

# Narcissistic Subtypes and Contingent Self-Esteem: Do All Narcissists Base Their Self-Esteem on the Same Domains?

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**ABSTRACT** It has been suggested that there are two forms of narcissism: a *grandiose* subtype and a *vulnerable* subtype. Although these forms of narcissism share certain similarities, it is believed that these subtypes may differ in the domains upon which their self-esteem is based. To explore this possibility, the present study examined the associations between these narcissistic subtypes and domain-specific contingencies of self-worth. The results show that vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with contingencies of self-worth across a variety of domains. In contrast, the associations between grandiose narcissism and domain-specific contingencies of self-worth were more complex and included both positive and negative relationships. These results provide additional support for the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism by showing that the domains of contingent self-esteem associated with grandiose narcissism may be more limited in scope than those associated with vulnerable narcissism.

One of the most intriguing questions about narcissism concerns how narcissists really feel about themselves. Part of what makes this question so interesting is that although narcissism is often characterized as a pathological form of self-love, there is considerable doubt concerning both the basis and authenticity of the positive self-views expressed by narcissists. For example, many of the characteristics demonstrated by narcissists—such as their concerns about social dominance (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004) and admiration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001)—suggest that the high levels of self-esteem these

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individuals claim to possess may not actually be the entire story. In fact, most theorists and researchers have come to acknowledge that the self-esteem of narcissists is somewhat fragile and that this fragility may account for at least some of the behaviors associated with narcissism (e.g., aggression, interpersonal difficulties; Kernis, 2003; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

At the present time, there are three primary models that distinguish between fragile and secure high self-esteem (see Kernis, 2003 for a review): discrepancies between explicit and implicit self-esteem (e.g., Bosson, Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003), self-esteem instability (e.g., Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989), and contingent self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1995). Although each of these models is distinct, it has been suggested that each may be associated with narcissism (Kernis, 2003; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Despite the appeal of this simple hypothesis, previous findings have only provided mixed support. For example, the link between narcissism and discrepant self-esteem is clearly derived from the psychodynamic “mask” model which proposes that the overt grandiosity of narcissists may actually serve as a facade to disguise their underlying feelings of insecurity and inferiority (e.g., Kernberg, 1975, 1976; Kohut, 1966, 1977; see Bosson et al., 2007, for a review). Although some studies have supported this mask model by showing that narcissists possess underlying negative attitudes about the self (i.e., low implicit self-esteem) that diverge from their self-reports of high explicit self-esteem (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006a), a recent meta-analysis by Bosson and her colleagues (2007) suggests that support for this model has not consistently emerged across studies. Similarly, inconsistent results have been found for studies examining the association between narcissism and self-esteem instability with some studies supporting this link (Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998) but others failing to do so (Bosson et al., 2007; Webster, Kirkpatrick, Nezelek, Smith, & Paddock, 2007; Zeigler-Hill, 2006a).

The present study concerns the association between narcissism and contingent self-esteem. This final model of fragile self-esteem refers to feelings about oneself that are reliant upon meeting some internal or external standard (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1995). In other words, contingent self-esteem represents what an individual believes one must do or be in order to have value and worth

as a person. Contingent self-esteem is considered to be fragile because it can only be maintained when the individual is able to successfully meet the standards upon which one's self-esteem is based. The most common approach for examining contingent self-esteem focuses on the level of specific domains (Crocker, 2002; Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Wolfe & Crocker, 2003). Many of the studies concerning domain-specific self-esteem contingencies have used the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003), which measures the tendency for individuals to base their self-esteem on the following domains: physical appearance, outdoing others in competition, academic competence, others' approval, family love and support, God's love, and being a virtuous or moral person. Some of these domains clearly require external approval (i.e., physical appearance, academic competence, others' approval, and family love and support), whereas others concern competition or internal standards (i.e., God's love and being a virtuous or moral person). Studies supporting this model of domain-specific contingent self-esteem have shown, for example, that the self-esteem of individuals who base their self-esteem on academic competence are highly reactive to good (or bad) grades (Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, & Chase, 2003) or letters of acceptance (or rejection) from graduate programs (Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen, 2002).

