Short Communication

Differentiation of the two narcissistic faces in their relations to personality traits and basic values

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ABSTRACT

Many ambiguities exist in the published results of the literature regarding narcissism. The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013), which separates the bright and dark sides of narcissism, has helped to resolve some of these ambiguities. The current study used this model to examine the relationship between both sides of narcissism and two other personality characteristics: traits and values. Admiration was strongly related to extraversion and weakly related to all of the traits except conscientiousness, while rivalry was most strongly related to disagreeableness and weakly related to emotional stability and conscientiousness. Regarding relationships with values, admiration was related to openness to change and achievement values, while rivalry was related to power-dominance and power-resources values. Our results support the distinctiveness of the two narcissistic dimensions that are assumed in the NARC. Moreover, we demonstrate that both values and traits provide a unique contribution to explain admiration and rivalry.

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1. Narcissism as a personality disorder and as a trait: basic definitions

Narcissism is a matter of interest for both clinical and social and personality psychologists. Narcissistic personality disorder was first introduced in the DSM-III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). The diagnostic criteria for the narcissistic personality disorder included a grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, beauty, exhibitionism, marked feelings of rage, inferiority or emptiness in response to criticism, entitlement, interpersonal exploitiveness, fluctuating characters of relationships and a lack of empathy. Although the definition of narcissism in the diagnostic criteria in the recent edition of the DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) shares some core elements with that of the DSM-III, the definitions are different. The common elements are grandiosity, fantasies, entitlement, exploitiveness and a lack of empathy. Exhibitionism, marked feelings and relationship characteristics have been excluded from the newer diagnostic criteria. The new elements are as follows: beliefs about being special, unique and only capable of being understood by special or high-status people or institutions; requiring excessive admiration; frequent envy; and arrogant and haughty behaviors or attitudes (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Raskin and Hall (1979) introduced the trait of narcissism into the social personality research. These authors argued that abnormality and normality are parts of a continuum; therefore, narcissism is a trait that is manifested to a greater extent in individuals with diagnoses of narcissistic personality disorder and to a lesser extent in the general population.

1.1. Two faces of narcissism

Narcissism is a heterogeneous construct full of paradoxes (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Different researchers have described narcissism as a construct with two faces, e.g., overt and covert, and grandiose and vulnerable, with intra- and interpersonal clusters (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Kernberg, 1975; Wink, 1991). Researchers have also reported that narcissists are self-absorbed and overly sensitive, emotionally labile, charming and aggressive, extraverted and disagreeable, self-assured and selfish, and self-enhancing but craving of admiration from others (Brown et al., 2009; Emmons, 1984; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001)

Narcissism is adaptive on the one hand and maladaptive on the other (Emmons, 1984). The bright side of narcissism reflects intrapersonal relationships of grandiosity (related to higher self-esteem and self-confidence), self-importance and preoccupation with receiving admiration from others, while the dark side of narcissism reflects interpersonal relationships of entitlement, self-assuredness, self-indulgence, and disrespect for the needs of others, which leads to the devaluation of others and aggressiveness (Brown et al., 2009; Paulhus, 1998).

1.2. The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept

Back et al. (2013) proposed a theoretical model of grandiose narcissism that accounts for the dualistic nature of narcissism, i.e., the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC), which is an

alternative to the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979). The NARC model comprises two social strategies that consist of affective–motivational, cognitive and behavioral facets. To maintain the grandiose self, narcissists can exhibit two independent but coexisting strategies: assertive self-enhancement (admiration) and antagonistic self-protection (rivalry). The dynamics of admiration are explained by striving for uniqueness and grandiose fantasies, which lead to narcissistic charmingness. The dynamics of rivalry are explained by striving for supremacy and the devaluation of others, which leads to aggressiveness. Therefore, the social interaction outcome of admiration may result in desired goals, such as success, social status and attractiveness (social potency), while the social interaction outcomes of rivalry may result in rejection, unpopularity or criticism (social conflict).

1.3. Associations between narcissism and personality traits

The five factor model (FFM) of personality has been most frequently used to study the relationships between narcissism and personality traits. However, the results have been ambiguous. Some studies have reported that narcissism is associated with high extraversion (Egan, Chan, & Shorter, 2014) and low agreeableness (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), while other studies have suggested that narcissism is associated only with high extraversion (Brown et al., 2009). Additionally, relationships between narcissism and other FFM traits are occasionally reported, e.g., a negative correlation with conscientiousness (Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006) and a positive correlation with openness to experience (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and neuroticism (Emmons, 1984).

