



## Homogenous scales of narcissism: Using the psychological entitlement scale, interpersonal exploitativeness scale, and narcissistic grandiosity scale to study narcissism<sup>☆</sup>



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### ABSTRACT

We examined the extent to which the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES), the Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale (IES), and the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (NGS), when taken together, assess a broader construct or three distinct facets. In Study 1, a principal components analysis was conducted, demonstrating that the PES, IES, and NGS should be considered three separate traits rather than one overall construct. In Study 2, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that the most efficient and best fitting model contained 8 items of the PES (dropping a reverse-scored item), the 6-item IES, and a revised 6-item model of the NGS. Study 3 replicated the CFA and examined the correlates of the PES, IES, and NGS with measures of narcissism and related measures such as empathic concern and self-esteem. Implications for future assessment of narcissism traits are discussed.

There has been growing interest in understanding narcissism in recent years. As this interest in narcissism has grown, there has been a corresponding increase in the development of measures that assess narcissism and specific narcissistic traits. Some (e.g., Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Smith, McCarthy, & Zapsolski, 2009) suggest that examining homogenous narcissistic traits might be useful because each trait may differentially predict outcomes. For example, some aspects of narcissism (e.g., grandiosity) are positively associated with mental health while other aspects (e.g., entitlement) are negatively associated with mental health (Brown et al., 2009).

There are currently several measures available for assessing homogenous traits. For example, Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004) created the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004) as a stand-alone measure of entitlement and Brunell et al. (2013) created the Interpersonal Exploitativeness Scale (IES) as a stand-alone measure of exploitativeness. More recently, Crowe, Carter, Campbell, and Miller (2016) validated a measure of grandiosity (the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale; NGS), first developed by Rosenthal, Hooley, and Steshenko (2007), as a singular, homogenous trait associated with narcissism. Crowe et al. found that abbreviated versions of the measure (i.e., a 13-item version and a 6-item version) had strong reliability and performed similarly to the full 16-item measure.

Our purpose for the present studies was to examine the extent to

which the PES, IES, and NGS are three separate, distinct constructs or represent one broader construct of narcissism. The possibility that these scales represent a latent broader construct stems from research showing that exploitativeness, entitlement, and grandiosity tend to be correlated (e.g., Brown et al., 2009; Brunell et al., 2013; Brunell & Buelow, 2017; Buelow & Brunell, 2014). Thus, the present studies sought to examine (a) the factor structure of these homogenous measures, and (b) their relationship to other measures of narcissism and related personality variables as well as mental health characteristics. To this point, some (i.e., Miller, Price, & Campbell, 2012) have argued that the NGS and PES do not sufficiently account for the variance in narcissism. We address this point by including an additional measure (the IES) and by assessing the extent to which the NPI accounts for variance of relevant measures above and beyond the homogenous measures.

One reason researchers may be interested in understanding the role of specific narcissistic traits is that it may be valuable to know when the darker traits of narcissism (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness) or the seemingly harmless traits (e.g., grandiosity) are associated with behavior. For example, in an investigation of narcissism and cheating (Brown et al., 2009, Study 3), psychological entitlement (i.e., the PES) predicted deliberative cheating (intentionally engaging in misconduct) and grandiosity (i.e., the NGS) predicted rationalized cheating (situations in which people do not explicitly intend to cheat but are able to explain away their behavior) because psychological entitlement is

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linked to antisocial behavior and overtly rejecting social expectations for behavior, whereas narcissistic grandiosity is linked to having a self-serving mindset that is linked to rationalizing away negative behavior.

Other scholars have also sought to examine the role of specific narcissistic traits. For example, Brunell et al. (2013) found that the IES, but not the PES, was linked to resource destruction during a commons dilemma, a situation wherein people share a common renewable resource. Their exploitative behavior during the task demonstrated a lack of cooperativeness over time and taking too much of the resource at a time to allow it to become adequately replenished. In a study of moral reasoning, Daddis and Brunell (2015) found that psychological entitlement and interpersonal exploitativeness were both linked to more reasoning about the self than a concern for others, but these dimensions diverged in predicting judgments about whether certain behaviors were acceptable or not (e.g., texting in class), and why it was acceptable or not. For example, people who were more entitled reasoned that this behavior was not acceptable because it would distract them from their own learning, whereas people who were more exploitative reasoned that texting in class was acceptable because it concerned personal choice. Neither were likely to reason that texting in class might be distracting to others.

To our knowledge, only a handful of studies have considered the PES, IES, and NGS jointly. Buelow and Brunell (2014) included grandiosity, psychological entitlement, and exploitativeness in their assessment of risk. They found that the primary predictor of risk-taking behaviors was narcissistic grandiosity. Specifically, the NGS predicted reports of ethical, financial, and social risk-taking as well as reports of aggressive behavior and drug use. Exploitativeness predicted ethical and financial risk-taking and reports of risk-taking in sports. In a study of risk-taking behavior, exploitativeness was a predictor of poorer performance on the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT; Bechara, Damasio, Damasio, & Anderson, 1994), a test of affective and deliberative decision-making (Brunell & Buelow, 2017).

