



Narcissism Breakdown: Why Do People Choose to Hurt Other People?

Aren Jayanthan (I am not a professional and this has not been proofread, please do your own research.)

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Citations are owned by their respective owners. Massive disclaimer: All of this is for educational and entertainment uses only. These theories, frameworks, and tests are not infallible, if the results say something about you that you don't think is true, you are right and it is wrong. I did the Big Five test and it said I like to party. Tf I like parties? Hell I don't even like crowds.

Please entertain the thoughts here without accepting them.

Unreviewed, Objectively Researched, Subjectively Organized Paper (printer-friendly)

The name Narcissism comes from the Greek mythological figure Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection.

Three major, oversimplified interpretations:

- **Explicit Narcissism**¹ can be defined as a set of personality traits associated with being outwardly confident, assertive, aggressive, and attention-seeking.
- **Implicit Narcissism**² can be defined as a set of personality traits associated with negative emotions, like fear, anger, shame, envy, or depression, and hypersensitivity, interpersonal sensitivity, insecurity, psychoticism and emotional instability.
- **Antagonism** is the middle section of traits that both explicit and implicit narcissism share, including reactive anger, arrogance, lack of empathy, manipulateness, exploitativeness, entitlement, and cynicism/distrust.

These are not categories that align perfectly with the actual research, but just to help understand from an entry-level point of view.

There is a difference between healthy selfishness, narcissistic selfishness, and pathological altruism:

- **Healthy selfishness** is the practice of appropriately prioritizing your needs and wellbeing.

¹ **Explicit Narcissism:** overt narcissism is tied to Grandiosity-Exhibitionism narcissism (two-factor model), and agentic extraversion + antagonism (trifurcated model).

² **Implicit Narcissism:** covert, Vulnerability-Sensitivity (two-factor model), and neuroticism + antagonism (trifurcated model).

- **Narcissistic selfishness** goes beyond healthy self-interest into a pattern where others exist primarily as extensions of the self or means to an end.
- **Pathological altruism** is when helping others actually causes harm, either to yourself or paradoxically to those you're trying to help.

Narcissism developing from childhood development:

- **Kernberg's Model³**: Parental devaluation, coldness, and rejection; Child defensively withdraws and develops mistrust of others; "Only I can be trusted" → inflated self-reliance and defensive grandiosity.
- **Kohut's Model⁴**: Failure of normal developmental processes (inadequate mirroring/idealization; Childhood narcissism is normal but fails to mature appropriately; Person remains stuck seeking mirroring and idealization in adult relationships.
- **Millon's Model⁵**: Parental overvaluation and excessive praise; Child treated as special/perfect, develops unrealistic self-illusions; Inflated self-image that cannot be sustained in the outer world.

If you get what you want by telling a lie, you are not smart enough to get it by telling the truth.

Jordan Peterson

³ **Kernberg's Model:** Cold Parenting → Defensive Grandiosity, Narcissism as a defense against feeling unloved)

⁴ **Kohut's Model:** Unmet Mirroring Needs → Arrested Development, the person never outgrew normal childhood narcissistic needs

⁵ **Millon's Model:** Overvaluation → Unrealistic Self-Image, learned grandiosity from excessive positive reinforcement

THE FIVE-FACTOR NARCISSISM INVENTORY (FFNI) CATEGORIZED UNDER THE TRIFURCATED MODEL

This is reference a section: the FFNI was specifically developed to assess traits associated with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). The FFNI draws from both the Big Five general framework AND the Revised NEO Personality Inventory facets, while also incorporating Wink's influential two-factor model distinguishing grandiose and vulnerable narcissism.⁶

NEUROTICISM

Need for Admiration: *involving a sense of inner weakness, uncertainty, and insecurity with respect to a desired or perceived greatness.*

Shame: *concerning shame or humiliation in response to perceived slights, criticism, failure, or rebuke.*

Indifference: *concerning indifference in response to perceived slights, criticism, failure, or rebuke.*

AGENTIC EXTRAVERSION

Acclaim-Seeking: *assessing narcissistic aspirations, working toward acclaim, and an excessive driving ambition to achieve.*

Thrill-Seeking: *assessing a tendency to engage in high-risk behavior for the sake of thrills and excitement.*

Grandiose Fantasies: *assessing fantasies of grandeur and success, preoccupation with fantasies of future glory, and a tendency to distort reality to achieve an overly positive*

view of past, current, or future accomplishments.

