

Trait Narcissism and Romantic Attraction: An Extension

Research Thesis

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by

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Abstract

The present study used the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Miller et al., 2016) and communal narcissism to extend Campbell's (1999) research on narcissism and romantic attraction.

Participants (N = 283) were given a brief survey assessing trait narcissism as well as levels of attraction towards a set of hypothetical potential partners who varied in their descriptions of how perfect, caring, and admiring they were. Results revealed that participants scoring higher in FFNI Extraversion preferred partners who were described as perfect or admiring. Participants scoring higher in FFNI Antagonism revealed less attraction for a caring partner unless the person was described as perfect. Participants scoring higher in FFNI Neuroticism and communal narcissism did not reveal a preference for any targets listed.

Keywords: narcissism, Trifurcated Model of Narcissism, romantic attraction

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Narcissism has become a rather popular term often used to describe those who are perceived as self-absorbed, conceited, and toxic to be around. While this is true, there is more to being a narcissist than just being self-absorbed and unpleasant to be around. In this paper, I will be focusing on trait-level narcissism, which is a complex and multifaceted construct (Wink, 1991; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Cain et al., 2008). Trait-level narcissism exists on a continuum, meaning that everyone possesses certain narcissistic characteristics. It is when one scores higher on a narcissism continuum that social and personality psychologists label them narcissists for brevity (Brunell, in press).

The most commonly researched form of trait narcissism is grandiose narcissism, which is characterized by feelings of grandiosity (Brown et al., 2009; Rogoza et al., 2016), extraversion (Miller et al., 2011), exhibitionism (Wink, 1991), antagonism (Crowe et al., 2019), entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004; Crowe et al., 2019), and a lack of empathy for others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), as well as interpersonally antagonistic traits such as egotism and noncompliance (Crowe et al., 2019). Many people have found themselves in a romantic relationship with a grandiose narcissist, or at least know of someone else in that situation (Brunell & Campbell, 2011). Being romantically tied to a grandiose narcissist is not easy, as grandiose narcissistic partners are notoriously difficult, to say the least. They tend to make great first impressions (Back et al., 2010) because they are kind and charismatic in the early stages of a new relationship (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). However, the façade can only uphold for so long; eventually, their great sense of entitlement and lack of empathy begins to come out (Brunell & Campbell, 2011). They are controlling and exploitative in their relationships (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). They are also selfish, hostile, and arrogant (Back et al., 2010). On top of all of that, grandiose narcissistic individuals tend to lack commitment to their relationships (Campbell

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& Foster, 2002). So, it is easy to imagine how unpleasant a romantic relationship with a narcissistic individual truly is.

Previous research shows that the romantic relationships of grandiose narcissists are often short-lived, as their charming behaviors only last for so long before their true narcissistic qualities begin to reveal themselves, such as their desire to be admired by others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Back et al., 2010) and their preference for power over closeness and intimacy (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Campbell et al., 2002). Vrabel et al. (2019) suggest that a narcissist's strong internal desire for both respect and admiration within their relationships may explain their preference for certain qualities in their romantic partners as well as themselves. Specifically, they appear to prefer more agentic qualities, such as ambition and competence, over communal qualities, such as warmth and nurturance (Vrabel et al., 2019).

Grandiose narcissism has been studied for decades, but now it is better understood that grandiose narcissism should be divided into two different domains: agentic grandiose narcissism and communal narcissism. An agentic grandiose narcissist is probably who most people typically imagine when someone refers to a narcissist. An agentic grandiose narcissist is extraverted (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), arrogant (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), and strives to enhance their already inflated self-esteem (Rogoza et al., 2016). There is not nearly as much known about communal narcissism in comparison to what is known about agentic grandiose narcissism, but it is known that, similarly to agentic grandiose narcissists, communal narcissists share the same self-motives for grandiosity, self-esteem, power, and entitlement (Gebauer, 2012). However, communal narcissists differ in that they place emphasis on excelling in communal domains (Gebauer et al., 2012). A communal grandiose narcissist presents like an agentic narcissist but focuses on power and general social approval rather than personal superiority (Brunell, in press).

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They often perceive themselves as being an exceptionally helpful, caring, and philanthropic person (Gebauer et al., 2012; Brunell, in press). Contrary to their self-perceptions, previous research has found that communal narcissists are not more helpful than their counterparts (Gebauer et al., 2012) and often become less helpful once their desire for power has been validated by those around them (Giacomin & Jordan, 2015).

Recently, more research has begun to focus on a separate facet of trait narcissism, referred to as vulnerable, or covert, narcissism (Wink, 1991; Hendin & Cheek, 1997). Although vulnerable narcissists share some core qualities with grandiose narcissists (i.e., underlying sense of entitlement and grandiose fantasies) (Wink, 1991), they differ interpersonally. Vulnerable narcissism is characterized by low self-esteem (Brown & Brunell, 2017), hypersensitivity (Wink, 1991), neuroticism (Miller et al., 2011), and insecurity (Wink, 1991). Vulnerable narcissists have a hard time accepting criticism. Dickinson and Pincus (2003) discovered that individuals scoring higher on vulnerable narcissism reported having a fearful or preoccupied attachment style, which suggests that they do desire to maintain close relationships, but often have difficulty doing so.

