

## Narcissistic Personality Inventory Factors, Splitting, and Self-Consciousness

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Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1984) factors were correlated with Splitting, Self-Consciousness, Depression, Anxiety, and Self-Esteem. Exploitativeness/Entitlement was largely maladaptive, whereas Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration yielded ambiguous outcomes. Partialing out Exploitativeness/Entitlement uncovered stronger ties of the other factors with adjustment, and controlling for the other three dimensions caused Exploitativeness/Entitlement to appear more pathological. Raskin and Terry (1988) NPI factors and a narcissistic Superiority Scale were similarly affected by partialing, appearing healthier when controlling for "maladaptive" narcissism and more unhealthy when removing the more "adaptive" variance. These data suggest that complex entanglements between adaptive and maladaptive forms of self-love may make it difficult to understand and assess pathological narcissism.

In the early part of this century, Freud (1914/1986) brought into focus the psychoanalytic use of the narcissism concept and initiated a line of theory development that continues until today. Attempts to elaborate the initial insights have led to numerous controversies, in part because "Freud's ideas on narcissism contained contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps that are still being struggled with" (Teicholz, 1978, p. 833). Disagreements have appeared over the most basic of issues, including how the term should be defined (see, e.g., Pulver, 1970/1986; Stolorow, 1975/1986; Teicholz, 1978) and whether it should even be retained (Cooper, 1981/1986, p. 118). Given a lack of consensus on such definitional issues, it is not surprising that debates continue over more complicated questions, such as how to explain the dynamics of "narcissistic" dysfunctions (e.g., Kernberg, 1986; Kohut, 1972).

Despite the failure of theorists to resolve fundamental conceptual problems, they nevertheless seem united in assuming that the term *narcissism* points toward phenomena important in understanding both normal and abnormal psychological development (e.g., Teicholz, 1978). The former possibility was evident in Freud's (1914/1986) own suggestion that "self-regard has a specially intimate dependence on narcissistic libido" (p. 40). Practical confirmation of the latter was formalized in 1980 by including the narcissistic personality disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (3rd ed. [DSM-III]; American Psychiatric Association, 1980). Among the identified diagnostic criteria are grandiose self-concern; exhibitionism; fantasies of omnipotence and omniscience; susceptibility to feelings of rage, shame, humiliation, and emptiness; a sense of entitlement, exploitativeness, and a lack of empathy (see Ronningstam, 1988, for a comprehensive review).

Establishment of this diagnostic category prompted creation of a number of assessment devices including the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981). This forced-choice instrument has proven to be a valid predictor of such presumed correlates of narcissism as creativity (Raskin, 1980), use of projection as a defense mechanism (Biscardi & Schill, 1985), sensation seeking (Emmons, 1981), lowered social interest (Joubert, 1986), excessive use of first person pronouns (Raskin & Shaw, 1988), and an antipathy toward intrinsic religiousness (Watson, Hood, & Morris, 1984). The NPI also relates directly to other putative measures of pathological narcissism (e.g., Auerbach, 1984; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984; Solomon, 1982; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984); and recent studies have confirmed broad-ranging linkages with numerous behavioral and self-report indices associated with the narcissistic personality (Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Despite such evidence, continued analysis revealed a number of ambiguities. Preliminary factor analyses uncovered four dimensions (Emmons, 1984, 1987), but only Exploitativeness/Entitlement appeared strongly pathological, with Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration often associated with adjustment (see also Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984; Watson, Hood, Foster, & Morris, 1988; Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1987). Complex entanglements among these factors also appeared. In one study, for example, zero-order Exploitativeness/Entitlement ties to assertiveness were significantly positive, but a partial correlation controlling for the other three factors yielded a significant effect in the opposite direction (Watson, McKinney, Hawkins, & Morris, 1988). Partialing additionally produced clearer evidence of this trait as pathological, and a covariance with Exploitativeness/Entitlement can also obscure linkages of the other three dimensions with adjustment (Watson, Morris, & Hood, 1989a, 1989b; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987).

Another illustration of such entanglements appeared with examinations of depression. Direct relationships of Exploitativeness/Entitlement with depression were more likely or seemed to be stronger when the variance associated with the other factors was removed. On the other hand, controlling for Exploitativeness/Entitlement increased the probability of observing inverse ties of depression with

Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and/or Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (Watson, Biderman, & Boyd, 1989; Watson et al., 1989a; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987). Overall, such data suggested that interactions between healthy and unhealthy forms of self-functioning may present formidable challenges to those interested in assessing and understanding pathological narcissism, an observation consistent with other recent research (Mullins & Kopelman, 1988).

