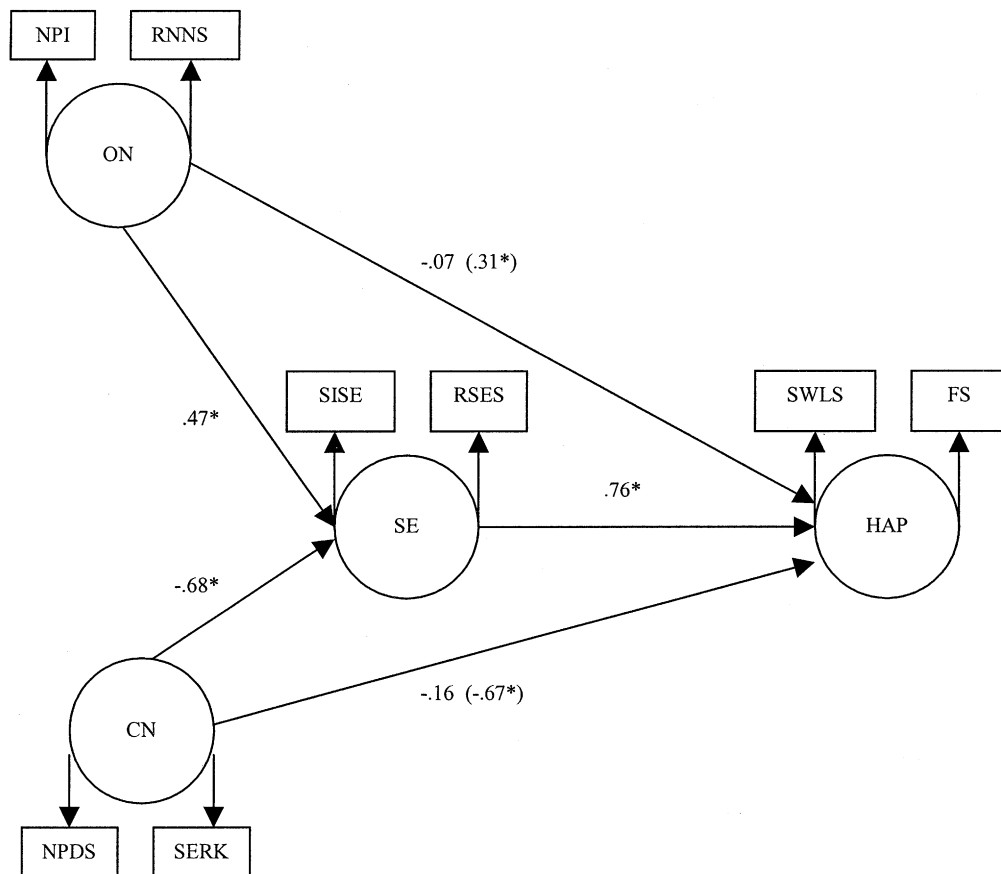
χ^2 (15) = 66.27, p < .05, GFI = .94, CFI = .95; * = p < .05

Fig. 1. Structural equation model representing the associations among overt narcissism, covert narcissism, self-esteem and happiness. Direct effects from a direct-effects-only model are shown in parentheses. NPI, Narcissistic Personality Inventory; RNNS, Raskin and Novacek Narcissism Scale; ON, overt narcissism; NPDS, Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale; SERK, Serkownek Narcissism Scale; CN, covert narcissism; RSES, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale; SISE, Single-item Self-esteem Scale; SE, self-esteem; SWLS, Satisfaction With Life Scale; FS, Faces Scale; HAP, happiness.

parentheses) was positive and significant, $B = 0.31$, $t = 4.38$, $P < 0.05$. The effect of covert narcissism on happiness (shown in Fig. 1 as the lowermost value in parentheses) was negative and significant, $B = -0.67$, $t = -7.24$, $P < 0.05$. Importantly, the values of the direct paths in the direct-effects-only model were substantially larger than the values of the direct paths in the mediational model. Thus, just by inspecting the differing sizes of these path coefficients, it is apparent that self-esteem accounts for much of the shared variance between both types of narcissism and happiness.