Exhibitionism: *a seeking of constant admiration, showing off when in the presence of others, and attention-seeking, without reference to feelings of insecurity.*

Authoritativeness: *assessing a tendency to take charge of situations, to authoritatively take responsibility for making decisions, and to perceive oneself as a leader.*

ANTAGONISM

Reactive Anger: *in response to perceived slights, criticism, failure, or rebuke.*

Arrogance: *assessing haughty, snobbish, imperious, pretentious, conceited, pompous, and disdainful beliefs and behaviors.*

Lack of Empathy: *assessing the extent to which the person fails to be aware of, appreciate, or acknowledge the feelings of others, displaying attitudes that are generally uncaring and unsympathetic.*

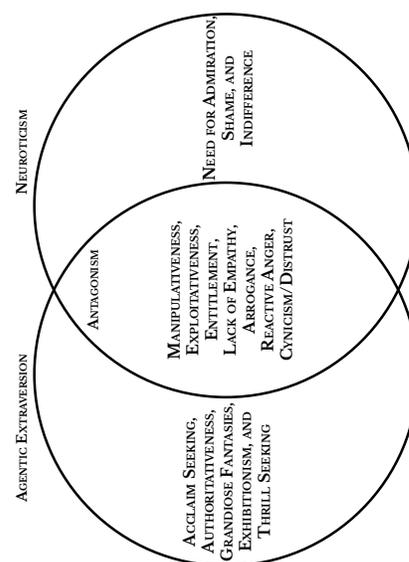
Manipulativeness: *assessing a tendency to skillfully and characteristically manipulate,*

ply, shape, beguile, machinate, or maneuver the feelings or opinions of others.

Exploitativeness: *assessing a tendency to exploit, take advantage of, and use others for his or her own gain.*

Entitlement: *involving feelings and actions of entitlement, presumptuousness, not being satisfied until he OR she gets what is perceived to be deserved, or expectation of favorable treatment.*

Cynicism/Distrust: *assessing a sense of cynicism and mistrust concerning the motives, intentions, and reliability of others.*



⁶ Glover, N., Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., Crego, C., & Widiger, T. A. (2012)

INTRODUCTION

Theodore Millon's *Personality disorders in modern life* (2nd ed.)⁷:

Narcissists have a tough job because perfection is viewed as either all or nothing: If you are not perfect, you are imperfect, and if you are imperfect, you are nothing.

This ego ideal must then be projected as a public persona whom others must appease with sacrifices of admiration and submission.

Anything short of this ideal tarnishes the self, squashing perfection outright and leading to chronic feelings of emptiness or shame.

Narcissism⁸, by definition, is *egoism, egocentrism/narcissistic personality disorder; love of or sexual desire of one's own body.*

- **Egoism**⁹: *a doctrine that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action; a doctrine that individual self-interest is the valid end of all actions; excessive concern for oneself with or without exaggerated feelings of self-importance*
- **Egocentrism**¹⁰: *the quality or state of being egocentric: excessive interest in oneself and concern for one's own welfare or advantage at the expense of or in disregard of others*
- **Narcissistic Personality Disorder**¹¹: *a personality disorder characterized especially by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, persistent need for admiration, lack of empathy for others, excessive pride in achievements, and snobbish, disdainful, or patronizing attitudes*

To be clear, there is a difference between healthy selfishness, narcissistic selfishness, and pathological altruism.

The core distinction is:

- **Healthy selfishness** is the practice of appropriately prioritizing your needs and wellbeing.
- **Narcissistic selfishness** goes beyond healthy self-interest into a pattern where others exist primarily as extensions of the self or means to an end.
- **Pathological altruism** is when helping others actually causes harm, either to yourself or paradoxically to those you're trying to help.

Keep in mind collateral damage: where actions inadvertently have unintended consequences¹². Something that comes off as narcissistic could be just collateral damage. **Intentions are very important.**

(This is further explored in the Context Section.)

There's three major categories I'm categorizing for narcissism: Explicit, Implicit, and Antagonism.

I'm oversimplifying this for the main reason I got really confused when I first put this together.

This paper is about understanding. If you are reading this to call people narcissistic because your pride/arrogance is high af, you are part of the problem.

This paper is also not commentary-based, more as a reference sheet.

⁷ Millon, T., Millon, C. M., Meagher, S. E., Grossman, S. D., & Ramnath, R. (2004)

⁸ Merriam-Webster: Narcissism

⁹ Merriam-Webster: Egoism

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster: Egocentrism

¹¹ Merriam-Webster: Narcissistic Personality Disorder

¹² "We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior." - Stephen M.R. Covey

I want to be clear about one thing: words are just words. How people define those words, especially when it comes to analyzing other people, can be the difference between **understanding** (seeing someone for just being human) and **ignorance** (disregarding that we all make mistakes and have our own complicated, not complex¹³, emotions).

In my opinion, it is easy to identify when someone is intentionally being narcissistic when it is explicit and overt, especially when they are being emotional ignorant. Like dude, we're all human, this guy who talked to you in a harsh tone of voice might have just had a rough day. What if his mother just died?

It is somewhat harder to see narcissistic behavior when it is implicit and covert, especially when it comes to hyper-masculine men and hyper-feminine women (I'll do another paper on the comparison of these two types) since the traits of what is perceived as "normal"/ the societal acceptance of this is "what men just do" or "this is just what women do" can mask the truth of genuine narcissism.

But that's just an opinion and this is an objective paper lol.

If you want to get to the meat of the paper, skip to the Implicit Narcissism section and start from there. Otherwise, knock yourself out with the next section.