A number of similarities exist between narcissism and contingent self-esteem that would seem to support a link between these constructs (Kernis, 2003; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). For example, both narcissism and contingent self-esteem are believed to be associated with considerable expenditures of time and effort in the pursuit of self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2004). However, despite these similarities, the relationship between narcissism and contingent self-esteem has been shown to be, at best, extremely weak. In a recent meta-analysis, for example, Bosson and her colleagues (2007) found that narcissism was not associated with a global measure of contingent self-esteem. Similarly, studies examining domain-specific contingencies have shown that the only domains that are consistently associated with higher levels of narcissism are those based on competition (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). Thus, as with the other models of fragile self-esteem, the link between contingent self-esteem and narcissism may not be as straightforward as was once believed.

Part of the confusion concerning the link between narcissism and contingent self-esteem may be due to narcissists actually being a heterogeneous group composed of two subtypes: *grandiose* narcissists and *vulnerable* narcissists. The possibility of narcissistic subtypes has been repeatedly suggested in the narcissism literature for decades (e.g., Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Cooper, 1998; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Gabbard, 1989, 1998; Gersten, 1991; Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Kohut, 1971; Rose, 2002; Røvik, 2001; Wink, 1991, 1996).<sup>1</sup> Grandiose narcissism is characterized by arrogance, self-absorption, a sense of entitlement, and reactivity to criticism. This is the form of narcissism that is captured by the diagnostic criteria found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Vulnerable narcissism is similar to grandiose narcissism in that both subtypes share grandiose fantasies and expectations about the self, harbor feelings of entitlement, and display a willingness to exploit other individuals for their own gain (Cooper, 1998; Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Pimentel, Ansell, Pincus, & Cain, 2006). However, an important difference between the two subtypes is that vulnerable narcissists conceal these feelings and behavioral tendencies beneath a facade of inhibition, modesty, and concern for others, whereas grandiose narcissists do not bother to do so. Thus, a fundamental difference between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists is that grandiose narcissists regulate their self-esteem through overt strategies (e.g., self-aggrandizement, the devaluation of people who threaten their self-esteem; see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, for a review), whereas vulnerable narcissists are believed to rely primarily upon the approval of others (Cooper & Maxwell, 1995; Pimentel et al., 2006). The purpose of the present study was to examine whether grandiose and vulnerable narcissism differ in their associations with domain-specific contingencies of self-esteem.

1. A variety of labels has been used in the past to distinguish between these narcissistic subtypes (see Dickinson & Pincus, 2003, for a review). The most common alternative labels for grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism have been overt narcissism and covert narcissism, respectively (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Cooper, 1998; Wink, 1991). In addition, grandiose narcissists have been referred to as oblivious narcissists (Gabbard, 1989, 1998), whereas vulnerable narcissists have also been labeled as closet narcissists (Masterson, 1993), hyper-vigilant narcissists (Gabbard, 1989), and hypersensitive narcissists (Hendin & Cheek, 1997).

### Overview and Predictions

As a result of the different approaches that grandiose and vulnerable narcissists employ to regulate their self-esteem, it seemed likely that these subtypes would differ in their associations with domain-specific contingencies of self-worth. More specifically, our prediction for vulnerable narcissism was that it would be associated with self-esteem contingencies across an array of domains due to the reliance of vulnerable narcissists on the approval of others for maintaining and enhancing their self-esteem. That is, vulnerable narcissists may use their “success” in domains requiring external validation as a means for gaining the approval they appear to crave so desperately. It was less clear whether vulnerable narcissism would also be associated with self-esteem contingencies for domains that are not reliant on external validation (i.e., God’s love and virtue). In contrast, our prediction for grandiose narcissism was that it would be positively associated with the competition CSW but not with those domains requiring the approval of others (i.e., physical appearance, academic competence, others’ approval, and family support). This hypothesis was informed by the previous literature, which has shown that grandiose narcissists are highly competitive (Morf, Weir, & Davidov, 2000; Ryckman, Thornton, & Butler, 1994; Watson, Morris, & Miller, 1997) and concerned with gaining the *attention* of others but not their *approval* (e.g., Kernberg, 1984; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991).