One method for determining whether the differences between the values of the direct paths in the two models is statistically significant is to constrain the values of the direct paths in the mediational model to equal their values in the direct-effects-only model. By doing so, it is possible to test whether constraining the paths worsens the fit of the mediational model. Because the value of a direct path should diminish when a "true" mediator is included in the model (Baron & Kenny, 1986), I expected that constraining the values of the direct paths in the mediational model to equal their values in the direct-effects-only model would significantly worsen model fit.

When the path from overt narcissism to happiness was constrained to its value in the direct-effects-only model, the fit of the model worsened, χ^2 (16) = 80.42, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94. The model with the constrained path had significantly worse fit than the model in which the path was left unconstrained, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1) = 14.15, $P < 0.05$. This result supports the hypothesis that one of the reasons that overt narcissists are happier with their lives is that they experience high self-esteem.

Similar results were obtained when I constrained the path from covert narcissism to happiness to its value in the direct-effects-only model. When this path was constrained, the fit of the model worsened, χ^2 (16) = 76.73, GFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.94. The model with the constrained path had significantly worse fit than the model in which the path was left unconstrained, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1) = 10.46, $P < 0.05$. This result supports the hypothesis that one of the reasons that covert narcissists are unhappy with their lives is that they experience low self-esteem.

The results presented so far strongly suggest that self-esteem mediates the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness. But might self-deception mediate theses associations just as well? To examine this possibility, self-deception was inserted into the mediational model in place of self-esteem. Because only one measure of self-deception was available, the self-deception subscale was bifurcated into two observed variables (see Schmit & Ryan, 1993). Ten items were assigned to each observed variable in a manner that optimized the internal consistency coefficients of both observed variables (αs = 0.60 and 0.61). These two observed variables were then associated with a self-deception latent variable (with factor loadings of 0.53 and 0.54). When self-deception was inserted into the mediational model in place of self-esteem, the model had acceptably good fit, χ^2 (15) = 62.92, $P < 0.05$, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.93. To test whether self-deception might mediate the association between overt narcissism and happiness, the path connecting overt narcissism to happiness was constrained to its value in the direct-effects-only model. This model still had acceptably good fit, χ^2 (16) = 63.49, $P < 0.05$, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.93, and it did *not* fit the data significantly worse than the model in which the path was left unconstrained, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1) = 0.57, $P > 0.05$. This result suggests that overt narcissists' higher happiness scores may have little to do with their tendencies to be self-deceived.

But what about covert narcissists? Although I am not aware of any theoretical precedent for the hypothesis that self-deception mediates the association between covert narcissism and happiness, the correlations presented in Table 1 (columns eleven through 13) suggest that it is at least a

possibility. Covert narcissism is negatively associated with both self-deception and happiness. As a result, one could hypothesize that one of the reasons that covert narcissists experience unhappiness is that they lack self-deceptive tendencies. To test this hypothesis, the path from covert narcissism to happiness was constrained to its original value in the model that posited self-deception as a potential mediator. This model still had acceptably good fit, χ^2 (16) = 63.29, $P <$ 0.05, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.93, and it did *not* fit the data significantly worse than the model in which the path was left unconstrained, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1) = .37, $P > 0.05$. Thus, this result suggests that covert narcissists' lower happiness scores may have little to do with their lack of self-deception.

These results strongly favor the conclusion that self-esteem, and not self-deception, mediates the associations between both types of narcissism and happiness. However, there are several alternative models that might fit the data better than the mediational model I have posited. For instance, one possibility is that either type of narcissism might mediate the association between self-esteem and happiness. That is, perhaps one reason that people with high self-esteem report greater happiness is that people with high self-esteem tend to experience higher levels of overt narcissism or lower levels of covert narcissism. When the path linking overt narcissism to self-esteem was reversed (representing a model in which the association between self-esteem and happiness is mediated by overt narcissism) the fit of the model noticeably worsened, χ^2 (15) = 84.38, $P <$ 0.05, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94. Similarly, when the path linking covert narcissism to self-esteem was reversed (representing a model in which the association between self-esteem and happiness is mediated by covert narcissism) the fit of the model noticeably worsened, χ^2 (15) = 84.38, $P <$ 0.05, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94. (Because the degrees of freedom in these alternative models are equal to the degrees of freedom in the original mediational model, difference tests between the models are not possible; see Pedhazur, 1997. Nevertheless, the χ^2 values for the alternative models clearly exceed the χ^2 value for the original mediational model.) These results argue against the possibility that either type of narcissism may mediate the association between self-esteem and happiness.

