

## Three Types of Narcissism in Women from College to Mid-Life

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**ABSTRACT** This article examines personality change in three types of narcissists (hypersensitive, willful, and autonomous), who were members of a longitudinal sample of women. Measures of narcissism were derived from the age-43 California Q-set ratings. Women who had high scores on hypersensitivity at age 43 were characterized by decline in personal resources, as assessed by the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), relative to their early 20s, and by lack of success either in career or as a homemaker. Women who were high scorers on willfulness at age 43 showed little change from college days, but there was evidence they had grown during their 20s. The autonomous women, following conflict in their 20s, experienced personality growth evident by their early 40s. Hypersensitivity and willfulness, but not autonomy, were associated with evidence of troubled childhood relations with parents, particularly the mother. Willfulness was associated with early identification with a willful father. These findings demonstrate the usefulness of the construct of narcissism for the study of adult development and document the close relation between personality and social roles in the life of an individual over time.

Although psychodynamic writers believe that mid-life can bring increased creativity, wisdom, and generativity (Erikson, 1950; Jaques, 1965; Jung 1935/1965), narcissists are portrayed as deteriorating by middle adulthood (Kernberg, 1980; Kohut, 1977). For narcissists mid-life raises the specter of despair over lost opportunities and not being

This research was supported in part by National Institute of Health Grant RO1 MH4398 to Ravenna Helson, whom I would like to thank for her interest and help. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Paul Wink, who is now at the Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1346.

*Journal of Personality* 60:1, March 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Duke University Press.  
CCC 0022-3506/92/\$1.50

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true to one's innermost feelings, goals, and ambitions (Kohut, 1977; Winnicott, 1960/1965). Heightened awareness of one's mortality and of the limits to one's accomplishments potentiates feelings of envy and rage. In turn, these lead to defensive devaluation of others and of one's own past, which eats away at external and internal sources of support (Kernberg, 1980). Lacking the capacity to integrate the good and the bad (Kernberg, 1980), or the manic and depressive aspects of personality (Jaques, 1965; Klein, 1957), the narcissist is portrayed as becoming more socially introverted, and as inhabiting a world which appears to be progressively more hostile and more devoid of meaning, nourishment, and goodness (Kernberg, 1980).

The narcissistic personality appears better suited to the demands of young adulthood than to those of middle age. The romance of forming relationships, the excitement of embarking on a work career, and the development of a still rather vague vision/dream of self-in-adult-world (Levinson, 1978), without the demands, as yet, for sustained commitment, responsibility, and perseverance, fit well with the expansive sense of self and the craving for excitement and exhibitionism of the narcissist (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Kernberg, 1975).

Despite considerable interest in narcissism, there has been little empirical study of personality development of narcissists. In *Lives through Time*, Block (1971) reported that women between the age of 18 and their early 30s classified as "dominant narcissists" increased in socialization and consideration of others. They did not, however, lose their egotistically dominating and exploitative tendencies, and Block did not follow his subjects to mid-life.

The clinical view that narcissists deteriorate in mid-life contrasts with mounting evidence that many people show personality growth by this time. From young adulthood to mid-life, self-confidence, social poise, maturity, and cognitive investment tend to increase (Haan, 1981; Haan, Millsap, & Hartka, 1986; Helson & Moane, 1987; Vaillant, 1977).

This article examines personality change in three types of narcissists, all members of a Mills College longitudinal sample of women assessed when they were, on average, 21, 27, and 43 years of age (Helson, Mitchell, & Moane, 1984). Following Freud (1914/1953), and, more recently, Blatt and Shichman (1983), narcissism is defined broadly to include all individuals in whose lives issues of self-definition, self-worth, identity, and autonomy predominate. When construed broadly as self-investment, narcissism subsumes both healthy and pathological personality processes, and constitutes one of two fundamental lines of

human development. The second and alternative line of development (object directedness) emphasizes issues of relations with others (see Wink, 1991).

Questionnaire data from the Mills women at age 43 were sorted by raters using the California Q-set (CAQ; Block, 1978). The CAQ data were then used to classify the women on one of three patterns of narcissism: hypersensitive, willful, and autonomous. This differentiation, derived from a factor analysis of the indicative items of the CAQ narcissism prototype (Wink, 1991), includes two measures of dysfunctional narcissism as well as a new measure of healthy narcissism. The three CAQ narcissism scales showed very different correlations with personality and adjustment measures at age 43 (Wink, in press).

