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Overvalued and Ashamed

Considering the Roles of Self-Esteem and Self-Conscious Emotions in Covert Narcissism

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Over the past 30 years, empirical investigations into narcissism have yielded a rich body of knowledge about the personal and interpersonal tendencies associated with this construct. Despite these advances, research into some aspects of narcissism lags behind theory due to limitations in our measurement capabilities. For example, the feelings of shame and underlying self-doubt that theoretically fuel narcissistic self-regulation have proven difficult to capture empirically, given narcissists' tendencies toward grandiose posturing and categorical denial of negativity or weakness. Recently, however, the emergence of new, unobtrusive tools for assessing shame-proneness (Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992) and self-esteem (Bosson, Swann, & Pennebaker, 2000) has allowed researchers fresh access into the well-guarded inner worlds of narcissists. Here, we capitalize on these recent methodologies to test a model that links implicit and explicit self-esteem, cognitive attributional style, self-conscious emotions, and narcissistic personality.

To summarize the key features of our model, we begin by assuming that discrepancies between people's implicit (automatic, uncontrolled) and explicit (conscious, controlled) self-esteem lie at the heart of narcissistic self-regulation. Implicit/explicit self-esteem discrepancies emerge when people receive relatively extreme messages about their self-worth early in life from caregivers, but encounter repeated doses of environmental feedback that challenge the credibility of these messages. In such cases, people's outcomes conflict routinely with their implicit self-representations and, if they make certain attributions for these outcomes, they will consequently experience certain self-conscious emotions on a regular basis. Chronic experiences with certain self-conscious emotions can, in turn, shape people's explicit self-esteem such that it differs in valence from their implicit self-

esteem. In the context of the resulting fragile self system, narcissistic—that is, defensively self-aggrandizing—personality tendencies take root.

When first conceptualizing the specifics of our model, we assumed that narcissistic personality tendencies reflect *low implicit* self-esteem combined with *high explicit* self-esteem. Several theorists have proposed that narcissistic self-regulation reflects the individual's continual efforts to maintain positive explicit self-views in the face of negative implicit beliefs that derive from unreliable, cold, and/or abusive caregiving (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Indeed, Tracy and Robins (2003) recently proposed a developmental model of self-conscious emotions and narcissism similar to the one we outline here, in which they asserted that low implicit/high explicit self-esteem discrepancies fuel narcissism. Some empirical work also supports this account of narcissism, in that people high in explicit self-esteem, but low in implicit self-esteem, scored particularly high on several measures of narcissism and self-aggrandizement (Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003; Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003). Thus, both theory and research provided sound justification for our assumption that a combination of low implicit and high explicit self-esteem drives the narcissistic personality.

Very soon, however, we realized that this conceptualization of the link between discrepant implicit/explicit self-esteem and narcissism might be incomplete. For instance, research suggests that narcissism is a multifaceted construct, some components of which correlate positively with explicit self-esteem, and others of which correlate negatively with explicit self-esteem (e.g., Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Emmons, 1984, 1987; Millon, 1981; Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996; Rose, 2002; Wink, 1991). Some aspects (or types) of narcissism are thus characterized by low, rather than high, explicit self-esteem. Second, pilot data collected in the first author's lab suggested that, whereas high scores on some indices of narcissism were characterized by a pattern of low implicit self-esteem combined with high explicit self-esteem, high scores on other narcissism indices were characterized by *high implicit* and *low explicit* self-esteem. Finally, shame—a self-conscious emotion that theoretically plays a central role in narcissism (H. B. Lewis, 1971; Morrison, 1989)—correlates positively with some components of narcissism, but negatively or not at all with others (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Tangney, Burggraf, & Wagner, 1995; Watson, Hickman, & Morris, 1996).

Given the possibility of different forms of narcissism that stem from different patterns of discrepant implicit and explicit self-esteem, we focus here on developing a model of shame-driven (or *covert*) narcissism. Although our approach admittedly shares several key components and assumptions with other social-personality models of narcissism (Jordan et al., 2003; Otway & Vignoles, 2006; Tracy & Robins, 2003), it is novel in its (1) consideration of different patterns of discrepant self-esteem stemming from different developmental histories, and (2) emphasis on the distinction between two types of narcissism. While fleshing out the details of our model, we looked frequently to Millon's (1981) social learning theory of narcissism, which deviates from many classical accounts by positing that some forms of narcissism emerge in response to parental overvaluation rather than parental neglect or abuse.

As shown in Figure 22.1, our model begins with individuals who have unusually high implicit self-esteem, presumably due to parental overvaluation (e.g., overindulgence, pampering). When these individuals' personal outcomes fall short of their overblown expectancies, and they attribute their failures to some inadequacy of the self, they will experience shame on a regular basis (path *a*). To defend against painful shame feelings, these
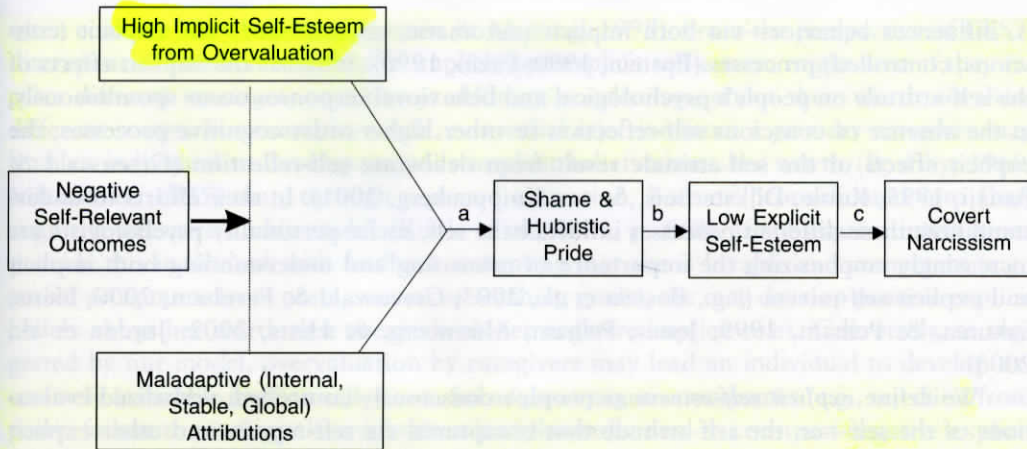
FIGURE 22.1. Covert narcissism as a function of self-esteem, cognitive attributional style, and self-conscious emotions.