A Model of Narcissism and Attraction

In 1999, W. K. Campbell proposed a model of narcissism and romantic attraction that predicted that narcissistic individuals, in comparison to non-narcissists, would prefer romantic partners who offered self-oriented traits as opposed to partners who offered other-oriented traits. Campbell notes two strategies commonly used by narcissists to self-enhance, which he refers to as admiration and identification. Admiration is comprised of receiving praise from a romantic partner. Identification refers to one's self-concept being bolstered by relational association with a partner who is overall perceived as being highly positive by others. Campbell theorized that narcissists would be more likely to prefer a romantic partner who has the ability to offer

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admiration and identification (self-oriented traits), as opposed to selecting romantic partners who are caring or offer emotional intimacy (other-oriented traits).

Participants of Study 1 were asked to complete the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988) and then list qualities that they most desired in a romantic partner, which were then coded to reflect which personality dimension they would represent: admiring, perfect, caring, or needy. The results of Study 1 were consistent with the self-orientation prediction. Because Study 1 lacked precision due to the open-response method, Campbell shifted methods for Study 2. Participants of Study 2 were first asked to complete the NPI as well as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965). They were then asked to read through a scenario where a friend introduces them to four different individuals at a party. Each individual represented one personality characteristic (i.e., perfect, caring, admiring, or needy). Participants were asked to answer a few questions regarding how they felt about each individual and rank the targets. Results from Study 2 also supported the self-orientation model, as narcissism was positively correlated with self-oriented traits. Only three participants rated the needy individual as attractive, therefore Campbell excluded the needy target in Study 3.

Study 3 was designed to evaluate the possible interaction of the two forms of narcissistic self-enhancement: admiration and self-identification. Study 3 was composed of eight target partners for participants to examine and rate. Each target was described as having either low or high levels of each personality quality of interest (i.e., perfect, caring, admiring). The method of Study 3 was similar to Study 2 in that it was composed of the NPI and the RSE, then participants were asked to read through a hypothetical party scenario where they were introduced to eight potential partners. After reading each description, participants were asked to answer a few questions to rate how they felt about each target. Results from Study 3 suggested that, on

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average, participants rated perfect individuals higher than non-perfect, admiring individuals higher than non-admiring, and caring individuals higher than non-caring. The effect of perfection was higher for narcissists compared to non-narcissists. There was not a significant interaction between narcissism and admiration, however there was a significant interaction between narcissism, perfection, and admiration. The effect of caring was higher for non-narcissists than narcissists, which remains consistent with the self-orientation model.

Study 4 also asked participants to answer the NPI and the RSE, but then asked participants to read a scenario and rate only two targets. The targets were perfect and noncaring or nonperfect and caring. Participants scoring higher on the narcissism continuum found the perfect-noncaring target more attractive. The final study, Study 5, remained identical to Study 4 with the addition of five questions that measured the mediators (i.e., status, esteem, attraction, and similarity) before being presented with the target descriptions. The results of Study 5 supported the mediational role of self-esteem and desire to associate with similar others in the romantic preferences of narcissistic individuals.

Taken together, the findings from Campbell's (1999) research on narcissism and romantic attraction show that individuals scoring high on agentic grandiose trait narcissism prefer admiring partners or significant others who can offer them improved social status. They do not prefer partners who offer emotional intimacy within a romantic relationship (Campbell, 1999). In regard to the romantic desires of communal narcissists, to the best of my knowledge, there is no published evidence to support any claims.

There has been little research regarding the romantic desires of vulnerable narcissists. In 2012, Feng et al. replicated and extended Campbell's (1999) study on narcissism and romantic attraction, which proposed the self-orientation model, by evaluating the romantic preferences of

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both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists within a collectivistic society. Participants from this study were asked to complete a questionnaire composed of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory for Chinese (NPIC; Zhou et al., 2009) and the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 1997) translated from English to Chinese. Participants were then asked to complete an attraction rating test, as well as a romantic-partner choice task – both tasks replicated directly from Campbell’s original study. Feng et al. reported that in comparison to non-narcissists, grandiose narcissists within a collectivistic society rated self-oriented individuals higher. Vulnerable narcissists were also more attracted to self-oriented individuals, but the researchers reported that they did not show such preference when selecting potential partners. However, other-oriented targets were more attractive to all participants – narcissists and non-narcissists. This is attributed to the values shared by members of a collectivistic society, like China (Feng et al., 2012).