## METHOD

### *Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 488 undergraduates enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses who participated in return for partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement. In addition to other measures that are not relevant to the present study, participants completed measures of grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, self-esteem, neuroticism, and domain-specific contingencies of self-worth during a laboratory session. Of the 488 participants who began the study, 9 participants were excluded due to failure to provide complete data. Analyses were conducted using the 479 remaining participants (108 men and 371 women). The mean age of participants was 20.71 years ( $SD = 4.11$ ). The racial/ethnic background of participants was 54% White, 42% Black, and 4% Other.

*Measures*

*Narcissistic Personality Inventory.* Grandiose narcissism was measured using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979, 1981). The NPI was developed according to diagnostic criteria but provides an index of narcissism reflecting both pathological levels as well as less extreme forms of narcissism that are believed to reflect narcissism as a personality trait. The version of the NPI used in the present research contains 37 true-false items that Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) adapted from Emmons's (1987) factor analysis of the original, 54-item instrument. The construct validity and internal consistency of the NPI has been previously demonstrated (Emmons, 1984, 1987; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Raskin & Terry, 1988).

*Vulnerable Narcissism Scale.* The Vulnerable Narcissism Scale (VNS; Pimentel et al., 2006) is a 50-item measure for which responses are made on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 6 (*very much like me*). The VNS measures seven dimensions of vulnerable narcissism: narcissistic self-esteem vulnerability (e.g., "It's hard for me to feel good about myself when I'm alone"); exploitativeness (e.g., "I find it easy to manipulate people"); self-sacrificing self-enhancement (e.g., "I can make myself feel good by caring for others"); defensive self-sufficiency (e.g., "I hate asking for help"); grandiose fantasy (e.g., "I often fantasize about having a huge impact on the world around me"); narcissistic social avoidance and shameful disavowal of needs (e.g., "Sometimes I avoid people because I'm concerned that they'll disappoint me"); and narcissistic entitlement rage (e.g., "I get annoyed by people who are not interested in what I say or do"). Pimentel et al. (2006) provide initial information concerning the reliability and validity of the VNS which includes correlations in the expected directions with related constructs such as self-esteem, grandiose narcissism, empathy, and dependency.

*Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.* The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure of global self-esteem. Participants were instructed to complete the scale according to how they typically or generally feel about themselves. Responses were made on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The RSES has been shown to be a well-validated and reliable measure of global self-regard (Blaskovich & Tomaka, 1991; Demo, 1985; Rosenberg, 1965; Silber & Tippet, 1965).

*Neuroticism.* The measure of neuroticism employed in the present study was the neuroticism scale from the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999). The BFI is a well-validated measure of the Big Five

personality traits (see John & Srivastava, 1999 for a review). The neuroticism scale of the BFI consists of eight potentially descriptive phrases (e.g., “I see myself as someone who worries a lot”) for which participants were asked to provide ratings of agreement on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale.* Domain-specific contingent self-esteem was measured with the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). The CSWS consists of 35 items to which participants provide ratings of agreement on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The CSWS assesses the following seven domains on which college students might base their feelings of self-worth: physical appearance (e.g., “When I think I look attractive, I feel good about myself”), outdoing others in competition (e.g., “Doing better than others gives me a sense of self-respect”), academic competence (e.g., “My self-esteem is influenced by my academic performance”), others’ approval (e.g., “I can’t respect myself if others don’t respect me”), God’s love (e.g., “My self-worth is based on God’s love”), being a virtuous or moral person (e.g., “I couldn’t respect myself if I didn’t live up to a moral code”), and family love and support (e.g., “When my family members are proud of me, my sense of self-worth increases”). Each of the CSWS domains has been found to possess good test-retest reliability and correlate in the expected direction with other personality variables (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003).

