

UNDERSTANDING NARCISSISM AND SELF-ESTEEM IN CHILDREN:
PROPOSING A NEW CONCEPTUALIZATION OF NARCISSISM

by

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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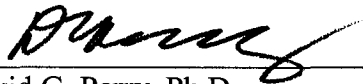
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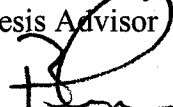
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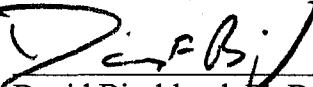
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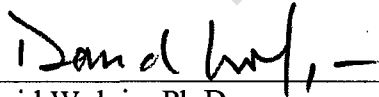
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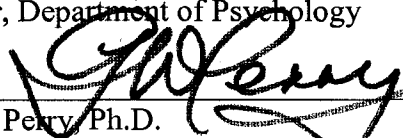
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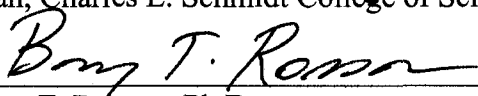
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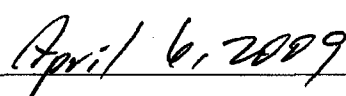
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PREVIEW

ABSTRACT

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This study examined the empirical relationship between narcissism and self-esteem in an attempt to evaluate competing conceptualizations of narcissism. Participants were 236 children (mean age 11.3 years) in the fourth through eighth grades. Counter to earlier conceptions, which characterized narcissism as very high self-esteem, narcissism and self-esteem were slightly negatively correlated. Also, narcissism predicted several adjustment variables, including aggression. None of these relationships was mediated by self-esteem. Lastly, self-esteem moderated the relationship between narcissism and aggression in boys. Taken together, these lines of evidence point to a new conceptualization of narcissism, modeled after self-discrepancy theory, in which narcissism is conceptualized as grandiosity in the ideal self. Implications of this proposal and directions for future research are discussed.

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my fiancé, Bruce, who has been extremely supportive throughout this project and others.

PREVIEW

UNDERSTANDING NARCISSISM AND SELF-ESTEEM IN CHILDREN:
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PREVIEW

Understanding Narcissism and Self-Esteem in Children: Proposing a New Conceptualization of Narcissism

Narcissism has been considered an undesirable personality trait since the word was coined from Greek mythology, when Narcissus displayed self-aggrandizing behavior that resembled what has been called “self-love.” Interest in the construct is strong, partly because of the confusing relationship it is presumed to have with desirable, high self-esteem. Narcissism continues to receive considerable empirical attention from a number of different fields of psychology, including the clinical, social and personality sub-disciplines. Narcissism now seems clear enough to be classified as a personality disorder by the American Psychiatric Association. The disapproval of the narcissistic person is not limited to clinicians. Observers view narcissistic individuals as obnoxious, immodest and as poor listeners (Baumeister, 1996). Despite the consensus on the undesirability of narcissism, researchers have yet to reach a conclusion about its nature and meaning.

Measures of Narcissism

Before examining the various conceptualizations of narcissism, it is important to explain methodological approaches to the construct. This sort of empirical view of narcissism will lend insight into the problems associated with defining it as an independent construct. There are two populations of interest when it comes to the assessment and conceptualization of narcissism via self-report. The clinical population is of interest to psychiatrists and clinical psychologists and will be discussed briefly. The