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Narcissistic Self-Esteem Management

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This study examines the relationships among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem in samples of 84, 57, and 300 Ss. The intercorrelations among various self-report and observer ratings of these constructs suggest that (a) hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism are substantially intercorrelated and form a coherent system of constructs and (b) the common variance in this system of constructs significantly predicts variations in Ss' self-esteem. The notion that some people use grandiosity, dominance, and a more generalized narcissistic personality style to manage their hostility and maintain a sense of positive regard was evaluated using hierarchical analyses. The results of these analyses were consistent with this model.

Raskin, Novacek, and Hogan (1991) studied the relationships among narcissism, defensive self-enhancement, and self-esteem. They found that (a) narcissism is positively related to self-esteem, (b) defensive self-enhancement consists of two components, grandiosity and social desirability, which represent different sources of variance in self-esteem, and (c) narcissism is related to grandiose self-enhancement rather than social desirability. These findings are consistent with the view that self-experience evolves in two parallel lines throughout the life cycle (Blatt, 1974; Freud, 1914/1957; Hogan, 1983; Kohut, 1977; Leary, 1956). For example, Freud (1914/1957) distinguished between narcissistic and anaclitic object love. In narcissistic love, a person may love "(a) what he himself is (i.e., himself), (b) what he himself was, (c) what he himself would like to be, (d) someone who was once part of himself" (p. 90). Conversely, in anaclitic or attachment object love, a person may love "(a) the woman who feeds him, (b) the man who protects him, and the succession of substitutes who take their place" (p. 90). Despite the old-fashioned language, Freud proposes two primary interpersonal orientations. In the narcissistic orientation, a person is concerned with self-love and self-enhancement, whereas in the anaclitic orientation, a person is concerned with the enhancement and love of another.

Freud's two pathways of personality development also appear in Kohut's (1977) model of the bipolar self; Kohut describes self-development in terms of the aggrandizement of self and the idealization of others. The two-pathway model is also found in Blatt's (1974) theory of introjective and anaclitic depression. In addition, a sizable literature that is based on the interpersonal circumplex (Leary, 1956; Wiggins, 1979) suggests that dominance and affiliation are principal dimensions underlying social interaction. From a more social psychological perspective, Hogan (1983) argues that needs for status and social approval are primary themes in interpersonal behavior and are satisfied through competition and affiliation; similarly, Wolfe, Lennox, and Cuttler (1986) suggest that self-presentational strategies tend to concern either "getting along" or "getting ahead," and Arkin (1981) classifies self-presentation strategies as either competitive or defensive.

We propose, in addition, that these two interpersonal styles are expressed either defensively or nondefensively. Defensive affiliation emerges as high need for approval and socially desirable responding. Defensive competition appears as narcissism. People typifying these two defensive styles can be described as "warriors" and "worriers." Warriors see life as a competitive game in which there can be only one winner. The worrier lives for acceptance and social approval, and his or her strivings for acceptance are motivated by a fear of social disapproval. The warrior competes for glory (status, wealth, power, fame, and adoration); the worrier strives for acceptance and approval. Conversely, the worrier affiliates with people to be liked, whereas the warrior affiliates with people who enhance his or her feelings of power.

This article examines the possibility that narcissism is a defensive form of self-esteem regulation. We base this hypothesis on the following empirical findings: (a) Narcissism is positively related to self-esteem (Emmons, 1984; Raskin et al., 1991; P. J. Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987), (b) narcissism is positively related to grandiosity (Raskin et al., 1991), (c) narcissism is positively related to hostility (Emmons, 1984; McCann & Biaggio, 1989; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Terry, 1988), (d) narcissism is positively related to dominance, needs for power, and exploitativeness (Bennett, 1988; Biscardi & Schill, 1985; Carroll, 1987; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988), and (e) narcissism is positively related to the defense of turning against others and projection and negatively related to turning against the self (Biscardi & Schill, 1985).

These observations suggest that hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism may form a coherent system of constructs that predicts variations in self-esteem. Our investigation

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Copies of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory will be sent without charge to anyone who desires to use it for research purposes.