## RESULTS

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and intercorrelations for the measures included in the present study. As expected, the correlation between grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism reached conventional levels of significance ( $r = .22, p < .01$ ). This correlation is thought to reflect the core of narcissism that is believed to be common to both subtypes (see Pimentel et al., 2006 for similar results). Despite their associations with each other, the narcissistic subtypes had different patterns of relationships with other measures included in the present study. For example, grandiose narcissism was positively associated with self-esteem ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and negatively associated with neuroticism ( $r = -.18, p < .001$ ), whereas vulnerable narcissism was

**Table 1**  
**Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Self-Esteem, Narcissism, and Contingent Self-Esteem**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Grandiose narcissism	—										
2. Vulnerable narcissism	.22***	—									
3. Self-Esteem	.30***	-.32***	—								
4. Neuroticism	-.18***	.27***	-.33***	—							
5. Physical appearance CSW	-.01	.42***	-.19***	.18***	—						
6. Competition CSW	.25***	.34***	-.07	.06	.30***	—					
7. Academic competence CSW	.03	.24***	-.01	.13**	.26***	.46***	—				
8. Others' approval CSW	-.22***	.33***	-.36***	.25***	.44***	.18***	.18***	—			
9. Family support CSW	-.07	.21***	.00	.17***	.33***	.24***	.34***	.31***	—		
10. God's love CSW	.03	-.09*	.21***	.01	-.03	.05	.14**	-.03	.30***	—	
11. Virtue CSW	.02	.12**	.07	.04	.12*	.30***	.29***	.22***	.31***	.19***	—
<i>M</i>	18.77	3.48	3.90	2.90	4.86	4.84	5.51	3.80	5.61	5.63	5.22
<i>SD</i>	6.64	.95	.77	.59	1.11	1.31	.94	1.30	.94	1.56	1.15
$\alpha$	.84	.93	.78	.82	.73	.92	.77	.83	.75	.74	.86

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

negatively associated with self-esteem ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ) and positively associated with neuroticism ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ).

It is important to note that sex differences emerged for a number of the measures included in the present study. In comparison to women, men reported significantly higher levels of narcissism ( $M_{Men} = 5.72, M_{Women} = 5.46; t[477] = -1.98, p < .05$ ) and higher scores for the competition CSW ( $M_{Men} = 5.17, M_{Women} = 4.75; t[477] = -2.97, p < .01$ ). In contrast, women reported significantly higher scores than men for the following CSWs: physical appearance ( $M_{Women} = 4.92, M_{Men} = 4.63; t[477] = 2.37, p < .05$ ), God's love ( $M_{Women} = 5.71, M_{Men} = 5.36; t[477] = 2.02, p < .05$ ), and others' approval ( $M_{Women} = 3.87, M_{Men} = 3.56; t[477] = 2.21, p < .05$ ). Despite the emergence of these sex differences, preliminary analyses indicated that the inclusion of sex did not qualify the results reported in the following section. As a result, sex will not be discussed further.

#### *Are Narcissistic Subtypes Associated With Domain-Specific Contingencies of Self-Worth?*

The associations between the narcissistic subtypes and contingencies of self-worth were examined using a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Although hypotheses concerned narcissistic subtypes and contingencies of self-worth, the analyses also included dispositional self-esteem and neuroticism because of their role in previous research concerning contingent self-esteem (e.g., Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). All of the predictor variables were centered for the purpose of testing interactions (Aiken & West, 1991). Preliminary results showed no significant interactions involving self-esteem, so interactions involving this term were trimmed from the final analyses. These regressions were set up hierarchically, with dispositional self-esteem and neuroticism entered as main effects on Step 1, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism entered as main effects on Step 2, and the two-way interactions of neuroticism, grandiose narcissism, and vulnerable narcissism entered on Step 3. The results of these regression analyses are presented in Table 2.

