Narcissism and Self-Enhancement: Self-Presentation, Affect, and the Moderating Role of Contingencies of Self-Worth

Submitted by

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Abstract

Narcissists typically present themselves in self-enhancing ways to gain validation (through positive social appraisals) of grandiose, yet uncertain self-views. Using e-mail, Studies 1 and 2 investigated several intra- and interpersonal variables that may influence narcissists' self-presentational behaviour. University students rated themselves on self domains requiring either external validation (e.g., attractiveness) or internal validation (e.g., morality), after being randomly assigned to be either accountable or non-accountable to an evaluative audience for their self-ratings (Study 1), to present their self-ratings to either a single or multiple person evaluative audience (Study 2), and to expect to present their self-ratings to either a high or low status evaluative audience (Studies 1 and 2). Results suggested that when degree of external self-worth contingency (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) was high, narcissists were insensitive to strategic self-presentational requirements, presenting themselves in a typically self-enhancing manner on external domains when accountable and when presenting to a multiple person audience. Non-narcissists showed more contextual sensitivity when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, and were more modest when these social contextual variables were present. Participants in Study 3 were given bogus positive or negative personality feedback on either their moral virtue or competitive spirit. Narcissists reported greater anger after receiving negative feedback, while also responding to negative feedback with inflated self-presentations. A key finding was that the combination of a high degree of self-worth contingency and negative feedback resulted in increases in self-reported

depression and drops in state self-esteem in narcissists. Results suggest that narcissists are chronically vigilant for self-enhancement opportunities, but may be insensitive to social constraints and norms in their efforts to construct their grandiose identities. Narcissists are especially vigilant for self-enhancement opportunities on contingent domains, yet when negative feedback is received in these domains where self-worth is staked, depression and lowered self-esteem may result.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of this thesis, this thesis contain no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree of diploma.

No other person's work had been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

As the supervisor of this thesis, Dr. Arthur A. Stukas made important contributions on a conceptual and theoretical level, and also in the research design and analyses. However, for the most part, I designed and conducted the experimental work, analysed the data, and developed all the written work.

All the research reported in this thesis was approved by the La Trobe University Faculty of Science, Technology, and Engineering Human Research Ethics Committee (Study 1: FHEC03/R81; Study 2: FHEC05/R80; Study 3: FHEC04/R72).

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CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 An Introduction to Narcissism

The term narcissism can be traced back to the mythical Greek character of Narcissus, a figure who, according to the myth, fell in love with his own image. Briefly stated, the myth tells the tale of Narcissus, a beautiful youth who heartlessly rejected the romantic advances of the nymph Echo. As a punishment for this rejection, Nemesis condemned Narcissus to stare at his own reflection high in a mountain pool. Through the passing of time, Narcissus came to fall deeply in love with his reflection; however, every time he sought to embrace it, the water rippled, and his image became fragmented. Unable to attain his perfect image, Narcissus pined away and changed into the flower that bears his name to this day.

Many of the character traits evident in Narcissus have now come to represent what writers in psychology have termed narcissism. Indeed, with his self-absorption, lack of empathy, and grandiose self-image, Narcissus embodies many of the characteristics that are now commonly construed as representing the narcissistic individual. It was Havelock Ellis (1898) who first articulated these characteristics in psychological parlance, followed soon thereafter by Freud's (1914/1957) seminal paper *On Narcissism*, where he cast narcissists as individuals with a strong libidinal investment in the self who direct their love inward. These early writings have inspired a considerable clinical literature, with

a multitude of authors attempting to elucidate the many and highly complex aspects of narcissism, including measurement (e.g., Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Hall, 1979; Wink, 1991), treatment (e.g., Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2004; Sperry, 1995), aetiology (e.g., Fernando, 1998), and phenomenology (e.g., Millon, 1996).

Yet far be it for narcissism to be owned solely by psychology, it has also enjoyed popularity in literary (Berman, 1990; Schapiro, 1983), as well as social-cultural circles (e.g., Lasch, 1979; Stern, 1980), where it has been used to explain the increasing degree of self-absorption apparent in modern western society. Now at the dawn of the twenty first century, narcissism is enjoying a continued growth in interest, both as a clinical and social entity, but ever-increasingly, as a topic for research. In short, narcissism is a construct with wide appeal.

1.1.1 *Clinical Perspectives on the Development of Narcissism*

Various clinical theories exist regarding the development of narcissism. Millon, Davis, Millon, Escovar, and Meagher (2000), taking a social learning perspective, describe narcissism as resulting from parental overvaluation, where the child is given overindulgent and extravagant praise and reward that is incommensurate with his or her actual achievements. The child subsequently develops a grandiose sense of self that is not rooted in an objective reality, but instead, is based on the inflated social feedback of the parent. Horney (1939) presents a similar account, noting that parents transfer their own ambitions onto the child, coming to regard him or her as special and unique, thereby developing

in the child a sense that he or she is loved for his or her fantasised qualities, and not for his or her true self. Children with such parental experiences come to learn that they are extraordinary human beings, carrying this grandiose self-image into adulthood, while maintaining the belief that their every movement should be met with applause and praise from their social partners (Millon, 1996).

Although the parental overvaluation hypothesis has gained considerable clinical acceptance over recent times (see also Beck et al., 2004; Livesley, Jang, Jackson, & Vernon, 1993), clinical accounts of the development of narcissism have traditionally been based around psychodynamic formulations. The two most prominent psychodynamic models of the narcissistic personality have come from Kohut (1972) and Kernberg (1975). Central to both of these models is the role of early childhood experience in shaping the narcissist's grandiose character structure. Kohut contended that narcissism is a normal developmental milestone, with grandiosity being a fundamental aspect of positive childhood development. As the normal child matures, they come to develop a more realistic sense of self, primarily through parental feedback (what Kohut termed *mirroring*), and also, by becoming witness to their parents' flaws and limitations (what Kohut termed *idealisation*). Pathological narcissism, as Kohut deemed it, arises when the child is starved of mirroring and idealisation opportunities, usually as a result of unempathetic parents.

Kernberg (1975) provides a somewhat different perspective on the development of narcissism, although he also concurs that narcissism is borne out of parental neglect. Kernberg asserts that narcissistic grandiosity stems from oral

rage, a product of emotional deprivation from an indifferent and covertly spiteful mother. In the context of this emotionally deprived environment, some unique attribute or skill possessed by the child fills them with a sense of being special or unique, thus providing them with an escape in the face of their indifferent and emotionally cold mother. This sense of uniqueness and grandiosity acts as a protective shield for the child, sheltering them from the distress of their infant reality (Sperry, 1995).

This review has neither the space nor scope to fully disentangle the many perspectives and postulations that make up the psychodynamic theorising on narcissism (for a detailed review see Akhtar & Thompson, 1982). What does become apparent when reading psychodynamic accounts however, is that they appear to lack a cohesive, clearly delineated, and mutually agreed upon definition of just what narcissism actually constitutes. As Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) note, psychodynamic formulations offer vague and often contradictory definitions of narcissism, a point which may have contributed to the delay in psychology's understanding of the narcissistic character. Emmons (1987) is more specific, stating that it has been psychology’s reliance on the empirically untestable assumptions of psychodynamic formulations (but see Shulman & Ferguson, 1988) that has delayed a systematic research program designed to map out the character structure of the narcissist. More recent times however, have seen a turning point in the search for empirically based knowledge on narcissism, largely brought on by the inclusion of narcissistic personality disorder

in the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-III*; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1980).

1.1.2 Narcissistic Personality Disorder: A Definition

The DSM-IV (APA, 1994) describes the essential features of narcissism as a grandiose self-image, a lack of empathy, and an excessive need for admiration. Narcissists possess strong feelings of self-importance and uniqueness, and habitually overestimate their abilities and accomplishments. They are pre-occupied with fantasies of unlimited individual success, power, beauty, and brilliance, and hold notions that they can only be understood by, or associate with, high status people.

Narcissists are also exhibitionistic, requiring constant admiration from others, and may react negatively if such admiration is not received. Indeed, with their pervasive sense of entitlement, narcissists assume that others will see them in the same grandiose light as they see themselves. If criticism is encountered, they often respond with feelings of rage, shame, and humiliation. Narcissists also experience significant interpersonal difficulties, arising from their persistent need for admiration, entitlement, and favourable treatment, without feeling the need to reciprocate. Such interpersonal difficulties are compounded by narcissists' overt behaviour, which is commonly arrogant and haughty, stemming largely from a sense of personal superiority. Finally, a lack of empathy means that narcissists have difficulty in recognising the feelings and desires of others, and may fail to

recognise situations where self-promotion is inappropriate. Table 1 details the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Table 1

DSM-IV (APA, 1994) Diagnostic Criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder

A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:
1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognised as superior without commensurate achievements);
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love;
3. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions);
4. Requires excessive admiration;
5. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favourable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations;
6. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends;
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognise or identify with the feelings and needs of others;
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her;
9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes;

One of the most interesting aspects of the narcissist outlined by DSM-IV (APA, 1994) is that invariably, his or her self-esteem is very fragile. Underlying the narcissist's grandiose exterior is a frail and vulnerable inner self. In response, the narcissist attempts to shore-up and validate his or her sense of self-worth by seeking and expecting constant admiration from his or her social partners (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Thus, the emerging portrait of the narcissist is of a person who is intensely invested in receiving highly positive appraisals and admiration from others, and indeed, becomes reliant on such input for his or her sense of self-worth.

1.1.3 The Measurement of Narcissism

The conceptual definition of narcissism provided by DSM-IV (APA, 1994) has opened the door for researchers, particularly those from social and personality psychology, to engage in systematic research efforts on narcissism. The diagnostic criteria set out by DSM-IV have essentially served as a phenomenological template for research attempting to delineate the dynamics of the narcissistic personality. The empirical efforts of these researchers have also been greatly facilitated by the development of several self-report scales designed to measure narcissism.

The most common scale used by personality and social psychologists to measure narcissism has been the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). The NPI was constructed around the DSM-III (APA, 1980) criteria for narcissistic personality disorder, and has been shown to capture both extreme

(i.e., pathological) narcissism (e.g., Prifitera & Ryan, 1984), as well as less extreme forms reflecting narcissism as a personality trait (Emmons, 1987). The NPI therefore conceptualises narcissism as occurring on a continuum between normality and abnormality, with narcissism being a personality trait that is possessed by individuals to varying degrees. In the current research, the terms narcissists and non-narcissists refer to people with relatively high or low scores on the NPI. This use of terminology is consistent with other research in social and personality psychology (e.g., Wallace & Baumeister, 2004).

Equipped with both a conceptual (i.e., the DSM-IV criteria) and operational (i.e., the NPI) definition (Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, Elliot, & Gregg, 2002), personality and social psychologists have pushed ahead in their efforts for empirical knowledge on narcissism, and along the way, developed an extensive and ever-developing research literature.

1.2 Narcissism: Perspectives from Social and Personality Psychology

Discussion has thus far focused on the characteristics of the narcissistic self; that is, a self that is highly positive and grandiose, yet fragile, and reliant on social feedback to maintain a positive self-image. Yet these characteristics represent far more than a static set of personality traits. To gain a truly rich understanding of the narcissistic personality, one must examine the underlying processes that give rise to such a personality. In this regard, the view on narcissism put forth here is informed by the formulation of narcissism outlined by

Morf and Rhodewalt (2001), a formulation that casts narcissism as a dynamic self-regulatory personality process.

1.2.1 *Process Models of Personality*

The central tenet behind process models of personality is that personality is constructed and maintained through a dynamic interaction between the person and his or her environment (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Of particular interest are the intra- and interpersonal self-regulatory strategies that people use to bring themselves in line with their identity goals (Schlenker, 1985; Swann, 1985). By actively manipulating their intra- and interpersonal worlds, people aim to create their desired identity, both within their own minds, and within the minds of their social interaction partners. The process model of self and personality therefore holds that people are not passive social agents responding mechanistically to their social environments (J. D. Brown, 1998), but rather, actively construct and manipulate their environments in order to achieve their identity goals.