individuals suppress shame and convert it into hubristic pride, an all-encompassing feeling of superiority that is distinct from more adaptive and circumscribed feelings of achievement-oriented, or "authentic," pride (M. Lewis, 2000; Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007). Although hubristic pride is a positively valenced feeling state, it does not protect the individual from the harmful effects of chronic shame. Shame feelings therefore chip away at explicit self-esteem, ultimately creating a discrepancy between high implicit and low explicit self-esteem (path *b*). The vulnerability engendered by this self-esteem discrepancy, in turn, promotes covert narcissistic tendencies toward entitlement and exploitativeness (path *c*).

In what follows we define the primary constructs in our model, clarify the links among them, and summarize the literatures on which our logic is based. Next, we present the results of a preliminary test of our ideas, and discuss their implications for our model. Throughout this chapter, we link our ideas and findings to current social-personality research on implicit and explicit self-esteem, self-conscious emotions, and narcissism (e.g., Bosson et al., 2003; Jordan et al., 2003; Robins, Tracy, & Shaver, 2002; Tracy & Robins, 2003).

THE MODEL

As noted, we assume that a pattern of high implicit and low explicit self-esteem underlies covert narcissism. We therefore begin by defining implicit and explicit self-esteem and discussing their developmental origins.

Implicit and Explicit Self-Esteem

Consistent with several influential conceptualizations, we define "self-esteem" as an attitude that individuals hold about the self (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965) or, more specifically, an evaluation of one's lovability and competence (Harter, 1990; Tafarodi & Swann, 2001). As do other types of attitudes, the self-attitude presumably operates—that

is, influences behavior—via both implicit (automatic, uncontrolled) and explicit (conscious, controlled) processes (Epstein, 1990; Fazio, 1990). Whereas the implicit effects of the self-attitude on people's psychological and behavioral responses occur spontaneously, in the absence of conscious self-reflection or other higher-order cognitive processes, the explicit effects of the self-attitude result from deliberate self-reflection (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Koole, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2001). In their efforts to understand how these different processes influence the self, social-personality psychologists are increasingly emphasizing the importance of measuring and understanding both implicit and explicit self-esteem (e.g., Bosson et al., 2003; Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Hetts, Sakuma, & Pelham, 1999; Jones, Pelham, Mirenberg, & Hetts, 2002; Jordan et al., 2003).

We define *explicit self-esteem* as people's consciously controlled, verbalized evaluations of the self—or, the self-attitude that is captured via self-reports and other explicit measurement techniques. In contrast, we define *implicit self-esteem* as the affect that is elicited automatically by stimuli that prime the self—or, the self-attitude that is captured via cognitive priming tasks and other implicit measures (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Unlike self-report scales, implicit measures of self-esteem do not require respondents to answer direct questions about their attitudes toward the self. Instead, implicit measures seek to circumvent respondents' conscious control by, for example, priming the self and assessing the speed with which respondents can subsequently identify positive versus negative stimuli (e.g., Hetts et al., 1999) or measuring the positivity of respondents' reactions to self-associated stimuli (e.g., Koole et al., 2001; Nuttin, 1985).

Whereas implicit and explicit self-esteem measures presumably assess the same underlying construct, they tend to be uncorrelated or, at best, weakly associated (Bosson et al., 2000). Although this fact raises legitimate concerns about the validity of both types of measures (see Bosson, 2006; Farnham, Greenwald, & Banaji, 1999), a discussion of these measurement issues is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, we begin here by assuming that low correlations between implicit and explicit self-esteem scores emerge because some people's implicit and explicit reactions to the self truly differ in valence. To explain how such discrepancies might emerge, we look to Epstein's (1990) cognitive–experiential self-theory (CEST).

According to CEST, human information processing is characterized by two separate systems. The evolutionarily older *experiential* system operates automatically, holistically, and intuitively, and is thus adapted for immediate action. In contrast, the relatively young *cognitive* system operates deliberatively, and is thus adapted for rational decision making and delayed action. These systems work in tandem to provide people with two different ways of "knowing" the self and the world. For example, people develop implicit beliefs about the self via implicit learning processes such as classical and operant conditioning and other emotion-based experiences, and they develop explicit beliefs about the self via logical, rational analyses of self-relevant experiences. Whereas self-relevant information that gets processed automatically and heuristically should form the basis of people's implicit self-esteem, information that is processed in an effortful, piecemeal fashion should form the basis of explicit self-esteem. Note that the type of processing that occurs, experiential versus cognitive, may depend on features of the information being processed (e.g., whether it is affect-laden or affect-free, nonverbal or verbal), as well as features of the individual doing the processing (e.g., whether motivation and ability to engage in effortful processing are high versus low; see Fazio, 1990).

Although beliefs about the self acquired via the experiential and cognitive systems

often coincide, they need not (Epstein & Morling, 1995). From the perspective of CEST, discrepancies between individuals' implicit and explicit self-esteem might arise if they receive different messages, or arrive at different conclusions, about their worth via these different routes. For example, subtle, nonverbal rejection from a primary caregiver may lead an individual to develop negative implicit beliefs about her worth (Bowlby, 1969; Mikulincer, 1995) that, through repeated activation, become "consolidated into [her] cognitive-affective architecture" (Koole et al., 2001, p. 669). If subsequent interactions provide this individual with feedback indicating that she is lovable and competent (e.g., verbal acceptance from peers, success at reaching goals), she may develop positive explicit beliefs about her worth that coexist with her negative implicit ones. Conversely, as suggested by our model, overvaluation by caregivers may lead an individual to develop excessively favorable implicit self-views. Subsequent negative outcomes (e.g., rejection from peers, failure to reach goals) might then lead this individual to construct negative explicit self-esteem alongside her positive implicit self-esteem.