The CAQ Willfulness scale taps the most typical form of narcissism, characterized by overt grandeur, power orientation, exhibitionism, poor impulse control, and a pleasure-seeking orientation to life (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Kernberg, 1986; Reich, 1949). This type of narcissism is reflected in the self-report Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1981), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) narcissism scale of Morey, Waugh, and Blashfield (1985), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and MMPI narcissism scales of Wink and Gough (1990).

The CAQ Hypersensitivity scale measures a frequent but "atypical" form of narcissism in which overt inhibition, introversion, and lack of self-confidence mask an underlying (covert) grandiose sense of self-importance, entitlement, and exhibitionism (Kernberg, 1986; Kohut, 1977). Correlates of both the CAQ Hypersensitivity scale and the self-report-based Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale (NPDS; Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979) indicate covert narcissists to be more pathological than their overt counterparts (Emmons, 1987; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987; Wink, in press).

The Hypersensitivity and Willfulness scales measure two variants of dysfunctional narcissism, both of which, as aforementioned, have been widely researched. In comparison, healthy narcissism has received little empirical attention, and the CAQ Autonomy scale is the first measure of this construct. Its correlates indicate that healthy narcissism is characterized by inner directedness that gives rise to self-reliance, intellectual interests, psychological mindedness, and creativity (Wink, 1991, in press).

Rank's (1945) original depiction of individuals (narcissists) who tran-

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scend the conflict between self-will and will of others through the development of creative interests, in contrast to those who do not transcend this conflict, was supported empirically by MacKinnon (1965) in his research on architects. In her studies, Helson (1985, 1987) interpreted the fulfillment of creative potential as a way of transcending problems for women who combined a precocious ego development with narcissistic vulnerabilities. According to Kohut (1966, 1971), healthy narcissism leads in mid-life to the development of empathy, humor, wisdom, and the actualization of creative potential.

On the basis of the literature reviewed, one would expect that women with high scores in mid-life (early 40s) on the more dysfunctional dimensions of hypersensitivity and willfulness would show deterioration relative to how they were in early adulthood (the 20s). Conversely, women with high scores in mid-life on the healthy dimension of autonomy should show personality growth relative to the 20s. They should also be effective in realization of life goals. The stronger pathological implications of hypersensitivity suggest that high scorers on this dimension may deteriorate more than their willful counterparts. On the other hand, the abundant energy, overt grandeur, and exhibitionism of the willful narcissists points to early adulthood (late 20s) as their prime of life.

In addition to studying how the personality of middle-aged women with high scores on narcissism changed relative to early adulthood, this article relates the three patterns of narcissism to involvement in the social clock projects of homemaker and careerist (Helson et al., 1984). Sustained commitment over the course of adult life to either or both of these roles requires an investment of personal meaning and the willingness to curb one's needs and desires that is antithetical to the more dysfunctional forms of narcissism. Rebelliousness, a strong need for independence, and problems with nurturance should make the role of homemaker particularly difficult for narcissistic women. Healthy narcissism, however, should be related to successful self-expression in work, and thus to an upwardly mobile work career.

Finally, this article will investigate the relationship between narcissism and early patterns of parent-child relations. Relatively little is known about the specific parental characteristics that lead to adult narcissism. Kernberg (1975, 1986) associates pathological narcissism with a chronically cold, rejecting, but at the same time, intrusive and admiring primary parent. Both Kohut (1971, 1977) and Miller (1981) stress the contributing role of unempathic parenting, which entails the use of the child for the parent's own narcissistic gratification.

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According to Block (1971), dominantly narcissistic (willful) women were confronted as children with a neurotic mother and tended to find comfort and strength in their identification with a flamboyant, self-indulgent, and extraverted father.

Drawing on Rank (1945), MacKinnon (1962) said that parents who respected their children would make it easier for them to transcend the conflict between their own will and parental will, that is, to develop healthy narcissism. Helson (1985) attributed the fulfillment of creative potential in part to the woman's ability to separate herself successfully from the world of parental authority. This suggests the absence of an unduly close or distant relationship of the autonomous woman with either of her parents.

In sum, the hypothesis is advanced that women who score high on hypersensitivity and willfulness in their early 40s will show a pattern of personality decline relative to how they were in their early and late 20s. They are also expected to lack sustained involvement in major social roles. The decline should be particularly evident in hypersensitive women. In contrast, autonomous women are expected to show personality growth and an involvement in an upwardly mobile occupational career. It is hypothesized that hypersensitivity and willfulness, but not autonomy, will be associated with reports of troubled past relationships with parents.