Back et al. (2013) explained these associations by differentiating admiration and rivalry. These authors reported that admiration was associated with extraversion, while the rivalry was associated with low agreeableness. Back et al. (2013) also reported that admiration was associated with openness to experience and negatively associated with neuroticism, while rivalry was negatively associated to conscientiousness and positively associated with neuroticism. Unfortunately Back et al. (2013) reported only a single correlation/regression without taking into account the shared variance of the personality traits and measurement error, which can yield biased results.

1.4. Narcissism in the context of basic values

Differentiating between the two narcissistic dimensions has consequences not only for an explanation of the ambiguous associations with personality traits, but it also provides an opportunity to shed new light on the relationship between narcissism and individual value priorities. Schwartz (1992) defines universal basic values as trans-situational motivational goals that serve as guiding principles in one's life. Schwartz et al. (2012) proposed a circular model in which four higher order values can be differentiated: openness to change versus conservation, and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. Each of the dimensions comprises sets of values that are related to similar motivations.

In the refined theory of values from Schwartz et al. (2012), it is possible to differentiate between 19 values. In contrast, four higher order values can also be described by two dimensions: the first dimension being personal-focus values (self-enhancement and openness to change) versus social-focus values (self-transcendence and conservation), and the second dimension being anxiety-free values (self-transcendence and openness to change) versus anxiety-avoidance values (self-enhancement and conservation).

The definition of narcissism assumes self-focused exaggerated thoughts, motivations, and behaviors (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), which suggests the role of personal-focused values in narcissistic functioning. Table 1 depicts the personal-focused values of the theory of Schwartz et al. (2012).

Table 1
Definition of personal-focus values in Schwartz et al. (2012) model.

Value	Brief description
Self-direction	Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas, abilities and determining actions
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and change
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensous gratification
Achievement	Success according to social standards
Power-dominance	Power through excercising control over people
Power-resources	Power through control of material and social resources

Some studies have assessed the relationships between narcissism and basic values in the framework of Schwartz's (1992) theory. However, paradoxically, no research has reported any relationship between narcissism and openness to change values; the research has only reported associations between narcissism and self-enhancement values (Güngör, Eksi, & Aricak, 2012; Kajonius, Persson, & Jonason, 2015), which is in contradiction to the theoretical expectation that narcissism is associated with the personal-focus dimension, which also includes openness to change values.

2. Current study

The goals of the current paper are twofold: first, we sought to test the relationship between narcissism and personality traits. We aimed to replicate the results that were reported by Back et al. (2013), however, taking into account the shared variance and measurement error in the structural equation model (SEM). We expected to find the strongest associations between admiration and extraversion and between rivalry and disagreeableness. We also expected to find that admiration will be predicted by openness to experience and low neuroticism and that rivalry will be predicted by low conscientiousness and neuroticism. Second, we sought to test the relationship between narcissism and values. We expected that admiration will predict self-direction, hedonism, and stimulation values (openness values), as well as achievement value, whereas rivalry will predict values of power and achievement (self-enhancement values). Finally, we tested whether personal values could predict narcissistic admiration and rivalry beyond personality traits.

3. Material and methods

3.1. Participants and procedures

The sample comprised 1012 adults from Poland (810 women) with a mean age of 22.36 years ($SD = 3.44$ years), who completed an online survey. The study was anonymous; however, the respondents had the opportunity to provide an e-mail address to participate in a lottery to win a book as a reward.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Measurement of narcissism

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013) comprises 18 items that measure two distinct narcissistic dimensions: admiration and rivalry. In the NARQ, respondents rate their agreement using a 6-point Likert scale. The following estimates of reliability were obtained for admiration and rivalry: $\alpha = .85$ and $\alpha = .83$, respectively.

3.2.2. Measurement of personality traits

The five factors of personality were assessed using the IPIP-50 (Goldberg, 1999). The respondents indicated their own resemblance to statements on a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability estimates are as follows: extraversion $\alpha = .91$, agreeableness $\alpha = .84$, conscientiousness $\alpha = .84$, emotional stability ($\alpha = .89$), and intellect ($\alpha = .80$).

3.2.3. Measurement of basic values

Refined basic individual values were assessed using the PVQ-57 questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2012), which the respondents answered on a 6-point Likert scale. The reliability estimates of the scales to measure self-enhancement and openness to change values were as follows: power resources ($\alpha = .84$), power dominance ($\alpha = .84$), achievement ($\alpha = .71$), hedonism ($\alpha = .73$), stimulation ($\alpha = .75$), and self-direction ($\alpha = .85$).

4. Results

4.1. Narcissism and FFM traits

To assess how personality traits predicted admiration and rivalry, we applied a SEM model with a maximum likelihood estimation with scaled-shifted correction (MLMV; Fig. 1). In this model, personality traits were measured by randomly generated parcels.