Trifurcated Model/Spectrum Model

The current study examines trait narcissism through the lens of the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism (Miller et al., 2016; Crowe et al., 2019). The Trifurcated Model of Narcissism is derived from the Five Factor Model of Narcissism (Campbell & Miller, 2013; Glover et al., 2012). This model explores both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and understands that both forms of narcissism must share a common underlying structure, if they are both to be considered constructs of narcissism (Crowe et al., 2019). This model investigates a three-factor conceptualization involving the structure of narcissism: Agentic Extraversion (and Exhibitionism); Antagonism/Entitlement; Neuroticism/Vulnerability (Crowe et al., 2019). In this model, agentic extraversion and exhibitionism are attributed to grandiose narcissism, neuroticism and vulnerability are linked with vulnerable narcissism, and antagonism is understood as the

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common core between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Thus, moving forward, grandiose narcissistic traits will be examined through the lens of agentic extraversion, vulnerable narcissism will be examined as narcissistic neuroticism, and antagonism is understood as the shared trait between the two facets.

Present Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the relationship between trait narcissism and romantic attraction, with the goal being to determine which traits individuals scoring high in Agentic Extraversion (and Exhibitionism); Antagonism/Entitlement; Neuroticism/Vulnerability prefer, as well as the romantic interests of communal narcissists. The inspiration behind this study came from Campbell's (1999) research regarding narcissism and romantic attraction. Campbell's research focused on agentic grandiose narcissists and found that agentic grandiose narcissists are attracted to those with an admiring personality type and less attracted to partners who offer more emotional intimacy. This suggests that narcissists use their romantic partners as a mechanism to increase self-esteem.

My recent research extended Campbell's (1999) Study 2 to examine trait narcissism through the lens of the Trifurcated Model and included a measure of communal narcissism (Newton et al, 2023a; 2023b). Data were collected from a sample of introductory psychology students (Newton et al., 2023a) and a sample from Prolific.com (Newton et al., 2023b). In both samples, those scoring higher on agentic extraversion predicted greater attraction for the admiring or perfect target. Unexpectedly, in the Prolific sample, agentic extraversion was also weakly associated with more liking for the caring target. For neurotic/vulnerable narcissism, in the student sample, there was a preference for the admiring target but in the Prolific sample, there was a preference for the caring or needy target. Antagonistic/entitled narcissistic

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participants indicated less attraction for the caring and needy person across both samples. Lastly, communal narcissism was not a significant predictor for any target among the student sample, but was associated with greater attraction for the admiring, perfect, and needy targets in the Prolific sample.

The current study seeks to replicate and extend Campbell's (1999) Study 3 by examining trait narcissists through the lens of the Trifurcated Model and investigating communal narcissism as well. Like in Campbell's (1999) Study 3, the needy characteristic was dropped from examination. Based on this prior research, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Agentic extraverts would reveal a preference for the target who is described as perfect, admiring, but not caring, which would offer an opportunity to bolster self-esteem.

Hypothesis 2: Neurotic/vulnerable narcissists would prefer an admiring or caring target, but not necessarily a perfect target. These partners could serve to help raise the low self-esteem of neurotic/vulnerable narcissists without offering too much emotional intimacy.

Hypothesis 3: Antagonistic/entitled narcissists would prefer the less caring target.

Hypothesis 4: Communal narcissists would prefer the perfect, admiring, not caring target or the perfect, admiring, and caring target. Although communal narcissists self-enhance in the communal domain, it does not appear that having a caring partner is important to a communal narcissist.

In the present study, I assess narcissism and then present participants with eight hypothetical targets that they have met at a party. These targets are described as perfect/not perfect, caring/not caring, admiring/not admiring in different ways. Participants are asked a series of questions to rate their attraction for each target.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from the Prolific website. All participants were required to be American adults, 18-25 years of age, and to be single at the time of completion. Participants received a payment of \$2.25 after completion of the survey through Prolific.com. 290 total participants completed the survey. However, because some participants were in a relationship at the time they completed the study, data were only analyzed for 283 participants (139 males, 122 females, 14 third-gender or non-binary, 6 transgender, and 2 who preferred not to indicate their gender identity). The mean age of participants was 22.13 (SD = 2.04). Looking at race, 140 participants identified as White/Caucasian, 38 identified as Black/African American, 25 identified as Hispanic/Latinx, 45 individuals identified as Asian/Asian American, 1 identified as Native American/Pacific Islander, and 33 participants preferred not to answer. Finally, participants were asked their sexual orientation (171 heterosexual/straight, 38 gay/lesbian, 25 bisexual, 45 pansexual, 1 asexual, 1 other/I don't know, and 33 preferred not to answer).

Materials

Narcissism Questionnaires

The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory Short Form (FFNI-SF): The short form of the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI-SF; Sherman et al., 2015) is a 60-item questionnaire designed to measure both vulnerable and grandiose narcissism from a five-factor model perspective. Each item is scored on a 5-point scale (1= “disagree strongly”, 5= “agree strongly”). The extraversion subfacet is 16 items. An example is “I often fantasize about having lots of success and power”.

