A brief tale of the two faces of narcissism and the two facets of pride

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ABSTRACT

Existing research suggests that narcissism is moderately associated with authentic pride and weakly associated with hubristic pride. In the current paper, we investigate whether the differentiation of the two faces of narcissism (i.e., admiration and rivalry), provides an alternate account of the relationships between these variables. We hypothesised that such differentiation would result in a contradictory pattern of relations with authentic pride, whilst both narcissistic strategies would be positively correlated with hubristic pride. The study was conducted on an adult sample using the Authentic and Hubristic Pride Scale and Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using a structural equation model, which was well fitted to the data. The results supported our expectations regarding the mutual suppression effect of the two faces of narcissism on the relation with authentic pride as well as the common direction of the relations with the hubristic pride.

1. Introduction

Modern times are frequently described as facing a narcissism epidemic (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), which emphasizes that the problem with narcissists and their behaviour is an ongoing issue for everyday functioning of modern societies; however, research suggests that there is a small decline in the overall narcissism level over the past 20 years (between 1990 and 2010; Wetzel et al., in press). Despite this decline, understanding narcissism is still an important issue which is expressed in a growing realm of research (e.g., the seminal work of Raskin & Terry, 1988; according to Google Scholar was cited 272 times just in 2017).

Within the literature, two forms of narcissism can be identified: grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Wink, 1991). Grandiose narcissism is interpreted as a personality trait in the general population, whilst vulnerable narcissism is associated more with clinical manifestations of narcissism (Cain, Pincus, & Ansell, 2008). Moreover, grandiose narcissism is associated with greater social poise and self-assurance, while vulnerable narcissism, as the label suggests, is associated with emotional sensitivity (Wink, 1991). Since we are interested in personality, we decided to study the general population and investigate grandiose narcissism only. Thus, whenever we mention narcissism in this manuscript, we refer to grandiose narcissism.

1.1. Two faces of narcissism

Narcissism can be interpreted as a construct with two faces: the bright face of admiration representing grandiose and the dark face of rivalry representing the antagonistic aspects of narcissism (Back et al., 2013). Despite this distinction, the majority of existing research focuses mostly on the grandiose dimension (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2011), regardless of the fact that the antagonistic aspect of narcissism has a different impact on underlying behavioural processes (Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015). Both dimensions are composed of three basic components: affective-motivational, cognitive, and behavioural; for admiration these components are striving for uniqueness, grandiose fantasies, and charmingness, respectively; for rivalry these components are striving for supremacy, devaluation of others, and aggressiveness, respectively (Back et al., 2013).

This disentanglement, which takes into account both bright and dark characteristics of grandiose narcissism, clarified many existing ambiguities, such as why the correlation between narcissism and self-esteem is not as high as expected; Back et al. (2013) argued that it was due to the suppression effect resulting from a different pattern of relationships with admiration (positive) and rivalry (negative). Also, the two faces of narcissism turned out to have a different nomological network in relation to basic values and personality traits (Rogoza, 2018).
2. Current study

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the differential impact of the two faces of narcissism, namely, narcissistic admiration and rivalry on the two types of pride: authentic and hubristic. We hypothesise (1) a contradictory direction of the relation between authentic pride with admiration (positively) and rivalry (negatively related); and (2) to provide support for the hypothesis that narcissism is ultimately self-focused, which will be expressed in positive relations of both narcissistic faces with hubristic pride (albeit with stronger relations for rivalry).

1.3. Two faces of narcissism and the two facets of pride

Although research on the relation between narcissism and the two facets of pride has already been conducted (Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007), in the current paper we investigate whether the differentiation of the two faces of narcissism shed a new light on these observed relationships. Initially, narcissism was predicted to be highly related to hubristic pride, but according to previous research, it was linked to both facets (the relation was moderate, and higher for authentic pride; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Research has already demonstrated admiration and rivalry’s utility in disentangling the relations between narcissism and other variables (e.g., personality traits and basic values; Back et al., 2013; Rogoza, Wyszyńska, et al., 2016). Thus, the existing research investigating the relationship between narcissism (with more traditional conceptualizations and measures of narcissism) and pride, suggesting a weak relation with authentic pride and low relation with hubristic pride (Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007), may be somewhat misleading. The relations with basic personality traits also seems to support this claim as general narcissism is related to both high extraversion and low agreeableness (Vernon et al., 2008), while authentic pride is related to high extraversion and high agreeableness (Tracy & Robins, 2007); thus, the differentiation of admiration, which is related primarily with high extraversion and rivalry, which is related primarily with low agreeableness (Rogoza, Wyszyńska, et al., 2016) might be more informative. More precisely, similarly as in the case of self-esteem (Back et al., 2013) we expect a suppression effect between admiration (positive), rivalry (negative), and authentic pride, which would be responsible for the inflation of the correlation strength in studies which did not differentiate the two faces of narcissism (Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Moreover, because narcissism is to do with on oneself (albeit rivalry is even more straightforward about this particular aspect; Back et al., 2013; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) we expect that both the dark (with stronger) and the bright side of narcissism (with a weaker positive relation) will be related with hubristic pride. This would be consistent with the results of Cheng, Tracy, and Henrich (2010) who found that the two facets of pride are associated with different routes to social status. Specifically, authentic pride was primarily associated with prestige (status based on recognition of skills, knowledge, or accomplishment), while hubristic pride was primarily associated with dominance (status based on intimidation and coercion). Moreover, authentic pride was also correlated, albeit weakly, with dominance, while hubristic pride was weakly negatively correlated with prestige. Because narcissistic admiration is defined as the tendency to approach social status through self-promotion (e.g., displays of success or competence), and narcissistic rivalry is conceptualized as an antagonistic and defensive means of avoiding failure (e.g., displays of aggression; Back et al., 2013), there are clear conceptual similarities between admiration and prestige, and rivalry and dominance.
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