Note our assumption that implicit self-esteem develops earlier in life than explicit self-esteem. Because explicit self-esteem is language-based, requires self-awareness, and derives from conscious analysis of self-relevant outcomes, it cannot take hold until individuals pass certain developmental milestones (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). In contrast, implicit belief systems emerge developmentally prior to explicit ones (e.g., Seger, 1994), and reflect the quality of early interactions with caregivers and other relationship partners (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1969). Empirical research linking implicit self-esteem to early social relationships is sparse, but promising. For example, Hetts and Pelham (2003) found that individuals who are born near the Christmas holiday tend to exhibit lower implicit self-esteem than individuals born at other times of the year, presumably because the former often got overlooked by family and friends on their birthday. Furthermore, DeHart, Pelham, and Tennen (2006) found that respondents higher in implicit self-esteem recalled having mothers who were more nurturing and less overprotective during their childhood, and mothers' reports of their parenting style similarly predicted respondents' implicit self-esteem. Despite these encouraging findings, we note that no existing empirical work links parental overvaluation to high implicit self-esteem in the manner suggested by our model.

In contrast to implicit self-esteem, explicit self-esteem should reflect the individual's judgments of his or her worth based on conscious assessments of self-relevant feedback and outcomes. According to our model, covert narcissism grows from a discrepancy between extremely high implicit self-esteem—rooted in parental overvaluation, coddling, and favoritism—and relatively low explicit self-esteem, which develops when the individual repeatedly assesses his or her outcomes as falling below expectations. More specifically, we suggest that repeated failure experiences lead to shame-proneness in some high implicit self-esteem individuals, and that shame ultimately forms the basis of their low explicit self-esteem. To clarify the proposed link between shame-proneness and explicit self-esteem, we turn to M. Lewis's (1992, 2000) cognitive-attributional theory of self-conscious emotions.

Cognitive Attributions and Self-Conscious Emotions

According to M. Lewis's (1992, 2000) cognitive-attributional theory, self-conscious emotions arise from attribution processes in which the individual makes an internal attribution (i.e., takes personal responsibility) for a self-relevant outcome. A *self-relevant out-*

come is an assessment of one's behavior or performance with regard to an internalized, personally valued standard or goal (Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger, & Weiss, 1989; Tangney, 2002; Tracy & Robins, 2004). To illustrate, a woman who considers social skills to be a central component of her self-concept may assess her interpersonal conduct during a business meeting as either exceeding, matching, or falling short of her desired social self-representation (Higgins, 1987). If the woman makes such an assessment and then takes personal responsibility for it (e.g., "That was *my* doing"), she should experience a self-conscious emotion.

The specific self-conscious emotion felt is determined by two additional cognitive processes: (1) an evaluation of the self-relevant outcome as either a success or a failure, and (2) an attribution to either global and stable or specific and unstable causes (M. Lewis, 1992, 2000). The first of these decisions has implications for the valence of the resulting self-conscious emotion. To the extent that a self-relevant outcome exceeds or meets one's standard, positively valenced feelings of either hubristic pride or authentic pride should occur. Conversely, if an outcome falls short of one's standard, negative emotion should occur in the form of either shame or guilt. The second decision—the attribution of the outcome to global and stable versus specific and unstable causes—determines how "fully" the self is implicated in the resulting emotion. Attributions to a global, stable cause will result in self-conscious emotions that subsume the whole self, that is, shame and hubristic pride. Alternatively, attributions to a specific, unstable cause will produce self-conscious emotions—specifically, guilt and authentic pride—that implicate one's actions in a given context rather than one's self in totality.

As illustrated in Figure 22.1, we propose that self-conscious emotions that engulf the self, that is, shame and hubristic pride, play central roles in covert narcissism (see also Tracy & Robins, 2003). These emotions should arise when individuals high in implicit self-esteem experience repeated failure outcomes and attribute these outcomes to internal, global, and stable causes (path *a*).

Before proceeding, it is worth considering why some individuals with high implicit self-esteem might develop a shame-promoting attributional style. Logically, it seems that high implicit self-esteem should bias people to process self-relevant information in a positive, self-enhancing manner, thus mitigating the tendency toward shame-promoting attributions for negative outcomes. In the case of individuals whose high implicit self-esteem stems from parental overvaluation, however, self-enhancing attributions for repeated failures may, over time, become unsustainable as the reality of one's personal limitations belies one's idealistic expectations. After all, repeated failures to attain "perfection" must surely reflect something internal, stable, and global about the individual—namely, that she or he is not, and will never be, perfect. From our perspective, then, the grandiose standards instilled by overvaluing parents can foster a pattern of disappointing outcomes that becomes difficult to blame on external, specific, and unstable causes. As such, even individuals high in implicit self-esteem are vulnerable to developing a shame-promoting attributional style.

Returning to path *a*, research documents a link between the tendency to make internal, global, and stable attributions for negative self-relevant outcomes and a chronic proneness to shame (Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992; Tangney et al., 1992; Tracy & Robins, 2005; Weiner, 1985). That is, to the extent that people blame their negative outcomes on their own pervasive and persistent inadequacies, they react to such outcomes with all-encompassing feelings of humiliation and worthlessness. Also consistent with M. Lewis's (1992, 2000) model, Tracy and

Robins (2007) found that internal, stable attributions for positive self-relevant outcomes predicted a proneness to hubristic pride, but they did not measure the globality dimension of attributions (and instead focused on the controllability dimension). One question we therefore address in the upcoming test of our model is whether hubristic pride indeed arises from internal, global, and stable attributions for positive self-relevant outcomes.