The neuroticism subfacet is composed of 12 items. Example item is “I often feel as if I need

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compliments from others in order to be sure of myself”. The antagonism subfacet is made up of 32 items. An example item is “It is easy to get people to do what I want”.

Communal Narcissism Inventory (CNI): The Communal Narcissism Inventory (Gebauer et al., 2012) is a 16-item questionnaire designed to measure communal narcissism within an individual.

The CNI asks participants to reflect on different statements and respond on a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree) to indicate if they have had this or similar thoughts.

Example item is “I am (going to be) the best parent on this planet”.

Relationship Questionnaire

The relationship questionnaire is a replica of what is used in Campbell’s (1999) Study 3 regarding narcissism and romantic attraction. Participants were told the following:

Imagine the following situation: You are at a party with some people that you know and some people that you don’t know. A friend of yours introduces you to eight people of your preferred gender who are single – we’ll call them by their first initials: J., G., C., F., B., W., R., and K. Later, you run into your friend in the kitchen, and she tells you about these people in more detail. Your friend describes the eight single people that you met in random order.

Participants were then presented with eight hypothetical target descriptions in randomized order. Each target is described as being a different combination of Perfect/Not Perfect, Caring/Not Caring, and Admiring/Not Admiring (See Table 1 for a summary). After participants read through each description of a given target, they then answer how much or how little they agree to a series of five questions on a 7-point scale (1= not at all, 7= very). Example item is “This person seems like a desirable dating partner”. See Appendix A.

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Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants were asked to complete both narcissism measures (FFNI-SF & CNI) and then were asked to read through each of the eight target's description carefully and answer the relationship measure. After completing all surveys, participants were asked to report information regarding their demographics such as gender, age, and ethnicity. Upon completion of the survey, all participants were awarded the payment for their participation.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's α are displayed in Table 2. The top three ratings were given to Person J (Perfect, Caring, Admiring), Person B (Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring) and Person C (Perfect, Admiring, Not Caring). Thus, it seems that participants rated admiring targets more favorably.

Correlations among study variables are presented in Table 3. Of note, people higher in FFNI Extraversion rated Person C (Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring) more highly. Participants scoring higher in FFNI Antagonism rated Person G (Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring), Person C (Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring), Person F (Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring), Person R (Not Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring), and Person K (Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring) more favorably while they rated Person J (Perfect, Caring, Admiring) and Person B (Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring) more negatively. Participants higher in FFNI Neuroticism gave lower ratings to Persons G (Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring), C (Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring), F (Perfect, Not

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Caring, Not Admiring), W (Not Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring), and K (Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring).

Independent t-tests were computed to determine if men and women differed in their narcissism levels and preferences for targets. These results are summarized in Table 4. Only results from participants identifying as cisgender were used to examine gender differences because there were too few participants in the other gender identity categories. Men scored slightly higher on all measures of narcissism except for FFNI Neuroticism; women scored higher than men on this variable. Men tended to give targets across the board higher scores than women did, except for Person J (Perfect, Caring, Admiring); women rated Person J more highly.

Independent t-tests were also computed to examine differences for target men and target women. These results are displayed in Table 5. Results showed that those who rated men were slightly higher on the FFNI Neuroticism facet than those who rated women. Results also revealed that male targets were rated lower than female targets in general.

Primary Analyses

For the following analysis, cisgender was used to examine gender differences due to there being too few participants in the other gender identity categories. A series of multiple regression analyses were computed to determine the extent to which narcissism facets predicted ratings for each target person while controlling for participant and target gender. A repeated measures analysis of variance was computed to determine if mean ratings for each target differed significantly. Results were significant; $F(4.823, 1205.651) = 351.075, p < .001$. I am reporting the Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment due to violations in sphericity. Results are summarized in Table 6 (for perfect targets) and Table 7 (for non-perfect targets).

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For FFNI Extraversion, those who were higher on FFNI Extraversion rated Person J (Perfect, Caring, Admiring) and Person C (Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring) higher than those lower on FFNI Extraversion. In order to examine if these correlations were significantly different, r to z transformations were computed. There were no significant differences between ratings for Person J and Person C ($z = -0.96, p = .337$). Participants scoring higher on FFNI Antagonism rated Person G (Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring), Person C (Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring), Person F (Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring), Person R (Not Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring), and Person K (Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring) higher than those scoring lower on FFNI Antagonism. Those higher in FFNI Antagonism rated Person B (Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring) lower than those lower in FFNI Antagonism. In order to examine if the correlations were significantly different for the strongest correlations (Person F, Person K, and Person C) r to z transformations were computed. There were no significant differences between these three correlations (highest $z = 1.45, p = .147$). Taken together, it appears that people higher in FFNI Antagonism were indicating that they felt less attraction for a caring partner unless they were also described as perfect.