## METHOD

### Sample

In 1958 and 1960 a representative two-thirds of the senior class ( $N = 141$ ) at Mills College participated in a study of personality characteristics and plans for the future among college women. Further information was obtained by mail from 99 women about 5 years after their graduation (Helson, 1967). In 1981 all women who had participated in previous phases of the study were contacted again. They were then between 42 and 45 years of age. Questionnaire and inventory materials were obtained from 111 women (Helson et al., 1984). A core of 81 women completed the CPI at the three time periods, and provided sufficient information to be sorted on the CAQ at age 43.

### Q-Sort Data and Measures of Narcissism

*Q-sort.* Life data provided by 105 of the 111 participants in the 1981 follow-up were studied by three to six raters, who then formulated personality descriptions of each woman by means of Q-sorting with the CAQ (Block, 1978).

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Raters were confined to the questionnaire material available for the 1981 follow-up. This comprehensive set of questionnaires consisted of both open-ended questions and rating scales covering the areas of life events, marital and family relations, **views of parents**, work commitments, and physical and mental health. The  $\alpha$  reliabilities for the 105 CAQ composites ranged from a low of .65 to a high of .90, with a mean at .75 (Wink, 1991).

*CAQ Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Autonomy scales.* The top and most characteristic items of the CAQ narcissism prototype were subjected to a principal components analysis, which resulted in the extraction of three orthogonal factors: hypersensitivity, willfulness, and autonomy (Wink, 1991). Subsequently, factor scores for the above three dimensions were used as markers for the development of scales in the Mills sample and a cross-validation sample of 350 males and females (Wink, in press).

The Hypersensitivity scale consists of CAQ items reflecting sensitivity to demands and criticism, self-defensiveness, hostility and irritability, and concern with one's own adequacy. The Willfulness scale includes items indicating self-indulgence, condescension, manipulateness, impulsivity, self-dramatization, and tendencies to eroticize situations. The Autonomy scale is comprised of items measuring independence, high aspirations, unusual thought processes, and breadth of aesthetic and intellectual interests.

The  $\alpha$  measure of internal consistency for the three scales ranges from .87 to .92, and intercorrelations among them range from a low of  $-.19$  between hypersensitivity and autonomy, and a high of .27 for hypersensitivity and willfulness. All three scales correlated with ratings of narcissism in the Mills sample. Only hypersensitivity and willfulness were related to ratings of pathology (Wink, in press).

### Measures Used in Analyses of Change over Time

*Interpersonal functioning, impulse control, and achievement.* The 20 folk concept scales of the CPI (Gough, 1957, 1987) provide a comprehensive set of personality measures which include themes of interpersonal adequacy, normative control of impulses, and achievement potential (Gough, 1957). The recent revision of the CPI also includes three new, higher order vector scales measuring the dimensions of externality versus internality, norm favoring versus norm questioning, and social and intellectual competence-realization (Gough, 1987).

*Social clock project and role variables.* The social clock project variables, developed from questionnaire material available at age 43, seek to identify personally and culturally salient need-press (Murray, 1938) configurations over time (Helson et al., 1984). For the present study, two social clock variables were chosen, with presence or absence coded by 1 to 0 dummy weights. "Ad-

herence to the Feminine Social Clock (FSC)" is based on the criteria of getting married and starting a family by age 28. "Masculine Occupational Clock at 28 (MOC28)" was coded as present if the subject had chosen a field of work with high status potential by age 28; MOC28-43 was rated positive if there was evidence of persistence and achievement in the chosen career by age 43.

Traditionality of roles classifies women according to the traditionality of their life stories by age 43. Its five categories, from least to most traditional, identify women who never married; married but did not have children; married and had children but divorced; mothers in intact marriages in the labor force; and mothers in intact marriages not in the labor force (Helson & Picano, 1990).

### Measures Used in the Study of Early Antecedents of Narcissism

*Retrospective account of parents.* At age 43, the entire sample reported information about current contacts with parents and also described positive and negative feelings toward parents in childhood. These descriptions were converted with adequate reliability using a 3-point scale to scores on 35 ratings of parental characteristics and 14 ratings of emotions experienced by the subjects in their past and present relations with mother and father (Mathelon, 1983). In order to uncover underlying themes, and to guard against chance findings, the 35 ratings of characteristics and 14 ratings of emotions describing past relations with mother and father were factor-analyzed separately for each parent using principal component analyses (Table 1).

The use of retrospective data raises issues of report biases (McCrae & Costa, 1988; Ross & Conway, 1986). While there is no doubt that an adult's current status can affect her/his recollections of the past, several studies have shown impressive correspondence between retrospective accounts and actual childhood events (for reviews see Block, 1971; Burbach & Borduin, 1986).