*Physical appearance.* On Step 1, main effects emerged for self-esteem ( $\beta = -.15, p < .001$ ) and neuroticism ( $\beta = .13, p < .01$ ). These results indicate that individuals with lower levels of self-esteem or

**Table 2**

**Hierarchical Multiple Regressions of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Onto Self-Esteem, Neuroticism, Sex, Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism, and Their Interactions**

Variables	Physical Appearance <sup>a</sup>	Competition <sup>b</sup>	Academic Competence <sup>c</sup>	Others' Approval <sup>d</sup>	Family Support <sup>e</sup>	God's Love <sup>f</sup>	Virtue <sup>g</sup>
<i>Step 1</i>							
Self-Esteem	-.15**	-.05	.04	-.31***	.06	.24***	.10*
Neuroticism	.13**	.05	.14**	.15***	.19***	.09*	.07
<i>Step 2</i>							
Grandiose narcissism	-.09*	.20***	-.05	-.22***	-.16***	-.01	-.07
Vulnerable narcissism	.42***	.29***	.27***	.30***	.27***	-.05	.18***
<i>Step 3</i>							
Neuroticism × Grandiose narcissism	.00	-.01	.01	.06	-.05	-.07	-.02
Neuroticism × Vulnerable narcissism	.07	.05	.01	.18***	-.03	.06	-.03
Grandiose narcissism × Vulnerable narcissism	.07	-.05	.08	.03	.01	-.08	-.01

<sup>a</sup>Multiple  $R = .44$ ;  $R^2 = .19$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 16.20$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>b</sup>Multiple  $R = .40$ ;  $R^2 = .16$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 12.59$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>c</sup>Multiple  $R = .28$ ;  $R^2 = .08$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 5.85$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>d</sup>Multiple  $R = .51$ ;  $R^2 = .26$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 23.37$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>e</sup>Multiple  $R = .30$ ;  $R^2 = .09$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 6.82$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>f</sup>Multiple  $R = .27$ ;  $R^2 = .07$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 5.10$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>g</sup>Multiple  $R = .19$ ;  $R^2 = .03$ ;  $F(7, 471) = 2.38$ ,  $p < .05$ .

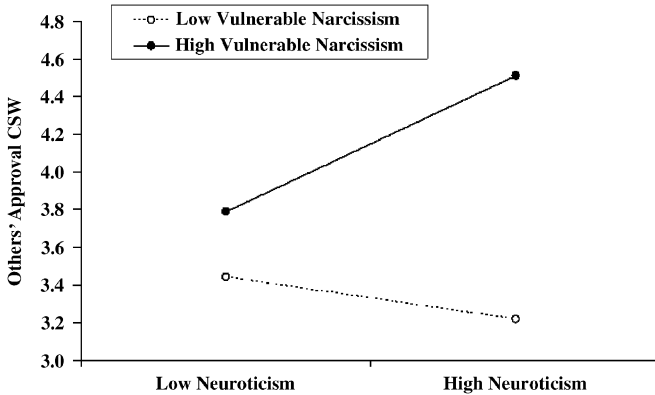
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

higher levels of neuroticism reported higher scores for the physical appearance CSW. On Step 2, main effects emerged for both grandiose narcissism ( $\beta = -.09, p < .05$ ) and vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ). It is important to note that the main effects of the narcissistic subtypes were in opposite directions such that grandiose narcissism was negatively associated with scores on the physical appearance CSW, whereas the main effect of vulnerable narcissism was positive.

*Outdoing others in competition.* Main effects emerged for both grandiose narcissism ( $\beta = .20, p < .001$ ) and vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ) such that individuals reporting higher levels of either narcissistic subtype also tended to report higher scores on the competition CSW. Unlike the results for the physical appearance CSW, the main effects for the narcissistic subtypes were in the same direction for the competition CSW.

*Academic competence.* The only main effect to emerge on Step 1 was for neuroticism ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ) such that higher levels of neuroticism were associated with higher scores on the academic competence CSW. On Step 2, the main effect of vulnerable narcissism emerged ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ) such that individuals reporting higher levels of vulnerable narcissism also tended to report higher scores on the academic competence CSW.