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of the structural relations among these four constructs is based on a model of narcissistic self-esteem regulation using observations of child development made by Freud (1914/1957), Jacobson (1954), Reich (1960), Kohut (1971, 1977), Kernberg (1975), Miller (1981), and others.

Our developmental scenario for narcissism begins with a parent-child relationship typified by a "stage mother." In this scenario, the parent(s), because of their own insecurities, have an idealized image of how their child should be—that is, attractive, engaging, charming, brilliant. When the child performs according to these expectations, he or she is given warmth and love and few behavioral restrictions. However, when the child fails to perform (to be interesting, brilliant, and attractive), warmth and love are replaced by rejection or restrictions. As the child matures, he or she realizes that the parent's affections depend on social performance. This realization produces anger, insecurity, and self-doubt, which the child cannot express for fear of further loss of love. To avoid self-doubt and depression and to manage hostility, the child develops grandiose self-theories (often fantasies) concerned with glory, success, power, wisdom, and adoration. Prompted by these grandiose self-images, a child (a) learns to put on attractive performances for adults, which guarantee parental indulgence (e.g., Adler's "spoiled child") and (b) develops interpersonal strategies that permit the child to dominate its peers. Successful peer domination allows the growing narcissist to negotiate social identities that reinforce his or her grandiose self-theories. If a child can successfully dominate his or her peers, he or she will experience heightened self-esteem. If a child is unable to perform and dominate successfully, then he or she will reexperience earlier rejection and rage including feelings of shame and depression.

The foregoing scenario suggests a model of narcissistic self-esteem management in which grandiosity is used to protect the self from self-doubt and depression.[1] Grandiose self-images are reinforced by interpersonal strategies that are based on dominance, exhibitionism, self-sufficiency, authoritarianism, exploitativeness, entitlement, superiority, and vanity (Raskin & Terry, 1988). When successful, this narcissistic configuration promotes self-esteem. When unsuccessful, self-esteem gives way to self-doubt. Developmentally, hostility should proceed grandiosity, followed by dominance, then narcissism.

Method

To study narcissistic self-esteem regulation, we examined the relationships among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem in three samples. In most cases we used two or more instruments to measure each construct in each sample. In some cases the same measures were used across samples, but in others different measures of the same construct were used across samples. Different measures of the same construct increase reliability and breadth of measurement; by using both the same and different construct measures across samples, we could estimate the consistency of our results across samples and increase their generalizability.

Subjects

The subjects were undergraduate students at the University of California at Berkeley, who participated in the research to receive academic credit or a nominal fee.

Sample 1 included 38 men and 46 women, ranging in age from 17 to 40, with an average age of 19.2 and a standard deviation of 2.6 years.

Sample 2 contained data for 28 men and 29 women who participated in the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research's (IPAR) 1982 and 1984 assessments of college sophomores. They ranged in age from 18 to 62, with an average age of 21 and a standard deviation of 6.6 years.

Sample 3 contained 300 subjects, 127 of whom were men and 173 of whom were women. They ranged in age from 17 to 33, with an average age of 19.2 and a standard deviation of 1.6 years.

Procedures

All volunteers completed a packet of personality questionnaires. Additionally, in Sample 2, observational data were obtained on 57 cases. These 57 people were invited in groups of 10 to spend two consecutive 8-hour days at IPAR, during which time they completed a variety of tasks while interacting with one another and 12–15 IPAR staff observers. Activities included an informal breakfast with staff members and structured events such as a leaderless group discussion, a game of charades, several structured and semistructured interviews, and group testing sessions. Before each assessment session, subjects completed a large battery of personality questionnaires that included the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Gough, 1956) and the Adjective Check List (ACL; Gough and Heilbrun, 1965). After each assessment session, IPAR staff members recorded their impressions and observations of the subjects on a trait-ranking list, on the California Q-Sort (Q), and on the ACL.