In a study of college student volunteerism, each narcissistic trait predicted different motivations for volunteering (Brunell, Tumblyn, & Buelow, 2014; Study 2). Exploitativeness was positively associated with the motivation to volunteer to gain new learning experiences or offer opportunities to exercise one's knowledge, skills, and abilities that might otherwise be underutilized. Entitlement, by contrast, was positively associated with the career (resume-building and acquiring new skills) and social (expanding one's social network and to make new connections) motives. Put another way, entitlement and exploitativeness had to do with benefiting the self rather than helping others.

## 1. Present studies

We report three studies that examine the use of the PES, IES, and NGS in the investigation of narcissism. The aim of Study 1 was to examine the factor structure of these three measures to determine if they are three separate traits or should be considered one broader trait. We conducted a principal components analysis on the NGS, PES, and IES to examine this question. Study 2 followed-up on this initial analysis with a confirmatory factor analysis, comparing model fits across competing models based on Study 1 results as well as condensed versions of the NGS (see Crowe et al., 2016). Lastly, the aim for Study 3 was to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of these measures. We examined associations between the NGS, PES, and IES and other established measures of trait narcissism (as opposed to clinical narcissism or Narcissistic Personality Disorder) well as constructs related to narcissism (e.g., empathy, mental health, extraversion). We also assess the extent to which the NPI accounts for variance above and beyond the three homogenous traits. Taken together, these studies aim to understand the extent to which the independent narcissistic traits represent one construct, remove redundancy among the items, and improve efficiency for psychologists seeking to investigate these traits.

## 2. Study 1: methods

### 2.1. Participants

Three hundred Introductory Psychology students (155 males, 141 females, and 4 individuals who did not indicate their sex) at a regional campus of a large Midwestern University participated in the study in exchange for partial course credit. Participants were 19.77 years old on average ( $SD = 3.50$ ), and 74.8% self-identified as Caucasian.

### 3. Materials and procedure

The study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board, and all participants provided informed consent. Participants completed all measures in a randomized order as part of a larger study. All participants were debriefed at the end of the study.

The IES is a 6-item measure that examines the extent to which individuals feel comfortable readily taking advantage of others. A sample item is, "vulnerable people are fair game." Responses are made using 7-point scales, ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*) (Brunell et al., 2013). Total scores are computed by summing scores across the six items ( $M = 13.35$ ,  $SD = 7.45$ ,  $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

The PES consists of nine statements, including "I deserve more things in my life." Responses are made using 7-point scales, ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*) (Campbell et al., 2004). Total scores are computed by summing responses across the nine items ( $M = 28.02$ ,  $SD = 10.47$ ,  $\alpha = 0.87$ ).

The NGS consists of 16 grandiose adjectives, such as "superior." Participants respond on a 7-point scale, indicating the extent to which the adjectives are self-descriptive (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*) (Rosenthal et al., 2007). Total scores are computed by summing scores across the 16 items ( $M = 49.53$ ,  $SD = 19.43$ ,  $\alpha = 0.96$ ).

### 4. Study 1: results and discussion

A principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted in SPSS, and results of oblique rotations are reported. As we had a relatively large sample size and our three variables were correlated with one another, we opted for a PCA rather than an exploratory factor analysis. To determine which components to retain, a parallel analysis was conducted on a randomly generated dataset with 31 variables. Components in the PCA were retained if the eigenvalue was greater than the corresponding eigenvalue in the parallel analysis (O'Connor, 2000). In addition, Velicer's minimum average partial (MAP) test (Velicer, 1976) was conducted to confirm the number of components retained. Table 1 includes the variable means, standard deviations, eigenvalues, and component loadings. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure indicated the analysis was acceptable ( $KMO = 0.941$ ), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant,  $\chi^2 = 6439.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Three components met criteria for retention and accounted for 59.75% of the total variance (Table 1). Supplemental tables include both the scree plot and the results of Velicer's MAP test. The first component included all of the NGS items, with factor loadings ranging from 0.599 (Item 15) to 0.835 (Item 16). The second component included all of the IES items, with factor loadings ranging from 0.675 (Item 2) to 0.904 (Item 6). Component 3 included all of the PES items, except for Item 5, with factor loadings ranging from 0.593 (Item 9) to 0.822 (Item 7). The principal components analysis was re-run with PES Item 5 included but not reverse scored, and no differences emerged in the factor loadings (i.e., three components again emerged).

The results of the principal components analysis suggest the measures comprise separate components rather than loading on a single, common factor. This result provides evidence that the IES, PES, and NGS consistently measure separate but distinct facets of narcissism.

That the PES Item 5 did not load with the other PES items might be that this item was subject to systematic measurement error due to

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