*Others' approval.* On Step 1, main effects emerged for self-esteem ( $\beta = -.31, p < .001$ ) and neuroticism ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ). These results indicate that individuals with lower levels of self-esteem or higher levels of neuroticism tend to report higher scores for the others' approval CSW. On Step 2, main effects also emerged for both grandiose narcissism ( $\beta = -.22, p < .001$ ) and vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ). As with the physical appearance CSW, these main effects were in opposing directions with the effect for grandiose narcissism being negative and the effect for vulnerable narcissism being positive. However, the main effect for vulnerable narcissism was qualified by its interaction with neuroticism,  $\beta = .18, p < .001$ . The predicted values for this interaction are shown in Figure 1. The pattern of this interaction was probed using the simple slopes tests recommended by Aiken and West (1991). These tests found that the slope of the line representing the association between neuroticism



**Figure 1**

Predicted values for the others' approval CSW, illustrating the interaction of vulnerable narcissism and neuroticism at values that are one standard deviation above and below their respective means.

and the others' approval CSW was significant for those who reported high levels of vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = .28, p < .01$ ) but not for those reporting low levels of vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = -.08, ns$ ). This pattern shows that neuroticism was only a significant predictor of the others' approval CSW among those with high levels of vulnerable narcissism.

*Family love and support.* On Step 1, the main effect emerged for neuroticism ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ) such that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism reported higher scores on the family support CSW. On Step 2, main effects emerged for both grandiose narcissism ( $\beta = -.16, p < .001$ ) and vulnerable narcissism ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ). As with the physical appearance and others' approval CSWs, it is important to note that the main effects of grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism were in opposing directions.

*God's love.* Main effects of self-esteem ( $\beta = .24, p < .001$ ) and neuroticism ( $\beta = .09, p < .05$ ) emerged on Step 1. These results indicate that individuals with high levels of self-esteem or high levels of neuroticism reported higher levels of the God's love CSW. The main effects for both narcissistic subtypes failed to reach conventional levels of significance.

*Being a virtuous and moral person.* The main effect of self-esteem ( $\beta = .10, p < .05$ ) emerged on Step 1 such that higher levels of self-esteem were associated with higher scores on the virtue CSW. On Step 2, the main effect of vulnerable narcissism emerged ( $\beta = .18, p < .001$ ) such that higher levels of vulnerable narcissism were associated with higher scores for the virtue CSW.<sup>2</sup>

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine the associations between the narcissistic subtypes and domain-specific contingencies of self-worth. In support of our hypotheses, the narcissistic subtypes differed in their associations with the domains of contingent self-esteem examined in the present study. Vulnerable narcissism was positively associated with an array of domain-specific contingencies of self-esteem (i.e., six of the seven domains included in the CSWS), whereas the results were more complex for grandiose narcissism and included a positive association with one domain (i.e., competition),

2. Factor analyses of the NPI have shown that it possesses a complex structure consisting of three relatively adaptive factors (i.e., Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration) and one maladaptive factor (i.e., Entitlement/Exploitation; Emmons, 1984, 1987). Using the method outlined by Dickinson and Pincus (2003), scores on these NPI factors were used to create an adaptive narcissism subscale (NPI-Adaptive) and a maladaptive narcissism subscale (NPI-Maladaptive). The correlation between the NPI-Adaptive and NPI-Maladaptive subscales was significant,  $r = .49, p < .001$ . Interestingly, the NPI-Adaptive and NPI-Maladaptive subscales differed in the strength of their associations with four of the CSWs: physical appearance ( $r_{NPI-Adaptive} = -.06, ns; r_{NPI-Maladaptive} = .14, p < .01; t[476] = 4.30, p < .001$ ); competition ( $r_{NPI-Adaptive} = .20, p < .001; r_{NPI-Maladaptive} = .27, p < .001; t[476] = 1.85, p < .05$ ); academic competence ( $r_{NPI-Adaptive} = .01, ns; r_{NPI-Maladaptive} = .10, p < .05; t[476] = 1.99, p < .05$ ); and others' approval ( $r_{NPI-Adaptive} = -.26, p < .001; r_{NPI-Maladaptive} = -.03, ns; t[476] = 5.01, p < .001$ ). The correlations for the remaining CSWs (i.e., family love and support, God's love, and being a virtuous and moral person) did not reach conventional levels of significance for either NPI subscale. These results may be viewed as consistent with previous research showing the NPI-Maladaptive subscale to be consistently associated with negative outcomes such as shame, whereas the factors constituting the NPI-Adaptive subscale are primarily associated with positive outcomes such as high levels of self-esteem (e.g., Bosson & Prewitt-Freilino, 2007; Emmons, 1984, 1987; Gramzow & Tangney, 1992; Watson & Biderman, 1993; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984; Watson, Little, Sawrie, & Biderman, 1992).