Target ratings were not statistically significant for FFNI Neuroticism and CNI.

Discussion

In the present study, I sought to use the Trifurcated Model of Narcissism and Communal Narcissism Inventory to examine the qualities that trait narcissists look for in a romantic partner. In general, participants rated the target with all positive characteristics (Perfect, Caring, Admiring) highest. This was expected because this person would be able to offer intimacy and increased self-esteem to the participant. The next highest rated targets were both described as

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sharing the admiring characteristic, making them likely to be desirable dating partners, as they are able to offer increased self-esteem.

Participants who scored higher in FFNI Extraversion preferred targets who were described as being perfect as well admiring, supporting Hypothesis 1. Scoring higher on the FFNI Extraversion subfacet is associated with grandiose narcissism and previous research has found that grandiose narcissists prefer a “perfect” partner to maintain and bolster an already high self-esteem (Campbell, 1999). Identifying with a highly positive individual has been revealed as being a commonly used self-enhancement strategy, especially in romantic relationships (Campbell, 1999) That rings true for the admiring characteristic as well. Previous research has discovered that admiration is one strategy for narcissistic self-enhancement, therefore, an admiring partner would continuously encourage high self-esteem in the participant (Campbell, 1999; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Tanchotsrinon et al., 2007). The results suggest that those higher in FFNI Extraversion do not necessarily prefer a caring partner, which aligns with previous research that has revealed that grandiose narcissistic individuals do not seek intimacy in their close relationships (Campbell, 1999; Brunell, in press).

Participants scoring higher on FFNI Antagonism rated targets who share the common trait of being described as perfect more highly. FFNI Antagonism is understood as being the shared variable between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists (Miller et al., 2016). Because antagonism is associated with grandiose narcissism, these findings are consistent with previous findings which revealed that grandiose narcissists prefer a perfect partner (Campbell, 1999). Participants scoring higher in FFNI Antagonism also rated a few targets described as “not perfect” highly; however, these targets were described as admiring. Although these targets were not able to offer perfection, they were able to offer admiration, which boosts self-esteem and

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fulfills narcissists' need for admiration (Campbell, 1999). Most interestingly, the target possessing no positive qualities (described as Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring) was rated highly by participants scoring higher in FFNI Antagonism. Although it might seem that a person who is described as having no redeemable characteristics would not receive any interest from narcissistic individuals, it makes sense when one considers that antagonism is also associated with vulnerable narcissism. Vulnerable narcissists have low self-esteem (Brown & Brunell, 2017) and are insecure (Wink, 1991). Thus, from that lens, I theorize that this finding can be attributed to the similarity-attraction effect. The similarity-attraction effect proposes that an increase in similarity between individuals is associated with increased attraction to that person (Byrne, 1997; Montoya et al., 2008). Moreover, there is some evidence that people who have low self-esteem might be attracted to those who offer them self-verification feedback, that is, that they see them how they see themselves (Katz & Beach, 2000). Thus, it could be that participants scoring higher in facets associated with vulnerable narcissism do not desire a partner who could be perceived as being a highly positive individual. This is also consistent with previous research that suggests that vulnerable narcissists tend to identify with similar others (Sullinger et al., 2023). This may be to avoid shame and further insecurity that could be associated with upward social comparison or to avoid upward social comparison altogether. The target who was described as not perfect but was admiring and caring was negatively correlated with FFNI Antagonism. This is most likely because this target offers too much emotional intimacy by displaying caring and admiring characteristics, without offering perfection. Taken together, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 2 was that the neurotic facet would predict a preference for an admiring or caring target, but not necessarily a perfect target. Thus, H2 was not supported; FFNI Neuroticism

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was not associated with the ratings of the targets. This finding was unexpected. More research is needed to understand why the facet of antagonism predicted ratings of the targets, but neuroticism did not.

Given that communal narcissism is a form of grandiose narcissism, I expected communal narcissists to rate targets who were described as perfect or admiring highly – similarly to the results of FFNI Extraversion (Hypothesis 4). This hypothesis was not supported as communal narcissism was not significantly correlated with any target characteristics. They did not seem to prefer targets who were perfect and admiring. Also, although communal narcissists self-enhance in the communal domain, it does not appear that having a caring partner is important to them. Future research should examine the partner characteristics communal narcissists are attracted to.

One limitation to this study is that participants were presented with hypothetical situations of romantic partners, as opposed to a more realistic setting that might provide a more genuine response from participants. Another possible fault to this study is that participants were presented with eight targets to rate one after another, which could have been too many targets with similar descriptions for participants to be presented with at once. A future study could benefit from reducing the number of targets presented, as well as changing some of the language used in the target descriptions which could be perceived as harsh and affect participant responses. A strength to this study was the age range of participants. In comparison to a pool of participants made up of introductory psychology undergraduate students, it can be assumed that a slightly older sample presents more maturity and experience with romantic relationships and preferences. Overall, another study should be conducted to address these concerns. More research should be done to expand on this data and explore the mechanisms behind narcissistic individuals' preferences in their romantic partners.