Unlike M. Lewis's (1992, 2000) attributional account of hubristic pride, our model proposes that this self-conscious emotion often emerges defensively, to protect the self against the painful feelings of shame that arise following failures. Because shame is such a debilitating emotion (Tangney, 2002), some shame-prone individuals suppress their shame reactions and replace them with hubristic pride, a grandiose feeling of superiority (Horney, 1950; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Nathanson, 1987). For example, when shame arises, people may defend against it by externalizing blame for the shame-eliciting event, while at the same time recalling or seeking opportunities for self-enhancement at the expense of others (Robins et al., 2001). Over time, the tendency toward shame elicits a concurrent tendency to respond to personal successes with hubristic pride. Ultimately, however, attempts to protect the self from shame by evoking hubristic pride fail, and shame chips away at explicit self-esteem (path *b*).

Because the self is implicated so fully in the emotion of shame, episodes of shame should provide much of the raw data from which people abstract generalized, explicit assessments of self-worth (Malatesta & Wilson, 1988; Moretti & Higgins, 1990; Scheff, 1988). Consistent with this assumption, research shows that temporary feelings of shame covary with immediate decrements in self-esteem (Gruenewald, Kemeny, Aziz, & Fahey, 2004), and shame-proneness correlates negatively with baseline self-esteem (Harder, Cutler, & Rockart, 1992; Leith & Baumeister, 1998; Sorotzkin, 1985; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Thus, to the extent that people chronically react to negative outcomes with shame, they will gradually (at least explicitly) deem themselves less lovable, competent, and worthy. Implicit self-esteem, on the other hand, because it is overlearned and difficult to control, should be relatively less affected by repeated failure experiences (Hetts et al., 1999). As a result, individuals with high implicit self-esteem who make internal, global, and stable attributions for negative self-relevant outcomes should develop low explicit self-esteem, but retain their high implicit self-esteem (at least for some time). According to our model, then, these high implicit/low explicit self-esteem people will be vulnerable to developing covert narcissism.

The Narcissistic Personality: Types, Origins, and Measurement

The narcissistic personality is characterized by heightened levels of self-importance, entitlement, exhibitionism, vanity, power striving, and exploitativeness (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Within this broad constellation of traits, researchers find evidence for two distinct forms of narcissistic personality (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Wink, 1991). One form, often called *overt* or grandiose narcissism, is characterized by high explicit self-esteem, subjective happiness (Rose, 2002), and low levels of shame (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Watson et al., 1996); a second form, often called *covert* or vulnerable narcissism, is characterized by low explicit self-esteem, unhappiness, and shame-proneness. Thus, although both types of narcissists are "extraordinarily self-absorbed and arrogant" (Rose, 2002, p. 380), overt narcissists enjoy several psychological benefits that covert narcissists do not share.

Historically, theorists have disagreed about the developmental origins of narcissism, with some linking it to parental undervaluation and others linking it to parental overvaluation. According to parental undervaluation models, narcissistic personality tendencies reflect the individual's continual efforts to shore up support for grandiose, but fragile, explicit self-views that mask underlying feelings of inferiority and self-doubt (Brown & Bosson, 2001; Kernberg, 1975; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). More specifically, inadequate and insensitive parenting leads some individuals to associate the self with negative affect (low implicit self-esteem). To protect against this negative self-relevant affect, narcissists defensively construct highly positive explicit self-views that they maintain through various intra- and interpersonal self-enhancement strategies. From this perspective, then, the narcissist's grandiose posturing reflects his or her efforts to defend the self against deep-seated feelings of inferiority instilled by uncaring or insufficiently attentive parents.

Parental overvaluation models, in contrast, tie narcissistic personality traits to excessive pampering at the hands of parents (Adler, 1938/1964; Capron, 2004; Millon, 1981). According to these models, some parents "pamper and indulge their youngsters in ways that teach them that their every wish is a command, that they can receive without giving in return, and that they deserve prominence without even minimal effort" (Millon, 1981, p. 175). Consequently, these youngsters learn to associate the self with positive affect and develop extremely favorable implicit self-representations. Millon acknowledges that parental praise is not problematic when it is well earned, but notes also that the "idyllic existence" fostered by parents who spoil their children "cannot long endure; the world beyond home will not be so benign and accepting" (p. 167). Thus, in many cases of parental overindulgence, reality eventually intervenes—in the form of personal failures, humiliations, weaknesses, and the like—and undermines the individual's explicit self-esteem. From this perspective, narcissists' tendencies toward entitlement and exploitativeness reflect the overblown implicit expectations their parents instilled in them, while their shame-proneness reflects their chronic perception of themselves as falling short of these expectations.

Here, we link these different developmental accounts of narcissism to the different types of narcissism identified above (see also Capron, 2004; Emmons, 1984; Freud, 1914/1957; Otway & Vignoles, 2006). Specifically, we suggest that parental undervaluation drives overt narcissism, whereas parental overvaluation drives covert narcissism. Individuals who receive insensitive or uncaring parenting should develop low implicit self-esteem, but subsequent successes may convince them—at least explicitly—that they are lovable and competent. As a result, these individuals will possess low implicit self-esteem combined with high explicit self-esteem, and will self-regulate by rigorously pursuing self-enhancement strategies (overt narcissism). Conversely, individuals whose parents overindulge and spoil them should develop high implicit self-esteem, but subsequent failures should teach them that they are not as "special" as their parents led them to feel. Consequently, these individuals will possess high implicit self-esteem combined with low explicit self-esteem, and will self-regulate by exploiting and manipulating others (covert narcissism; see Figure 22.1, path c).