Theoretical support for this empirically derived conclusion may be evident in the work of Kohut (1971, 1977). The self in Kohut's terms exists potentially as a bipolar structure anchored by energizing ambitions at one pole opposite a stable value system at the other, and a tension between strivings and ideals activates whatever basic talents an individual may possess. Emergence of this self begins early in life when a fragile, tentatively established self requires for its integrity the external support most typically supplied by loving parents. Ambitions grow out of an immature grandiose self that pridefully "sees" acceptance for its exhibitionistic displays in the "mirroring" approval of others. Personal values, on the other hand, grow out of a rudimentary psychological structure established as parents allow themselves to be idealized, enabling the child to internalize admirable adult characteristics into an idealized parent imago.

Movement toward mature narcissism occurs through phase-appropriate and minor empathic failures by those who satisfy these mirroring and idealizing functions, what Kohut called selfobjects. The individual responds to the missed emotional sustenance by gradually building mitigating internal structures that maintain healthy ambitions and stable ideals that are less reliant on external bolstering. Thus, through the optimal frustration associated with such nontraumatic empathic failures, grandiosity moves through assertiveness toward adult ambitiousness, and dependence on the guidance of others proceeds toward a functional set of internalized values. The absence of optimal frustration, either too much or too little, prevents the building of internal structures and makes environmental support a prerequisite for the integrity of the self. When that support is lacking, the vulnerable self collapses into the difficulties of "pathological" narcissism.

For our purposes, the most important insight to be gained here is that narcissism theoretically exists along a continuum, or rather two separate continua, and that amalgamations of adaptive and maladaptive self-structures may be as common as clear differentiations between the two. With regard to the measurement problem, the suggestion is that operationalizations of narcissism may assume different positions along these continua. Specifically, Exploitativeness/Entitlement may be based more in the immature direction but may reach toward the other factors, which in turn may rest more strongly, though not completely, on adaptive internal structures. Partialing procedures may be explicable in terms of moving the two sets of constructs in opposite directions with Exploitativeness/Entitlement pushed more toward the immature end and with the other factors more closely approaching maturity.

To interpret the NPI in this manner does not conform easily with all the literature. Finer-grained factor analyses have uncovered seven instead of four NPI dimensions: Authority, Exhibitionism, Superiority, Vanity, Entitlement, Exploitativeness,

and Self-Sufficiency (Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Correlations with numerous measures including depression have led to the conclusion that Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, and Vanity are less maladjusted, whereas Entitlement, Exploitativeness, and Exhibitionism are more pathological. Inverse relationships of some of these factors with depression were additionally seen as supporting theorists like Kernberg (1975) in identifying "narcissism as a constellation of aggrandized self-representations which are used to ward off unconscious feelings of inadequacy and depression" (Raskin & Novacek, 1989, p. 76); hence, inverse ties with depression were assumed to reveal a defensive response to the more maladaptive aspects of the condition.

Further development of this idea may require consideration of the partialing data. If zero-order correlations with adjustment reflect a defensive reaction to the more pathological elements of narcissism, then statistically controlling for some of those elements (e.g., Exploitativeness/Entitlement) would tend to remove variance associated with the core cause of such "reactive" linkages. Partialing consequently should diminish these associations rather than making them stronger. However, at least some "grandiosities" may not represent faulty or reactively pathological self-structures, but more normal traits in a state of arrested development. This alternative suggestion is more congruent with Kohut's theory, and differentiating between arrested and faulty traits consequently may be as much an empirical problem as a theoretical one (see, e.g., Cooper, 1981/1986, pp. 138-139; Masterson, 1981, pp. 24-26).

Still, the transition from statistical analysis to theoretical explanation may not always be smooth, especially when unconscious processes are presumed to be involved. In addition, the comparability of findings with the two sets of NPI factors has not been ascertained. Further studies are therefore needed, and our project examined zero-order and partial NPI factor correlations with constructs hypothesized to be directly or more indirectly related to narcissism.

With regard to the direct measures, the Robbins and Patton (1985) Superiority Scale attempts to record mild immaturity in Kohut's grandiose self, and the Goal Instability Scale (Robbins, 1989; Scott & Robbins, 1985) accomplishes the same thing for idealization. Interestingly, partialing produces predictable effects on Superiority, moving it in adaptive or maladaptive directions depending on which variance is removed (e.g., Watson, Biderman, & Boyd, 1989). That this scale may also represent an amalgamation of healthy and unhealthy forms of narcissism may help explain some of the complexities evident in its previous use (e.g., Robbins & Schwitzer, 1988).