The results indicate an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1090.10$; $p < .001$; CFI = .901; RMSEA = .074 [90% CI = .070–.078]). Extraversion was the strongest predictor of admiration, and intellect was a weak predictor. Similarly, low agreeableness was the strongest predictor of rivalry; but extraversion, low emotional stability and low conscientiousness were also weak predictors. These findings replicate those that were obtained by Back et al. (2013).

4.2. Narcissism and personal-focused values

To test the hypothesis regarding the associations between personal-focused values and admiration and rivalry, we applied a SEM model with a MLMV estimation (Fig. 2) with items as observed variables.

The presented SEM model fits the data well ($\chi^2 = 1463.30$; $p < .001$; CFI = .907; RMSEA = .038 [90% CI = .036–.041]). In the current model, rivalry moderately predicted both power values. In contrast, admiration quite strongly predicted hedonism, self-direction, and stimulation. These results confirm the hypothesis that openness to change values are associated with narcissism.

4.3. Explaining narcissistic admiration and rivalry by personality traits and values

We assessed whether values contribute to the prediction of NARC dimensions beyond personality traits. Values explained 36% and 34% of variance of admiration and rivalry dimensions, respectively, while personality traits explained 39% and 30% of variance of admiration and rivalry dimensions. The model that comprised both values and personality traits explained 51% and 45% of variance. The difference (Σ − Big Five) was 12% and 15% of variance. Therefore, one can conclude that although both values and personality traits share some of the explained variance on admiration and rivalry — they both uniquely contribute to the prediction of NARC dimensions.

5. Discussion

Although many paradoxes concerning narcissism exist in the literature, the NARC model seems to be a promising approach to unravel some of them. In the current study, we applied this model to study the relationship between narcissism and two personality characteristics, i.e., traits and values.

First, by investigating the SEM model, which is superior to correlational analysis because all shared variance and measurement error can be observed, we replicated Back et al.'s results (2013): extraversion was the strongest predictor of admiration, while disagreeableness was the strongest predictor of rivalry. Regarding the other FFM traits, conscientiousness was the only trait that did not predict admiration, whereas intellect was the second strongest predictor. Emotional stability and conscientiousness were the negative predictors of rivalry. We confirmed that the results that were obtained by Back et al. (2013) are robust after taking into account the shared variance of personality traits and controlling for measurement error.

Second, we confirmed our expectations that differentiating between two faces of narcissism explains the relationship with openness to change values and self-enhancement values. Further, we found that admiration is a good predictor of hedonism, self-direction, stimulation (openness values) and achievement values, while rivalry is a good predictor of power-dominance and power-resources values. The
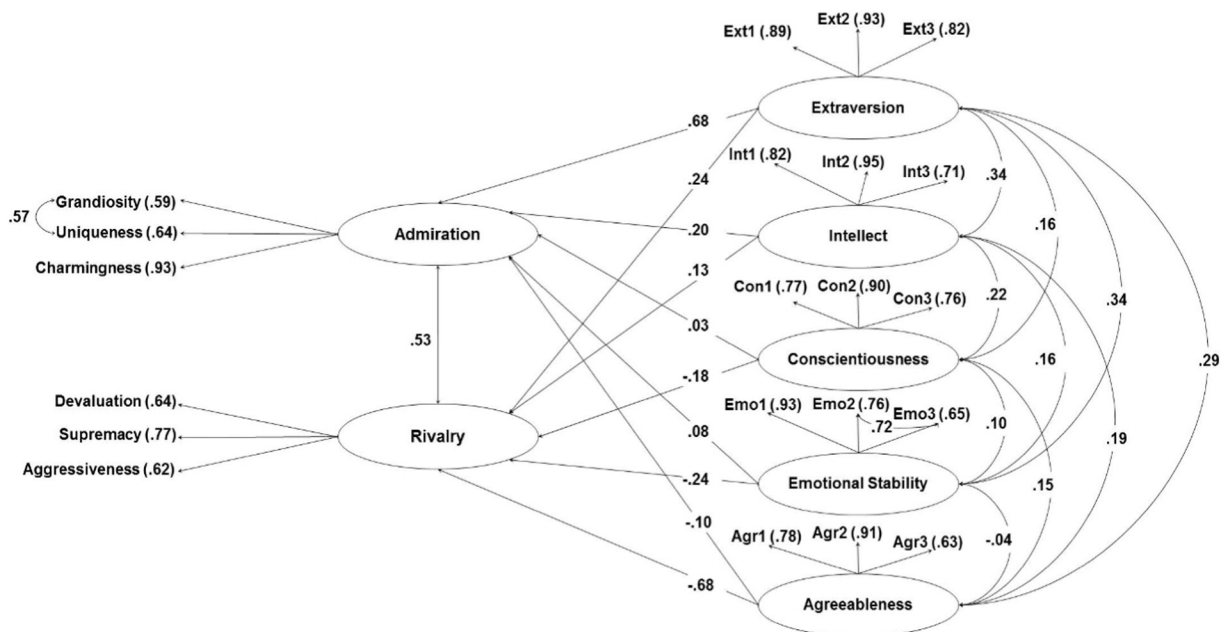