If our logic is correct, implicit and explicit self-esteem should interact differently to predict measures of overt and covert narcissism. Some research does suggest that implicit and explicit self-esteem interact to predict narcissistic tendencies, but this work generally operationalizes narcissism as total scores on Raskin and Hall's (1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI). When NPI scores are computed by summing (or averaging) across all of the NPI items, the resulting index appears to capture

overt—as opposed to covert—narcissism: total NPI scores correlate negatively with shame-proneness, depression, anxiety, and neuroticism, and positively with self-esteem, actual–ideal self-congruency, and self-handicapping (Emmons, 1984; Harder & Lewis, 1987; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Rhodewalt & Tragakis, 2003; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987). As noted earlier, and consistent with our logic regarding the implicit and explicit self-esteem bases of overt narcissism, Jordan et al. (2003) found that high scores on the total NPI were characterized by low implicit self-esteem and high explicit self-esteem. Similarly, Bosson et al. (2003) found that low implicit/high explicit self-esteem discrepancies predicted stronger tendencies toward overt narcissism.

To differentiate overt from covert narcissism, Emmons (1984, 1987) factor-analyzed the NPI and found evidence of four distinct factors. Of these, one factor (titled Exploitativeness/Entitlement, or EE) appears to tap into covert narcissism. The remaining three factors—titled Leadership/Authority (LA), Superiority/Arrogance (SA), and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (SS)—tap overt features of the narcissistic personality. For example, whereas LA and SS narcissism correlate positively with self-esteem and negatively with shame-proneness and depression, EE narcissism correlates negatively with self-esteem and positively with tendencies toward shame and depression (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Watson et al., 1987). We therefore wondered whether high implicit/low explicit self-esteem predicts EE narcissism, and low implicit/high explicit self-esteem predicts LA, SA, and/or SS narcissism. In what follows, we present the results of an investigation whose purpose was to test these proposed links, as well as the previously described paths, in our model.

TESTING THE MODEL

We conducted a correlational study to test the basic assumptions of the model depicted in Figure 22.1. To this end, we recruited 133 native English speakers (93 women and 40 men) to complete measures of implicit and explicit self-esteem, cognitive attributions for successes and failures, proneness to self-conscious emotions, and overt and covert narcissism. Given the preliminary nature of this investigation, we used a cross-sectional design and relied on people's self-reports. Because our model is a work-in-progress, we allowed ourselves considerable flexibility to pursue statistical analyses that tested not only our primary paths, but also additional links of interest among our theoretical constructs.

To assess implicit self-esteem, we measured people's preferences for their first- and last-name initials. Compared to other implicit measures of self-esteem, name letter preferences demonstrate acceptable test–retest reliability and predictive validity (Bosson et al., 2000; Koole et al., 2001). Liking for first and last initials was correlated, $r = .35$, $p .001$, so we averaged them to yield an index of implicit self-esteem. To measure explicit self-esteem, we combined Rosenberg's (1965) 10 global self-esteem items with Tafarodi and Swann's (2001) 16 self-liking and self-competence items ($\alpha = .96$). As in other research, explicit and implicit self-esteem scores did not correlate, $r = .07$, $p > .44$.

Our measure of cognitive attributional style was an abbreviated version of Anderson, Jennings, and Arnoult's (1988) Attributional Style Assessment Test-III (ASAT-III). This scale requires respondents to imagine 10 failure scenarios (e.g., "You just attended a party for new students and did not make any new friends") and 10 success scenarios (e.g., "You just received a high score on the midterm in a class"), and to generate one major cause of each outcome. Respondents then rate each cause in terms of its locus (*caused*

by other people or circumstances vs. *caused by me*), its globality (*specific to a few situations* vs. *relevant to many situations*), and its stability (*not at all stable* vs. *very stable*). We created measures of attributional style by combining across the locus, globality, and stability items of the ASAT-III separately for the failure ($\alpha = .79$) and success ($\alpha = .83$) scenarios.

To assess shame-, hubristic pride-, guilt-, and authentic pride-proneness, we used the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA; see Tangney et al., 1992). This measure presents respondents with 15 self-relevant scenarios, 10 of which describe negative outcomes (e.g., "You make a mistake on an important project at work . . . and your boss criticizes you") and five of which describe positive outcomes (e.g., "You put off making a difficult phone call. At the last minute you make the call and . . . all goes well"). After imagining themselves in each scenario, respondents rate the likelihood of experiencing a variety of self-conscious emotions including shame (e.g., "You would feel incompetent") and guilt (e.g., "You would feel that you deserve to be reprimanded"). In response to the positive scenarios only, respondents rate the likelihood of experiencing *alpha pride* and *beta pride*, which correspond, respectively, to hubristic pride (e.g., "You would feel competent and proud of yourself") and authentic pride (e.g., "You would feel your hard work had paid off"). Following Gramzow and Tangney (1992), we computed separate shame ($\alpha = .77$), guilt ($\alpha = .72$), hubristic pride ($\alpha = .47$), and authentic pride ($\alpha = .51$) scores by averaging these items across the scenarios. We then created "pure" measures of shame and hubristic pride by regressing shame onto guilt and hubristic pride onto authentic pride, and saving the standardized residuals; we also created pure measures of guilt and authentic pride this way.

To assess narcissism, we used Raskin and Terry's (1988) 40-item version of the NPI. Following Emmons (1984), we computed separate EE, LA, SA, and SS subscales. The EE subscale ($\alpha = .55$) assesses tendencies toward interpersonal entitlement and manipulation; the LA subscale ($\alpha = .75$) captures assertiveness and a strong leadership striving; the SA subscale ($\alpha = .53$) captures an arrogant sense of superiority over others; and the SS subscale ($\alpha = .63$) captures a tendency toward vain self-absorption. To obtain statistically pure indices of these four narcissism components, we regressed EE onto LA, SA, and SS, and saved the standardized residuals as our index of EE narcissism. We then repeated this procedure on the other three narcissism subscales.

Do High Implicit/Low Explicit Self-Esteem Discrepancies Fuel Covert Narcissism?