Splitting is often thought to be central to pathological narcissism and is a defense mechanism characterized by an "inability to synthesize self and object images that have a positive affective valence with self and object images that have a negative affective valence" (Adler, 1986, p. 431). For example, an immature self may demand to see itself as "good" and split off any possibility of having "bad" qualities, the admission of which would threaten its tenuously established integration. Others who serve as an external prop for the insecure self may similarly be seen as all good, with their bad qualities disavowed. Like

narcissism, splitting is a complex concept that has been the subject of a long (Pruyser, 1975) and continuing (e.g., Gabbard, 1989) controversy, but agreement generally exists that splitting points to characteristics associated with narcissistic personalities, although important variations appear in interpreting its operation (e.g., Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971).

Gerson's (1984) Splitting Scale was developed explicitly as an operationalization of a clinically relevant phenomenon. Items were constructed in consultation with psychoanalytic therapists and were based on the relevant literature, including the work of Kernberg (1975) and Kohut (1971). Fourteen statements make up the scale, which can be illustrated by the self-report that "I often feel that I can't put the different parts of my personality together, so that there is one 'me.'" A direct relationship with an MMPI-derived index of the narcissistic personality disorder was reported in the first use of this device, and such a result would be the obvious expectation for any measure of maladaptive narcissism.

How self-consciousness might be complexly and more indirectly related to narcissism is evident in Kohut's writing. On the one hand, a kind of self-consciousness can be indicative of unhealthy development because "a feeble, fragmented self will impinge upon our awareness, while an optimally firm, securely coherent self will not" (Kohut, 1977, p. 93; see also 1971, pp. 144, 153, 190-191). On the other hand, realistic self-consciousness is a prerequisite for adaptive functioning. In psychoanalysis, for example, the therapist must establish a proper alliance with "the observing and self-analyzing segment of the patient's ego" (Kohut, 1971, p. 229) so that narcissistic needs can be raised to consciousness and integrated into the personality (Kohut, 1971, p. 148; see also p. 328 concerning personal recognition of self-limitations).

The Private Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) records a personal tendency toward a "private mulling over the self" (p. 525) and consists of Internal State of Awareness and Self-Reflectiveness dimensions (Burnkrant & Page, 1984; Mittal & Balasubramanian, 1987). An Internal State of Awareness appears largely adaptive and can be illustrated by the claim that "I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings." On the other hand, Self-Reflectiveness appears to be associated with psychological liabilities, a possibility perhaps most obvious in the self-report that "I sometimes have the feeling that I'm off somewhere watching myself" (Watson, Morris, Foster, & Hood, 1986; Watson, Morris, & Hood, 1988a, 1989a; Watson, Headrick, & McKinney, 1989).

Other self-consciousness measures include the Social Anxiety Scale, recording a sense of unease in the presence of others (e.g., "I have trouble working when someone is watching me"). Public Self-Consciousness monitors awareness of the self as a social object and consists of two components: Appearance Consciousness, a concern over physical attractiveness, and Style Consciousness, a sensitivity to the behavioral elements of self-presentation (Mittal & Balasubramanian, 1987). Appearance Consciousness is illustrated by the statement that "One of the last things I do before I leave the house is look in the mirror." The claim that "I usually worry about making a good impression" exemplifies Style Consciousness.

Clinical descriptions of narcissism stress a propensity toward the experience of shame (e.g., Kohut, 1971), and a direct linkage of pathological narcissism with all self-consciousness measures except for an Internal State of Awareness would offer indirect support for this observation. As an apparently healthy form of self-consciousness, an Internal State of Awareness presumably should predict diminished pathologies in the self.

Finally, Depression and Anxiety (Costello & Comrey, 1967) and Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) Scales were administered. Lerner (1986) noted that narcissistic personalities come from family environments that foster "lowered self-esteem, disintegration anxiety, and feelings of depletion" (p. 335). Within Kohut's theory, disintegration anxiety involves the discomfort experienced when stressors threaten to fragment a fragile self, and depletion represents a specific form of depression associated with "feelings of deadness and nonexistence and a self-perception of emptiness, weakness, and hopelessness" (Lerner, p. 336). Wolf (1988) also identifies chronic anxiety and depression as presenting complaints of narcissistic patients (e.g., pp. 70, 95, 96, 106). Such observations support the idea that maladaptive narcissism should be directly related to Anxiety and Depression and inversely related to Self-Esteem. Use of these instruments also helped clarify the splitting and self-consciousness data and helped evaluate the consequences of partialing.