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Taken together, extraverted narcissists desire perfect and admiring potential romantic partners. Antagonistic narcissists' preferences seem contradictory, but a few patterns reveal their preference for either perfect partners (especially when they are also admiring) or the less than perfect partner who seems to have no redeemable qualities. On the one hand, the perfect and admiring partner provided the antagonistic narcissist with a means of self-enhancement, where the partner lacking in perfection, admiration, and care mirrors who the antagonistic narcissist actually is. Neither neurotic narcissists nor communal narcissists revealed preference for any potential partner in this study.

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Table 1*Target Description Key*

Target	Description
Person J	Perfect, Caring, Admiring
Person G	Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring
Person C	Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring
Person F	Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring
Person B	Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring
Person W	Not Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring
Person R	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring
Person K	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring

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Table 2*Alphas, Means, and Standard Deviations*

	α	M	SD
FFNI Extraversion	.880	4.05	.980
FFNI Neuroticism	.892	3.45	.817
FFNI Antagonism	.926	2.31	.640
CNI	.931	3.86	1.16
Target J	.883	6.03	0.925
Target G	.899	3.25	1.46
Target C	.948	4.02	1.72
Target F	.906	2.41	1.31
Target B	.929	4.51	1.32
Target W	.927	2.43	1.21
Target R	.947	2.73	1.44
Target K	.936	1.79	1.03

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Table 3*Correlation Matrix*

		FFNI Extra	FFNI Antag	FFNI Neurot	CNI	Targ. J	Targ. G	Targ. C	Targ. F	Targ. B	Targ. W	Targ. R	Targ. K
FFNI Extra	<i>r</i>	--											
	<i>p</i>												
FFNI Antag	<i>r</i>	.489	--										
	<i>p</i>	<.001											
FFNI Neurot	<i>r</i>	-.261	-.168	--									
	<i>p</i>	<.001	.005										
CNI	<i>r</i>	.627	.384	-.314	--								
	<i>p</i>	<.001	<.001	<.001									
Target J	<i>r</i>	.099	-.140	.036	.085	--							
	<i>p</i>	.096	.019	.546	.157								
Target G	<i>r</i>	.076	.216	-.200	.082	.006	--						
	<i>p</i>	.204	<.001	<.001	.168	.920							
Target C	<i>r</i>	.179	.260	-.175	.084	.087	.272	--					
	<i>p</i>	.003	<.001	.003	.163	.148	<.001						
Target F	<i>r</i>	.101	.371	-.215	.085	-.156	.699	.434	--				
	<i>p</i>	.093	<.001	<.001	.157	.009	<.001	<.001					
Target B	<i>r</i>	-.105	-.122	.081	-.029	.010	-.040	.097	-.018	--			
	<i>p</i>	.079	.041	.176	.627	.862	.502	.107	.766				

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Target W	<i>r</i>	.030	.113	-.171	.074	-.203	.480	.070	.485	.220	--		
	<i>p</i>	.622	.060	.004	.221	<.001	<.001	.248	<.001	<.001			
Target R	<i>r</i>	.093	.183	-.078	.059	-.263	.198	.459	.362	.386	.334	--	
	<i>p</i>	.118	.002	.192	.324	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		
Target K	<i>r</i>	.070	.349	-.130	.125	-.272	.404	.250	.607	.131	.577	.495	--
	<i>p</i>	.241	<.001	.029	.036	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.028	<.001	<.001	

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Table 4*T-Test for Participant Gender*

Variable	Target Description	Male		Female		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
FFNI Extraversion	---	4.24	.908	3.96	1.02	2.35	.020
FFNI Neuroticism	---	3.11	.795	3.75	.724	-6.75	<.001
FFNI Antagonism	---	2.43	.685	2.22	.583	2.69	.008
CNI	---	4.04	1.04	3.74	1.25	2.12	.035
Target J	Perfect, Caring, Admiring	5.95	1.06	6.06	.869	-.917	.360
Target G	Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring	3.72	1.53	2.77	1.22	5.52	<.001
Target C	Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring	4.49	1.69	3.48	1.62	4.89	<.001
Target F	Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring	2.79	1.47	2.02	.986	4.87	<.001
Target B	Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring	4.54	1.41	4.37	1.30	1.02	.308
Target W	Not Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring	2.72	1.32	2.12	1.01	4.08	<.001
Target R	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring	3.02	1.51	2.42	1.27	3.46	<.001
Target K	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring	2.07	1.24	1.57	.763	3.85	<.001

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Table 5*T-Test for Target Gender*