Self-Report Measures

Self-esteem. In Sample 1, self-esteem was measured with the California Self-Evaluation Scales (CSES; Phinney & Gough, in press), the Global Self-Esteem Scale (GSE: O'Brien & Epstein, 1982), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965), and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale Total Self-Esteem score (Fitts, 1965). In Sample 2, self-esteem was assessed with the CSES, and in Sample 3, self-esteem was measured with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1959), the GSE, and the CSES. Raskin et al., (1991) report alpha reliability estimates for the CSES and GSE of .94 and .88, respectively.

Aggregating indexes of a psychological construct produces a more reliable measure of that construct; consequently, the self-esteem measures in Samples 1 and 3 were subjected to principal-components analyses. In Sample 1, the four measures of self-esteem produced a one-component solution accounting for 73% of the variance among the measures. Scale loadings on the principal component ranged from .91 (GSE) to .79 (RSE). Using the scale loadings on the principal component as regression weights, we generated component scores for each person; we called this score General Self-Reported Self-Esteem. The same procedures were used to aggregate the self-esteem measures in Sample 3; this also produced a one-component solution accounting for 80% of the variance, with scale loadings ranging from .93 (CSES) to .86 (GSE).

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[1] This scenario is our distillation of psychoanalytic observations about the development of narcissistic personalities. These writers (Kohut, Kernberg, Miller, Reich, etc.) express their ideas in abstract psychoanalytic jargon and are not always in total agreement. However, their writing on narcissistic development shares common themes, which we try to express in everyday language. Our understanding and presentation of this material involve some subjective speculation. However, we believe that our interpretations are consistent with contemporary clinical thinking about the development of narcissism.

Narcissism. In each sample, narcissism was measured with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). A full description of the NPI is provided by Raskin and Terry (1988). In Sample 1, narcissism was also assessed with the Narcissistic/Competitive (BC) scale of the Interpersonal Check List (Leary, 1956). The NPI and BC scale scores were converted to *z* scores and combined in an index of general narcissism (GN). In Sample 3, narcissism was also assessed with the Millon Narcissistic Personality Scale (MNPS; Millon, 1982) and with the Narcissistic Personality Disorder scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Morey, Waugh, & Blashfield, 1985). These three measures were subjected to a principal-components analysis, which yielded a one-component solution accounting for 69% of the variance. Scale loadings on the principal component ranged from .84 (NPI) to .81 (MNPS). Using the scale loadings as regression weights, we generated component GN scores for each person.

Grandiosity. In Samples 1 and 3, grandiosity was measured with an MMPI-derived scale for clinical grandiosity (GR; C. G. Watson & Klett, 1972). This scale consists of 16 rationally selected MMPI items. Sample items are, "I am a special agent of God" and "I have often found people jealous of my good ideas, just because they had not thought of them first." Raskin et al. (1991) report an alpha reliability estimate for the GR scale of .66. In Sample 2, an index of grandiosity (GRA) was developed by using the residualized scores of the ACL (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965) Ideal Self scale (which reflects the fit between person's self and ideal self representations), with the ACL scale for personal adjustment partialed out. The reasoning behind this operationalization is as follows. Grandiose people see themselves in highly idealized terms. This suggests that the self and ideal self descriptions for such people will be highly congruent. However, self and ideal self congruency is often positively correlated with measures of self-esteem and personal adjustment. This suggests that there are two types of people whose self and ideal self descriptions are highly congruent. One type is people with high aspirations for themselves who are meeting those aspirations through real-life accomplishments. For these people, self and ideal self congruency reflects healthy or genuine self-esteem and personal adjustment. The other type is people with high aspirations for themselves who meet these aspirations in fantasy rather than in real-life accomplishment. For these people, congruency between self and ideal self reflects a form of defensive self-enhancement and relatively poor personal adjustment. Accordingly, to measure grandiosity, we regressed subjects' personal adjustment scores on their self and ideal self congruency scores. The residual scores from this regression reflect subjects' degree of self and ideal self congruency that is uncorrelated with personal adjustment. We suggest that high self and ideal self congruency in the absence of personal adjustment is a reasonable operational definition of grandiosity and one that is consistent with the phenomena described in clinical literature.