Path a

The first path in our model links implicit self-esteem and cognitive attributional style with self-conscious emotions. Specifically, we propose that people with high implicit self-esteem who make maladaptive (i.e., internal, stable, global) attributions for negative self-relevant outcomes should be prone to shame and hubristic pride.

Before testing this path, we investigated the links between specific attributional styles and self-conscious emotions. To do this, we regressed shame- and guilt-proneness separately onto the index of failure attributions, and hubristic and authentic pride-proneness onto the index of success attributions. In support of M. Lewis's (1992, 2000) theory, a tendency to make internal, global, and stable attributions for failures predicted shame, $\beta = .25$, $p < .01$. However, failure attributions were unrelated to guilt, $t < 1$, and success attributions predicted neither hubristic nor authentic pride, $ts < 1$. Instead, and consistent

with our model, hubristic pride following positive outcomes was associated with a tendency to make internal, global, and stable attributions for failures, $\beta = .22$, $p = .01$. Although by no means definitive, this finding suggests that hubristic pride may arise defensively to ward off painful feelings associated with failure-based shame. Additional support for this assumption is provided by the fact that our respondents who were high in shame-proneness tended also to score high in hubristic pride, $r = .35$, $p < .01$. We therefore averaged shame and hubristic pride to create an index of narcissistic self-conscious emotions.

To test path *a* in our model, we regressed this measure of narcissistic emotions onto implicit self-esteem, attributional style, and their interaction (implicit self-esteem and attributional style were uncorrelated, $r = -.001$). A significant interaction emerged, $\beta = .19$, $p = .02$, and predicted values of narcissistic emotions appear in Figure 22.2. Consistent with our logic, people who have positive, affective reactions to the self, but who attribute failure experiences to internal, global, and stable causes, experience more shame and hubristic pride than do high implicit self-esteem people with a more adaptive attributional style.

Path b

The next path in our model links narcissistic self-conscious emotions to explicit self-esteem. Specifically, a tendency to experience shame and hubristic pride should be associated with lower explicit self-esteem. The results of a regression analysis provided strong support for this path, $\beta = -.44$, $p < .001$.
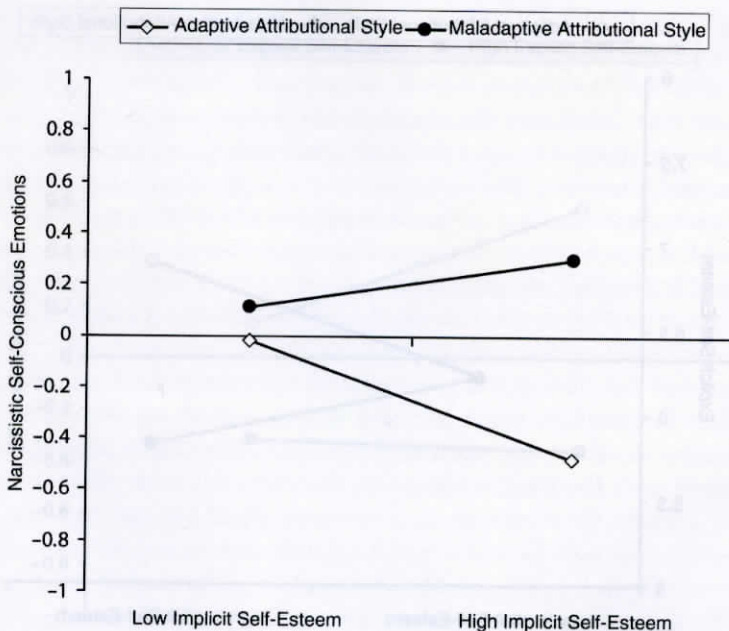

FIGURE 22.2. Narcissistic self-conscious emotions (shame- and hubristic pride-proneness) as a function of implicit self-esteem and cognitive attributional style. Predicted values are calculated at 1 *SD* above and below the mean on implicit self-esteem and attributional style.

We also tested the indirect path, implied by our model, linking high implicit self-esteem and a maladaptive attributional style to low explicit self-esteem. That is, we tested whether implicit self-esteem and attributional style interacted to predict explicit self-esteem. A regression analysis revealed that they did, $\beta = -.18$, $p = .04$; predicted values of explicit self-esteem as a function of implicit self-esteem and attributional style are shown in Figure 22.3. Consistent with our logic, people with high implicit self-esteem who make internal, global, and stable attributions for failures exhibit relatively low explicit self-esteem.

We also explored whether shame and hubristic pride mediated the path from implicit self-esteem and attributional style to explicit self-esteem. When we entered these narcissistic emotions into the regression model described above, the emotion index was negatively related to explicit self-esteem, $\beta = -.40$, $p < .001$, and the interaction of implicit self-esteem and attributional style was no longer significant, $\beta = -.10$, $p = .21$. This suggests that shame and hubristic pride at least partially mediate the link between attributional style and explicit self-esteem among people high in implicit self-esteem.

Path c

The final direct path in our model links low explicit self-esteem to covert narcissism. A regression analysis revealed the expected association in that people lower in explicit self-esteem scored higher in EE narcissism, $\beta = -.32$, $p < .001$.