*Criticalness of parents and childhood activities.* The age-43 retrospective ratings of relations with parents are supplemented with data from the first assessment when the subjects were still in college. At that time the subjects provided a thumbnail sketch of both parents. These descriptions were subsequently rated for criticalness of description of mother and father. Also at the age of 21, the subjects rated the degree of pleasure they had received from each of 37 childhood activities. A cluster analysis of these ratings produced two dimensions related to creativity: imaginative/artistic and tomboy (Helson, 1965). This study uses scores on amount of pleasure from each activity, number of activities disliked, and the two clusters mentioned.

*Parent's self-descriptions.* When the Mills women were seniors, 36 mothers and 33 fathers of a subgroup of 51 assessed subjects described themselves on the 300-item Adjective Check List (ACL; Gough & Heilbrun, 1983). These

**Table 1**  
**Factor Analyses of Ratings of Retrospective**  
**Accounts of Relations with Parents**

Items	Factor loadings
<i>Emotions toward mother<sup>a</sup></i>	
Factor 1. Dislike/tension	
Dislike, irritated	.76
Relaxed, comfortable	-.71
Anxious, tense	.71
Factor 2. Insecurity/distrust	
Insecure, embarrassed	.75
Trusting, secure, accepted	-.72
Fear, distrust	.66
<i>Mother's characteristics<sup>b</sup></i>	
Factor 1. Strict/critical	
Strict, controlling	.79
Respectful, nonintrusive, trusting	-.78
Grants autonomy, allowing, permissive	-.77
Factor 2. Warm/caring	
Caring, nurturant, involved	.83
Distant, withdrawn, unknowable	-.76
Cold, rejecting	-.76
Factor 3. Capable/independent	
Dependent, nonassertive, compliant	-.84
Independent, assertive, strong	.81
Capable, competent, successful	.63
<i>Emotions toward father<sup>c</sup></i>	
Factor 1. Insecurity/distrust	
Trusting, secure, accepted	-.83
Fear, distrust	.83
Insecure, embarrassed	.75
Factor 2. Liking/pride	
Liking, enjoyment	.73
Loving, affectionate, warmth	.66
Hatred, anger, resentment	-.65
<i>Father's characteristics<sup>d</sup></i>	
Factor 1. Strict/critical	
Grants autonomy, allowing, permissive	-.84
Open-minded, fair, flexible	-.83
Strict, controlling	.82

**Table 1** Continued

Items	Factor loadings
Factor 2. Warm/caring	
Cold, rejecting	-.82
Caring, nurturant, involved	.76
Distant, withdrawn, unknowable	-.76
Factor 3. Capable/independent	
Capable, competent, successful	.71
Independent, assertive, strong	.71
Dependent, nonassertive, compliant	-.66

Note. For each factor only the three items with highest loadings are provided.  $N = 90$  for the mothers, and  $n = 87$  for the fathers.

- Variance accounted for by Factors 1 and 2 = 37% and 9%.
- Variance accounted for by Factors 1, 2, and 3 = 27%, 14%, and 8%.
- Variance accounted for by Factors 1 and 2 = 32% and 14%.
- Variance accounted for by Factors 1, 2, and 3 = 27%, 15%, and 9%.

descriptions were scored on ACL scales measuring 15 of Murray's (1938) needs and other dispositions.

### Plan of Analyses

The 81 subjects for whom CPI data were available at all times of testing were used to form three nonoverlapping groups based on their age-43 scores on hypersensitivity ( $N = 18$ ), willfulness ( $N = 12$ ), and autonomy ( $N = 26$ ). Each group included only those women whose  $z$  scores on the criterion scale were above the mean and greater than scores on the other two scales by one-fifth a standard deviation or more.

For each of the three groups, CPI mean scores were compared using  $t$  tests for repeated measures for ages 21 to 27, 27 to 43, and 21 to 43. Similar analyses were performed to compare the means of each group at ages 21, 27, and 43 with the complement of Mills subjects.

Additional correlational analyses were based on all subjects for whom scores were available on relevant measures.

## RESULTS

### Changes on the CPI

This section shows how each of the three narcissism groups, as classified at age 43, changed over time and how each group compares with all other women at each age of testing.

*Changes within groups.* As shown in Table 2, from ages 21 to 27 hypersensitive women decreased on the socialization scale and increased on femininity, a pattern signifying increased alienation and vulnerability (McAllister, 1986). From 27 to 43 they decreased on responsibility and norm-favoring, indicating increased self-centeredness, rebelliousness, and moodiness (Gough, 1987). From 21 to 43, the decreases on the responsibility and socialization scales remain significant. In addition there is a decrease in well-being, indicating a growth in pessimism and worry about health and the future (Gough, 1987).