Hostility. In Sample 1, hostility was assessed with the Aggressive/Sadistic scale of the Interpersonal Check List (Leary, 1956); in Sample 2, hostility was measured with the ACL Need for Aggression scale (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965). In Sample 3, general hostility was measured by using principal-components analysis to aggregate subject's scores on the Buss-Durkee Hostility Scales (BDHI; Buss & Durkee, 1957), the Spielberger Trait Anger Scale (Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983), and the Need for Aggression Scale (AG) of the Jackson Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1967). This analysis produced a single component accounting for 75% of the variance, with scale loadings ranging from .89 (BDHI) to .83 (AG).

Dominance. In Sample 1, we measured dominance with the Managerial/Autocratic scale of the Interpersonal Check List (Leary, 1956). In Sample 2, dominance was measured with the Dominance scale of the CPI (Gough, 1956); in Sample 3, dominance was assessed with the Need for Dominance scale of the Jackson Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1967).

Observer Measures

The observer indexes used in Sample 2 were composite judgments made of each of the assessees by 5 to 12 IPAR staff members. Trait rankings reflect the composite judgment of 12 staff members, CQ items reflect the composite judgment of 5 staff members, and ACL items summarize the judgments of 10 staff members. For a more complete description of the observational procedures used in these assessments, see Raskin and Terry (1988). The specific observational measures used in the present analyses are as follows: Narcissism was measured by a trait ranking for narcissism. Self-esteem was measured by aggregating *z* scores obtained from the trait ranking for self-esteem and the CQ item "is satisfied with self." Dominance was defined in terms of a principal-components analysis that aggregated the trait ranking for dominance, the ACL item, Dominant, and the CQ item "is power oriented." This analysis produced a one-component solution accounting for 77% of the variance among the items. Item loadings on the principal component (which ranged from .82 to .92) were then used as regression weights to generate a measure of observed dominance.

We used the same procedure to generate observer indexes of grandiosity and hostility. The ACL items Conceited and Egotistical and the CQ item "shows condescending behavior in relation to others" were aggregated to index grandiosity; the ACL items Quarrelsome, Argumentative, Rude, Sarcastic, Aggressive, and Hostile, and the CQ item "has basic hostility towards others" were aggregated to index observed hostility. In both cases, the principal-components analyses produced one-component solutions, accounting for 70% and 67% of the variance, respectively. Item loadings across the two solutions ranged from .65 to .90.

Results

The observer data collected in Sample 2 provides a validity check for some of the self-report measures used in these studies. Correlations were computed between the NPI and observer-rated narcissism ($r = .46$, $p < .001$), between the CSES and observer-rated self-esteem ($r = .51$, $p < .001$), between the GRA and observer-rated grandiosity ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), between the CPI Dominance scale and observer-rated dominance ($r = .55$, $p < .001$), and between the ACL Need for Aggression scale and observer-rated hostility ($r = .52$, $p < .001$).

In the first series of analyses, correlations among indexes of hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism were computed in each of the three samples, and then each of the correlation matrixes were subjected to a principal-components analysis. Table 1 shows the results of these analyses. The correlations among the four construct measures converge in each of the samples. The average correlations among the measures were .45 in Sample 1, .53 in Sample 2, and .47 in Sample 3. Additionally, the principal-components analyses produced one-component solutions in each of the samples; this accounted for 60%, 66%, and 61%, respectively, of the variance among the measures. Furthermore, the scale loadings on the principal components and the scale communality estimates clearly show that the four measures tap responses from a coherent domain of behavior. To index the common variance within this system for future analysis, we used the scale loadings on the principal component as regression weights to generate hostility/grandiosity/dominance/narcissism (HGDN) common variance scores for each subject in the three samples.