Variable	Target Description	Target Male		Target Female		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
FFNI Extraversion	--	4.06	.994	4.05	.973	.022	.982
FFNI Neuroticism	--	3.60	.767	3.32	.839	2.85	.005
FFNI Antagonism	--	2.32	.659	2.30	.625	.270	.788
CNI	--	3.89	1.21	3.84	1.12	.319	.750
Target J	Perfect, Caring, Admiring	5.87	.987	6.10	.921	-2.06	.040
Target G	Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring	2.97	1.39	3.51	1.48	-3.13	.002
Target C	Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring	3.59	1.61	4.36	1.72	-3.85	<.001
Target F	Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring	2.10	1.14	2.67	1.36	-3.75	<.001
Target B	Not Perfect, Caring, Admiring	4.33	1.31	4.62	1.36	-1.81	.072
Target W	Not Perfect, Caring, Not Admiring	2.22	1.24	2.64	1.18	-2.84	.005
Target R	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Admiring	2.52	1.45	2.97	1.39	-2.62	.009
Target K	Not Perfect, Not Caring, Not Admiring	1.68	1.01	1.95	1.06	-2.33	.020

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Table 6*Regression analyses predicting attraction ratings for perfect targets with varying levels of care and admiration*

	Target J		Target G		Target C		Target F	
	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$
Participant Gender	.143	2.08 (.039)	-.289	-4.40 (<.001)	-.220	-3.34 (<.001)	-.234	-3.53 (<.001)
Target Gender	.155	2.29 (.023)	.072	1.12 (.266)	.122	1.87 (.062)	.112	1.70 (.090)
FFNI E	.130	2.10 (.035)	.037	.630 (.529)	.148	2.48 (.014)	.066	1.10 (.272)
Participant Gender	.108	1.48 (.139)	-.264	-3.81 (<.001)	-.222	-3.17 (.002)	-.202	-2.89 (.004)
Target Gender	.147	2.15 (.032)	.069	1.07 (.287)	.112	1.70 (.090)	.106	1.62 (.107)
FFNI N	.030	.440 (.660)	-.082	-1.29 (.198)	-.060	-.926 (.355)	-.113	-1.75 (.081)
Participant Gender	.094	1.36 (.174)	-.259	-3.99 (<.001)	-.198	-3.04 (.003)	-.179	-2.87 (.004)
Target Gender	.135	1.98 (.048)	.085	1.33 (.184)	.131	2.05 (.042)	.134	2.17 (.031)
FFNI A	-.115	-1.84 (.067)	.181	3.08 (.002)	.233	3.95 (<.001)	.349	6.18 (<.001)
Participant Gender	.141	2.05 (.042)	-.287	-4.37 (<.001)	-.237	-3.57 (<.001)	-.236	-3.56 (<.001)
Target Gender	.158	2.32 (.021)	.074	1.15 (.253)	.117	1.77 (.078)	.112	1.70 (.090)
CNI	.119	1.91 (.057)	.050	.838 (.403)	.041	.688 (.492)	.058	.962 (.337)

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Table 7*Regression analyses predicting attraction ratings for non-perfect targets with varying levels of care and admiration*

	Target B		Target W		Target R		Target K	
	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$	β	$t(p)$
Participant Gender	-.040	-.576 (.565)	-.217	-3.20 (.002)	-.166	-2.44 (.015)	-.216	-3.19 (.002)
Target Gender	.087	1.27 (.205)	.064	.951 (.342)	.076	1.14 (.257)	.032	.478 (.633)
FFNI E	-.089	-1.42 (.158)	.022	.351 (.726)	.082	1.32 (.187)	.025	.414 (.679)
Participant Gender	-.067	-.926 (.355)	-.182	-2.57 (.011)	-.180	-2.50 (.013)	-.207	-2.90 (.004)
Target Gender	.094	1.37 (.171)	.061	.917 (.360)	.072	1.07 (.287)	.030	.449 (.654)
FFNI N	.112	1.67 (.096)	-.102	-1.56 (.121)	-.001	-.018 (.986)	-.034	-.518 (.605)
Participant Gender	-.051	-.740 (.460)	-.203	-3.00 (.003)	-.152	-2.24 (.026)	-.157	-2.44 (.015)
Target Gender	.081	1.19 (.235)	.070	1.04 (.299)	.083	1.24 (.217)	.058	.912 (.363)
FFNI A	-.131	-2.10 (.037)	.090	1.47 (.142)	.148	2.42 (.016)	.319	5.45 (<.001)
Participant Gender	-.029	-.412 (.681)	-.210	-3.11 (.002)	-.176	-2.58 (.011)	-.205	-3.04 (.003)
Target Gender	.090	1.31 (.192)	.068	1.02 (.309)	.074	1.09 (.275)	.038	.568 (.571)
CNI	-.023	-.358 (.720)	.063	1.04 (.301)	.028	.452 (.652)	.089	1.45 (.148)

Appendix A

Imagine the following situation: You are at a party with some people that you know and some people that you don't know. A friend of yours introduces you to eight people of your preferred gender who are single – we'll call them by their first initials: J., G., C., F., B., W., R., and K. Later, you run into your friend in the kitchen, and she tells you about these people in more detail. Your friend describes the eight single people that you met -- J., G., C., F., B., W., R., and K. – as follows. Please read these descriptions carefully because you will be asked to answer some questions about them later on.