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In striking contrast to the hypersensitive women, the willful women showed impressive gains between 21 and 27. They increased on several measures of social assurance (dominance, sociability, self-acceptance, and independence); on measures of achievement-via-independence and tolerance; on self-control and sense of well-being; and on level of effective functioning. From ages 27 to 43 the willful women tended to drop on well-being ( $p < .10$ ). From 21 to 43 the only change was an increase in tolerance.

Between ages 21 and 27, the autonomous group increased on psychological mindedness and decreased on empathy and socialization, indicating greater interest in human motives but also an increase in discomfort with self and rebelliousness (Gough, 1987). From ages 27 to 43 autonomy was associated with increases on the dominance and independence scales, greater maturity of judgment, social acuity, psychological integration, and higher level of effective functioning (scales for empathy, psychological mindedness, and effective functioning). Changes from ages 21 to 43 parallel those for 27 to 43. In addition, decreases in sociability and flexibility indicate a growing tendency to become more private and stable.

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*Comparisons with other women over time.* Table 3 shows that hypersensitive women score lower than other women on only 2 scales at age 21, on 6 scales at age 27, and 13 scales at age 43. By mid-life the hypersensitive women are clearly more alienated, rebellious, cynical, and buffeted by impulse (lower responsibility, socialization, self-control, and well-being), and less able to order their lives and to understand themselves and others (e.g., lower intellectual efficiency and psychological mindedness). Note that at all times of testing, the hypersensitive women score lower than other women on empathy and effective functioning.

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The willful group consistently score lower than other women on self-control, and at age 21 they are more rebellious and self-centered as

well (lower socialization and norm-favoring). However, at age 27 they score higher than other women on several indicators of social assurance (dominance, social presence, independence, and internalization). They are also more empathic and flexible. At age 43, they remain more subject to mood and impulse (lower self-control), and are more articulate and witty in social situations (social presence), but other differences have disappeared.

The autonomous women score consistently higher on tolerance, achievement-via-independence, and intellectual effectiveness, indicating greater resourcefulness, creative and intellectual interests, individualism, and higher aspirations. At mid-life they show more dominance, capacity for status, and independence; dependability (socialization); understanding of self and others (psychological mindedness); and effective functioning.

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#### Role and Social Clock Variables

The correlations of the three narcissism scales with role and social clock variables highlight the tendency of narcissistic women to avoid or fail at the traditional role of intact marriage and family (Table 4). Both willfulness and autonomy are associated with starting out on an upwardly mobile career, but only autonomy was associated with a sustained and successful work career throughout the first half of the adult life (MOC28-43).

#### Retrospective (Age 43) Accounts of Parent-Child Relations

Correlations between hypersensitivity and factor scores based on ratings of the women's age-43 descriptions of their relations with parents in childhood indicate feelings of insecurity and distrust toward the mother. Both parents tended to be described as lacking in warmth and caring (Table 5). Willfulness was associated with feelings of tension and dislike toward the mother, and of liking and pride toward the father. The autonomy scale did not correlate significantly with any of the retrospective measures of relation with parents.

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**Table 2**  
**Changes over Time on CPI Scales for the Hypersensitive, Willful, and Autonomous Groups**

Scale	Age 21		Age 27		Age 43		<i>t</i> tests		
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>t</i> <sub>2</sub>	<i>t</i> <sub>3</sub>
<b>Hypersensitivity</b>									
Responsibility	28.83	2.8	28.83	4.0	25.83	4.3	.00	-4.53***	-3.09**
Socialization	33.61	4.1	31.83	4.5	30.28	4.4	-2.27*	-1.14	-2.54*
Well-being	33.00	3.9	32.28	3.9	30.72	4.1	-.87	-1.70	-2.47*
Femininity	19.94	3.5	21.78	3.9	21.05	3.0	2.46*	-.99	1.60
Norm-favoring (V.2)	23.44	5.3	22.44	4.7	20.00	4.7	-.83	-2.08*	-2.00
<b>Willfulness</b>									
Dominance	24.67	4.6	26.83	3.4	26.92	5.0	2.75**	.07	1.74
Sociability	23.33	4.3	25.50	4.2	24.92	4.4	3.40**	-.50	1.25
Self-acceptance	20.58	3.4	22.50	1.9	21.25	3.0	2.15*	-1.37	.60
Independence	19.33	3.5	22.50	2.2	21.33	3.5	3.17**	-.83	1.64
Self-control	16.67	4.9	18.92	2.8	18.50	5.5	2.69*	-.28	1.10
Well-being	31.50	3.1	33.75	2.2	31.92	3.7	3.65**	-1.82	.33
Tolerance	23.50	3.0	25.75	2.4	25.83	2.1	2.36*	.09	2.42*
Achievement-via-independence	26.83	2.6	28.33	2.1	27.83	2.8	2.17*	-.58	1.35
Competence (V.3)	41.33	3.3	45.25	3.8	42.75	5.5	3.31**	-1.48	.99