To test whether the relationships found among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism would hold up in the

Table 1
Correlations and Principal-Components Analyses of Self-Reported Hostility, Grandiosity, Dominance, and Narcissism

Variable	1	2	3	4	FUPC	Communality
Sample 1						
1. Hostility	—				.81	.66
2. Grandiosity	.24	—			.85	.73
3. Dominance	.53*	.37*	—		.72	.51
4. Narcissism	.40*	.61*	.57*	—	.69	.47
Sample 2						
1. Hostility	—				.74	.54
2. Grandiosity	.38	—			.75	.56
3. Dominance	.54*	.56*	—		.89	.79
4. Narcissism	.49*	.51*	.71*	—	.85	.73
Sample 3						
1. Hostility	—				.60	.36
2. Grandiosity	.27*	—			.75	.57
3. Dominance	.37*	.49*	—		.86	.73
4. Narcissism	.38*	.57*	.71*	—	.88	.78

Note. FUPC = First unrotated principal component. For Sample 1, $n = 84$; for Sample 2, $n = 57$; for Sample 3, $n = 300$.
* $p < .001$.

observer domain, we computed correlations among the observer ratings of these four constructs and then subjected the resulting matrix to a principal-components analysis. Table 2 shows the results of these analyses. The correlations among the four observer indexes converged nicely; their average correlation was .66. Furthermore, the principal-components analysis produced a one-component solution that accounted for 75% of the variance among the four indexes. Inspection of the scale loadings on the principal component and the scale communality estimates shows that the four observer indexes reflect a coherent domain of observer judgments. To index the common variance in this set of observer judgments for future analysis, we used the scale loadings on the principal component as regression weights to generate observer-rated HGDN (O-HGDN) common variance scores for each subject in the second study.

The correlations among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism seem to reflect a coherent system of constructs, whether measured by self-report or observer judgments. Next, we determined the degree to which the variance shared within this system predicted subject's self-esteem. We did this by correlating, in Samples 1, 2, and 3, subjects' HGDN common variance scores with their self-esteem scores. These correlations were .48 ($p < .001$), .51 ($p < .001$), and .51 ($p < .001$), respectively. Additionally, in the observer domain, correlations between subjects' O-HGDN common variance scores and observer-rated self-esteem were .43 ($p < .001$).

These results suggest that hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism are interrelated constructs that are also related to variations in self-esteem. We next conducted a series of hierarchical analyses called *reduced form equations* (Cohen & Cohen, 1983, pp. 353–378) to determine whether the correlations among the five constructs (hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem) could be decomposed in a manner consistent with our model of narcissistic self-esteem regulation. Reduced form equations analysis is a modeling procedure that allows for a detailed partitioning of variance within a set of variables that are assumed to be causally related. This technique enters each variable in the order of specified causal priority. The regression coefficient when the variable first enters the hierarchy is its total effect. The regression coefficient in the final equation is its direct effect. The difference between a given variable's total effect and direct effect is the variable's indirect effect. In developing the reduced form equations for this analysis, the variables were ordered as follows: In Equation 1, grandiosity was regressed on dispositional hostility; in Equation 2, dominance was regressed on hostility followed by grandiosity;

Table 2
Correlations and Principal-Components Analyses of Observer-Rated Hostility, Grandiosity, Dominance, and Narcissism

Variable	1	2	3	4	FUPC	Communality
1. Hostility	—				.84	.71
2. Grandiosity	.68	—			.87	.75
3. Dominance	.59	.57	—		.85	.72
4. Narcissism	.64	.73	.76	—	.91	.83

Note. $N = 57$. FUPC = First unrotated principal component. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

in Equation 3, narcissism was regressed on hostility followed by grandiosity followed by dominance; and in Equation 4, self-esteem (the outcome variable) was regressed on hostility followed by grandiosity followed by dominance followed by narcissism.

Before presenting the results of these hierarchical analyses, we should briefly discuss the issue of causation within the context of this model because the model is developmental and makes a number of causal assumptions. Although the cross-sectional and nonexperimental nature of our data does not permit causal inferences, decomposing the observed relationships in the data into direct and indirect influences permits us to determine the extent to which the ordering of the variables in the equations is consistent with the theoretical assumptions underlying that ordering. To the extent that the theoretical model fits the data, we can say the theory has withstood the test because it has not been disconfirmed (Pedhazur, 1982). In the present case, our model makes several predictions concerning the relations among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem. With regard to narcissism, if grandiosity and dominance allow the narcissist to integrate hostility into his or her general personality style and to express anger in (relatively) socially acceptable ways, then the observed covariance between hostility and narcissism should be mediated by grandiosity and dominance. In other words, there should be no direct link between hostility and narcissism; any variance shared by these two constructs should be mediated by grandiosity and dominance.