We followed this analysis up by testing the indirect path from discrepant (high implicit/low explicit) self-esteem to covert narcissism. Specifically, we regressed the index of EE narcissism onto implicit and explicit self-esteem and their interaction. The interaction
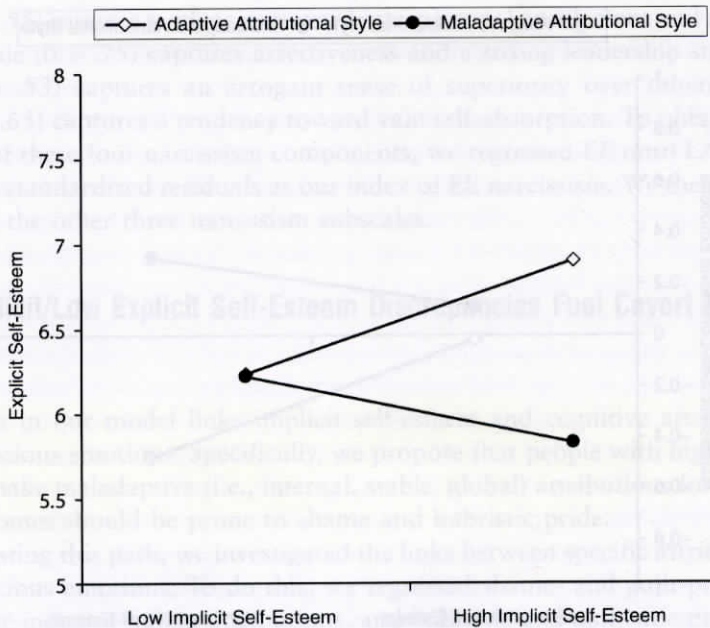

FIGURE 22.3. Explicit self-esteem as a function of implicit self-esteem and cognitive attributional style. Predicted values are calculated at 1 *SD* above and below the mean on implicit self-esteem and attributional style.

approached significance, $\beta = -.14$, $p < .10$, and the predicted values presented in Figure 22.4 reveal a pattern that is consistent with our model: people high in implicit self-esteem, but low in explicit self-esteem, scored the highest in covert narcissism.

Finally, to establish further the role of self-conscious emotions in covert narcissism, we conducted four simple regression analyses in which we predicted EE narcissism from the four self-conscious emotion indices. Consistent with our model and past work (Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Tracy & Robins, 2003), people higher in both shame and hubristic pride scored higher in EE narcissism, βs $> .18$, ps $< .04$. EE narcissism was also negatively related to guilt, $\beta = -.20$, $p = .02$, and it was unrelated to authentic pride, $t < 1$.

To summarize, we found evidence consistent with our model of shame-prone narcissistic self-regulation. People with high implicit self-esteem who attributed negative outcomes to internal, global, stable causes tended toward greater shame and hubristic pride, as well as lower explicit self-esteem. Discrepant (high implicit/low explicit) self-esteem, in turn, marginally significantly predicted a tendency toward covert narcissism.

Do Low Implicit/High Explicit Self-Esteem Discrepancies Fuel Overt Narcissism?

Based on our current theorizing, as well as past theory and research (Bosson et al., 2003; Brown & Bosson, 2001; Jordan et al., 2003; Tracy & Robins, 2003), we also expected implicit and explicit self-esteem to interact in predicting measures of overt narcissism. However, the anticipated low implicit/high explicit self-esteem pattern did not emerge. When we regressed LA, SA, and SS narcissism (as well as total NPI scores) separately onto explicit self-esteem, implicit self-esteem, and their interaction, the interaction did not approach significance in any model, ps $> .14$. Moreover, the highest overall scores on
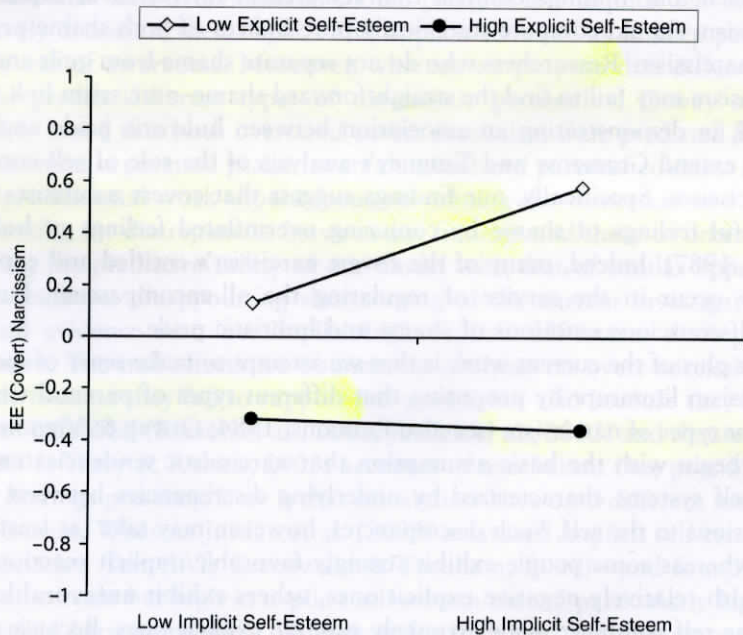

FIGURE 22.4. Covert narcissism as a function of implicit and explicit self-esteem. Predicted values are calculated at 1 *SD* above and below the mean on implicit and explicit self-esteem.

most of the indices of overt narcissism (LA, SS, and total NPI) were obtained by people with congruent, not discrepant, high self-esteem (i.e., high implicit *and* high explicit self-esteem). Although the highest scores on SA narcissism were obtained by people with high explicit and low implicit self-esteem, the implicit/explicit interaction did not even approach significance in this model, $t < 1$. Thus, we found no support for the idea that low implicit and high explicit self-esteem combine to fuel overt narcissism. Unfortunately, space constraints prevent additional empirical investigations into the links between low implicit/high explicit self-esteem and other constructs in our model.

DISCUSSION

The goals of this chapter were to lay the theoretical groundwork and present some preliminary empirical support for a model linking self-esteem, attributional style, self-conscious emotions, and narcissistic personality. More specifically, we sought to link different patterns of discrepant implicit/explicit self-esteem with different types of narcissism, in the context of a broad developmental model. In the final analysis, our efforts met with mixed success.