**Autonomy**

Dominance	25.08	4.4	23.65	4.5	28.08	4.1	-1.69	5.84**	3.03**
Sociability	24.58	3.6	23.54	3.9	23.34	3.5	-1.54	-.27	-2.05*
Independence	20.19	3.4	20.88	3.5	22.42	3.7	.92	2.10*	2.55*
Empathy	25.85	3.1	24.07	3.2	26.11	2.9	-2.92**	2.84**	.40
Socialization	34.65	4.2	32.54	3.8	33.64	3.4	-3.24**	1.38	-1.06
Achievement-via-independence	28.81	3.4	29.23	3.3	30.08	2.8	.77	1.93	2.23*
Psychological mindedness	18.85	2.8	20.04	2.7	21.19	2.2	2.63*	2.74*	4.48***
Flexibility	18.77	3.8	17.76	3.9	16.69	3.7	-1.43	-1.34	-2.28*
Competence (V.3)	44.16	7.6	44.72	5.9	46.54	5.7	.53	2.03*	1.78

Note.  $N = 18, 12,$  and  $26$  for hypersensitivity, willfulness, and autonomy, respectively. For  $t$  tests, subscript 1 indicates that the  $t$  test is based on scores for ages 21 and 27, subscript 2 on scores from ages 27 and 43, and subscript 3 on scores from ages 21 and 43. CPI = California Psychological Inventory.

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

**Table 3**  
**Comparisons of the Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Autonomy Groups**  
**with the Complement of Mills Women at Ages 21, 27, and 43**

Scale	Hypersensitivity			Willfulness			Autonomy		
	21	27	43	21	27	43	21	27	43
Dominance					2.24*				1.95*
Capacity for status		-2.44*	-2.97**						1.94*
Sociability									
Social presence					2.80**	2.32*			
Self-acceptance									
Independence					2.31*				2.08*
Empathy	-2.71**	-1.97*	-3.37**		2.14*				2.54*
Responsibility			-3.01**						
Socialization			-2.18*	-2.35*					2.33*
Self-control			-2.34*	-2.53*	-2.13*	-2.31*	2.04*		
Good impression			-3.05**						

Communality					
Well-being		-2.60*			
Tolerance		-2.51*		3.15*	2.08* 1.92*
Achievement-via-conformance		-2.61*			
Achievement-via-independence	-2.45*	-3.63**		2.59*	3.50** 3.68**
Intellectual efficiency	-2.01*	-1.95*		2.34*	2.74** 2.62*
Psychological mindedness	-1.93*	-3.65**			3.01** 3.87***
Flexibility			2.68**	2.35*	
Femininity					
Internalization (V.1)			-2.50* -2.23*		
Norm-favoring (V.2)			-2.04* -2.36*		
Competence (V.3)	-2.17*	-2.94*	-3.76**		2.61*

Note. For the hypersensitivity group,  $n = 18$ , and for the complementary group,  $n = 63$ . For the willfulness group,  $n = 12$ , and for the complementary group,  $n = 69$ . For the autonomy group,  $n = 26$ , and for the complementary group,  $n = 55$ .

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

**Table 4**  
Correlations of CAQ Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Autonomy Scales with Roles and Social Clock Variables

Variables	CAQ narcissism scales		
	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness	Autonomy
Traditionality of roles	-.27**	-.30**	-.23**
Feminine social clock (FSC)	-.20*	-.11	-.15
Masculine Occupational Clock (MOC28)	.16	.26**	.27**
Masculine Occupational Clock (MOC28-43)	-.04	.15	.25**

Note.  $N = 105$  for all role and social clock variables. CAQ = California Q-set.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed

\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

**Table 5**  
Correlations of CAQ Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Autonomy Scales with Retrospective Accounts of Parents

Variables	CAQ narcissism scales		
	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness	Autonomy
<b>Mother</b>			
Emotions			
Dislike/tension	.03	.26*	.15
Insecurity/distrust	.35**	-.03	-.18
Characteristics			
Strict/critical	.11	.16	.01
Warm/caring	-.29**	-.11	.00
Independent/capable	.05	.02	-.13
<b>Father</b>			
Emotions			
Insecurity/distrust	.08	.08	.00
Like/pride	-.10	.24*	-.16
Characteristics			
Strict/critical	-.12	-.06	.17
Warm/caring	-.23*	-.02	-.08
Independent/capable	-.04	.09	.06

Note.  $N = 90$  for mother's data, and  $n = 87$  for father's data. CAQ = California Q-set.