NARCISSISM IN CONTEXT

- The **Big Five Framework**¹⁴ describes human personality along five continuous dimensions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). (1990)
- The **Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R)**¹⁵ is a standardized self-report questionnaire that measures the Big Five dimensions and their subfacets (such as anxiety, excitement-seeking, fantasy, straightforwardness, etc). (1992)
- The **Two-Factor Model**¹⁶ of narcissism distinguishes between grandiose-narcissism and vulnerable-narcissism. (1991)
- The **Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI)**¹⁷ bridges general personality structure (the Big Five) and narcissism research (Two-Factor Model) and reframes them as maladaptive expressions of normal personality facets. (2012, 2016)

¹³ I mean complicated doesn't have obvious structure whereas complex does. This is a subjective interpretation. (Like I said, words and definitions matter.)

¹⁴ **Big Five Factor Structure:** Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure.

¹⁵ **The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R):** Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) and NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) professional manual. Psychological Assessment Resources.

¹⁶ **Two Factor Model:** Wink, P. (1991). Two faces of narcissism.

¹⁷ **Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI, Original):** Glover, N., Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., Crego, C., & Widiger, T. A. (2012). The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory: A five-factor measure of narcissistic personality traits; **Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI, Structure):** Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., McCain, J. L., Few, L. R., Crego, C., Widiger, T. A., & Campbell, W. K. (2016). Thinking structurally about narcissism: An examination of the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory and its components.

- The **Trifurcated Model**¹⁸ refined the two-factor approach by separating narcissism into three components (agentic, antagonistic, and neurotic) which helped isolate the antagonistic core that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism share. (2019)
- **Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)** is a clinical diagnosis, distinct from simply having narcissistic traits. The difference is about pervasiveness, rigidity, and the degree to which the patterns cause functional impairment across relationships, work, and self-understanding.

BIG FIVE FRAMEWORK

The Big Five is a widely accepted theoretical framework in personality psychology that identifies five broad, bipolar dimensions of personality¹⁹:

- **Neuroticism** (vs. emotional stability)
- **Extraversion** (vs. introversion)
- **Openness** (vs. closedness) to experience
- **Agreeableness** (vs. antagonism),
- **Conscientiousness** (vs. impulsivity)

More specifically²⁰:

- **Neuroticism:** emotional distress versus emotionally stable
- **Extraversion:** energetic and thrill-seeking versus sober and solitary

- **Openness:** Curious and unconventional versus traditional and pragmatic
- **Agreeableness:** kind and trusting versus competitive and arrogant
- **Conscientiousness:** disciplined and fastidious versus laidback and careless

REVISED NEO PERSONALITY INVENTORY

Revised NEO²¹ Personality Inventory (**NEO-PI-R**) is one of the most established tests designed to measure the Big Five traits.

The **NEO-PI-R** is the full, comprehensive version that tests the 5 broad personality domains plus 30 specific facet scales (6 facets per domain), while the **NEO-FFI** scores only for the 5 broad domains, with no facet-level information.

Evolution of the Test:

- 1978: Original NEO-PI (measuring only Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness)
- 1985: Updated to include all five factors
- 1992: NEO-PI-R (Revised version) - 240 items
- 1992: NEO-FFI (Five-Factor Inventory) - 60-item short version
- 2005: NEO-PI-3 (updated with improved readability for adolescents)

NEO-PI-R Subfacets²² (Generalized):

¹⁸ **Trifurcated Model:** Crowe, M. L., Lynam, D. R., Campbell, W. K., & Miller, J. D. (2019). Exploring the structure of narcissism: Toward an integrated solution. **Trifurcated Model (antagonism expanded):** Weiss, B., Campbell, W. K., Lynam, D. R., & Miller, J. D. (2019). A trifurcated model of narcissism: On the pivotal role of trait antagonism.

¹⁹ Samuel, D. B., & Widiger, T. A. (2008)

²⁰ Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1992)

²¹ NEO refers to the original structure of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness but later got updated to include Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

²² Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1995)

- **Neuroticism:** N1: **Anxiety**, N2: **Angry Hostility**, N3: **Depression**, N4: **Self-Consciousness**, N5: **Impulsiveness**, N6: **Vulnerability**
- **Extraversion:** E1: **Warmth**, E2: **Gregariousness**, E3: **Assertiveness**, E4: **Activity**, E5: **Excitement Seeking**, E6: **Positive Emotions**
- **Openness:** O1: **Fantasy**, O2: **Aesthetics**, O3: **Feelings**, O4: **Actions**, O5: **Ideas**, O6: **Values**
- **Agreeableness:** A1: **Trust**, A2: **Straightforwardness**, A3: **Altruism**, A4: **Compliance**, A5: **Modesty**, A6: **Tender-Mindedness**
- **Conscientiousness:** C1: **Competence**, C2: **Order**, C3: **Dutifulness**, C4: **Achievement Striving**, C5: **Self-Discipline**, C6: **Deliberation**

Individuals who wish to understand NEO-PI-R facet scales in more detail are invited to study the definitions, items, and adjective and scale correlates given in the Manual (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

There are a LOT of nuances to each facet and subfacets, refer to Costa & McCrae's 1992 manual for their definitions and the difference between a person who is high vs low in each subfacet (pages 14 - 18).