Second, with regard to self-esteem, if narcissistic processes protect one from feelings of depression and self-doubt, then (a) hostility and self-esteem should have no zero-order relationship, and (b) when the mediating influences of grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism are accounted for, the direct influences between hostility and self-esteem should show a significant negative suppression effect. If narcissistic processes serve as a defense against depression, then by partialing out those parts of hostility that are associated with grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism, we should be left with a construct that has a negative relationship to self-esteem. Additionally, the model predicts positive indirect effects between hostility and self-esteem that are mediated through grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism.

Figure 1 presents path diagrams of direct influences found in the hierarchical analyses of the data collected in each of the three samples, and Figure 2 shows a diagram of those paths that were replicated (with path coefficients of .20 and above) across the three samples. Examination of Figure 1 shows that hostility, grandiosity, and dominance account for 52%, 54%, and 59% (respectively) of the variance in narcissism. Although hostility and narcissism are significantly related in Samples 1–3 (correlations are .40, .49, and .38, respectively), almost none of the variance in this relationship can be attributed to the direct influences that are shared by these constructs, Pathway $(P)_{14} = .114$, $P_{14} = .136$, and $P_{14} = .091$, respectively. On the other hand, an analysis of the total indirect influences between hostility and narcissism reveals that the influences mediated by grandiosity and dominance are appreciably larger than the direct influences between hostility and narcissism (total indirect influences are .289, .282, and .361 respectively).[2] A clearer view of these results can be seen by examining the replicated paths to narcissism in Figure 2. Figure 2 shows that there are no direct influences between hostility and narcissism; the variance shared by the two constructs can be attributed to the mediating influences of grandiosity and dominance. The results suggest that when grandiosity and dominance are partialed out of hostility, the apparent zero-order relationship between hostility and narcissism disappears.

With regard to self-esteem, Figure 1 shows that hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism combined account for 37%, 47%, and 52%, respectively, of the variance in self-reported self-esteem. As the model predicts, hostility and self-esteem were not directly related in Samples 1–3 (correlations were .07, .10, and −.07, respectively), but these two constructs shared a direct influence in the form of a significant negative suppression effect ($P_{15} = -.233$, $P_{15} = -.364$, and $P_{15} = -384$, respectively). In other words, when grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism are partialed out of hostility, residualized hostility is negatively related to self-esteem. Further support for the model is provided by an analysis of the indirect influences shared by hostility and self-esteem, which appear to be mediated by grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism. These analyses show that the total indirect influences between hostility and self-esteem by means of grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism are positive and substantial (the total indirect influences are .304, .465, and .314, respectively).

The replicated paths to self-esteem in Figure 4 show that the influences shared by hostility and self-esteem are mediated by grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism and that when the latter constructs are considered, hostility and self-esteem show a substantial negative relationship. Additionally, (a) the replicated influences shared by grandiosity and self-esteem appear to be mediated by dominance and narcissism, (b) the replicated influences shared by dominance and self-esteem appear to be mediated by narcissism, and (c) narcissism appears to have a replicated direct influence on self-esteem.

Discussion

The clinical and empirical literature on narcissism suggests that narcissistic persons are aggressive and domineering and have grandiose self-theories. An examination of the relationships among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism shows that measures of these four constructs consistently group together.

Several theorists have suggested that narcissism represents a form of self-esteem regulation. According to this view, aggression, grandiosity, dominance, entitlement, and exploitativeness are among behaviors that narcissists use to protect themselves from self-doubt and depression. To the extent that these defensive efforts are successful, the narcissistic person will experience heightened self-esteem. Our data show that the variance common to hostility, grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism is

[2] The total indirect influences reported within each of the hierarchical analyses are not represented in the path diagrams but were calculated as the difference between the regression coefficient when each variable first entered the hierarchy (its total effect) and the regression coefficient in the final equation when all of the variables had been entered (its direct effect).