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed

\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

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**Table 6**  
Correlations of CAQ Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Autonomy Scales with College-Based Ratings of Early Family Environment

Variables	CAQ narcissism scales		
	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness	Autonomy
Criticalness of mother	.24*	.23*	.00
Criticalness of father	.07	.18	-.02
Childhood imaginative/artistic activities	-.01	.14	.34**
Childhood tomboy activities	-.09	.10	.27**
Number of childhood activities disliked	.28**	-.05	-.18

Note.  $N = 99$  for all variables except number of disliked activities, where  $n = 102$ .

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed

\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

#### Criticalness of Parents and Childhood Activities

The Hypersensitivity and Willfulness scales were correlated with ratings of criticalness of mother based on thumbnail sketches of parents provided by the Mills subjects when they were still in college (Table 6).

Also while in college, the Mills women rated a set of 37 childhood activities for amount of enjoyment (Table 6). Hypersensitivity was correlated with the number of activities in childhood that were disliked, and failed to correlate with enjoyment of any of the 37 childhood activities. Willfulness was associated with pleasure in painting ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and writing poems and stories ( $r = .22$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Autonomy was correlated with the clusters of both childhood tomboy and imaginative/artistic activities and with individual childhood activities such as climbing trees ( $r = .21$ ), going on hikes ( $r = .36$ ), painting ( $r = .30$ ), and writing poems and stories ( $r = .22$ ) (all  $p$ s  $< .05$ ).

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#### Parent's ACL Self-Descriptions

The Hypersensitivity scale showed a positive correlation with the mother's ACL high origience-high intellectance scale (a measure of creative temperament; Welsh, 1975) ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and a negative correlation with nurturance ( $r = -.37$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating unconven-

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tionality, dissatisfaction, and lack of warmth and consideration (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983).

Willfulness was correlated with father's scores on ACL heterosexuality ( $r = .42, p < .05$ ), change ( $r = .42, p < .05$ ), and self-confidence ( $r = .33, p < .10$ ). Like their willful daughters, the fathers appeared to be outgoing, pleasure-seeking, and confident.

The Autonomy scale was correlated positively with mother's deference ( $r = .33, p < .05$ ) and father's nurturance ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ).

### DISCUSSION

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Psychoanalysts have described narcissists as deteriorating in middle age (Jaques, 1965; Kernberg, 1980; Kohut, 1977). This article uses two CAQ (Block, 1978) measures of dysfunctional narcissism and one measure of healthy narcissism to show their quite distinct patterns of personality change and relations to goals in the first half of adult life. Those women who scored high on hypersensitivity in their early 40s showed a course of steady decline relative to how they were in their early 20s. Willfulness at 43 showed little change relative to age 21, but there was evidence of personality growth in the 20s. Those women classified as autonomous, following conflict in their late 20s, experienced a surge of personality growth by the early 40s.

At age 43 high scorers on the CAQ Hypersensitivity scale were more rebellious, buffeted by impulse, cynical, and less able to put their lives together than the rest of the Mills women. These differences were not evident at age 21, although at all three times of testing the hypersensitive women were less empathic and effective in their functioning relative to their peers. Between ages 21 and 27 the hypersensitive women became more vulnerable and alienated. From 27 to 43 they became more nonconforming, self-centered, pessimistic, and moody. This pattern of change is what Kernberg (1980, 1986) predicts for the more pathological forms of narcissism in mid-life.

In the course of their adult life, the hypersensitive women found it difficult to commit themselves either to the goal of establishing and raising a family or to pursuing an upwardly mobile career. The combination of decline in resources of personality and lack of commitment to either of the major social roles of adulthood attests to the important relation between personal and social factors in the life of an individual over time (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987, 1988).