Self-Identification theory (Schlenker, 1986) offers a useful perspective from which to view people's attempts to achieve their identity goals. Schlenker states that self-identification is the process of showing oneself to be a particular type of person, thereby specifying one's identity. This task can be achieved privately, via reflection and contemplation on oneself, or publicly, by presenting oneself in a strategic manner to one's social audience. Of key importance is the idea that people work towards achieving those identities that are the most personally beneficial. In other words, people aim to construct identities that best

serve their personal goals and values (i.e., their desired identities), and this construction is achieved through a dynamic interaction between the person, the environment, and a public audience.

1.2.2 *A Process Model of Narcissism*

Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) note that their conceptualisation of narcissism shares much in common with self-identification theory. Indeed, using a framework strongly informed by self-identification theory, Morf and Rhodewalt state that narcissism is best understood as a personality process, consisting of a system of dynamic cognitive, affective, and behavioural self-regulatory strategies, which function either at the intra- or interpersonal level. It is proposed that these self-regulatory strategies are tactics that narcissists employ in an attempt to construct and maintain their desired self-image, an image that is grossly positive and grandiose. At the interpersonal level, narcissists strategically interact with their social partners in an attempt to display their personal excellence and greatness, thereby specifying their desired identity to their social audience (what may be broadly construed as self-presentational behaviour; Baumeister, 1982), but also, to themselves. Narcissists also use this self-presentational behaviour for the purpose of eliciting positive, self-affirming appraisals from their interaction partners, in an attempt to garner social validation of their grandiose self-views.

Yet narcissists' self-regulatory activities are not limited to interpersonal processes. Although narcissistic self-regulation is overtly manifested in strategic social behaviour towards interaction partners, self-regulation can also be found in

more covert, intrapersonal processes. These intrapersonal processes are strategies that occur without the presence of a social audience, and involve efforts by narcissists to construct internal models and perceptions of their experiences that serve to validate their grandiose self-perceptions (Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002).

Narcissists therefore have a diverse arsenal of self-regulatory strategies that are designed for a common purpose - to manipulate their social and intrapersonal worlds so as to create and sustain the grandiose sense of self that they desire. This is a process that Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) describe as motivated self-construction. If this self-construction is deemed a motivated process, just what motives are involved in building the narcissist's grandiose self? Or put another way, what motives drive the narcissist's self-regulatory strategies?

1.3 Narcissism and Motivational Composition

It has so far been established that the narcissist's existence is characterised by a quest to achieve a grandiose self, a self to be adored by both the narcissist and his or her social audience; and that this self is constructed through self-regulatory means. Yet to understand what gives drive to these self-regulatory efforts, a close inspection of the narcissist's motivational composition is required. This analysis will reveal that the narcissistic self, specifically, his or her self-constructive efforts, are profoundly influenced by motivational processes.

This of course is not a new idea, given the voluminous literature indicating that an individual's sense of self and identity is constructed and maintained within a motivational framework (e.g., J. D. Brown, 1986; Sedikides & Strube, 1995; Swann, Bosson, & Pelham, 2002; Trope, 1980). In regards to narcissism, the two most commonly implicated motives in identity formation and maintenance processes are self-verification and self-enhancement.

The self-verification motive refers to people's desire to confirm and maintain the consistency of their existing self-conceptions, be they positive (Swann, 1987) or negative (Swann, Wenzlaff, Krull, & Pelham, 1992). The self-enhancement motive refers to people's desire to enhance and maintain the positivity of their self-views (J. D. Brown & Dutton, 1995b). Both motives influence people's self-views, either making them more positive (i.e., self-enhancement), or maintaining their consistency (i.e., self-verification). The nature of a person's self-view will therefore be highly dependent upon which of these motives permeate most strongly within that particular individual. The narcissistic self is no different, although as will be discovered, narcissists differ from other people in that their preferred motives may permeate too strongly in their self-constructive efforts, which may result in significant social and intrapsychic costs.

1.3.1 *Self-Verification: The Quest for Consistency*

Self-verification theory evolved from the tradition of self-consistency theories (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Lecky, 1945; Secord & Backman, 1965), and argues that people are motivated to maintain the consistency of their self-

concept. In order to maintain this consistency, people preferentially seek social feedback that confirms their self-conceptions, thus making their self-concept more stable and enduring. Although self-consistency theorists essentially argue that people seek consistency for its own sake (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992), the self-verification perspective goes a step further by providing a theoretical justification for people's desire for consistency.

Self-verification proposes that people strive to confirm and maintain the consistency of their self-conceptions because such consistency affords them prediction and control over their social environments (Swann, 1987). By displaying stable and consistent self-conceptions or identities to their interaction partners, people are able to bring their interaction partners to treat them in accordance with these self-conceptions (de La Ronde & Swann, 1998). People want others to see them as they see themselves. People are then better able to navigate their social worlds because they are in a position to predict how their interaction partners will treat them both now and in the future. Stable self-concepts therefore play a crucial role in interpreting experiences, guiding social behaviour, predicting future events, and generally allowing a person to make sense of the social world in which he or she exists (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993).

Self-conceptions are essentially the lenses through which people view themselves and their world. It can therefore be argued that any substantial changes or instability in a person's self-concept would result in a significant reorganisation of how he or she makes sense of his or her social environment

(Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003). In accordance with this line of reasoning, it is possible to see why people are motivated to maintain the consistency of their self-conceptions, given the ramifications that inconsistency may create.

Swann and colleagues (e.g., de La Ronde & Swann, 1998; Giesler, Josephs, & Swann, 1996; Swann et al., 2002; Swann & Ely, 1984; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987) have headed the empirical investigation of self-verification. Indeed, more than two decades of research has provided both support and elaboration of self-verification theory. In traditional methods testing the theory, participants are presented with a variety of feedback options, with the typical outcome measure being a participant's preference for feedback that matches his or her self-view. Using this methodology, studies have shown that people are motivated to preferentially solicit self-consistent feedback from their interaction partners (e.g., Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990; Swann, Wenzlaff et al., 1992). Other studies have shown that people are more likely to attend to (e.g., Swann & Read, 1981a), recall (e.g., Swann & Read, 1981b) and attribute more credibility to (e.g., Swann et al., 1987) feedback that matches their self-views. Studies have also shown that people prefer interacting with others who see them as they see themselves (e.g., Swann, Hixon, & de La Ronde, 1992), while other studies have shown that people behave in ways that serve to bring their interaction partner's views of them in line with their own (e.g., Swann & Ely, 1984). In summary, Swann and colleagues have produced strong supporting evidence for the idea that people want stable and consistent self-views, and further, employ various intra- and interpersonal strategies in the interest of

creating these self-views (see Swann et al., 2003, for a complete review of the empirical evidence supporting self-verification).

Although not commonly implicated in the motivational composition of the narcissist (but see Rhodewalt, 2001), self-verification provides an interesting lens from which to view the narcissist's self-constructive efforts. If it is taken that people seek stable and consistent self-views, and attempt to structure their intra- and interpersonal worlds in the service of creating this stability, then narcissists' self-constructive efforts begin to develop a richer meaning. The key point here is that narcissists' self-views, although grandiose, may be fragile, and held with little confidence or certainty (A. M. Cooper, 1998; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). A key task therefore facing narcissists may be to make their self-views more stable, consistent, and certain. Narcissists may therefore not only desire an identity that is grandiose, but also, an identity that is confidently held; one that is not plagued by self-doubt and fragility that appears so typical of the narcissistic condition. In their attempts to escape this self-doubt and build an identity that is both grandiose and firmly held, it may be that narcissists enter social interactions with the goal of eliciting positive (i.e., self-verifying) appraisals that serve to validate their grandiose self-views. Although the creation of stable self-views appears a fundamental human motive (Swann et al., 1987), this task may take on particular significance for the self-uncertain narcissist. Though most people are successful in creating relatively enduring and stable self-views (Bosson & Swann, 1999; James, 1890), the narcissistic self may be distinct in that it is theorised to be

characterised by an ongoing battle for certainty (A. M. Cooper, 1998; Rhodewalt, 2001).

Narcissists' quest for self-verification highlights their dependence on positive social appraisals for the construction and maintenance of their grandiose identities. In a similar way, narcissists rely on another motive, self-enhancement, to aid them in their self-constructive efforts.

1.3.2 *Self-Enhancement: The Quest for Positivity*

The self-enhancement perspective argues that people are fundamentally motivated to increase the positivity of their self-conceptions, whilst also protecting their self-concepts from becoming negative (Sedikides, 1993). People want to see themselves in a positive manner and feel good about themselves. They want to believe that they are competent and worthy people who are loved and respected by those around them. The idea that people are primarily motivated to feel good about themselves is one of psychology's most well-established ideas. For example, McDougall (1933) regarded self-enhancement as being so central to human nature that he labelled it the "master motive". Similarly, Allport (1937) labelled self-enhancement as the central goal of human existence, and Becker (1973) perceived it as the basic law of human life. Other historical figures in psychology have also endorsed the self-enhancement perspective, most notably James (1890), who viewed the motivation to achieve a positive self-view as a direct and elementary endowment of human nature.

Yet endorsement of the self-enhancement perspective extends well beyond these historical accounts. To be sure, there is a considerable amount of empirical evidence to support the self-enhancement perspective. In research investigating recall of self-relevant information, people show memory biases that magnify the positivity of their own performance (e.g., Bradley, 1978), remember positive self-attributes better than negative ones (e.g., Kuiper & MacDonald, 1982), and remember success feedback better than failure feedback (e.g., Silverman, 1964). Further, it has been shown that people tend to process self-relevant information faster when it is positive than when it is negative (e.g., Kuiper & MacDonald, 1982), attribute more socially desirable than socially undesirable attributes to themselves (e.g., J. D. Brown, 1986), and spend more time reading positive self-relevant feedback than negative self-relevant feedback (e.g., Baumeister & Cairns, 1992). Research has also shown that people see themselves as above average (i.e., better than most people) on a wide range of characteristics, such as leadership and social skills (College Board, 1976/1977), management ability (Larwood, 1978), driving ability (Svenson, 1981), and attractiveness (John & Robins, 1994). Finally, research on causal attributions indicates that people are more likely to attribute positive rather than negative outcomes to the self in order to preserve and enhance the positivity (and decrease the negativity) of their self-views (Zuckerman, 1979; see Sedikides & Strube, 1997, for a complete review of the empirical evidence supporting self-enhancement).

Like self-verification therefore, considerable empirical evidence exists to support the self-enhancement motive. The question therefore beckons as to which motive is most characteristic of human functioning. At first blush, the two motives would appear to be in opposition, one (i.e., self-verification) arguing that people are motivated to maintain the consistency of their self-conceptions, and the other (i.e., self-enhancement), arguing that people are motivated to increase the positivity of their self-conceptions. Yet a closer inspection reveals that self-enhancement and self-verification actually operate in concert for people with positive self-views (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989). For people with a positive self-view, the desire to enhance the positivity of one's self-view is compatible with the desire to maintain a consistent self-image. This line of reasoning may be especially relevant to narcissists, whose self-views are overtly positive. For narcissists, both motives may operate concurrently in the service of creating and maintaining their grandiose identities.

The idea that people with a self-enhancement motive will have a positive desired identity is well established (e.g., Greenwald & Breckler, 1985; Taylor & J. D. Brown, 1988). As a logical progression from this point, it should also stand to reason that the relative strength of an individual's desire for self-enhancement will influence the relative positivity of that individual's desired self-view (Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995; Paulhus, 1998). Put another way, the stronger one's motivation for self-enhancement, the more positive one's desired self-view should be. The question therefore arises as to just how positive one's desired self-view should be, and thus, can a person be too self-enhancing? This is a question that

lies at the heart of a line of research that has generated much debate, *positive illusions* about the self.