I wish I could put it here but it started taking up two pages which is just plain unnecessary.

TWO-FACTOR MODEL

Based on Wink's work, most notably his 1991 work: *Two faces of narcissism*.

In the present study, six MMPI [Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory²³] narcissism scales were used to study the relationship

²³ The MMPI is a standardized psychometric test used by mental health professionals to assess personality traits and detect signs of mental health disorders. The MMPI consists of hundreds of True/False statements. It is designed to be "un-fakeable" through its most famous feature: **Validity Scales: L (Lie) Scale:** Detects if a person is trying to present themselves in an impossibly positive light. **F (Infrequency) Scale:** Detects "faking bad," random answering, or severe distress. **K (Correction) Scale:** Identifies "defensiveness" or a subtle attempt to hide problems. Wink referred to the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

between those narcissism measures that emphasize grandeur and exhibitionism and those that focus on vulnerability and sensitivity.

(This will be covered more in-depth in the Implicit Narcissism and Explicit Narcissism sections.)

- **Vulnerability-Sensitivity** was associated with introversion, defensiveness, anxiety, and vulnerability to life's traumas.
- **Grandiosity-Exhibitionism** was related to extraversion, self-assurance, exhibitionism, and aggression.

THE FIVE-FACTOR NARCISSISM INVENTORY

The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (**FFNI**) is specifically developed to assess traits associated with narcissistic personality disorder.

The FFNI draws from both the Big Five general framework and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory facets, while also incorporating Wink's two-factor model:

- **Neuroticism:**
 - **Reactive Anger** (N2 - Angry Hostility),
 - **Shame** (N4 - Self-Consciousness),
 - **Indifference** (N4 - low Self-Consciousness),
 - **Need for Admiration** (N6 - Vulnerability)
- **Extraversion:**
 - **Exhibitionism** (E2 - Gregariousness),
 - **Authoritativeness** (E3 - Assertiveness),
 - **Thrill-Seeking** (E5 - Excitement Seeking)

- **Openness: Grandiose Fantasies** (O1 - Fantasy) *traits are specific expressions of general personality domains.*
- **Low Agreeableness:**
 - **Cynicism/Distrust** (low A1 - Trust),
 - **Manipulativeness** (low A2 - Straightforwardness),
 - **Exploitativeness** (low A3 - Altruism),
 - **Entitlement** (low A3 - Altruism),
 - **Arrogance** (low A5 - Modesty),
 - **Lack of Empathy** (low A6 - Tender-mindedness)
- **Conscientiousness: Acclaim-Seeking** (C4 - Achievement Striving)
 - *Factor 3.1 was labeled Agentic Extraversion and its strongest FFM correlates were Modesty and Assertiveness.*
 - *Factor 3.2 was labeled Narcissistic Neuroticism as its strongest FFM associations were with facets of Neuroticism (e.g., Anxiety; Depression).*
 - *Self-centered Antagonism (F3.3) included items related to a willingness to exploit others for personal gain, a sense of entitlement, and a lack of empathy, including negative associations with all facets of agreeableness as well as a negative association with Dutifulness, a facet of conscientiousness.*

From Miller et al.:

- **Neuroticism** was measured as the mean of the scales Shame, Indifference (Reversed), and Need for Admiration.
- **Agentic Extraversion** was measured as the mean of the scales Acclaim Seeking, Authoritativeness, Grandiose Fantasies, and Exhibitionism.
- **Antagonism** was measured as the mean of the subscales Manipulativeness, Exploitativeness, Entitlement, Lack of Empathy, Arrogance, Reactive Anger, Distrust, and Thrill Seeking.

TRIFURCATED MODEL

(This will be covered more in-depth in the Implicit Narcissism and Explicit Narcissism sections. A more complete breakdown is in the *The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI)* categorized under the *Trifurcated Model* section.)

The 2019 study by **Crowe et al.** (which validated the 2016 **Miller et al.** FFNI paper, I think) was a comprehensive, empirical integration designed to reconcile all existing narcissism measures into one structural model, using an item pool of 591 participants, completing 303 narcissism items each, encompassing 46 narcissism scales and subscales.

Agentic Extraversion is about self-promotion, Narcissistic Neuroticism is about self-protection, and Antagonism is about self-centeredness at others' expense.

From Crowe et al. (rearranged for easier reading):

The factors observed at the three-factor level appear consistent with the three-factor structure of the FFNI (i.e., Agentic Extraversion, Antagonism, Neuroticism). The factor labels were modified slightly to reflect the belief that these

NARCISSISM HIERARCHY

From Crowe et. al. (2019): a hierarchical factor structure of narcissism, categorized from broad to specific across five levels (of which, the **three-factor solution** was considered to be the most empirically supported structure):

Level 1 (Most General):

- **Narcissism** (F1.1) - What's common to all narcissistic traits

Level 2 (Two Factors):

- **Grandiose Narcissism** (F2.1) - Superiority, low agreeableness, high extraversion
- **Vulnerable Narcissism** (F2.2) - Reactive anger, validation-seeking, high neuroticism

Level 3 (Three Factors):