negative associations with three domains (i.e., physical appearance, others' approval, and family support), and no associations with the remaining three domains (i.e., academic competence, God's love, and virtue).

The differences in the patterns of associations between the narcissistic subtypes suggest the possibility that vulnerable narcissism may be characterized by a form of contingent self-esteem that is relatively global, whereas grandiose narcissism appears to be associated with a form of contingent self-esteem that is rather limited in its scope. The pattern for vulnerable narcissism is consistent with the contention that these individuals tend to seek the approval and validation of others in order to maintain and enhance their self-esteem. This reliance upon external validation may be a result of the conscious feelings of inadequacy and inferiority that are believed to prevent vulnerable narcissists from engaging in the sorts of overt self-enhancement strategies favored by grandiose narcissists. Ironically, their reliance on the evaluations of others may actually foster greater self-esteem instability and make these individuals more vulnerable to negative experiences (e.g., social rejection, failure) when they do not receive the approval from others that they desire (Crocker & Knight, 2005; Crocker & Park, 2004). Thus, this relatively global form of contingent self-esteem, with its emphasis on external validation, may provide at least a partial explanation for the fragility that is believed to characterize the self-esteem of vulnerable narcissists (Pimentel et al., 2006).

In contrast to the straightforward results for vulnerable narcissism, the diversity of associations between grandiose narcissism and the domain-specific self-esteem contingencies may explain why a recent meta-analysis by Bosson and her colleagues (2007) found that grandiose narcissism was not associated with a global measure of contingent self-esteem. That is, grandiose narcissism was positively associated with the competition CSW, negatively associated with those domains that require external validation (e.g., others' approval), and not associated with the remaining domains (e.g., God's love). This suggests that previous studies that used global measures of contingent self-esteem may have inadvertently disguised the complexity of the relationship between grandiose narcissism and contingent self-esteem. The reluctance of grandiose narcissists to base their self-esteem on domains that require some level of approval from others is consistent with previous findings that have shown grandiose narcissists to be far more concerned with gaining the

attention of others than they are with gaining their approval (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Raskin et al., 1991).

There are at least two possible explanations for the negative associations that emerged between grandiose narcissism and the domains of contingent self-esteem that rely on the approval of others. First, grandiose narcissists may simply be reluctant to base their self-esteem on these domains. This reluctance may be at least somewhat adaptive given their ability to employ alternative strategies that may be more attractive to them (e.g., overt self-enhancement) and the problems that grandiose narcissists often experience in their interpersonal relationships (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995, 2005; Rhodewalt & Sorrow, 2003). Second, it is possible that grandiose narcissists may actually base their self-esteem upon the validation of others but refuse to admit this on self-report instruments. This refusal may be the result of grandiose narcissists attempting to satisfy their desire for autonomy and social dominance that may be threatened by admitting their need for approval. This possibility warrants consideration in future studies in light of recent findings that suggest that grandiose narcissists may be responsive to social integration (Rhodewalt, 2005).

The narcissistic subtypes may also be associated with domains of contingent self-esteem that were not adequately measured by the CSWS. This instrument only measures the seven domains that college students commonly use as a basis for their self-esteem and is clearly not exhaustive in its coverage of domains upon which self-esteem may be based (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). One potential direction for future research would be to examine the degree to which both forms of narcissism are associated with basing self-esteem on the sorts of domains that are not included in the CSWS. For example, given that grandiose narcissism is often associated with higher levels of agency and lower levels of communion (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007; Campbell & Green, 2007; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002), it may be important for future studies to incorporate more domains that are relevant to agency (e.g., social dominance, authority, wealth). By extending the domains that are examined, we may gain an even better understanding of the domains upon which both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists base their feelings of self-worth.