1.4 Positive Illusions: Self-Enhancement Biases in Self-Views

Philosophical thought has long proposed that a unique quality of human-kind is the ability to engage in rational thought, and to distinguish truth from illusion (Gergen, 1971). Such thought also extends to the way that humans perceive themselves. This perspective is embodied in the ancient precept, "Know thyself", which has been attributed to Plato, Pythagoras, and Socrates (J. D. Brown, 1991). Alternatively, distortion of the reality surrounding the self has been viewed in profoundly negative terms, as it betrays the uniquely human ability to know truth (Colvin & Block, 1994).

The possession of accurate self-knowledge seems to be encouraged for two reasons. Firstly, accurate self-knowledge has been advocated from a moral perspective, a position championed, not surprisingly, by theologians (e.g., MacArthur, 1991; Packer, 1984). These authors argue that people are morally obligated to uncover their true nature. Those that evade self-discovery and true self-understanding are deemed to be weak, cowardly, and devoid of the ability to lead a meaningful existence (J. D. Brown & Dutton, 1995b).

Secondly, people are encouraged to acquire accurate self-knowledge because of the functional benefits that such knowledge brings. Effective functioning in the world is facilitated by accurate self-understanding, and effective

social adaptation is governed by one's ability to create an accurate relationship between oneself and reality (C. R. Snyder, 1989). This need for an accurate match between self-knowledge and reality has been strongly supported by mental health practitioners. An accurate perception of, and contact with reality, has long been proposed as a central criterion for assessing mental health. This criterion was most vividly established by Jahoda (1958), in her monograph prepared for the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health (a synopsis of the dominant views on mental health at the time). Jahoda stated that the mentally healthy person is one who is capable of perceiving the self as it actually is, without distorting one's perception of self to fit one's own wishes. Such a view on mental health has since been reinforced by other works (e.g., Haan, 1977; Vaillant, 1977), and is currently an unequivocal criterion used by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and other professionals to evaluate mental health (Robins & Beer, 2001).

1.4.1 *Research on Positive Illusions*

In a highly influential article, Taylor and J. D. Brown (1988) challenged the traditional conceptualisation of mental health as the ability to perceive the self accurately and without distortion. They argued that an inherent characteristic of human nature is the tendency to see oneself more positively than negatively, and that these positive views of the self often exceed what reality actually indicates the self to be. That is, people often have positive illusions about the self. Taylor and J. D. Brown argue that abnormality, from a mental health perspective, is

normatively defined. They therefore reason that if the majority of people do in fact possess positively inflated (and thus inaccurate) self-views, it would be logically implausible to label such people as abnormal.

In supporting their position, Taylor and J. D. Brown (1988) cite many of the findings in the self-enhancement literature, which, as previously discussed, generally highlight that far from being even-handed in their self-appraisals, most individuals have a chronic tendency to view themselves in overwhelmingly more positive than negative terms (e.g., Bradley, 1978; J. D. Brown, 1986; Kuiper & MacDonald, 1982). As Taylor and J. D. Brown (see also Baumeister, 1989; Murray & Holmes, 1997) point out, positive illusions are fundamentally driven and created by the self-enhancement motive. However, findings demonstrating this positive bias in self-views are not in themselves enough evidence to suggest that such self-views are in fact unrealistic or illusionary. Indeed, some people do actually possess very positive attributes.

More compelling evidence is available to support the positive illusion position. For example, several studies (e.g., Alicke, 1985; J. D. Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988) have shown that most people have a chronic tendency to rate themselves as better than most others, or above average, on a wide range of characteristics and abilities (e.g., intelligence, attractiveness, and social skills). Given that it is statistically impossible for most people to be better than average, these skewed self-views have been taken as evidence that they are in fact unrealistic and illusionary. The possibility still remains however that at least some

of the people who claim they are above average indeed are, and thus, have accurate self-views.

In an effort to solve this problem, some studies have employed a more sophisticated methodology. These studies generally attempt to compare a person's self-view with some objective criterion; with this objective criterion presumed to be a truer reflection of reality. A common demonstration of this method comes in investigations that compare self-ratings with judgements made by observers. For example, studies have used the judgements of clinical psychologists (e.g., Colvin at al., 1995), intimate partners (e.g., Paulhus, 1998), and friends (e.g., Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003), to compare with a person's self-rating, and have frequently found that people's self-ratings are considerably more positive than perceiver ratings. People's propensity to rate themselves more positively than an objective criterion has been taken as evidence for the positive illusion position. Some (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1997) have argued however that perceiver judgements may be of questionable accuracy as they are susceptible to a variety of biases that have been well documented in the social cognition and person perception literature (see Kunda, 1999, for a review).

In response to this criticism, some studies (e.g., Taylor et al., 2003) have used a standardised intelligence test as an objective criterion from which to compare an individual's self-rated intelligence. Such a method is useful because a standardised intelligence test is deemed to be an objective measure of intelligence (but see Neisser et al., 1996), and thus, escapes the subjective bias

criticism levelled at methods employing perceiver judgements. These studies have shown that people rate their intelligence higher than what their score on the intelligence test indicates, thus providing further support to the positive illusion formulation.

So there appears to be a considerable amount of evidence, using a wide range of methodologies, research designs, and dependent variables, suggesting that people do have self-views that are overwhelmingly positive, inflated, and even illusionary. Yet is the evidence so plentiful to support Taylor and J. D. Brown's (1988) other contention? That is, positive illusions about the self are actually beneficial for mental health.

1.4.2 *Positive Illusions: Do they Enhance Mental Health?*

Taylor and J. D. Brown (1988; see also J. D. Brown, 1991; Taylor & Amor, 1996; Taylor & J. D. Brown, 1994) argue that positive illusions are psychologically adaptive for several reasons. It is argued that those with positive illusions are more likely to have high self-esteem and confidence, are less likely to suffer from depression, and harbour more compassion towards their interaction partners. Positive illusions are also thought to foster higher motivation and greater persistence on tasks, which ultimately leads to greater success. In effect, positive illusions may increase a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), because they help people to strive harder in situations that would otherwise be deemed futile, which in turn leads to a greater probability of success.

Despite the intuitive appeal of these ideas, some research indicates that positive illusions are not always conducive to mental health, and indeed, may serve to undermine a person's psychological well being. Robins and Beer (2001) argue that positive illusions about the self may lead to overconfidence in one's abilities. This overconfidence may mean that a person overestimates their likelihood for success, which could result in difficult or inappropriate tasks being undertaken without sufficient skills, resources, or safeguards. Such undertakings could prove physically hazardous, or alternatively, could lead to persistent and recurrent failure, which subsequently decreases an individual's level of self-esteem. Further, Johnson, Vincent, and Ross (1997) found that self-enhancing positive illusions were associated with aggression and hostility following a failure experience, whilst Paulhus (1998) found that although people with positive illusions were initially seen as agreeable, competent, and well-adjusted, after several interactions they were eventually perceived as arrogant, defensive, and insensitive by their interaction partners.

These findings appear to challenge Taylor and J. D. Brown's (1988) claims that positive illusions are psychologically adaptive. Despite such findings, the research literature has been somewhat reticent to dismiss the positive illusion position. Indeed, efforts have been made to reconcile the two competing views, in an attempt to create a more elegant conceptualisation of positive illusions and their psychological and social consequences. One such effort is represented by Baumeister's (1989) optimal margin of illusion hypothesis.

1.4.3 *The Optimal Margin of Illusion Hypothesis*

The central tenet of Baumeister's (1989) optimal margin of illusion hypothesis is that there is a curvilinear relationship between positive illusions and mental health. Optimal psychological functioning is characterised by a mild to moderate positive distortion in one's perception of self. People who distort less than this optimal level have self-views that are too realistic, which Baumeister (see also Alloy & Abramson, 1988) claims is depressing. Baumeister also argues that having too realistic a self-view may mean that people become hesitant to take on challenging tasks that could lead to significant success, and subsequent psychological fulfilment. Alternatively, excessive positive distortions in the way that people perceive themselves can lead to the undertaking of tasks that are beyond their capabilities, which may result in failure or a threat to the self. By seeing oneself as only slightly better than one really is, an individual can enjoy the affective benefits of illusions, whilst avoiding the risks associated with having too unrealistic a self-view. Thus according to Baumeister, adaptive mental functioning is facilitated by a mild to moderate degree of self-enhancement, which results in mild to moderate positive illusions.

The optimal margin of illusion hypothesis brings to light some intriguing questions regarding the narcissist. Chief amongst these is whether the narcissist, in his or her quest for a grandiose identity, is too self-enhancing, and further, what costs may be associated with an excessive self-enhancement strategy?

1.5 Narcissism and Self-Enhancement

The self-enhancement motive represents a motivational base that drives activities designed to create narcissists' grandiose identities, given that it is primarily concerned with increasing and sustaining the positivity of the self (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Yet to achieve their grandiose identity, narcissists may be compelled to use a degree of self-enhancement that extends beyond normative boundaries, with this self-enhancement strategy, as will become clear, coming at a significant cost. For narcissists, a moderate and socially acceptable degree of self-enhancement may simply not be enough to create and sustain the grandness and uniqueness of their self-image. This excessive form of self-enhancement appears to pervade narcissists' intra- and interpersonal lives.

1.5.1 *Self-Enhancement and the Narcissist's Intrapersonal Life*

From an intrapersonal self-regulatory perspective, narcissists attempt to construct internal models and perceptions of their social worlds that serve to validate their grandiose self-perceptions (Rhodewalt, 2001). For example, in a study conducted by John and Robins (1994), narcissists and non-narcissists (as measured by the NPI [Raskin & Hall, 1979]) participated in a group decision making task. It was found that narcissists, compared with non-narcissists, significantly overestimated their contribution to the group relative to group (and independent judges') ratings of their contribution. This study suggests that intrapersonally, narcissists display a self-aggrandising attribution style, and

ascribe an undue amount of credit to themselves when such credit is unfounded or unwarranted. This strategy is reflective of their pervasive need for self-enhancement.

Rhodewalt and Eddings (2001) provide further elaboration on the narcissist's self-enhancing intrapersonal self-regulatory strategies. They found that after a romantic rejection, narcissists, compared with non-narcissists, showed significantly more positive biases in their autobiographical memories regarding their romantic relationships. Narcissists were more self-aggrandising, attributing the positive aspects of the relationship to themselves, whilst attributing the negative aspects to their relationship partners. Importantly, it was found that this positive bias served as a self-esteem buffer against the effects of the romantic rejection. Such a strategy serves to protect the narcissist's highly positive self-views against potential social threats. Further, Kernis and Sun (1994) found that narcissists are extremely vigilant in their attempts to discredit the sources of negative self-relevant feedback. They found that after receiving negative feedback, narcissists rated the evaluator as less competent and the test used to derive the feedback as less diagnostic than did non-narcissists. Such a strategy serves to protect the narcissist's self-view, because by discrediting the source of the feedback, he or she is able to deflect the threat to the self.

It has also been found that narcissists overestimate their general intelligence (Gabriel, Critelli, & Ee, 1994), their attractiveness (Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2001), their academic ability (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd, 1998), and their positive personality characteristics (Paulhus, 1998). Considerable evidence

therefore supports the notion that narcissists employ an active and significantly amplified self-enhancement orientation in their intrapersonal self-regulatory activities. Such an orientation can also be found in the narcissist's interpersonal self-regulatory activities.

1.5.2 *Self-Enhancement and the Narcissist's Interpersonal Life*

For the narcissist, social interactions represent a lucrative arena from which to achieve their identity goals. Indeed, an increasing amount of research is being garnered to support the notion that narcissists use their social interactions to construct and support their grandiose selves. For example, Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) investigated narcissists' reactions to being outperformed by another person on a task central to their self-definitions. In accordance with Tesser's (1988) self-evaluation maintenance model, it was found that narcissists attempted to reduce the social comparison threat and boost their own self-esteem by derogating a better performing other on another dimension. This study highlights the way in which the narcissist's vehement concern for protecting and enhancing his or her highly positive self translates into troubled interpersonal relationships. Narcissists appear to use and exploit others in order to maintain and increase their self-esteem, and may possess little awareness for the feelings of others or the destruction that may be caused to their interpersonal relationships (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002).