- **Agentic Extraversion** (F3.1) - Low modesty, high assertiveness
- **Narcissistic Neuroticism** (F3.2) - Anxiety, depression
- **Self-centered Antagonism** (F3.3) - Exploitation, entitlement, lack of empathy

Level 4 (Four Factors), same three as above, plus:

- **Distrustful Self-reliance** (F4.4) - Self-sufficiency, distrust of others

Level 5 (Five Factors):

- **Grandiosity** (F5.1) - Grandiose self-view, entitlement
- **Narcissistic Neuroticism** (F5.2)
- **Self-centered Antagonism** (F5.3)
- **Distrustful Self-reliance** (F5.4)
- **Attention Seeking** (F5.5) - Desire for attention and authority

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is defined by the American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology^{24,25} as the following:

A personality disorder with the following characteristics:

- (a) a long-standing pattern of grandiose self-importance and an exaggerated sense of talent and achievements
- (b) fantasies of unlimited sex, power, brilliance, or beauty
- (c) an exhibitionistic need for attention and admiration
- (d) either cool indifference or feelings of rage, humiliation, or emptiness as a response to criticism, indifference, or defeat
- and (e) various interpersonal disturbances, such as feeling entitled to special favors, taking advantage of others, and inability to empathize with the feelings of others.

IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT

There will be repeated definitions in the next sections. Meaning, if you read the *Narcissism in Context* section, the following sections may sound redundant.

The implicit and explicit categorization is also a creative rendition for oversimplification sake.

IMPLICIT NARCISSISM

Implicit narcissism combines covert, vulnerability-sensitivity, and neuroticism.

- **Vulnerability-Sensitivity** was associated with: *introversion, hypersensitivity, defensiveness, anxiety, and vulnerability to life's traumas*²⁶.
- **Covertly** narcissistic individuals appear to be *hypersensitive, anxious, timid, and insecure, but on close contact surprise observers with their grandiose fantasies* (Kernberg, 1986).

²⁴ APA Dictionary of Psychology: Narcissistic Personality Disorder

²⁵ Originally formulated by psychoanalysts Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), Otto Kernberg (1928–), and Heinz Kohut (1913–1981) and psychologist Theodore Millon

²⁶ Wink, P. (1991)

- **Neuroticism** was measured as the mean of the scales Shame, Indifference (Reversed), and Need for Admiration.²⁷

Implicit narcissism can be defined as a set of personality traits associated with negative emotions (such as fear, anger, shame, envy, or depression, and hypersensitivity), interpersonal sensitivity, insecurity, psychoticism²⁸ and emotional instability.

These emotions are felt more often and intensely, causing actions that are or can be interpreted as defensive, anxious, hypersensitive, introverted, and/or socially insecure, among others.

Implicit narcissistic people may bring about self-indulgence, arrogance, and insistence on getting their way within relationships.

Implicit narcissistic actions, which may start small here and there, build to larger problems²⁹, such as lacking confidence in social and leadership situations.

(Refer to The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory for the expanded list of scales.)

EXPLICIT NARCISSISM

Explicit narcissism combines overt, grandiosity-exhibitionism, and agentic Extraversion

- When it is **overt**, narcissistic grandiosity leads to a direct expression of exhibitionism, self-

importance, and preoccupation with receiving attention and admiration from others.³⁰

- **Grandiosity-Exhibitionism** was related to extraversion, aggressiveness, self-assuredness, and the need to be admired by others.³¹

- Similarly, Reich's (1949) notion of phallic narcissism³² stresses arrogant self-assurance, blatant self-confidence, and flagrant display of superiority.³³

- **Agentic Extraversion** was measured as the mean of the scales Acclaim Seeking, Authoritativeness, Grandiose Fantasies, and Exhibitionism.³⁴

Explicit narcissism can be defined as a set of personality traits associated with being outwardly confident, assertive, aggressive, and attention-seeking.

This can be displayed as high social poise, a need for power and admiration, manipulateness, and disregard for others, show-offs, egotistical, and self-centered.

It is also associated with subjective well-being, initial popularity, attractiveness, assertiveness, dominance, and a strong desire for attention and admiration.

(Refer to The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory for the expanded list of scales.)

²⁷ Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., McCain, J. L., Few, L. R., Crego, C., Widiger, T. A., & Campbell, W. K. (2016).

²⁸ Psychoticism: "a dimension of personality in Eysenck's dimensions characterized by aggression, impulsivity, aloofness, and antisocial behavior, indicating a susceptibility to psychosis and psychopathic disorders (see antisocial personality disorder)." APA Dictionary: Psychoticism

²⁹ Consistency can be towards progression, regression, and/or stagnation.

³⁰ Wink, P. (1991)

³¹ Wink, P. (1991)

³² Expanded in the Context section

³³ Wink, P. (1991)

³⁴ Miller, J. D., Lynam, D. R., McCain, J. L., Few, L. R., Crego, C., Widiger, T. A., & Campbell, W. K. (2016).

ANTAGONISM

Antagonism is the middle section of traits that both explicit and implicit narcissism share, including reactive anger, arrogance, lack of empathy, manipulateness, exploitativeness, entitlement, and cynicism/distrust.