Fig. 1. Structural equation model of admiration and rivalry and personality. All pathways are standardized and significant ($p < .001$) regressions (with the exception of admiration on conscientiousness; $p = .198$).
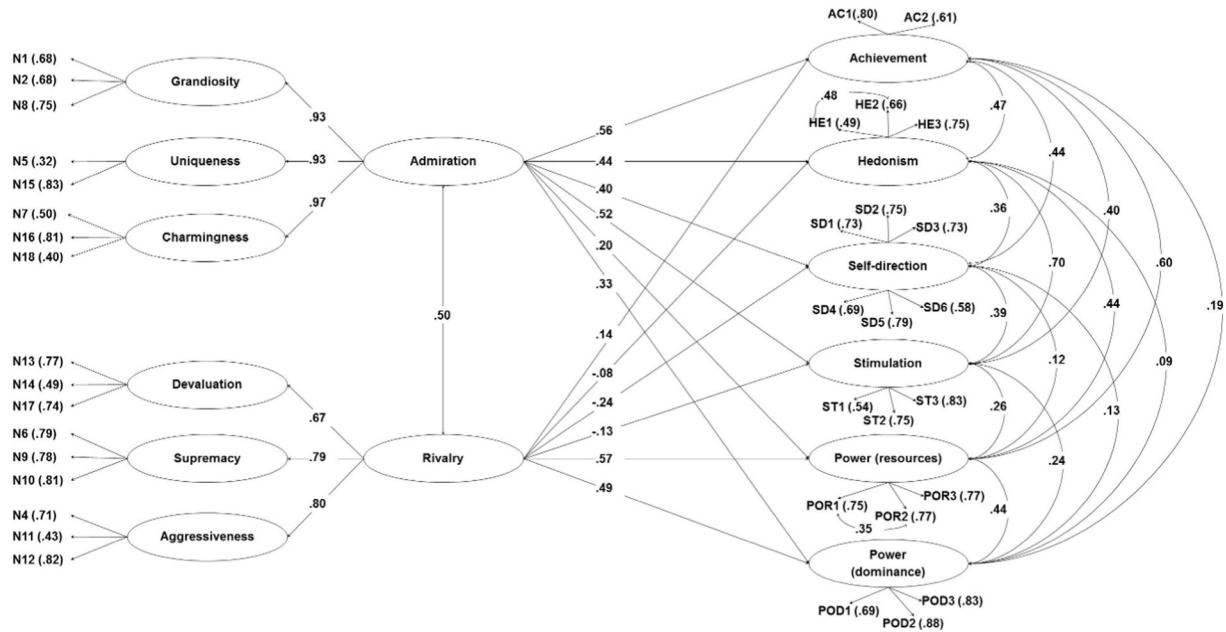
Fig. 2. Structural equation model of admiration and rivalry predicting personal focused values. All pathways are standardized and significant ($p < .001$) regressions (with the exception of hedonism on rivalry; $p = .085$).

relation of achievement to admiration can be explained by its strong relationship to openness to change values as was shown by Cieciuch, Davidov, Vecchione, and Schwartz (2014). Together, these results suggest that admiration is focused on exhibiting the grandiose self, whereas rivalry is concentrated on controlling others and the environment to protect the self.

Finally, we demonstrated that personal values predict narcissistic admiration and rivalry beyond the Big Five traits. Both personal values and the Big Five traits predicted narcissistic dimensions to similar levels; thus, one can conclude that narcissism is not only a trait, but it is also a dispositional construct with motivational, cognitive, and behavioral dynamics.

To summarize, we supported the hypothesis that narcissists function by using two distinct social strategies. Narcissists are disagreeable extraverts (Paulhus & Williams, 2002); however, this is due to admiration and rivalry dimensions, rather than to overall narcissism. Back et al. (2013) described that the choice of one strategy over another lies in the motivational dynamics, which we investigated within Schwartz et al.'s (2012) theory. A narcissist is one who defends his or her ego, endeavors to control people and the environment to dismiss a perceived threat. But also, a narcissist is one who aims to enhance ego, pursues success, acts autonomously and chooses short-term goals that will result in admiration from others. Because whenever narcissists perceive ego threats and act aggressively to antagonize the people they encounter, they seek novel acquaintances (Paulhus, 1998).

Acknowledgment

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