Rhodewalt and Morf (1998) provide further insight into the mechanisms underlying the narcissist's disturbed interpersonal relationships. Their study

found that when presented with negative self-relevant feedback, narcissists responded with more anger towards the feedback provider than did non-narcissists. In related research, Bushman and Baumeister (1998) found that narcissists responded with higher levels of aggression towards the source of a personal insult than did non-narcissists. These findings provide empirical support for the concept of *narcissistic rage*, an idea that has been well established in the clinical literature (e.g., Akhtar & Thompson, 1982; Kohut, 1972). These findings also suggest the possibility that by becoming angry and hostile, narcissists may be willing to sacrifice the feelings of others in order to preserve their highly positive self-views from the effects of negative feedback.

In another study, Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot (2000) found that narcissists, when completing an interdependent task, classified themselves as being more responsible for successful task outcomes but less responsible for failed task outcomes. This finding essentially demonstrated narcissists' willingness to use a comparative self-enhancement strategy. That is, narcissists were willing to self-enhance, even when doing so meant comparing themselves favourably to another person (i.e., their partner on the interdependent task). Non-narcissists showed an aversion to this comparative self-enhancement strategy by not self-enhancing when doing so required comparing oneself favourably to their task partner. No significant differences were found between narcissists and non-narcissists on a non-comparative measure of self-enhancement. Narcissists were willing to denigrate their interaction partners in the service of self-enhancement (see also self-evaluation maintenance model, Tesser, 1988), whereas non-

narcissists were more sensitive to the concerns of their interaction partners, choosing not to self-enhance when doing so required disparaging others. These findings suggest that narcissists are not simply more self-enhancing than non-narcissists, but also that narcissists are willing to sacrifice the interpersonal bond in their quest for self-enhancement (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002).

1.5.3 *Interpersonal Self-Regulation and the Narcissistic Paradox*

The above findings investigating narcissists' interpersonal self-regulatory strategies highlight a central paradox in the narcissistic personality. Recall from an earlier discussion that narcissists are reliant on positive evaluations from their interaction partners in order to maintain their highly positive self-views. Thus, how can it be that narcissists, who are so dependent on positive evaluations from others for their sense of self-worth, actually act in ways that may engender negative evaluations from their interaction partners? Narcissists' pathological need for self-enhancement and insensitivity toward others leads them to behave in ways that may unintentionally alienate their interaction partners, thus cutting off their primary road to self-worth. This is what Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) termed the narcissistic paradox.

The basis of this paradox lies in the narcissist's fragile and vulnerable, yet overtly grandiose self. It is a self that cannot stand on its own because it is not grounded in any form of objective reality. It thus needs constant shoring up and validation to maintain its overly positive configuration (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001); validation that comes via the positive appraisals of others. Yet to maintain this

grandiose self-configuration, the narcissist must employ an equally ostentatious self-enhancement strategy, a strategy that is both excessive and socially inappropriate. Subsequently, to his or her interaction partners, the narcissist appears self-obsessed, pretentious, non-empathetic, and even aggressive; characteristics that augur for negative evaluations. Therefore the narcissistic self, robbed of positive social evaluations, evades the validation it yearns for, and may be plunged into a state of incoherency, fraudulence, and self-doubt. Thus the self-enhancement motive, which at first appears to narcissists as a staunch ally in their quest to maintain and validate their grandiose self, may in actuality, be a pervasive enemy that works to undermine the very self that narcissists are attempting to foster.

The paradoxical nature of the narcissist's interpersonal self-regulatory strategies is no better represented than by one specific from of interpersonal self-regulation, self-presentation.

1.6 Narcissism and Self-Presentation

It has long been recognised in psychology that people use their social behaviour as a means of communicating information about themselves to others (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1959). Indeed, the vast self-presentation (also known as impression management; Tedeschi, 1981) literature is testament to this notion. Over four decades of self-presentation research has found that people attempt to control, either consciously or unconsciously, the information that they

present to their social audiences about themselves (for a complete review, see Schlenker, 2003). Such a strategy is aimed at creating, maintaining, and refining the desired image of oneself in the minds of others (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). As Tice and Faber (2001) point out, shaping a particular and often desirable image of the self in the minds of others is one of the most fundamental tasks of interpersonal life.

Despite its fundamental importance, self-presentation is not a homogeneous construct. Indeed, self-presentational behaviour varies profoundly between different people, variation that is largely a product of the type of identities that people aim to create, and the motivations underlying their self-presentational strategies.

1.6.1 *Narcissistic Self-Presentation: An Acquisitive Orientation*

In his notable commentary about self-presentation, Arkin (1981) conceptually differentiated two separate self-presentational strategies, protection and acquisition. From Arkin's perspective, a protective orientation is characterised by a conservative approach to social interactions, where the person’s main goal is not to bring public focus onto his or her good qualities, but instead, to divert the social spotlight away from his or her weaknesses. In contrast, an acquisitive orientation is marked by the general desire to increase the positivity of the self in the eyes of others by publicly presenting oneself in a favourable light (see also, Schlenker, Britt, & Pennington, 1996). This has the effect of garnering social applause by instilling a positive image of oneself in the

mind of one's interaction partners. Given that narcissists are characterised by an overstimulated self-enhancement motive, Arkin and Lakin (2001) concluded that the narcissistic self-presentational style is undoubtedly acquisitive in its orientation.

Those with an acquisitive orientation face a constant trade-off between their desire to maximise the positivity of the self in the minds of their social partners, and the need to keep their positive self-presentations within the realms of believability (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Excessively favourable claims about the self may not be believed by one's social audience (Arkin & Baumgardner, 1986). Moreover, excessively favourable statements about oneself may be perceived as arrogant, conceited, and egotistical. Therefore an individual's acquisitive self-presentational style is held in check by what his or her interaction partners are likely to believe (Tice, Butler, Muraven, & Stillwell, 1995). It is only within the limits of believability that most people will attempt to present themselves as favourably as possible. In this regard, it has been found that most people with an acquisitive orientation can balance these competing demands by presenting themselves in ways that they believe they can substantiate to observers (e.g., Baumeister & Scher, 1988; M. R. Leary & Kowalski, 1990). By achieving a balance between positivity and believability, people are able to retain the benefits associated with a positive self-presentation, while also ensuring that they do not alienate their interaction partners with self-presentations that clearly exceed reality. The narcissist may be less adept at achieving this balance however.

1.6.2 Narcissism and Insensitivity to the Social Context

To the narcissist, social interactions are entered into with the goal of seeking corroboration of his or her grandiose self-view (Rhodewalt & Morf, 2005). To this end, the narcissist may not be particularly concerned with social approval, as such concerns are superseded by their omnipresent need to construct and convey their highly positive self. Research on narcissists' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships has documented this idea. A diary study by Rhodewalt, Tragakis, and Finley (2002; as descried by Rhodewalt & Morf, 2005) found that the extent to which one felt admired by one's social audience had a greater impact on self-esteem levels for those with higher levels of narcissism than those with lower levels. In a related way, a series of studies by Campbell (1999) found that narcissists are more attracted to those romantic partners who offer admiration, as opposed to those partners who offer the potential for intimacy and caring. Campbell concluded that this preference is reflective of a tendency to use these admiring partners as a self-esteem boosting mechanism. The conclusion to be made is that narcissists appear to enter social engagements with the goal of being admired as opposed to being liked, and the payoff for this strategy is an increase in their self-esteem.

Given their preference for admiration, narcissists may present themselves in an excessively positive manner to glean validation of their grandiose self-views from their interaction partners. The problem for narcissists is that strategic or socially appropriate self-presentational behaviour requires that people show modesty in regards to their personal attributes, or otherwise risk the possibility of

having their interpersonal relationships disturbed by being perceived as a braggart (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). Yet narcissists may be insensitive to this risk; being blinded by their fervent need to achieve their desired selves, narcissists may become oblivious to the social context and the specific concerns of their interaction partners. Narcissists crave a social arena from which they can win the adulation of their social audience, no matter what costs their behaviour may have to their interpersonal relationships (Sedikides, Campbell, et al. 2002).

The crux of narcissistic self-presentation is that they are motivated to gain admiration and adulation, rather than gaining the social approval that comes with presenting oneself in a modest or socially appropriate fashion. As Arkin and Lakin (2001) argue, it seems that although the narcissist needs a social audience to acknowledge and receive their self-presentational efforts, their social orientation revolves around an egocentric construction of reality, as they do not have any genuine concern for what their audience really thinks.

In sum then, the narcissist's self-presentational behaviour is marked by a persistent and enduring need to present the self in an excessively positive light to his or her public audience. This pervasive self-enhancement pattern may be rigidly inflexible (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002), because narcissists become so invested in bringing about their desired grandiose identity through their self-presentational behaviour, that they use this strategy in situations where such behaviour is inappropriate. This rigidity inherent in the narcissist’s self-presentational behaviour can be interpreted through the context of the interpersonal flexibility literature.

1.6.3 *Interpersonal Flexibility and Narcissism*

T. Leary (1957) defined interpersonal flexibility as the ability to adjust one's behaviours and responses to suit changing interpersonal contexts. In this view, one's interpersonal flexibility directly impacts on one's psychological adjustment. Well-adjusted people are characterised by interpersonal strategies that are flexible enough to deal with a large variety of interpersonal situations and environmental contingencies. In contrast, the maladjusted person is marked by the compulsive use of rigid and inappropriate interpersonal strategies that are used mechanistically across all social contexts (Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1981).

Paulhus and Martin (1988), expanding on T. Leary's (1957) work, deemed interpersonal flexibility (which they termed functional flexibility) as having two key components: (a) a wide range of interpersonal responses, and (b) situational appropriateness. In this view, the person who is functionally flexible has a wide catalogue of interpersonal behaviours that they can select from to fit the demands of their current social environment. Consistent with T. Leary's view, Paulhus and Martin proposed that an individual's degree of functional flexibility can be used as an index of his or her psychological adjustment. This association between functional flexibility and psychological adjustment is also consistent with clinical theories of personality dysfunction.

The clinical link between one's ability to tailor one's behaviour to meet situational demands and one's psychological adjustment is most clearly outlined in the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) general criteria for a Personality Disorder. DSM-IV states that a personality disorder is apparent when a person's enduring pattern of

interpersonal functioning is “inflexible and pervasive across a broad range of personal and social situations” (Criterion B, p. 689). Therefore from a clinical diagnostic perspective, interpersonal inflexibility forms an essential criterion for defining pathology within the context of personality.

Beck et al. (2004) provide a more expansive clinical point of view, arguing that the behaviour of those with personality psychopathology can be viewed from an evolutionary perspective. They argue that much of human behaviour is pre-programmed and derived from our evolutionary ancestors. For example, narcissists’ exhibitionistic interpersonal strategies may have evolved from early humans’ attempts to gain helpers or mates through lavish displays of self-promotion. However Beck et al. argue that very often, such evolutionary based behaviour does not meet the demands of the modern interpersonal environment. They reason that our environment has changed faster than our evolutionary based behaviour, and as such, many of the strategies used by our distant ancestors in their more primitive environment do not always suit the demands of a contemporary environment characterised by individualisation, technological advancement, as well as by diverse cultures and sub-cultures. Consistent with both the interpersonal flexibility literature and DSM-IV (APA, 1994), they argue that it is when behaviour becomes inflexible and unbefitting of a given social situation that it may be defined as problematic. This is what they refer to as a “bad fit” between the person and the situation.

As is apparent in the above discussion, evidence is plentiful, both from clinical and social psychology, that narcissists’ self-presentational behaviour is

marked by a rigid and inflexible self-enhancing approach. The rigidity inherent in this strategy may mean that the self-enhancing approach used by narcissists may often be inappropriate for the contextual variables present in a given social situation. One specific social contextual variable that narcissists may be insensitive to is accountability.