In the "pluses" column, we found fairly straightforward evidence of a form of shame-prone narcissism characterized by high implicit/low explicit self-esteem discrepancies. In this sense, our findings are consistent with theoretical models that propose a central role of shame in driving narcissism (Broucek, 1991; H. B. Lewis, 1971; Morrison, 1989; Tracy & Robins, 2003; Watson et al., 1996). Moreover, the findings presented here both replicate and extend Gramzow and Tangney's (1992) work on the link between shame-proneness and narcissism. First, in replicating Gramzow and Tangney's computational approach, our findings confirm that researchers interested in capturing shame-prone narcissism should compute statistically pure indices of both shame-proneness and covert (EE) narcissism. Researchers who do not separate shame from guilt and overt from covert narcissism may fail to find the straightforward shame–narcissism link we obtained here. Second, in demonstrating an association between hubristic pride and narcissism, our findings extend Gramzow and Tangney's analysis of the role of self-conscious emotions in narcissism. Specifically, our findings suggest that covert narcissists may defend against painful feelings of shame by conjuring overinflated feelings of hubristic pride (Nathanson, 1987). Indeed, many of the covert narcissist's entitled and exploitative behaviors may occur in the service of regulating the all-encompassing, but oppositely valenced, self-conscious emotions of shame and hubristic pride.

Another plus of the current work is that we attempt to make sense of inconsistencies in the narcissism literature by proposing that different types of parental treatment produce different types of narcissism (see also Emmons, 1984; Otway & Vignoles, 2006). To do this, we begin with the basic assumption that narcissistic tendencies emerge within vulnerable self systems characterized by underlying discrepancies between implicit and explicit reactions to the self. Such discrepancies, however, may take (at least) two different forms: whereas some people exhibit strongly favorable implicit reactions to the self combined with relatively negative explicit ones, others exhibit unfavorable implicit reactions to the self combined with extremely positive explicit ones. Because implicit self-esteem is theoretically rooted in early interpersonal dynamics with caregivers, we suggest that different types of parental treatment might predispose individuals toward these different types of self-esteem discrepancies—and, consequently, toward the different types of

narcissism—by instilling in them rather extreme implicit attitudes toward the self. Parental undervaluation may create unrealistically low implicit self-esteem, which ultimately fuels overt (i.e., grandiose, non-shame-prone) narcissism, and parental overvaluation should create unrealistically high implicit self-esteem, which fuels covert (i.e., vulnerable, shame-prone) narcissism.

In the "minuses" column, the empirical investigation presented here allowed only a partial test of our theoretical model. After all, our model posits developmental processes that unfold across time, and the cross-sectional design used here was inadequate to the task of capturing cause-and-effect relations among our constructs of interest. Moreover, some features of our model—including parental treatment and early failure experiences—were assumed rather than assessed in our investigation. That is, we did not measure directly the quality or type of caregiving that respondents received in childhood, nor did we query them about early experiences with self-relevant outcomes that challenged their implicit self-representations. Until these variables are measured directly, all of our assumptions about the role of early life experiences in shaping narcissism remain speculative.

Furthermore, several crucial factors in our model have yet to be elucidated. For instance, we suggest that people with high implicit self-esteem who make maladaptive attributions for negative outcomes will suffer decrements in explicit self-esteem via repeated feelings of shame. However, our claims as to why some high implicit self-esteem individuals develop a maladaptive attributional style remain purely speculative at this point. Similarly, our model assumes that some people react to shame by evoking hubristic pride, but we have yet to clarify the variables that predict this tendency. Finally, as noted earlier, although our model shares several basic features with other recent approaches to narcissism, some of our key assumptions diverge. For instance, whereas we propose that parental overvaluation should lead to excessively high implicit self-esteem, Tracy and Robins (2003) propose that such overvaluation should produce *low* implicit self-esteem as children defensively dissociate their explicit and implicit selves so as to keep painful feelings of inferiority out of awareness. Moreover, whereas we propose that different parenting styles should predict different types of narcissistic personality, Otway and Vignoles (2006) recently found that both overt *and* covert narcissism were predicted by high levels of both indiscriminate parental praise (overvaluation) *and* parental coldness (undervaluation). Clearly, additional work should focus on refining the constructs and paths in our model, accounting for discrepancies between our findings and those of other researchers, and comparing the predictive utility of our model with that of similar approaches.

Perhaps the most disappointing shortcoming of the current investigation was our failure to find evidence that low implicit/high explicit self-esteem discrepancies drive overt narcissism. The null effects we obtained in analyses on overt narcissism are troubling not only because they fail to support our model, but also because they are inconsistent with both empirical (Bosson et al., 2003; Jordan et al., 2003) and theoretical (Brown & Bosson, 2001; Tracy & Robins, 2003) accounts of narcissism. One possible reason for the puzzling findings presented here is that researchers have used different methods to tap implicit self-esteem. Whereas Jordan et al. (2003) measured implicit self-esteem with the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald & Farnham, 2000)—and found that people low in IAT self-esteem but high in explicit self-esteem earned particularly high total NPI scores—we relied here on people's preferences for their name initials as our measure of implicit self-esteem. Given that these different indices of implicit self-esteem do not correlate with each other (Bosson et al., 2000), it is perhaps not surprising that patterns obtained with one index do not replicate with a different implicit self-esteem index.

Another possibility is that subtle features of the measurement context may influence the performance of implicit self-esteem indices in ways that are difficult for researchers to discern. Although implicit self-esteem appears relatively stable across long periods of time (Hetts et al., 1999), it may actually fluctuate more than explicit self-esteem in response to momentary, self-relevant experiences (Jones et al., 2002). If this is the case, then perhaps we failed to replicate past narcissism findings because we did not control for contextual variables that affect people's immediate feelings of implicit self-esteem (Bosson, 2006). This explanation, however, seems insufficient given that we did find evidence for the role of implicit self-esteem in driving covert narcissism.

Of course, we cannot say for sure why we found no evidence that low implicit and high explicit self-esteem combine to predict overt narcissism. For now, this issue remains unresolved, and we count ourselves among a small but dedicated group of researchers who strive to understand the role of implicit self-esteem in narcissism. The ideas and findings presented here reflect this goal, and we hope that they serve the important purpose of inspiring additional efforts.

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