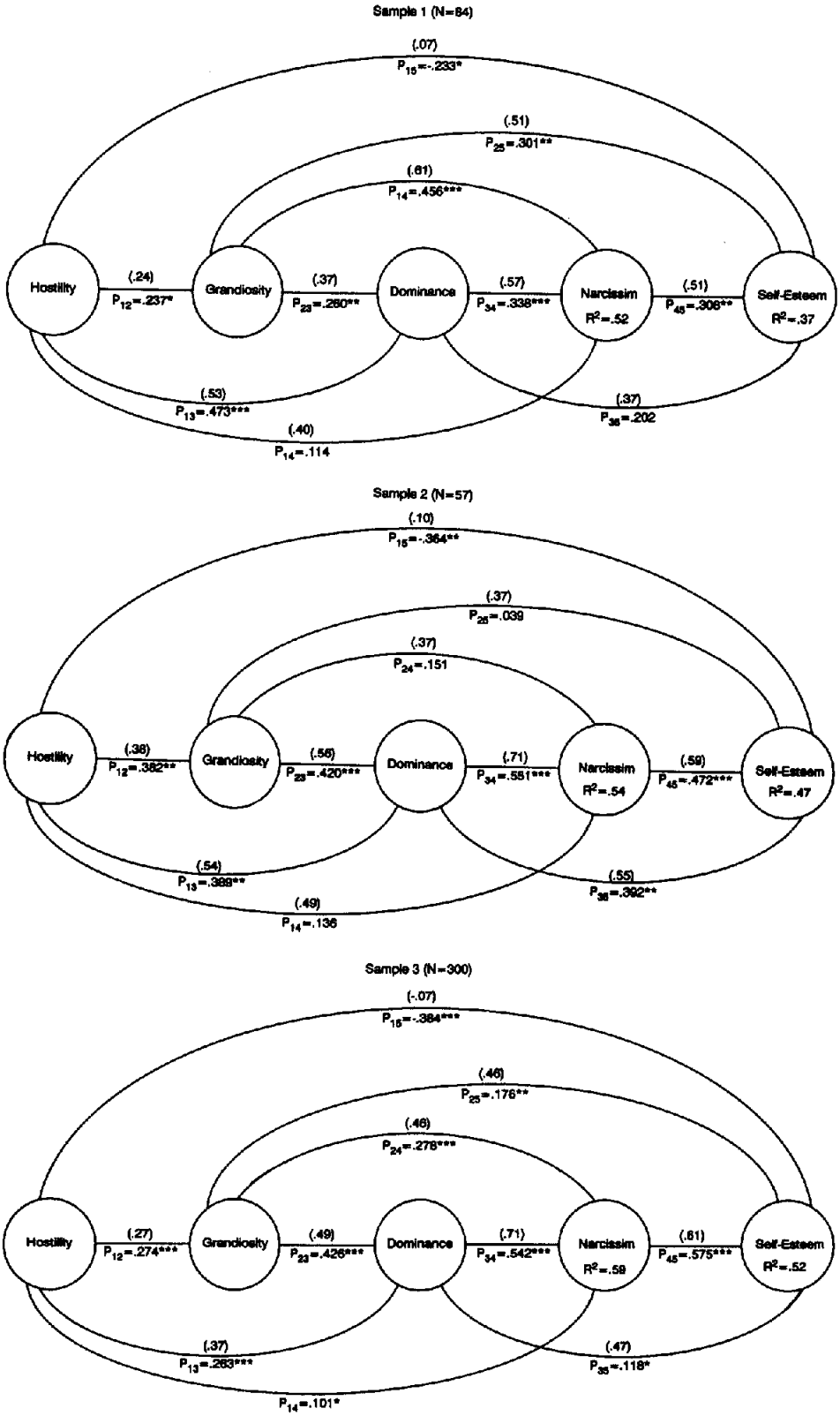

Figure 1. Path (*P*) diagrams for models of narcissistic self-esteem management for Samples 1–3. (Solid lines represent significant paths of influence; broken lines represent nonsignificant paths of influence. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.)