1.7 Narcissism and Accountability

1.7.1 *An Introduction to Accountability*

Accountability is a fundamental concept in psychology, and has long been central in the areas of justice and social control. It is a condition whereby one is answerable to one's social audience for performing up to subscribed standards, thereby fulfilling one's responsibilities, duties, and expectations (Schlenker, Weigold, & Doherty, 1991). Many writers, including philosophers (Hobbes, 1660/1968), organisational psychologists (Brtek & Motowidlo, 2002), clinical psychologists (Ruscio, 2000), and social psychologists (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999), have seen accountability as a cornerstone of society, a key concept that both creates and maintains social order. Semin and Manstead (1983) contend that without accountability, social order could not be upheld because people would not be answerable for their individual and collective actions. Accountability mandates people to follow the rules and norms of society because those who do not become answerable for their actions.

Operationally defined, accountability refers to a person's expectation that he or she will be called upon to defend, justify, and explain his or her behaviour to a social audience (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Defined in this way, the expectation of being accountable is ubiquitous in almost every human action. Be it an academic preparing a conference presentation or a football coach choosing to draft or trade a certain player, individuals must anticipate scrutiny by their social audience and subsequently formulate counter-arguments to justify their actions. Thus, when considering a certain course of action, individuals must consider how their actions will be perceived relevant to social norms and rules, and how they might explain those actions in the event of potential criticism or questioning (Schlenker et al., 1991).

Accountability therefore has important implications for self-regulation, as it requires people to monitor and control their behaviour in light of socially prescribed rules and standards of behaviour (Tetlock, 1999). As an extension of this point, accountability also has a significant influence on identity formation and maintenance, as the identities that people publicly project also come under accountability checks, and thus, are also open for scrutiny. People must therefore be prepared to defend and justify the identities that they claim in the interpersonal arena. Accountability should therefore have an observable impact on people’s self-presentational behaviour.

1.7.2 *Accountability and Self-Presentation*

Various hypotheses exist regarding accountability's impact on self-presentational behaviour. One line of reasoning contends that accountability may increase self-enhancement. This theory, generally referred to as *defensive bolstering* (Green, Visser, & Tetlock, 2000), posits that under conditions of accountability, people may choose to self-enhance and subsequently defend their behaviour by becoming dogmatic and rigid, attempting to devise as many reasons why they are correct and their scrutinising audience is incorrect (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Importantly, Tetlock, Skitka, and Boettger (1989) observed that this effect only occurs when people have already committed to a course of action and are then held accountable. That is, accountability pressures are applied after people have committed to a decision or behaviour (i.e., post-decisional accountability). Once people have backed themselves into a corner, they choose to stay and fight it out. How does accountability affect self-enhancement when accountability pressures are put in place before people have committed to a decision or course of action? That is, what happens in the case of pre-decisional accountability?

Evidence suggests that pre-decisional accountability may serve to reduce self-enhancement. This notion, what Tetlock (1992) termed *pre-emptive self-criticism,* states that when accountable for their actions, people become flexible and multidimensional thinkers capable of identifying and synthesising relevant environmental contingencies into a logical course of action. From this perspective, accountability produces a cognitive shift, whereby people are

required to process their social context at a deeper level of analysis in order to accommodate the greater degree of decisional and self-regulation complexity that is required to successfully navigate accountability demands (Tetlock, 1983). When accountable, people may work to be in a position where they can more easily substantiate their self-presentational efforts and reduce the likelihood that their identity claims will be vigorously scrutinised. The end result should be more modest self-presentations.

An important qualifier to this point is that pre-emptive self-criticism only occurs when the views and expectations of the audience is unknown (Tetlock, 1992). This makes intuitive sense, as people can not be sure exactly what to expect from an unknown audience to whom they are accountable. People are therefore required to undergo more sophisticated cognitive processing, as they must be in a position where they can anticipate the nature of a potential criticism from their unknown audience, and formulate a response to it (Lerner & Tetlock, 1994). The safest road in this case appears to be modesty.

In a recent study, Sedikides, Herbst, Hardin, & Dardis (2002) tested the effects of accountability specifically from a self-presentational perspective. They had participants assign a grade to a topic essay that they had personally written. Accountable participants were told that they would be required to explain, justify, and defend their essay grades to an unfamiliar evaluator with whom they would soon be meeting, while non-accountable participants were told that their essay grades were entirely anonymous. Consistent with the pre-emptive self-criticism perspective, it was found that participants in the accountable condition were

significantly less self-enhancing than those in the non-accountable condition. Participants' self-enhancing tendencies were restrained in the accountable condition, yet participants who were not laden with accountability demands displayed a propensity to present themselves in a more positive and favourable (i.e., self-enhancing) manner.

Sedikides, Herbst, et al's. (2002) finding that people tend to reduce their self-enhancement strivings under conditions of accountability can be viewed within the context of the self-presentational literature. Baumeister and M. R. Leary (1995) argue that a fundamental human motive is the "need to belong". People want to form meaningful and stable interpersonal attachments with others, as well as to avoid the dissolution of existing attachments. As noted earlier, presenting oneself too positively threatens one's interpersonal relationships as one runs the risk of being perceived as arrogant by one's social partners (Tice, et al., 1995). This risk is magnified under conditions of accountability, as social rules and norms dictate that people should present themselves in a modest manner. Accountability also creates a situation whereby people's self-presentations are scrutinised and analysed by the audience to whom they are accountable, which may result in having one's weaknesses exposed (Sedikides & Herbst, 2002). In the interests of both preserving interpersonal relationships, as well as avoiding a potential drop in self-esteem associated with having one's self-presentation rejected or weaknesses exposed, people apparently give in to accountability pressures and opt for modesty over self-enhancement.

People therefore appear to display a sophisticated understanding of the social context, and possess the ability to strategically tailor their self-enhancement strivings to meet the requirements of specific contextual factors such as accountability. For most people, self-enhancement appears to be a controllable motive. Yet does this finding hold true for the self-absorbed and grandiose narcissist? Several lines of reasoning indicate that it may not be the case.

1.7.3 *Narcissism and Insensitivity to Accountability*

It has been established that narcissists' exhibitionistic and self-aggrandizing interpersonal functioning differs markedly from that of less narcissistic people. Narcissists appear far more concerned with winning social admiration than less narcissistic people, who may choose to concentrate their efforts on gaining the approval of their social partners (Baumeister & M. R. Leary, 1995). This differing focus has important implications for accountability, because narcissists may be less respectful of accountability constraints in their efforts to gain the admiration of their social audience. Indeed, excessive self-promotion in accountable situations is likely to bring the narcissist's interpersonal behaviour to the sharp attention of his or her social audience. Although this may be the narcissist's goal, the grandiose identity presented is likely to come under close scrutiny by the people to whom he or she is presenting. Narcissists may therefore be likely to be placed in a position where they have to chronically substantiate their identity claims and continually win their audience over and

convince them of their greatness. It may be that narcissists truly believe that they can substantiate their identity claims, or it may also be that their lack of empathy (Millon, 1996) means that they can not see the perspective of their social audience. That is, they may not see that their social audience will most likely ask them to substantiate their identity claims and instead take for granted that others will see them as positively as they see themselves (APA, 1994). Or perhaps even more broadly construed, accountable conditions may offer narcissists a particularly compelling arena from which they can construct their desired grandiose identities.

1.7.4 *Narcissism and Accountability: Public vs. Private Audiences*

Schlenker et al. (1991) note that achievements may be more meaningful and rewarding when they are accomplished under conditions of accountability because it inherently involves passing a scrutiny test from an audience. From a self-presentation and identity construction perspective, identity claims may be more valid under conditions of accountability because if audience endorsement of an identity is won, that identity may become more valid and legitimate. The literature on public and private aspects of self-presentation is relevant to this idea.

Tice (1992) found that behaviours that are performed publicly have a greater impact on the self-concept than behaviours performed privately. She argues that any serious identity claims require social validation, and as a result, self-concept change is most likely when a person‘s identity claims are endorsed

by others. Tice's study showed that people tend to internalise their behaviour to a greater degree (leading to greater self-concept change) when that behaviour is performed in front of a public audience (see also Fazio, Effrein, & Falender, 1981; Schlenker & Trudeau, 1990, for examples of how public behaviour can lead to self-concept change).

Accountability may function similarly to a public context, in that people are under the critical examination of a social audience. Non-accountable conditions may therefore be seen as more of a private context, given that people are anonymous and not answerable to a social audience (which is the traditional way non-accountability is manipulated experimentally). In the context of Tice's (1992) findings, it may be that the public arena offered by being accountable gives narcissists greater opportunity to mould their desired identities by winning the positive appraisals of their audience. As Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) note, narcissists may come to rely on these appraisals to create and maintain their grandiose identities.

Problematic for narcissists' attempts to create their grandiose selves through self-presentational efforts is that for such a strategy to be effective, it first requires the audience to accept the identity that has been presented. Indeed, the "carryover effect", where one's self-concept is moulded by one's self-presentations is largely determined by whether the social audience provides confirmatory reactions to those self-presentations (Tice, 1992; Tice & Faber, 2001). Given that narcissists may self-enhance under conditions that demand modesty (i.e., accountability), they may fail to elicit this carryover effect because

they alienate their social audiences, and thus, reduce the likelihood of receiving identity confirming feedback. Stated another way, narcissists may elude self-verification (Swann, 1987) because they are unable to garner the self-consistent social feedback that would otherwise serve to shore-up their fragile identities.

Although the narcissist's public audience may have a key role in determining his or her approach to accountability, attention must also be given towards the narcissist's inner audience to determine how it is implicated in self-presentational efforts in both public (i.e., accountable) and private (i.e., non-accountable) conditions.

1.7.5 *To whom is the Narcissistic Self-Presented?*

Greenwald and Breckler (1985) note that self-presentation does not occur exclusively in a public arena. They argue that much of people's self-presentational behaviour is aimed at their private inner audience, stating that a key task in life is to create a favourable impression of oneself in one's own mind. According to this view, identity construction can also occur in private settings, without a public audience. This idea may provide an interesting counter-point to the narcissist's self-constructive efforts. Given that narcissists are predominantly concerned with carving out a grandiose identity through public self-presentational behaviour (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), private settings may offer them less in terms of identity construction. The narcissist's self-constructive efforts may therefore be less stimulated in non-accountable settings because these

conditions do not offer opportunities for public exhibitionism and self-enhancement.

In contrast, non-narcissists may view non-accountable conditions as a safer place to self-enhance because there is less threat of a self-presentation being rejected or scrutinised. Non-narcissists may therefore be more sensitive to the risks inherent in accountable situations, and subsequently, be more open to the possibility of using private settings in the service of constructing their desired identities. This is not to say that non-narcissists do not use public settings for self-construction, but more to say that they may be better able to notice specific contextual threats (e.g., accountability) and change their self-presentational behaviour to accommodate for those threats when they are present. The end result may be that narcissists will be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists under conditions of accountability.

Accountability may be one particularly diagnostic situation where individual differences in narcissism may be apparent in terms of self-presentational behaviour. Yet other social contextual variables may also bring out differences in self-presentational behaviour because they afford greater or lesser opportunities for self-enhancement. In this way, the status of the audience to whom people are self-presenting may have an important influence on people's self-enhancing behaviour, and may reveal differences in how much people with varying levels of narcissism choose to self-enhance.

1.8 Narcissism and Audience Status

1.8.1 *Finding Self-Enhancement Opportunities in the Social Audience*

The DSM-IV (APA, 1994) states that narcissists possess a belief that they can only be understood by, or associate with high status others. This belief manifests itself in narcissists seeking out eminent and reputed people with whom to associate and surround themselves. Narcissists may insist that they have the best doctor, hairdresser, or lawyer (for just a few examples), as people of lower status may not be perceived as special enough to warrant association. Beck et al. (2004) note that for narcissists, relationships serve as tools, with those possessing special qualities idealised because they have the potential to advance the narcissist and further enhance his or her public image. Psychodynamic theorists (e.g., Svrakic, 1986) reason that narcissists surround themselves with high status others in the pursuit of metamorphosis. By cultivating associations with powerful others, they aim to transform out of their internal state of inferiority and fraudulency. The theory is that the narcissist's self-esteem is enhanced (i.e., *mirrored*; Kohut, 1972) through association with these high status others (Segrin, 2001). Of the psychodynamic theorists, perhaps Freud (1914/1957) described this idea best when he noted that the narcissist gravitates towards "what he himself would like to be" (p. 90).