## METHOD

### Subjects

Undergraduates enrolled in large sections of introductory psychology served as the research participants. These 97 men and 147 women averaged 22.7 years of age and received extra course credit for their voluntary contributions to the project.

Though not clinically narcissistic, these participants were deemed appropriate for study on four most important grounds. First, assumptions that normality and abnormality form a continuum suggest that maladaptive narcissism should appear to some degree in nonclinical groups (Raskin & Hall, 1981). Second, critiques of contemporary social life have identified narcissism as a generally prominent relationship style (Lasch, 1979). Third, Kohut's emphasis on maladaptive narcissism as part of normal development points to the trait as common and perhaps particularly obvious in this age group. Such individuals must fashion more mature psychological structures, and Kohut's theory suggests that periods of developmental transition can undermine the stable foundations of a previously established self (see, e.g., Lapan & Patton, 1986). Indeed, Kohut (Elson, 1987) specifically noted that "it is in late adolescence and early adulthood that problems of the cohesiveness of the self and fear of the breakdown of the self occur" (p. 32). Finally, the NPI was intentionally devised for use in nonclinical populations (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

### Procedure

All subjects responded to a mimeographed questionnaire booklet that contained the NPI, the Splitting Scale, the Robbins and Patton Superiority and Goal Instability

instruments, the measures of Fenigstein and associates, the Costello and Comrey Depression and Anxiety scales, and the Rosenberg Index of Self-Esteem. Responses were entered on standardized answer sheets that were later read by optical scanning equipment and transferred into a computer data file for subsequent analysis. Use of these answer sheets necessitated a change to a 4-point from a 6-point Likert scale for the Robbins and Patton variables and to a 5-point from a 7-point scale for the Splitting instrument. Data from Fenigstein and colleagues were scored according to the procedures of Mittal and Balasubramanian (1987).

Data analysis proceeded in five basic steps. First, intercorrelations among measures were computed with the NPI data initially limited to the Emmons (1984) factors. Second, partialing procedures were conducted, controlling first for the more maladaptive Exploitativeness/Entitlement factor and then separately for the more adaptive Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration factors. Third, the Raskin and Terry (1988) factors were analyzed. Zero-order correlations were examined, and based on these data, factors were tentatively identified as adaptive and maladaptive for the purpose of conducting partial correlations parallel to those employed with the Emmons factors.

Fourth, NPI total score correlations were used to summarize the nature of the overall instrument and the effects of the partialing procedures. Zero-order data were contrasted with the NPI made more adaptive by partialing out the maladaptive factors and vice versa. These analyses were conducted separately for both sets of NPI factor structures.

Finally, the Superiority and Grandiosity Scales and the NPI dimensions were factor analyzed. These procedures were conducted twice with each set of NPI factors used separately. Factor analytic results have proven useful in previous work attempting to clarify the nature of narcissism measures (Watson, Biderman, et al., 1989).

## RESULTS

Zero-order correlations looking only at the Emmons (1984) NPI factors yielded four most noteworthy observations. First, an Internal State of Awareness seemed to reflect a positive form of self-consciousness (see Table 1), but the other variables of Fenigstein and colleagues emerged as mostly problematic. Second, Splitting was confirmed as a negative characteristic, because it displayed an inverse tie with Self-Esteem while being directly related to Depression, Anxiety, and all self-consciousness measures except for an Internal State of Awareness. Third, only Goal Instability and Exploitativeness/Entitlement produced unequivocal evidence of maladaptive narcissism. Both were linked to greater Splitting and to one or another of the more troubling aspects of self-consciousness. Goal Instability also predicted Depression, Anxiety, and reduced Self-Esteem. Finally and most important, the other narcissism measures offered a conflicting pattern of outcomes. Superiority was tied to Splitting, to three of the more unhealthy forms of self-consciousness, and to Exploitativeness/Entitlement, but it was also related to an Internal State of Awareness and to lower levels of Depression. Although associated with Ex-

TABLE 1  
Intercorrelations Among Splitting, Narcissism, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Functioning