In summary, the results presented support the hypothesis that overt narcissists are happy because they experience higher self-esteem whereas covert narcissists are unhappy because they experience lower self-esteem. The results also suggest that overt and covert narcissists' levels of happiness may have little to do with their levels of self-deception.

3. Discussion

A potential source of confusion in the study of narcissism is the fact that narcissistic features differ widely in their associations with psychological adjustment. In this study I demonstrated that indicators of overt narcissism were positively related to self-esteem and happiness whereas indicators of covert narcissism were negatively related to self-esteem and happiness. These results join a broader collection of evidence suggesting that overt and covert narcissism are very different constructs (e.g. Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996; Wink, 1991). They also join evidence suggesting that narcissistic features vary along a continuum of adjustment, with some features showing more positive associations with adjustment than others (Hickman et al., 1996; Watson et al., 1992, 1996, 1999–2000). In many respects, past research and theorizing on the distinction between overt

and covert narcissism are consistent with the continuum hypothesis. Overt and covert narcissism clearly differ in their relations with some indicators of well-being (Hickman et al., 1996; Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996; Watson et al., 1992, 1996), so it may be appropriate to regard these two constructs as constellations of narcissistic features that lie at different ends of the adjustment continuum.

Interestingly, this study also showed that overt narcissists' happiness and covert narcissists' unhappiness are largely attributable to differences in self-esteem. The fact that self-esteem mediates the association between overt narcissism and happiness may seem surprising considering that some research suggests that overt narcissists do not experience the healthiest kind of self-esteem. Although their self-esteem levels are generally high, overt narcissists experience wide variability in their day-to-day self-esteem levels (Rhodewalt et al., 1998). They also experience a combination of high explicit self-esteem and low implicit self-esteem, which suggests that their conscious and unconscious self-views conflict (Brown, Bosson & Swann; Jordan, Spencer & Zanna, 2001). These unique aspects of overt narcissists' self-esteem may explain why they react so defensively when they are evaluated negatively (e.g. Bushman & Bameister, 1998; Raskin, Nova-cek & Hogan, 1991; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998).

But even if overt narcissists' high self-esteem is defensive, it may still be associated with certain psychological benefits. For example, unrealistic illusions about the self are an integral aspect of defensive self-esteem (Raskin et al., 1991), and unrealistic illusions are associated with better health and adjustment (Baumeister, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Additionally, looking down on other people in an attempt to raise one's own relative position may also be an integral aspect of defensive self-esteem, and looking down on others has also been linked to better health and adjustment (Buunk & Gibbons, 1997; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Thus, even if their high self-esteem is defensive and illusory, overt narcissists may still reap certain benefits from this form of self-esteem (such as greater happiness). Of course, this perspective is based primarily on results obtained from relatively healthy college-student samples. Whether it applies to psychiatric samples as well is uncertain.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence that both challenges and supports past theorizing on the nature of narcissism. Although some theorists have claimed that narcissism is associated with unhappiness (e.g. Kernberg, 1975; Lasch, 1979; Reich, 1954) the results of this study suggest that only some narcissists—covert narcissists—are unhappy. Overt narcissists, in contrast, are quite happy, and their happiness is better explained by their levels of self-esteem than by their levels of self-deception. The results of this study also add further validity to the distinction made in past research between the overt and covert "faces" of narcissism (Wink, 1991). They go beyond past results, however, by suggesting that one of the faces of narcissism is a happy face, and the other face is a profoundly unhappy one.

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