Campbell (1999) documented this preference for high status others within the context of narcissists' romantic relationships. Campbell used the term *identification* to describe the process by which the self-concept is enhanced and

made more positive via association with highly positive or perfect others. In a series of five studies, he sought to determine the type of romantic partners to which narcissists were attracted. He hypothesised that narcissists would show a self-orientated approach to romantic relationships, preferring partners with highly positive traits (e.g., attractive, athletic, academically gifted, socially popular) over partners who offered the potential for caring, because highly positive partners were more advantageous in terms of self-enhancement. Using a vignette based methodology, Campbell found that narcissists showed a clear and consistent preference for highly positive romantic partners.

Campbell (1999) also found that this attraction to highly positive others served as an interpersonal self-enhancement tool (Study 5). Narcissists reported attraction to highly positive others to the extent that those others were able to provide them with a sense of self-esteem, popularity, and importance. Campbell concluded that narcissists prefer high status or perfect romantic partners because such people are able to elevate and maintain their self-esteem. Although Campbell's findings relate specifically to narcissists' romantic relationships, other theoretical positions suggest that such findings may also be indicative of their non-romantic relationships.

1.8.2 *Narcissism and Basking in Reflected Glory*

Cialdini et al. (1976) first coined the term "basking in reflected glory" (BIRG) to describe people's tendency to affiliate themselves with favourable others and distance themselves from unfavourable others. Their studies found

that university students displayed a greater propensity to publicly display their affiliation with their university football team by wearing team identifying apparel after that team had won than after it had lost (Study 1). They further found that people were more likely to use the pro-noun “we” after their university was victorious than non-victorious (Study 2), and that the tendency to publicly announce a connection to a successful other (and distance the self from a non-successful other) was strongest when one’s public image was threatened (Study 3). Based on these findings, Cialdini et al. contended that BIRG is a fundamentally public phenomenon that is aimed at enhancing one’s image in the eyes of one’s public audience. They contended that BIRG serves to enhance a person’s public image because a public audience has a natural tendency to evaluate one who is connected to a successful other in the same positive manner as they evaluate the successful other (Heider, 1957). These findings also suggest that people use self-presentation to display their affiliation with successful others in an attempt to gain access to the self-esteem benefits that are associated with being seen with such people. In regards to the narcissist’s self-constructional efforts, association with high status others may help to build a grandiose public image.

Additionally, given that narcissists chronically attempt to validate their uncertain self views by seeking out positive social appraisals (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), it may also be that they perceive high status others as an especially lucrative source of validation. If narcissists are able to win the admiration and positive appraisals of a high status other, strong evidence (at least in narcissists’

minds) is collected that they may in fact be as great as they publicly proclaim to be. High status others may therefore represent a highly valued source of self-verifying feedback (Swann, 1987). Given that self-verification concerns developing coherency and consistency in one's self-views via feedback from others, feedback from high status others may provide narcissists with an opportunity to transform their fragile and uncertain self-views into more certain and robust ones.

This line of reasoning may be especially relevant when the high status audience possesses a base of expert power (French & Raven, 1959). Those with expert power have a set of skills and expertise that may grant them more persuasiveness than those without such skills (although other types of power bases such as legitimate, reward, and coercive power may also affect persuasiveness). Feedback from those with expert power may therefore be perceived as especially diagnostic, and thus, especially accurate. For the narcissist, this type of feedback may be metaphorically akin to striking gold because it gives legitimacy to their identity claims. When confronted with an opportunity to receive such feedback (i.e., when in the presence of a high status expert audience), it may be that narcissists will become especially self-enhancing in a search for the self-verifying feedback they desire. A study by Morf, Ansara, and Shia (2001; as described by Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001) provides some initial support for this idea. This study found that unlike non-narcissists, narcissists presented themselves even more positively towards an expert interviewer than they did a layperson. Thus, as Morf and Rhodewalt note, it may

be that self-construction battles are more important to win with high status audiences.

Yet as with accountability, non-narcissists may be more sensitive to the demands of the social context in which they operate. Although self-enhancing towards a high status audience can have a large self-constructional payoff, it also comes with risk. Self-enhancing towards a high status audience leaves a person exposed to having his or her self-presentation rejected because such audiences may possess the skill to be able to recognise false identity claims. The narcissist's maximum gain self-presentational strategy (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) may therefore come at a high risk, a risk to which non-narcissists may be acutely sensitive. The result of this may be that non-narcissists choose to opt for more modest self-presentations when presenting to a high status audience, whereas narcissists may actually inflate their self-presentations.

In addition to social contextual variables such as accountability and audience status, within-person variables may also exert a powerful influence over people's self-presentational strategies. One such variable may be found in the specific domains in which people stake their self-worth.

1.9 Narcissism and Contingencies of Self-Worth

Self-esteem has long captured the empirical focus of psychologists, generating a diverse set of theoretical perspectives and a wealth of research articles (for reviews, see Kernis, 2003; M. R. Leary & MacDonald, 2003). Self-

esteem describes a person's overall evaluation of their personal worth or value (Rosenberg, 1965). To have high self-esteem is to evaluate one's self positively, and to possess a sense of self-liking and self-acceptance (J. D. Brown, 1993). Those with low self-esteem have fewer or less salient positive self-evaluations, possessing a lesser, or at least a more ambivalent sense of self-liking and self-acceptance (Spencer, Josephs, & Steele, 1993). Yet individual differences in self-esteem extend well beyond whether it is high or low (Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry, & Harlow, 1993), with most contemporary theorists now agreeing that self-esteem is a multi-faceted construct (Kernis, 2003). In this way, self-esteem has been characterised as varying to the degree that it is stable or unstable across time and situations (Kernis & Waschull, 1995), to the degree that it is defensive or secure (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003), to the degree which it is explicit or implicit (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000), and to the degree that it is determined by how valued one feels by one's relational partners (M. R. Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Following this trend, Crocker and her colleagues (e.g., Crocker & Park, 2004; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) have developed and empirically documented the concept of contingencies of self-worth.

1.9.1 *Contingencies of Self-Worth: An Introduction*

It was William James (1890) who first suggested that people possess both relatively stable trait, and relatively unstable state, self-esteem. He argued that people's level of state self-esteem fluctuates around a typical level of trait self-esteem in relation to positive and negative life events (Crocker & Knight, 2005).

James also suggested that the impact of these positive and negative events will largely depend on the domains in which a person has invested his or her self-esteem. Using James' framework, Crocker and Wolfe (2001) suggest that contingencies of self-worth reflect the domains in which people stake their feelings of self-worth. For example, the model may stake his or her self worth on being physically attractive, the priest on being morally virtuous, or the university student on being academically competent.

Contingencies of self-worth represent domains in which success means that the person is wonderful and worthwhile, and failure means the person may perceive themselves as worthless (Crocker, Karpinski, Quinn, & Chase, 2003). Feelings of self-worth are therefore dependent on success or failure in domains in which self-worth is contingent. Boosts in self-esteem follow from obtaining success in contingent domains, whereas drops in self-esteem follow from experiencing failures in such domains. Success and failure in contingent domains also generalises to the worth and value of the whole person (Crocker & Park, 2004). People are therefore motivated to pursue the increases in self-esteem that come with achieving success in contingent domains and aim to evade the losses in self-esteem that come with failing in contingent domains. People also strive for success in contingent domains because it serves an important self-validation goal (Crocker & Knight, 2005). By achieving success in contingent domains, people are able to prove to themselves that they are worthy and competent people because the domains in which their feelings of self-worth are based have been authenticated. Subsequently, efforts to maintain, increase, and protect

one's self-esteem should be concentrated in contingent domains (Crocker, Luhtanen, & Sommers, 2004).

Crocker and her colleagues have found that the domains in which people stake their self-worth influence the way in which they behave in the world. For example, a study by Crocker, Karpinski et al. (2003) found that college students who based their self-worth on being academically competent reported more time studying, those who based their self-worth on being morally virtuous spent more time volunteering, and those who based their self-worth on being physically attractive spent more time grooming and shopping for clothes. They further found that those who based their self-worth on being loved by their family spent more time talking to their families, whereas they found that those who based their self-worth on being loved by God spent more time as part of religious organisations. Moving beyond a self-report format to an experimental methodology, Brook and Crocker (2003; as described in Crocker & Knight, 2005) invited first year university students to write a persuasive letter to the incoming state governor on a political topic that they deemed important. Results found that 40% of students chose to write a letter addressing environmental concerns. Of most importance, they found that the more that a student's self-worth was based on being a good environmentalist, the more likely they were to choose to write a letter addressing environmental issues. Based on the results of these studies, it was concluded that people direct and invest their behaviour in the domains in which they have based their feelings of self-worth. It was further proposed that people invest behavioural efforts in contingent domains because they want to achieve success

in such domains. By achieving success, they are able to satisfy their contingencies and increase self-esteem (Crocker, 2002a).

An additional study lends support to this idea, documenting the self-esteem benefits that are associated with achieving success in contingent domains. Crocker, Sommers, and Luhtanen (2002) measured the daily self-esteem levels of college students applying for graduate programs. In line with contingencies of self-worth theory, they found that participants who had based their self-worth on being academically competent reported greater increases in self-esteem on days when they were accepted to a graduate program and greater decreases in self-esteem on days they were rejected from a graduate program. Taken together, these studies highlight that people structure their lives to fulfil their contingencies of self-worth, and the payoff for this strategy is a self-enhancing boost in self-esteem. Contingencies of self-worth therefore form an important self-regulatory function, directing behaviour towards contingent domains in a chronic pursuit of self-esteem and also, self-validation (Crocker & Park, 2004).

1.9.2 *Contingencies of Self-Worth and Self-Validation*

Investigating this idea of self-validation, Wolfe and Crocker (2003), again looking at college students applying for graduate programs, asked these students to write an essay on what acceptance into a graduate program would mean for or about them. Students who based their self-worth on academic competence took an egocentric approach, reporting that acceptance was evidence for their

capability as a person and ability as a student. Those who did not base their self-worth on academic ability viewed acceptance as a facilitator of their future goals (e.g., becoming an academic), and not as an indication or validation of their abilities or worth as a person (Crocker, Luhtanen et al., 2004). Thus, for people with contingent self-worth, self-validation reflects a desire to prove to the self and others that one possesses qualities on which one's self-worth is based (Park, Crocker, & Vohs, 2006). In this case, acceptance into a graduate program was taken as evidence (i.e., validation) of one's academic competency.

Park and Crocker (2003; as described in Crocker, Luhtanen et al., 2004) further investigated the relationship between contingencies of self-worth and self-validation goals. They developed a measure of self-validation goals in two separate domains, namely physical appearance (e.g., "I am often focused on demonstrating my attractiveness"), and academic competence (e.g., "In school I am focused on demonstrating that I am very intelligent"). They found that self-validation goals in the physical appearance (r = .71) and academic competence (r = .61) domains were strongly associated with degree of self-worth contingency in the corresponding domain. Contingencies of self-worth may therefore represent the domains in which people chronically seek to validate themselves and their abilities, effectively raising self-esteem by generating evidence that one does indeed possess qualities on which one's self-esteem is based. People may chronically seek out opportunities to validate self-worth in such domains, vigilant to identify opportunities where they can pursue self-esteem, thus allowing them the self-esteem benefits of validating or fulfilling their contingencies of self-worth.

Such a description of the pursuit of self-worth and self-validation is reminiscent of the narcissist's self-constructive efforts.