J.: He/She is a really great person. He/She is very popular and good-looking, and he/she is one of the best students at the school. He/She is also rated as one of the best soccer players in the nation; they even say that he/she might play professionally before he/she goes to medical school. At the same time, he/she is a really caring person. He/She told me that he's looking for a person to date with whom he/she could be close/intimate friends. He/She is one the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were terrific! He/She thought that you were the best-looking person at the party and that you were very charming. He/She also thought that you were one of the most intelligent people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

G.: He/She is a really great person. He/She is very popular and good-looking, and he/she is one of the best students at the school. He/She is also rated as one of the best soccer players in the nation; they even say that he/she might play professionally before he/she goes to medical school. At the same time, he/she is a really caring person. He/She told me that he's looking for a person to date with whom he/she could be close/intimate friends. He/She is one the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were not that terrific. He/She thought that you were one of the more average looking people at the party and that you were less than charming. He/She also thought that you were not one of the brightest people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

C.: He/She is a really great person. He/She is very popular and good-looking, and he/she is one of the best students at the school. He/She is also rated as one of the best soccer players in the nation; they even say that he/she might play professionally before he/she goes to medical school. At the same time, he/she is not a really caring person. He/She told me that he's looking for a person to date with whom he/she does not have to be close/intimate friends. He/She is definitely not one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were terrific! He/She thought that you were the best-looking person at the party and that you were very charming. He/She also thought that you were one of the most intelligent people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

F.: He/She is a really great person. He/She is very popular and good-looking, and he/she is one of the best students at the school. He/She is also rated as one of the best soccer players in the nation; they even say that he/she might play professionally before he/she goes to medical school. At the same time, he/she is not a really caring person. He/She told me that he's looking for a person to date with whom he/she does not have to be close/intimate friends. He/She is definitely not one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were not that terrific. He/She thought that you were one of the more average looking people at the party and that you were less than charming. He/She also thought that you were not one of the brightest people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

B.: He/She is a really unimpressive person. He/She isn't very popular or good-looking, and is one of the least successful students at the school. He/She is also rated the worst soccer player on his intramural team; he/she is not sure what he/she is going to do when he/she graduates and there is no way he/she is getting into graduate school. At the same time, he/she is a really caring person. He/She told me that he/she is looking for a person to date with whom he/she could be close, intimate friends. He/She is one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought of you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were terrific! He/She said that they thought you were the best-looking person at the party and that you were very charming. He/She also thought you were one of the most intelligent people they had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

W.: He/She is a really unimpressive person. He/She isn't very popular or good-looking and is one of the least successful students at the school. He/She is also rated the worst soccer player on his intramural team; he/she is not sure what he/she is going to do when he/she graduates and there is no way he/she is getting into graduate school. At the same time, he/she is a really caring person. He/She told me that he/she is looking for a person to date with whom he/she could be close, intimate friends. He/She is one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were not that terrific. He/She thought that you were one of the more average looking people at the party and that you were less than charming. He/She also thought that you were not one of the brightest people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

R.: He/She is a really unimpressive person. He/She isn't very popular or good-looking, and is one of the least successful students at the school. He/She is also rated the worst soccer player on his intramural team; he/she is not sure what he/she is going to do when he/she graduates and there is no way he/she is getting into graduate school. At the same time, he/she is not a really caring person. He/She told me that he/she is looking for a person to date with whom he/she doesn't have to be close, intimate friends. He/She is definitely not one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought of you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were terrific! He/She said that they thought you were the best-looking person at the party and that you were very charming. He/She also thought you were one of the most intelligent people they had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

K.: He/She is a really unimpressive person. He/She isn't very popular or good-looking, and is one of the least successful students at the school. He/She is also rated the worst soccer player on his intramural team; he/she is not sure what he/she is going to do when he/she graduates and there is no way he/she is getting into graduate school. At the same time, he/she is not a really caring person. He/She told me that he/she is looking for a person to date with whom he/she doesn't have to be close, intimate friends. He/She is definitely not one of the most sensitive, sharing, compassionate, and friendly people I know.

Here is what he/she thought about you: He/She told me that he/she thought you were not that terrific. He/She thought that you were one of the more average looking people at the party and that you were less than charming. He/She also thought that you were not one of the brightest people he/she had ever met.

We would now like to ask you some questions about this person.

NARCISSISM AND ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

Please rate this person using the following scale. Please select a number between 1 and 7.

1. How attractive do you find this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

2. How desirable would you find this person as a dating partner?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

3. How much would you actually like to date this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

Very

4. How would you feel about yourself if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very bad

Very good

5. How do you think your friends would feel about you if you were dating this person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Disapproving of me

Approving of me