The differences in associations between the narcissistic subtypes and domain-specific self-esteem contingencies also suggest the possibility that these forms of narcissism may differ in their

relationships with other models of fragile self-esteem. Although it was initially thought that grandiose narcissism would be directly associated with each of the models of fragile self-esteem (Kernis, 2003; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), the results of recent studies examining these relationships have produced results that are, at best, mixed in terms of their support for this idea (see Bosson et al., 2007 for a review). The inconsistency of these results may be explained by grandiose narcissists possessing a form of fragile self-esteem that is more limited in its scope than has been previously suggested. For example, despite a recent meta-analysis showing that grandiose narcissism is not associated with overall levels of self-esteem instability (Bosson et al., 2007), the self-esteem of grandiose narcissists does appear to be highly reactive to failures in their daily lives (Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Myers, 2007). In contrast, relatively little is known about the link between vulnerable narcissism and other models of fragile self-esteem. We hope that researchers will begin including measures of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in their studies so that we may gain a more nuanced understanding of the forms of fragile self-esteem that characterize these narcissistic subtypes.

Important similarities also emerged from the present study for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. One of these similarities was that neither subtype was associated with the God's love CSW. The absence of associations is interesting because previous studies have shown at least tentative links between grandiose narcissism and certain aspects of religiosity (Watson, Jones, & Morris, 2004; Wink, Dillon, & Fay, 2005). Further research will be necessary to gain a better understanding of the processes that link narcissism and religiosity.

A more important similarity for grandiose and vulnerable narcissism was that both subtypes were positively associated with the competition CSW. This may suggest that the tendency to base one's self-esteem on outperforming others may have its origin in the common core of narcissism which consists of feelings of entitlement and a willingness to exploit others (see Watson et al., 1997, for complementary results). For grandiose narcissists, this result is consistent with previous research showing them to be highly competitive (e.g., Ryckman et al., 1994; Watson et al., 1997). The fact that grandiose narcissists base their self-esteem upon competition would seem to suggest that their state self-esteem should vary in accordance with their standing in relation to their peers. In fact, recent research has found that the state self-esteem of grandiose narcissists is

associated with their recent social comparisons (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004).

It is important to note that basing one's self-esteem upon competition does require a certain type of external validation but that this domain of contingent self-esteem is associated with more interpersonal hostility than is found for any of the other domains (Zeigler-Hill, 2006b). Interestingly, the similar associations of the narcissistic subtypes with the competition CSW may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that both subtypes also share the hostile interpersonal style that characterizes the competition CSW (Zeigler-Hill, 2007). Thus, although both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists rely upon the validation of others to some degree, vulnerable narcissists appear to be primarily interested in pleasing others in order to receive the approval they need to regulate their self-esteem, whereas grandiose narcissists appear to be focused upon gaining the respect and admiration of those around them without being concerned with how much others like them.

### CONCLUSION

The results of the present study provide additional support for the distinction between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism by showing that the narcissistic subtypes differ in their associations with domain-specific contingencies. Vulnerable narcissism was associated with contingent self-esteem across an array of domains. This suggests that vulnerable narcissists may possess a relatively global form of contingent self-esteem. In contrast, the associations between grandiose narcissism and the domains of contingent self-esteem were more complex and suggest that grandiose narcissists value the role that competition plays in the maintenance and enhancement of self-esteem but devalue domains that require the approval of others. Thus, it appears that both forms of narcissism are clearly sensitive to domains requiring external validation. However, the subtypes differ in that vulnerable narcissism was associated with a tendency to base their self-esteem on those domains requiring the approval of others, whereas grandiose narcissism was linked with a reluctance to do so. The present results, as well as those of other recent studies (e.g., Bosson et al., 2007; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2007), suggest that the fragile self-esteem of narcissists may be more complex than has been previously proposed.

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