1.9.3 Contingencies of Self-Worth and Narcissistic Self-Construction

Narcissists are chronically pursuing the goal of protecting, maintaining, and enhancing their self-esteem (Rhodewalt, 2005), and the pursuit of this goal is motivated by a desire to validate their grandiose yet uncertain self-views. The narcissist is therefore ever vigilant for self-enhancement opportunities that will garner evidence in the services of validating and giving certainty to these self-views (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Yet as was previously highlighted, people are selective in the domains in which they pursue self-esteem, and appear to reserve their efforts for those domains in which they have staked their self-worth (Crocker, Karpinski, et al., 2003; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). It may therefore be that narcissists invest their self-constructive efforts in the domains that will give them the biggest payoff in terms of self-esteem boosts (i.e., contingent domains).

The narcissist's self-presentational style may therefore be particularly self-enhancing in contingent domains, given the self-esteem and self-constructive benefits that this strategy has the potential to create. If narcissists are able to elicit positive social appraisals that support their self-views in contingent domains, they place themselves in a position to fulfil their contingencies, and thus, validate their identities. Narcissists may therefore be especially vigilant in identifying opportunities to self-enhance in contingent domains, because more

than most (given their uncertain self-views), they may be pre-occupied with demonstrating to themselves and others that they are people of worth and value.

Yet what are the domains in which narcissists are contingent? What attributes do narcissists feel they have to demonstrate to be people of worth and value? A careful analysis of the narcissistic character reveals that there may be particular domains in which the narcissist's feelings of self-worth are staked.

1.9.4 *Contingencies of Self-Worth and Narcissistic Fragility*

A common theme posited throughout psychological accounts of narcissism is that narcissists have fragile self-esteem (e.g., Akhtar & Thompson, 1981; Beck et al., 2004; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). One way to operationalise this fragility may be through contingencies of self-worth. Having a high degree of self-worth contingency means that feeling worthy is contingent upon meeting some standard of performance (Crocker, Lee, & Park, 2004). The self-esteem of narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency may therefore be fragile because if such standards are not met, their contingencies, and thus, their feelings of self-worth, go unfulfilled. Failing to fulfil these contingencies may also mean that narcissists elude validation on these domains. The key point here is that validation of contingent domains may be more important to narcissists than other people, given that their grandiose self-views in such domains may be held with little confidence or certainty. In order to fulfil their contingencies and feel worthy and validated, narcissists may invest their self-presentation behaviour in bringing about contingency fulfilment.

The problem is that this self-presentational behaviour may be rigid and insensitive to the demands of a given social context (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002). Narcissists' chronic pursuit of contingent self-worth may therefore leave them open to potential social rejection or identity invalidation that may come with presenting oneself too positively in inappropriate contexts. This may mean that narcissists elude fulfilling their contingencies, and thus, elude identity validation on domains fundamental to their feelings of self-worth. The narcissistic paradox that Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) describe may therefore be especially relevant to narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency.

1.9.5 *Narcissists and External Contingencies*

Crocker and Wolfe (2001) differentiate between two distinct types of contingencies of self-worth, internal and external. Internal contingencies include the domains of moral virtue, family love and support, and God's love, whereas external contingencies include physical appearance, outdoing others in competition, academic competence, and the approval of others. These contingencies make up the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003), a measure designed to assess the extent to which a person's self-worth is based on each of the seven domains identified. Crocker et al. note that internal and external contingencies are conceptually different. External contingencies represent relatively superficial aspects of the self, and are highly dependent on the attainment of specific outcomes or achievements and the validation of others to be fulfilled. Internal contingencies,

on the other, hand represent more core, abstract features of the self, and depend less on the validation of others for fulfilment (see also Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Goldenberg, 2003).

The external contingencies of self-worth appear particularly characteristic of the narcissist. Clinical accounts suggest this, highlighting that narcissists may be especially focused on external symbols of validation such as wealth, power, and beauty (APA, 1994; Millon, 1996). For narcissists, the possession of certain publicly observable abilities or tangible assets provides evidence of their superiority, importance, and perhaps most importantly, their worth as a person (Beck et al., 2004). This evidence may come in the form of physical attractiveness, occupational or academic awards, winning competitions, or being admired by others. Narcissists may believe that to be worthy, they must openly display these external validators to the world, convincing them and their public audience of their greatness. Young, Klosko, and Weishaar (2003) note that narcissists employ this strategy to compensate for underlying feelings of defectiveness and worthlessness. External validators of self-worth may therefore represent an efficient identity construction tool, because, at least in the mind of the narcissist, they provide socially identifiable indicators of his or her greatness. External contingencies of self-worth may therefore be representative of the types of domains in which narcissists invest their self-esteem, given the self-constructive benefits reaped by pursuing self-worth in these domains.

Initial support for this idea came from Luhtanen and Crocker (2005), who found that narcissism was positively associated with external contingencies of

self-worth, notably physical appearance and outdoing others in competition. Interestingly, it was also found that narcissism was negatively associated with internal contingencies of self-worth, namely moral virtue. Although this study established that higher levels of narcissism are associated with higher levels of self-worth contingency in external domains, it says little about what effect these contingencies have on the actual behaviour of narcissists.

Some insight into this question comes from a study conducted by Campbell, Rudich, and Sedikides (2002). They hypothesised that narcissists would report highly positive self-views, but only on those domains reflective of an agentic orientation (e.g., intellectual skills). They further hypothesised that those with high self-esteem would also report highly positive self-views, but these would be evident on both agentic and communal (e.g., morality) domains. Consistent with these hypotheses, they found that narcissists rated themselves as better than the average person on agentic traits, but not on communal traits. In contrast, those with high self-esteem rated themselves as better than the average person on both agentic and communal traits.

Agentic and communal traits appear to overlap somewhat (but not completely) with the distinction between external and internal domains in the contingencies of self-worth literature. Like the external contingencies domains, agentic traits may reflect more tangible self-domains that are highly socially identifiable, whereas communal traits, like internal domains, may reflect more core abstract features of the self, that are identified more privately. Although Campbell et al's. (2002) study does not implicate level of self-worth contingency,

it does support the idea that narcissists may be particularly self-enhancing in external domains. If this finding is added to the finding that narcissism has been found to positively correlate with external contingencies of self-worth (Luhtanen & Crocker, 2005), support is generated for the idea that narcissists may be especially self-enhancing on external domains. This self-enhancement strategy may be fuelled by a need to maximise self-esteem and the positivity of one's public identity in the domains in which self-worth is staked.

1.10 The Current Research

The current series of studies aims to determine some of the social contextual and within-person variables that may moderate narcissistic self-enhancement. I hold the broad theoretical position that narcissists have grandiose yet fragile self-views that require constant validation from others to sustain their integrity (APA, 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In order to obtain corroboration of these grandiose self-views, narcissists adopt a self-aggrandising interpersonal approach, an approach designed to win the positive social appraisals that serve to shore-up their fragile identities.

I begin with the general hypothesis that narcissists will pursue a chronic self-enhancement strategy when presenting themselves to others. I further hypothesise that this self-enhancement strategy will be rigidly inflexible (Paulhus & Martin, 1988), with narcissists being so focused on creating their grandiose identity via self-presentational behaviour that they pursue this strategy in

situations where self-enhancement is inappropriate. It is essentially predicted that narcissists will show a lack of contextual sensitivity (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002), presenting themselves in highly positive ways in the presence of social contextual variables that would otherwise serve to lessen the self-enhancement strivings of non-narcissists.

Studies 1 and 2 aim to test the general hypothesis that narcissists show inflexibility in their self-enhancement strategy across a range of social contextual variables. Study 1 seeks to test the effects of accountability and audience status on the self-presentational behaviour of narcissists as compared to non-narcissists. Study 1 also seeks to determine how degree of self-worth contingency within a particular domain will affect how self-enhancing narcissists are willing to be on that particular domain. Building on the findings of Study 1, Study 2 seeks to determine how audience size affects the self-presentational behaviour of narcissists as compared to non-narcissists. Study 2 also retains audience status as a social contextual variable of interest. As with Study 1, Study 2 also seeks to determine how degree of self-worth contingency differentially affects the self-presentational behaviour of narcissists and non-narcissists.

Study 3 aims to investigate how narcissists' self-presentational behaviour is affected after receiving either positive or negative self-relevant feedback. It is also sought to determine how narcissists react, both emotionally and cognitively, after receiving such feedback. Of key interest in Study 3 is how degree of self-worth contingency may moderate narcissists' emotional reactions to the positive and negative feedback provided.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY 1

2.1 Introduction to Study 1

Study 1 aims to investigate diagnostic situations where individual differences in narcissism become apparent in regards to self-enhancement behaviour. It is proposed that differences in self-enhancement between narcissists and non-narcissists are not simply a matter of degree, but a matter of context. It is hypothesised that accountability and audience status are two social contextual variables that will bring about differences in self-enhancement between narcissists and non-narcissists.

Based on the previous discussion, it is argued that narcissists enter social interactions with a stronger motivation for self-enhancement than do non-narcissists, with their goal being the construction of their grandiose identity. It is also argued that certain social contexts offer greater or lesser opportunities for self-enhancement and subsequent self-construction. Accountability is a social contextual variable that should serve to reduce the self-enhancement of non-narcissists because it involves being evaluated by a social audience, a situation that holds the threat of having one's self-presentation rejected. Such a threat should serve to lead non-narcissists towards more modest self-presentations, which is also the course of action sanctioned by social norms (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Yet narcissists may act in a very different way when accountable. Guided by their strong need to self-enhance, narcissists may be

insensitive to accountability constraints inherent within the social context, and present themselves in an overly positive manner. Moreover, the public nature of being accountable may offer narcissists an especially appealing forum to construct their desired identities, given that narcissists' identities are in large part constructed in the interpersonal realm (Rhodewalt, 2005). It is therefore expected that narcissists will be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists when accountable, and further, narcissists may actually be more self-enhancing under accountable than non-accountable conditions, given that the public nature of accountability may offer more in terms of identity construction.

Audience status is another social contextual variable previously discussed that may bring about differences in self-enhancement between narcissists and non-narcissists. Given that feedback from a high status audience may be seen as especially accurate and diagnostic, narcissists may become especially self-enhancing towards a high status audience in an attempt to elicit the self-verifying feedback (Swann et al., 1987) that would serve to validate their grandiose but uncertain self-views. Non-narcissists may see self-enhancement towards a high status audience as an especially risky strategy, because this high status audience may have the expertise to discredit an overly positive self-presentation.

In situations that entail the threat of having one's self-presentation rejected, such as being accountable or presenting to a high status audience, narcissists and non-narcissists may take a very different course of self-presentational action when degree of self-worth contingency is high. In such situations, non-narcissists may choose to protect their self-esteem in the

domains in which they have invested their feelings of self-worth. This strategy serves to buffer non-narcissists against the painful emotional consequences of having their identity claims rejected in the domains that matter most to their feeling of self-worth. Narcissists however, pervasively motivated by their need to validate themselves in the domains in which they have staked their self-worth, may attempt to enhance their self-esteem in such threatening situations. Even though there exists a threat of identity disconfirmation, there also exists opportunity for identity validation. In narcissists' minds, the need for validation may outweigh the threat of disconfirmation when the domains in which they have staked their self-worth are on the line.

It is expected that narcissists will be more self-enhancing on external domains (e.g., physical appearance, academic competence), but not internal domains (e.g., moral virtue). As clinical and social psychological accounts have suggested, narcissists' character structure is likely to be orientated around these externally orientated domains, as such domains offer publicly identifiable indicators of their greatness. Internal domains represent more abstract features of the self, and may be less observable to others. Self-enhancement should therefore be strongest on external domains given that they are so closely tied to the narcissist's identity goals. Finally, it is expected that narcissists will show an inflexible self-enhancement pattern only on these external domains because these are the domains they may be most invested in validating.

2.1.1 *Hypotheses*

In line with the theoretical considerations previously outlined, the hypotheses for Study 1 are as follows:

H1a. Level of narcissism will be positively associated with the external contingencies of self-worth and negatively associated with the internal contingencies of self-worth.