It explains grandiose and vulnerable narcissism's association with interpersonal pathologies, involving entitlement, manipulation, and callousness.

It is categorically different from agentic extraversion and neuroticism, but there is sooooo much overlap with agentic extraversion-antagonism and neuroticism-antagonism.

From Crowe et al. (rearranged for easier reading):

- *Self-centered Antagonism (F3.3) included items related to a willingness to exploit others for personal gain, a sense of entitlement, and a lack of empathy, including negative associations with all facets of agreeableness as well as a negative association with Dutifulness, a facet of conscientiousness.*

Both the Vulnerability-Sensitivity and Grandiosity-Exhibitionism factors shared in common narcissistic characteristics of conceit, self-indulgence, and disregard for the needs of others.³⁵

According to Glover et. al:

The antagonism factor is made of up scales from both the vulnerable (e.g., Reactive Anger, Distrust) and grandiose (i.e., Exploitativeness, Lack of Empathy, Entitlement, Arrogance, and Manipulateness) dimensions.

From the Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory, antagonism has nine sub facets (four of which are

also categorized under Vulnerability-Sensitivity (marked in **bold font**) and the rest under Grandiosity-Exhibitionism.

- **Reactive Anger, Shame**, Indifference, Arrogance, Lack of Empathy, Manipulateness, Exploitativeness, Entitlement, **Cynicism/Distrust**

(Full definitions of each is in the *The Five-Factor Narcissism Inventory (FFNI)* categorized under the *Trifurcated Model* section.)

Small tangent: apparently there is a Antagonism-Agreeableness dimension³⁶:

The Antagonism-Agreeableness dimension includes these more basic bipolar traits: callousness versus compassion, immorality versus morality, distrust versus trust, combativeness versus affability, and arrogance versus modesty.

Another small tangent: a seven factor structure of antagonism³⁷:

A series of factor analyses were conducted to examine the structure of antagonism at a range of specificities. A seven-factor solution emerged as being both comprehensive and reasonably parsimonious with factors labeled Callousness, Grandiosity, Domineering, Manipulation, Suspiciousness, Aggression, and Risk Taking.

Small tangent numero tres³⁸ (five factor agreeableness):

Agreeableness have been developed, but empirically derived descriptions of this domain are largely missing....A five-factor solution was identified as most appropriate for most purposes. Identified facets in the five-factor solution were labeled Compassion, Morality, Trust, Affability, and Modesty.

³⁵ Wink, P. (1991)

³⁶ Lynam, D. R., & Miller, J. D. (2019)

³⁷ Sleep, C. E., Crowe, M. L., Carter, N. T., Lynam, D. R., & Miller, J. D. (2021)

³⁸ Crowe, M. L., Lynam, D. R., & Miller, J. D. (2019)

This is a whole bunch of not-a-today research but for future reference or for your exploratory pleasure.

NARCISSISM AND THE ILLUSION OF CONFIDENCE

This is the original question that started this entire paper. I read something in social media around the idea that women sometimes misinterpret the false confidence of narcissists as actual confidence.

From Confidence as Bayesian Probability: From Neural Origins to Behavior³⁹:

Here, we explore how a definition of confidence as Bayesian probability can unify these viewpoints.

*This computational view entails that there are distinct forms in which confidence is represented and used in the brain, including **distributional confidence**⁴⁰, pertaining to neural representations of probability distributions, and **summary confidence**⁴¹, pertaining to scalar summaries of those distributions.*

The sense of confidence has been defined as “a belief about the validity of our own thoughts, knowledge or performance that relies on a subjective feeling.

The **Bayesian Principle** is from mathematics, that your belief should change proportionally to how surprising the new evidence is.

$$P(H|E) = P(E|H) \times P(H) / P(E)$$

Where:

- **P(H|E)** = Probability of hypothesis H given evidence E (what we want to know);

- **P(H)** = Prior probability (what we believed before);
- **P(E|H)** = Likelihood (how likely this evidence is if H is true);
- **P(E)** = Probability of seeing this evidence under any circumstance

This is going to be the topic of another paper, but around the idea that narcissism can be seen from a confidence perspective and (in the context of relationships and limerence) can be a reason why people fall for narcissists.

I can't remember the source of this next point: there is a tendency for narcissists to be in relationships with other narcissists. Maybe social validation/emotional reciprocity/comfort?

SELF-ESTEEM AND CYNICISM

According to Glover et. al:

Self-esteem seems to explain the relations between narcissism and certain positive outcomes related to psychological health and well-being.

- *The FFNI Agentic Extraversion factor manifested a **significant positive relation**,*
- *the FFNI Neuroticism factor manifested a **significant negative relation**,*
- *and the FFNI Antagonism factor manifested a **null relation with self-esteem**.*

These results help explain why

- *measures of grandiose narcissism tend to manifest positive correlations with self-esteem,*

³⁹ Meyniel, F., Sigman, M., & Mainen, Z. F. (2015)

⁴⁰ **Distributional confidence:** How the brain represents uncertainty through neural probability distributions

⁴¹ **Summary confidence:** Scalar summaries that are "read out" from those neural probability distributions, allowing confidence to serve diverse cognitive functions

- *whereas measures of vulnerable narcissism tend to manifest negative correlations,*

they include content consistent with negative emotionality/neuroticism versus positive emotionality/extraversion.