Measures	Narcissism <sup>a</sup>							Self-Consciousness				Self-Functioning		
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<b>Splitting</b>														
1. Splitting	.24***	-.04	.01	-.11	.18**	.32***	-.06	.24***	.22***	.20**	.26***	.23***	.27***	-.22***
<b>Narcissism</b>														
2. E/E	—	.43***	.44***	.29***	.37***	.09	.08	.22***	.24***	.18**	-.05	.03	.11	.08
3. L/A		—	.66***	.41***	.46***	-.11	.15*	.04	-.04	.03	-.44***	-.17**	-.26***	.21***
4. S/A			—	.44***	.37***	-.10	.15*	.00	-.12	-.01	-.40***	-.18**	-.22***	.26***
5. S/S				—	.37***	-.17**	.27***	.15*	.04	.17**	-.20**	-.28***	-.11	.24***
6. Superiority					—	.09	.12	.24***	.21***	.21***	-.11	-.17**	-.10	.08
7. Goal Instability						—	-.20**	.17**	.07	.05	.21***	.36***	.22***	-.36***
<b>Self-Consciousness</b>														
8. Internal State of Awareness							—	.30***	.12	.25***	-.04	-.21***	-.06	.17**
9. Self-Reflectiveness								—	.33***	.16*	.23***	.18**	.13*	-.17**
10. Style Consciousness									—	.51***	.31***	.02	.12	-.09
11. Appearance Consciousness										—	.17**	.05	.23***	-.03
12. Social Anxiety											—	.18**	.43***	-.20**
<b>Self-Functioning</b>														
13. Depression												—	.35***	-.40***
14. Anxiety													—	-.12
15. Self-Esteem														—

<sup>a</sup>Narcissism data include the Emmons (1984) Factors: Exploitativeness/Entitlement (E/E), Leadership/Authority (L/A), Superiority/Arrogance (S/A), and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (S/S) factors of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



exploitiveness/Entitlement and Superiority, the other three NPI dimensions nevertheless failed to relate to Splitting and were generally predictive of more positive Self-Esteem and reduced Depression and Anxiety. In addition, Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration was negatively related to Goal Instability.

Results of the partial correlational procedures using the Emmons factors are presented in Table 2. A number of findings were congruent with the claim that controlling for Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration would uncover purer measures of maladaptive self-concern. For the first time, direct Exploitativeness/Entitlement relationships appeared with Goal Instability, Social Anxiety, Depression, and Anxiety. A Superiority Scale connection with less Depression was also removed, and new ties of this instrument were discovered with Goal Instability and Social Anxiety. Other Goal Instability data remained essentially unaffected.

With regard to the other three Emmons factors, partialing out Exploitativeness/Entitlement produced new negative relationships with Splitting and Style Consciousness, yielded stronger inverse linkages with Goal Instability, eliminated any trace of an association with Self-Reflectiveness and Appearance Conscious-

TABLE 2

Narcissism Correlations With Splitting, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Functioning Controlling for Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism

Measures	Controlling for Adaptive Narcissism <sup>a</sup>			Controlling for Maladaptive Narcissism				
	E/E	SUP	GI	L/A	S/A	S/S	SUP	GI
Splitting	.30***	.25***	.31***	-.17**	-.12	-.19**	.10	.30***
Narcissism								
Superiority	.19**	—	.20**	.36***	.25***	.30***	—	.06
Goal Instability	.18**	.20**	—	-.17**	-.16**	-.20**	.06	—
Self-Consciousness								
Internal State of								
Awareness	-.02	.00	-.16*	.14*	.13*	.26***	.10	-.21***
Self-Reflectiveness	.24***	.23***	.20**	-.07	-.12	.09	.17**	.15*
Style								
Consciousness	.32***	.26***	.07	-.16*	-.26***	-.02	.14*	.05
Appearance								
Consciousness	.19**	.20**	.08	-.05	-.10	.12	.16*	.04
Social Anxiety	.21***	.13*	.18**	-.47***	-.42***	-.19**	-.10	.21***
Self-Functioning								
Depression	.16*	-.06	.33***	-.20**	-.22***	-.30***	-.20**	.36***
Anxiety	.28***	.03	.20**	-.34***	-.30***	-.15*	-.15*	.21***
Self-Esteem	-.06	-.06	-.33***	.20**	.25***	.23***	.06	-.37***

<sup>a</sup>Measures of adaptive narcissism were the Leadership/Authority (L/A), Superiority/Arrogance (S/A), and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (S/S) factors of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, whereas the measure of maladaptive narcissism was the Exploitativeness/Entitlement (E/E) factor of this same instrument. Superiority (SUP) and Goal Instability (GI) were additional measures of narcissistic dysfunction.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

ness, and broadened the ties of these factors with diminished levels of Anxiety. For the Superiority Scale, these procedures also eliminated the positive correlation with Splitting while giving rise to a significant negative relationship with Anxiety. In short, controlling for the maladaptive narcissism of Exploitativeness/Entitlement seemed to produce clearer measures of healthy narcissism. This procedure, however, may not have fully converted the Superiority Scale into an index of positive self-functioning because connections with Self-Reflectiveness, Style Consciousness, and Appearance Consciousness remained. Goal Instability data once again remained relatively unaffected.