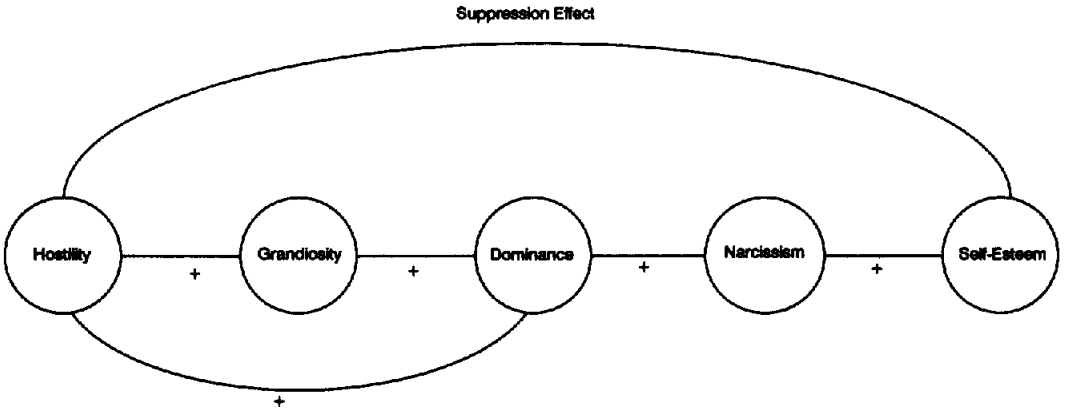

Figure 2. Replicated pathways to narcissistic self-esteem management.

substantially related to subjects' reports of high self-esteem. This finding raises an interesting question: How can people who maintain a hostile orientation toward the world, who express grandiose and unrealistic conceptions about themselves, and who need to dominate and control their social environment also experience feelings of self-satisfaction and well-being? The empirical fact that these seemingly incongruous expressions come together in a single personality configuration suggests that narcissistic behaviors are defenses against, or defensive expression of, threatening emotions such as anger, anxiety, and fear. Anger, hostility, and rage seem central to the emotional life of the narcissist; consequently, narcissistic behaviors may allow the expression of these emotions in a way that protects a sense of positive self-regard.

We examined this idea by conducting reduced form equations analyses of the intercorrelations among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem. The ordering of variables within our analyses was predicated on our model of narcissistic self-esteem regulation. Overall, the results were consistent with the structural relations predicted by the model in that (a) grandiosity and dominance appeared to mediate the observed covariance among hostility and narcissism and (b) although hostility and self-esteem appeared to be uncorrelated, when grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism were taken into account, hostility and self-esteem exhibited significant negative covariation. This suggests that in the absence of grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism, people who express higher hostility also report lower self-esteem. A third finding consistent with the model is that the indirect influence (i.e., those mediated by grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism) of hostility on self-esteem was substantial and positive; this indicates that in the presence of grandiosity, dominance, and narcissism, people who express higher hostility also report higher self-esteem.

In evaluating these results, it is important to note four points: (a) The main findings of these studies were replicated across three samples using a variety of different construct measures; (b) the relationships found among hostility, grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and self-esteem were consistent across the self-report domain and the domain of observer judgments; (c) the theoretical model examined was based on over 70 years of clinical observation and theorizing (Fenichel, 1945; Freud, 1914/1957; Jacobson, 1954; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971; Reich, 1960); and (d) the analyses examined the plausibility of the model; they did not reveal that this was the only, or even the best, model to fit the data. In summary, the data suggest the existence of a narcissistic configuration of ideational and behavioral processes that involves managing hostility through grandiose self-representation and interpersonal strategies centering on dominance; moreover, this configuration is central to many people's experience of self-worth and well-being.

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