The null correlation between the FFNI Antagonism factor and self-esteem is interesting because we have argued previously that there are both vulnerable/low self-esteem and grandiose/high self-esteem pathways to inter- and intrapersonal antagonism.

From Szymczak et. al's abstract:

We found that

- *agentic extraversion was positively related to trust and unrelated to cynicism,*
- *antagonism was negatively related to trust and positively related to cynicism,*
- *and narcissistic neuroticism was not related to trust nor cynicism.*

Furthermore, narcissism indicates a positive relationship to trust as it is related to the agentic extraversion aspect, which might be considered as an adaptive aspect of narcissism.

(A future paper will go into interpersonal trust, human nature is inherently good, vs cynicism, human nature is inherently evil and egoistic.)⁴²

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Related to attachment theory.

Kernberg's Model: Inflated self-reliance leads to defensive grandiosity

Narcissism as a defense against feeling unloved:

- Parental devaluation, coldness, and rejection → Child defensively withdraws and develops mistrust of others;

- "Only I can be trusted" → inflated self-reliance and defensive grandiosity.

- The child learns that the "other" is dangerous or rejecting, so they retreat into a "fortress" of grandiosity to protect a very fragile, devalued inner self.

- "I don't need you; I am everything, and you are nothing (because if I need you, you will hurt me)."

From Campbell (1999):

Kernberg (1974, 1975) theorized that narcissism emerges from a childhood lacking adequate love from a caregiver, especially in the pre-Oedipal years (roughly before age 3). Narcissism is developed as a defense against feelings of abandonment or loss as well as the rage associated with this abandonment.

First, underneath the inflated self-image, the narcissist is constantly at risk of experiencing intense feelings of fear, abandonment, and doubt.

Second, the narcissist strives to maintain an inflated self-image in close relationships to protect the self from this experience of abandonment.

From Emmons (1987):

Kernberg sees narcissism developing as a consequence of parental rejection or abandonment. This parental-devaluation hypothesis states that because of cold and rejecting parents, the child defensively withdraws and comes to believe that it is only himself or herself that can be trusted and relied on and therefore loved.

Kohut's Model: Not outgrowing normal childhood narcissistic needs

⁴² For further exploration: Jordan Peterson and Chris Williamson talked about cynicism on the Modern Wisdom podcast, episode #712: Dr. Jordan Peterson- How to Destroy Your Negative Beliefs (November 27, 2023)

Narcissism as **developmental arrest** from unmet mirroring⁴³:

- Childhood narcissism is **normal** but fails to mature appropriately → Failure of normal developmental processes (inadequate mirroring/idealization) → Person remains stuck seeking mirroring and idealization in adult relationships.
- The narcissist is constantly hungry for the "Self-Object" (the other person) to provide the validation they can't provide themselves. They are desperately seeking a connection to regulate their own temperature
- "Please look at me and tell me I'm wonderful so that I can feel real."

From Emmons (1987):

Kohut's theory is actually a developmental theory of the self, where pathological narcissism can result from failure to idealize the parents because of rejection or indifference.

From Campbell (1999):

Kohut (1977) described a different etiology of narcissism. Narcissism is a normal aspect of infant development. Narcissism is maintained through two strategies: mirroring and idealization.

According to Kohut, this childhood narcissism will gradually fade as the mirroring and the idealization processes slowly diminish and are replaced by more realistic views of self and other.

If these narcissistic needs are not met, however, the individual will maintain a defensive and inflated self-image and will try to meet these mirroring and idealization needs in the context of adult interpersonal relationships (Akhtar & Thompson, 1982; Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

Millon's Model: Inflated self-image that cannot be sustained in the outer world

Narcissism as learned grandiosity from excessive positive reinforcement:

- Parental **overvaluation** and excessive praise → Child treated as special/perfect, develops unrealistic self-illusions → Inflated self-image that cannot be sustained in the outer world.
- Like Kernberg's model, this person is covering up deep wounds and insecurities with a facade.
- They have high self-esteem (on the surface) and low regard for others' opinions unless those opinions serve them.

From Emmons (1987):

Millon (1981) and is what he calls a social-learning theory of narcissism. This view sees narcissism developing not as a response to parental devaluation but rather as a consequence of parental overvaluation. The child is treated as a special person, provided with a lot of attention, and led by parents to believe he or she is lovable and perfect.

According to Millon (1981), such unrealistic overvaluation will lead to self-illusions that "cannot be sustained in the outer world" (p. 165)

Since we're on the topic, Millon also categorized narcissists under a couple categories,

- Status and entitlement
- Seduction and charm
- Exploitation and deceit
- Covering up insecurity
- Self-righteousness

Based on a couple polarities:

- **Pleasure-Pain:** Is the person seeking rewards or avoiding distress?