For the sake of brevity, discussion of the Raskin and Terry factors will not involve detailed consideration of all the data, which will be supplied in tables on request. Instead, general findings will be reviewed, and partial correlations looking at NPI total scores will clarify the most important conceptual points. In terms of zero-order results, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, and Entitlement appeared to be more maladaptive with all three, for example, being positively related to Splitting,  $r_s = .11$  to  $.16$ ,  $p_s < .05$ . At the same time, each of these factors also tended to predict at least some psychological adjustment, as illustrated by Exhibitionism and Exploitativeness ties with greater Self-Esteem,  $r_s = .16$  and  $.18$  respectively,  $p_s < .01$ .

By contrast, Vanity but more especially Authority, Superiority, and Self-Sufficiency were largely adaptive. Self-Sufficiency best exemplified this suggestion, displaying negative relationships with Splitting ( $-.11$ ), Goal Instability ( $-.31$ ), Social Anxiety ( $-.22$ ), Depression ( $-.22$ ), and Anxiety ( $-.21$ ) and positive relationships with an Internal State of Awareness (.23) and Self-Esteem (.22), all  $p_s < .05$ .

Partial correlations using the Raskin and Terry factors were conducted with Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, and Entitlement identified as maladaptive and with Authority, Superiority, and Self-Sufficiency defined as adaptive. Effects of partialing were similar to those produced with the Emmons factors. Most clearly, maladaptive measures became more obviously indicative of psychological difficulties after partialing. For example, the significant Exploitativeness connection with greater Self-Esteem was eliminated (.09); and positive Entitlement correlations with Depression (.15),  $p < .05$ , and Anxiety (.25),  $p < .001$ , were discovered. Changes in adaptive narcissism were not so robust or so extensive after partialing out the maladaptive factors, however.

A useful summary of the overall effects of partialing is afforded by examining the NPI taken as a whole. Table 3 reviews the zero-order findings, and the NPI made a measure of adaptive narcissism by controlling for the maladaptive variance and vice versa. Partialing data were obtained for both sets of factors with similar trends observed for each. As would be expected of adaptive narcissism, direct ties were observed with an Internal State of Awareness and with Self-Esteem, and inverse associations appeared with Splitting, Goal Instability, Style Consciousness, Social Anxiety, Depression, and Anxiety. In line with the hypothesized influences of maladaptive narcissism were positive relationships with Splitting, Goal Instability, Self-Reflectiveness, Style Consciousness, Appearance Consciousness, Social Anxiety, Depression, and Anxiety. Direct linkages of the Superiority Scale with both the adaptive and maladaptive

TABLE 3  
Zero Order and Partial Correlations of Total Scores on the Narcissistic  
Personality Inventory (NPI) With Splitting Self Consciousness and  
Self-Functioning Measures

Variables	NPI Partial Correlations				
	NPI Zero Order <i>r</i>	Emmons Factors		Raskin and Terry Factors	
		Adaptive Narcissism <sup>a</sup>	Maladaptive Narcissism	Adaptive Narcissism	Maladaptive Narcissism
Splitting Narcissism	.05	-.16**	.28***	-.20**	.28***
Superiority	.50***	.37***	.16**	.28***	.26***
Goal Instability	-.09	-.22***	.13*	-.29***	.20**
Self-Consciousness					
Internal State of Awareness	.24***	.25***	.06	.29***	.04
Self-Reflectiveness	.14*	-.01	.20**	.05	.13*
Style Consciousness	.07	-.13*	.32***	-.04	.10
Appearance Consciousness	.16**	.05	.23***	.06	.17*
Social Anxiety	-.32***	-.40***	.20*	-.23***	-.03
Self-Functioning					
Depression	-.20**	-.29***	.12*	-.23***	.08
Anxiety	-.13*	-.29***	.24***	-.20**	.18**
Self-Esteem	.27***	.29***	.00	.23***	.02

<sup>a</sup>"Adaptive" narcissism data reflected NPI scores controlling for the "maladaptive" factors. With maladaptive data, variance associated with the adaptive factors was removed. For the Emmons (1984) dimensions, Exploitativeness/Entitlement was maladaptive, and the other three factors were adaptive. For the Raskin and Terry (1988) factors, Exploitativeness, Entitlement, and Exhibitionism were maladaptive, and Authority, Superiority, and Self-Sufficiency were adaptive.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

partials suggested that this instrument also operationalized an amalgamation of healthy and unhealthy forms of self-functioning.