Evidence of early parent-child relations adds to our understanding of

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the difficulties experienced by the hypersensitive women in their adult life. As early as college, a relatively good time in the life of hypersensitive individuals, there is evidence of criticalness toward the mother and a report of lack of enjoyment of childhood activities. The mother's own personality data indicate unconventionality, dissatisfaction, and lack of consideration for others. The age-43 recollections of early family interactions reveal a lack of warmth in description of both parents, and feelings of dislike toward the mother. In sum, there appears to be no sign of positive childhood influences that might have aided the hypersensitive women in the development of a resilient and cohesive sense of self.

The personality of high scorers on willfulness at age 43 showed little difference from the college days. At both ages they tended to be more impulsive and self-indulgent than the other Mills women, a finding which agrees with Block's account of the personality development of the dominant narcissist.

As hypothesized, the willful women increased in social poise, confidence, and level of effective functioning during the first few years after graduation from college, a time of establishing the first adult life-structure. The sense of optimism and personal growth, conveyed in self-report data, was accompanied by indications of success in starting a career with high-status potential. All in all, the late 20s, a time of novelty, excitement, and expansive visions of the world and the future, appeared to suit the personalities of the willful women well. By age 43, however, these women were no longer engaged in the pursuit of an upwardly mobile career.

While willfulness, like hypersensitivity, was associated with evidence of a troubled relationship with the mother, unlike hypersensitivity, it was also characterized by feelings of liking and pride in the father. This pattern of early parent-child relations replicates the prospective findings of Block (1971).

Although an identification with a parent who himself appeared to be willful was not without its negative consequences in adulthood, it also provided an opportunity to acquire an energetic and confident sense of self. The presence of positive childhood experiences, which includes, apart from an identification with the father, an active interest in creative activities such as writing poems and painting, is what this study shows to differentiate the background of the willful women from the more dysfunctional hypersensitive women.

From college to mid-life, the autonomous women proved to be con-

sistently more resourceful, ambitious, and individualistic than the other Mills women. They also showed creative and psychological interests and a general preoccupation with the inner world of ideas. Several of these characteristics were already evident in childhood interests in tomboy and imaginative/artistic activities.

A combination of strong independence, nontraditional interests, and involvement in a high-status occupational career seems to account for the relatively hard time experienced by the autonomous women in their late 20s. This was a time when, confronted with the need to juggle a demanding career and family life, they tended to question established norms and show personal discomfort. Evidence of similar conflicts at the time of the age-30 transition was reported by Helson (1987) in her study of Mills women who went on to fulfill their creative potential.

While high scorers on willfulness were at their best in their late 20s, for autonomy, the 30s and early 40s appeared to be the time of accelerated growth in confidence, social poise, understanding of self and others, increased level of effective functioning, and continued commitment to a high-status occupational career. The different timing of personality growth associated with willfulness and autonomy supports the contention that early adulthood benefits those individuals who prize the immediacy of fame and glory, whereas the demands of mid-life are more suited to persons who cathect the inner world of ideas (Jacoby, 1965; Jaques, 1965; Jung, 1931/1969). Unlike hypersensitivity and willfulness, autonomy was not correlated with unfavorable characteristics of parents.

Although varied in their patterns of development, the three narcissistic syndromes share nontraditionality with respect to the feminine role, perhaps because of its heavy emphasis on supportive intimate relationships. The willful and autonomous women show interests in high-status occupational career more common among men.

The finding that female narcissists tend to favor a masculine life-style supports Philipson (1985) and Haaken (1983) in their claim that narcissism, because of its emphasis on independence, is more characteristic of men than women. However, the fact that narcissism is more compatible with the traditional masculine life-style does not mean that there are no women narcissists. As seen in the case of willfulness, one way for women to develop a narcissistic personality structure is through an identification with a narcissistic father.

This article attempts to provide an understanding of adult personality changes in narcissism or self-directedness in terms of psychological

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processes and antecedents. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this sample of Mills College women forged their adult lives against the backdrop of quite unprecedented and revolutionary social changes, particularly in the lives of women. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was published only a few years after they graduated from college. It is quite possible that the positive personality changes in the autonomous women which occurred between their late 20s and early 40s were influenced by the rapidly evolving role of women in the workplace. Similarly it could be argued that the breakdown of traditional feminine roles and expectations contributed adversely to the lives of hypersensitive women whose problems included the need for stable structures.

In summary, the findings of this study demonstrate the usefulness of the construct of narcissism for the study of women's lives from early adulthood to mid-life. The results show the different implications of dysfunctional and healthy narcissism, as assessed in mid-life, for both personality change and performance in social roles during the first half of adulthood, and the continuities between parent-child relations and adult development.

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*Manuscript received July 17, 1990; revised January 28, 1991.*