⁴³ Mirroring, or "**the chameleon effect**", refers to nonconscious mimicry of the postures, mannerisms, facial expressions, and other behaviors of one's interaction partners, such that one's behavior passively and unintentionally changes to match that of others in one's current social environment." Chartrand, T. L., & Bargh, J. A. (1999)

- **Passive-Active:** Do they wait for things to happen or do they make them happen?
- **Self-Other:** Do they look to themselves for validation or to others?

I'm not going too deep into Millon's work since it could probably take up an entire paper.

ETYMOLOGY OF NARCISSISM

The name Narcissism comes from the Greek mythological figure Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection.

Book 3 Summary by Henry Riely:

Jupiter has a discussion with Juno on the relative pleasures of the sexes, and they agree to refer the question to Tiresias, who has been of both sexes.

He gives his decision in favour of Jupiter, on which Juno deprives him of sight; and, by way of recompense, Jupiter bestows on him the gift of prophesy.

His first prediction is fulfilled in the case of Narcissus, who, despising the advances of all females (in whose number is Echo, who has been transformed into a sound), at last pines away with love for himself, and is changed into a flower which bears his name.

The actual words would be like two or three pages here so please refer to Book 4, Fable 7 from The Metamorphoses of Ovid. Project Gutenberg has a public domain version (eBook 21765)⁴⁴.

— CONTEXT SECTION —

These, while important to understand the development of the FFNI construct, is more for informational purposes.

⁴⁴ Ovid. (2007). H. T. Riley, Translation, Project Gutenberg.

⁴⁵ Wilde, O. (1905)

⁴⁶ Fromm, E. (1947)

HEALTHY SELFISHNESS

This is more from the philosophical than scientific point of view.

Pathological altruism, healthy selfishness, narcissistic selfishness, and collateral damage.

The core distinction is:

- **Healthy selfishness** is the practice of appropriately prioritizing your needs and wellbeing.
- **Narcissistic selfishness** goes beyond healthy self-interest into a pattern where others exist primarily as extensions of the self or means to an end.
- **Pathological altruism** is when helping others actually causes harm, either to yourself or paradoxically to those you're trying to help.

The core distinction is that **healthy selfishness** stems from self-love and abundance, enabling genuine care for others, while **narcissistic selfishness** stems from inner emptiness and insecurity, preventing authentic connection.

There is also such thing as **collateral damage** where actions inadvertently have unintended consequences. Intentions are very important.

From Oscar Wilde⁴⁵:

I can be perfectly happy by myself. But if after I am free a friend of mine had a sorrow and refused to allow me to share it, I should feel it most bitterly. He who can look at the loveliness of the world and share its sorrow, and realize something of the wonder of both, is in immediate contact with divine things, and has got as near to God's secret as any one can get.

From Fromm's *Man for Himself*⁴⁶:

Before we start the discussion of the psychological aspect of selfishness and self-love, the logical fallacy in the notion that love for others and love for oneself are mutually exclusive should be stressed.

If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue—and not a vice—to love myself since I am a human being too.

The idea expressed in the Biblical "Love thy neighbor as thyself" implies that respect for one's own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one's own self, can not be separated from respect for and love and understanding of another individual.

The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self.

From: *Healthy Selfishness and Pathological Altruism: Measuring Two Paradoxical Forms of Selfishness*⁴⁷

Abraham Maslow (1943):

"For our part, we must not prejudge the case. We must not assume that selfish or unselfish behavior is either good or bad until we actually determine where the truth exists. It may be that at certain times, selfish behavior is good, and at other times, it is bad. It also may be that unselfish behavior is sometimes good and at other times bad."

"The dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness disappears altogether in healthy people because in principle every act is both selfish and unselfish."

2 Timothy 3:2-7 (WEBU version):

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness but having denied its power.

Turn away from these, also. For some of these are people who creep into houses and take captive gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

THE PHALLIC-NARCISSISTIC CHARACTER (REICH, 1949)

The phallic-narcissistic character differs even in external appearance from the compulsive and the hysterical character.

The compulsive is predominantly inhibited, reserved, depressive; the hysteric is nervous, agile, fear-ridden, erratic.

The typical phallic-narcissistic character, on the other hand, is self-assured, sometimes arrogant, elastic, energetic, often impressive in his bearing.

The more neurotic the inner mechanism is, the more obtrusive these modes of behavior are and the more blatantly they are paraded about.

OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Oedipal (or Oedipus complex) is a central concept in Freudian psychoanalysis, named after the Greek mythological figure Oedipus, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother.

Please refer to Sigmund Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (1923) for more information about the general concept.

Please refer to Heinz Kohut's *The Restoration of Self* (1977) for more information about his point of view on the oedipus complex.

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RELATED TOPICS

- Narcissism, the Dark Triad/Tetrad, The HEXACO Model (opposite of narcissism/Dark Triad), Confidence and the Bayesian Probability (and how narcissism can be interpreted as confidence), and then once all of that is well researched, one paper on Where does honesty end and narcissism begin?
- Interpersonal trust, human nature is inherently good, vs cynicism, human nature is inherently evil and egoistic.
- “I would rather keep my illusions for they are often kinder than the truth”.

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