Factor analysis using the Emmons dimensions yielded two eigenvalues in excess of 1.0. These eigenvalues (2.72 and 1.13) along with a scree test were taken as warrant for examining two factors utilizing varimax rotation procedures. The first dimension explained 45.3% of the variance and appeared as a Grandiosity factor with strong loadings by all measures except for Goal Instability (-.09): Leadership/Authority (.80), Superiority/Arrogance (.77), the Superiority Scale (.58), Exploitativeness/Entitlement (.57), and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (.56). A second, Idealizing factor explained 18.8% of the variance and was largely defined by Goal Instability (.69). No other loadings on this second dimension were stronger than the .21 value obtained for Exploitativeness/Entitlement.

When the Raskin and Terry measures were employed in the factor analysis, three dimensions were uncovered (eigenvalues = 2.94, 1.32, and 1.04), accounting for

58.9% of the variance. The first, a Grandiosity factor, included loadings by Authority (.80), Entitlement (.57), the Superiority Scale (.55), Exploitativeness (.53), Exhibitionism (.52), the NPI Superiority factor (.33), and Self-Sufficiency (.28). The second factor was defined by a negative loading for Goal Instability (-.82) and by positive loadings for Self-Sufficiency (.40) and Authority (.24). The third factor seemed best described as a Vanity factor, with loadings by Vanity (.66), Exhibitionism (.41), the NPI Superiority factor (.28), and the Superiority Scale (.23).

## DISCUSSION

Controversies in the analysis of narcissism present formidable challenges when attempts are made to make sense of empirical data. Arguments congruent with one theoretical account can be undermined from the position of another, and an ideal interpretation presumably would respect the full complexity of the background literature. For example, narcissistic grandiosities can be viewed as somewhat normal traits existing in a state of arrested development and requiring internalization. Narcissistic rage, from this perspective, would represent a reaction to adult social environments typically unresponsive to childlike needs for selfobject support. Alternatively, narcissistic grandiosities might be faulty self-structures occurring as a defensive response to the aggressive and depressive core of the condition.

If parallels can be drawn between Kohut's theory and an emphasis on arrested development and between Kernberg's theory and faulty development, then a useful approach to our data may be suggested by the claim that "Kernberg and Kohut may have been treating different patient populations" (Adler, 1986, p. 435). Kernberg focused on hospitalized individuals with more primitive personality organizations, but "Kohut, working primarily as a psychoanalyst with the reanalyses of patients who had unsuccessful first psychoanalytic treatments, may have been seeing another spectrum of narcissistic personality disorder patients." Overall, "it does appear that there are narcissistic patients who present issues closer to those described by Kernberg . . . while others present issues closer to the self-object failures defined by Kohut" (Adler, 1986, p. 435).

Within this framework, it might be logical to conclude that college students are more like the unhospitalized individuals analyzed by Kohut. Unsurprising, therefore, would be data tending to support the contention that at least some narcissistic grandiosities may reflect the rudiments of healthy self-functioning. With the Emmons factors, this was evident in partial correlations of Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration with greater Self-Esteem and with lowered levels of Splitting, Goal Instability, Depression, Anxiety, and aspects of self-consciousness hypothesized to reveal a propensity toward shame. With the Raskin and Terry factors, similar narcissistic elements most obviously appeared with the Authority, Superiority, and Self-Sufficiency factors.

This interpretation opposes the idea that direct correlations of narcissistic traits with psychological adjustment can be understood as defensive reactions to the core difficulties of the condition. Problems for this alternative perspective were perhaps

most obvious in the Splitting data. Splitting items were based on a clinically relevant understanding of the narcissistic patient, yet the zero-order tie between Splitting and the adaptive NPI Superiority factor was negative,  $r = -.16, p < .01$ . Such findings cannot be easily dismissed on psychometric grounds. The NPI exhibits an acceptable internal reliability, .83, for the seven Raskin and Terry factors combined together (Raskin & Novacek, 1989), and this observation suggests that the adaptive factors are an integral component of what the overall instrument operationalizes. **Direct linkages of the maladaptive factors and of Splitting with psychological dysfunction** further support the overall validity of both types of measures.

In short, the NPI may monitor a complex amalgamation of healthy and unhealthy aspects of self-functioning. More maladaptive traits were apparent in the Exploitativeness/Entitlement and in the Exploitativeness, Exhibitionism, and Entitlement findings. Strong interconnections and loadings on common factors seemed to locate all NPI factors and the Superiority Scale in the same grandiose sector of the bipolar self, and partial correlations further suggested that the Superiority Scale may have both adaptive and maladaptive elements. Furthermore, inverse ties of adaptive narcissism with Goal Instability supported recent theoretical descriptions of a balanced self-structure in which maturities in the development of ambitions can ameliorate immaturities along the pole of idealization (Wolf, 1988, pp. 51–52; see also Watson, Biderman, & Boyd, 1989). Negative Goal Instability and positive Self-Sufficiency and Authority loadings on the same factor were also in line with this possibility.

Theoretical positions requiring that absolutely all features of the narcissistic personality disorder be clearly pathological might consider at least three arguments against this interpretation. First, the validity of the NPI might be challenged. With a more adequate scale, this argument might proceed, factor correlations with adjustment would not appear. Still, some NPI factors did display at least some relatively uncontroversial evidence of recording self-pathology, and it is important to remember that the NPI was developed explicitly as a measure of the disorder as defined in *DSM-III*.

Second, concern about the conclusions of our project might focus on the use of college students as subjects. Despite arguments to the contrary, it might be claimed that clearer data would appear if only a truly pathological sample were employed. For example, inverse factor correlations with Splitting might disappear if the NPI were administered to individuals already diagnosed as displaying the narcissistic personality disorder. In short, all NPI factors could be documented as valid indices of pathological narcissism if only pathological narcissists were examined.

The first thing to say about this approach is that it might be correct, and indeed such data would be consistent with the previously mentioned suggestion that **different theories of pathological narcissism may be based on different kinds of patients. Even if this hypothesis were confirmed, however, it would not eliminate the possibility that different subgroups of narcissists exist, representing clinically significant subtypes requiring more discriminative diagnostic criteria.** Another problem with this approach is that it begs the question in certain fundamental and

practically important ways. If a scale for assessing pathological narcissism appears valid only in a sample already assessed as pathologically narcissistic, then obviously such an instrument cannot serve as a useful assessment device.

Finally, the position might be developed that correlations of NPI factors with adjustment reflect only surface phenomena. Masterson (1981), for example, describes the narcissistic mental structure as a defensive unit consisting of an omnipotent object fused with a grandiose self. This unit emerges in reaction to an underlying aggressive or depressive core made up of "a fused object representation that is harsh, punitive and attacking and a self-representation of being humiliated, attacked, empty, linked by the affect of the abandonment depression" (p. 15). Furthermore, "the underlying unit only reveals itself in treatment as the continuity of the defenses is worked through" (p. 15). Hence, NPI factor linkages with adjustment could be reactions to the pathological core. From this perspective, use of self-report instruments to explicate the dynamics of narcissism might also appear naive given that the most important processes operate below the level of consciousness.

This approach too might be correct. The pivotal problems here, however, involve NPI ties with maladjustment. If the core difficulties are repressed, then how can some NPI factors be linked to unhealthy characteristics? The answer to this question can be either that these data do in fact reflect the core difficulties in some way, or that they do not. If on the one hand it is granted that they do reflect the core difficulties, then the effects of partialing will have to be explained. Again, if correlations of adaptive narcissism with adjustment represent defensive reactions to the core difficulties, then removing variance defining some of the core difficulties presumably would diminish those correlations. This did not happen; the opposite occurred. On the other hand, if such findings do not reflect the core difficulties, then NPI ties with maladjustment still remain to be explained.

None of this means that these alternative approaches are necessarily wrong, only that they will have to resolve difficulties in maintaining the theoretical requirement that absolutely all features of the narcissistic personality disorder be clearly pathological. Overall, our evidence is consistent with previous conclusions that when narcissism is examined "the construct is a difficult one to delineate. . . . Certainly, its assessment using an objective, paper and pencil instrument is a formidable task" (Mullins & Kopelman, 1988, pp. 622-623). Nevertheless, the empirical complexities may reflect the theoretical problems, and a useful source of future guidance may be available in the work of Kohut. This is true not only because his theory may suggest useful ways of developing hypotheses about observed effects, but also because the difficulties associated with understanding these phenomena may require the investigative "playfulness" that he recommended (Kohut, 1977, pp. 311-312).

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