H1b. Overall, narcissists will be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists on external, but not internal domains.

H1c. Narcissists will show insensitivity to accountability demands. Narcissists will be equally, or more self-enhancing on external domains under conditions of accountability. Non-narcissists will be self-protective when accountable, and reduce their self-enhancement strivings on external domains. These differential effects for narcissism regarding promotion and protection will be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high.

H1d. Narcissists' self-enhancement will be stimulated by the prospect of meeting with a high status audience. Narcissists will be more self-enhancing towards a high than low status audience on external domains. Non-narcissists will be more self-protective and reduce their self-

enhancement strivings on external domains when presenting to a high status audience. These differential effects for narcissism regarding promotion and protection will be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 *Participants*

Participants consisted of 170 (42 Male, 128 Female) La Trobe University undergraduate students from a variety of academic disciplines. These participants were recruited from a volunteer student participant database compiled by the La Trobe University School of Psychological Science. The age of participants ranged between 18 and 48, with a mean age of 20.71 (*SD* = 5.09).

A total of 712 potential participants were approached via email to participate in the study, indicating a recruitment response rate of 24%. However, it is difficult to ascertain an exact response rate as many of the potential participants may not have actually received the recruitment email, given that many popular email systems (e.g., Hotmail, Yahoo) automatically divert some messages to the “junk-mail” folder. There were a further 14 participants who volunteered to participate after reading the recruitment email but did not return the experimental measures to the researchers. An attrition rate of 8% was therefore calculated for this study.

2.2.2 Materials

2.2.2.1 *The Narcissistic Personality Inventory*

The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Hall, 1979) was used to measure participants' levels of narcissism. The NPI is a 37-item (true/false) questionnaire designed to measure narcissism as defined by the DSM-III (APA, 1980) diagnostic criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Total scores on the NPI can range from 0 to 37, with higher scores indicating greater levels of narcissism. The NPI is the most thoroughly researched and validated measure of narcissism in non-clinical populations (for detailed reviews see Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). For the current study, NPI scores ranged from 2 to 34 ($M = 14.95$, $SD = 6.03$, $\alpha = .82$). Although a 40-item forced choice version of the NPI also exists (Raskin & Hall, 1979; Raskin & Terry, 1988), the adapted 37-item true/false version (Emmons, 1987) was chosen for use in this research. The 37-itme true/false version used in the current research can be found in Appendix A.

The NPI also possesses four subscales: leadership/authority, self-absorption/self-admiration, superiority/arrogance, and exploitativeness/ entitlement (Emmons, 1987). These sub-scales were not used in the current research, with analyses instead focusing on overall levels of narcissism. Throughout the research, it was found that overall levels of narcissism predicted responses to the dependent variables equally as well (and more consistently) than did any of the NPI subscales.

2.2.2.2 *Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale*

The Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSWS; Crocker et al., 2003) is a 35-item measure designed to assess the extent to which participants base their self-worth on seven domains (see Appendix B). These domains include physical appearance (sample item: “when I think I look attractive, I feel good about myself”), approval from others (sample item: “my self-esteem depends on the opinions others hold of me”), outdoing others in competition (sample item: “knowing that I am better than others on a task raises my self-esteem”), academic competence (sample item: “I feel better about myself when I know I'm doing well academically”), family love and support (sample item: “when my family members are proud of me, my sense of self-worth increases”), moral virtue (sample item: “my self-esteem depends on whether or not I follow my moral/ethical principles”), and God’s love (sample item: “my self-esteem goes up when I feel that God loves me”). Each item is answerable on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*).

Crocker and her colleagues have theorised (e.g., Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) and empirically documented (e.g., Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003) that these seven domains can be further grouped into external contingencies of self-worth (i.e., Physical Appearance, Approval from Others, Outdoing Others in Competition, Academic Competence) and internal contingencies of self-worth (i.e., Family Love and Support, Moral Virtue, God’s Love).

Each of the seven domains is measured with a 5-item subscale, with higher scores on a domain subscale indicating greater levels of self-worth

contingency on that domain. Total scores on a subscale can range from 5 to 35, and are divided by 5 to obtain a collapsed domain subscale score between 1 and 7. Each of the subscales has shown good test-retest reliability over 8.5 months (ranging from .51 to .88; Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003).

Descriptive statistics in the current study for the CSWS were as follows: Physical appearance (*M* = 4.87, *SD* = 1.12, α = .82), approval from others (*M* = 4.26, *SD* = 1.28, α = .82), outdoing others in competition (*M* = 4.77, *SD* = 1.09, α = .86), academic competence (*M* = 5.19, *SD* = .97, α = .80), overall external contingency (*M* = 4.77, *SD* = .81, α = .81), family love and support (*M* = 5.23 , *SD* = 1.08, α = .82), moral virtue (*M* = 5.08, *SD* = 1.01, α = .79), God's love (*M* = 2.78, *SD* = 1.82, α = .85), overall internal contingency (*M* = 4.36, *SD* = .92, α = .85).

2.2.2.3 *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES)*

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965) was used to measure participants' global levels of self-esteem (see Appendix C). The SES consists of 10-items, each answerable on a 4-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly agree*) to 4 (*Strongly disagree*). Total scores can range from 10-40, with higher scores indicating greater levels of global self-esteem. The SES has been shown to have excellent psychometric properties (for a detailed review see Fleming & Courtney, 1984). For the current study, SES scores ranged from 16 to 39 (M = 29.00, SD = 4.82, α = .87).

2.2.3 *Design*

The study employed a 2 (accountability: accountable, non-accountable) x 2 (audience status: high status, low status) factorial independent groups design, with narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency used as continuous predictors. The dependent variables of interest were participant self-ratings on the domains outlined by the contingencies of self-worth scale.

2.2.4 Procedure

Potential participants were approached via email with a cover story stating that they had the opportunity to participate in the trial of a new Australian personality assessment centre being run at La Trobe University. They were informed that if they decided to participate in the trial, they would be required to complete several psychological tests, which would later be assessed by a staff member working at the centre. They were also told that they would be meeting face-to-face with the assessing staff member to discuss their results. Appendix D contains the cover story in the form that it was presented to participants.

After reading the cover story, potential participants who were interested in the study were asked to send an email to the researchers confirming their willingness to participate. Once this email was received, participants were emailed (in Microsoft Word format) several psychological tests, including the NPI, the CSWS, the SES, and a self-rating scale. This self-rating scale (see Appendix E) asked participants to rate themselves, on a scale of 1-20 (with 20 being the most positive), how positively they viewed themselves on the seven domains

measured by the CSWS (i.e., attractiveness, ability to win the approval or regard of others, academic ability, ability to win the love of one's family, ability to outdo others in competition, ability to lead one's life according to strong moral virtues, ability to win God's love). Each domain was framed in terms of an ability or quality possessed by the participant in order to calibrate each of the CSWS domains into a measure of self-enhancement. The self-ratings served as a measure of self-enhancement, and were the dependent variables of interest.

2.2.4.1 Manipulation of Independent Variables

In the accountable condition, participants were told (immediately before rating themselves) that they would be required to explain, defend, and justify their self-ratings to the staff member they were supposedly meeting. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> Our staff member places a great deal of importance on people's answers to the self-rating scale. As such, he will be carefully analysing and scrutinising your responses to the self-rating scale in order to come up with a valid and accurate understanding of you. During your meeting with our staff member, you will have an extensive discussion about the ratings that you have given yourself on the various attributes. Please be prepared to fully *explain, defend*, and *justify* the ratings that you have given yourself to our staff member.

In the non-accountable condition, participants were told (immediately before rating themselves) that their self-ratings were completely anonymous, and used for training purposes only. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> Your self-ratings are not part of your official personality assessment. Instead, they form part of a training program for our staff. This program ensures that our staff members' skills in personality assessment remain at the highest standards. As part of his training program, your self-ratings will become available to the staff member who you are meeting. However, given that these self-ratings are for training purposes only, your answers are completely anonymous and confidential, and thus, he will not be able to trace them to you in any way.

As a manipulation check, participants in the accountable condition were asked if they understood that they would be required to fully explain, defend, and justify their self-ratings during their meeting with the staff member. Participants in the non-accountable condition were asked if they understood that their self-ratings were completely anonymous and confidential, and used for training purposes only. Participants responded by checking a box stating yes or no.

Perceptions of accountability or non-accountability were reinforced by including a reference to a mailing address of the staff member with whom

participants would be meeting. This reference was made in an “office-use only” box located immediately after the self-rating scale (see Appendix F).

In the high status audience condition, participants were told that the staff member who they would be meeting was Dr Daniel Walsh, a renowned clinical psychologist and personality assessment expert. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> The staff member that will be assessing your responses, and with whom you shall be meeting, is Dr Daniel Walsh. Dr Walsh earned his PhD. in clinical psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. After completing his residency in clinical psychology at the Johns Hopkins Psychiatric Centre in Baltimore, Dr Walsh began work at the New York State Hospital, where he headed the personality assessment team within the psychiatric ward. In 1995, Dr Walsh moved to Australia to take up a position at St Vincent's Hospital, where he has pioneered a new method of personality assessment that has been used in both the mental health and corporate business fields. He is a fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the Australian Psychological Society, and has served as an editor for numerous scientific and professional journals on personality assessment. Dr Walsh is recognised as one of the foremost personality assessment experts in the country, and we are most privileged to have him participating in our trial.

In the low status condition, participants were told that the staff member who they would be meeting was Mr Daniel Walsh, a first year undergraduate psychology student on work experience at the Personality Assessment Centre. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> The staff member that will be assessing your responses, and with whom you shall be meeting, is Mr Daniel Walsh. Mr Walsh is a first year undergraduate psychology student. He participates in a university pilot program that provides undergraduate psychology students with an opportunity to gain work-experience at our personality assessment centre. The aim of this is to expose undergraduate psychology students to the types of careers they may be working in once they have completed their studies. Mr Walsh is hoping that his work experience at the personality assessment centre will help equip him with the types of skills he needs for a career in psychology.

Status was manipulated according to educational and professional achievements, affiliated institution status, as well as clinical experience. These descriptions were based on previous work investigating outcomes relevant to psychotherapist status (e.g., Claiborn & Schmidt, 1977; Lasky & Salomone, 1977).

Participants were asked to return the completed tests and self-ratings to the researchers via email. Consistent with the cover story, they were also told that

they would be contacted within 48 hours to set up a meeting time with the staff member to discuss their test results. Once the researchers received the tests, participants were immediately (i.e., within 24 hours) emailed with a debriefing document detailing the true aims and hypotheses of the study, as well as the fictional nature of the personality assessment centre (see Appendix G). The above methodology was modelled on that used by Sedikides, Herbst, et al., (2002), as well as that used by Collins and Stukas (in press).

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Overview

The analyses for Study 1 are reported in three sections. Section 1 details the pilot test and manipulation check undertaken to test the validity of the experimental manipulations used. Section 2 details the correlational findings between narcissism and each contingency of self-worth. Section 3 presents the main data analyses, investigating the effects of narcissism, accountability, audience status, and degree of self-worth contingency on participant self-ratings.

2.3.2 Pilot Test on Audience Status

A pilot test was conducted to ensure that the descriptions of the high and low status evaluator were significantly different in regards to how much status they appeared to possess. Twenty participants were randomly assigned to read the description of either the high or the low status evaluator. Once finished,

participants were asked to fill out a 6-item measure designed to assess how much status they felt the evaluator possessed (see Appendix H). Each item was answerable on a 9-point scale, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of status attributed. Example items from the measure were “how much expertise do you think this person has in personality assessment?” and “how much status do you think this person has in general?” The six items were then averaged to create a composite measure of overall level of status attributed to the evaluator. The measure had excellent reliability (α = .97).

A two-tailed independent samples t-test revealed that the high status evaluator (*M* = 7.43, *SD* = 1.85) was deemed to have significantly more status than the low status evaluator (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 1.10), $t(18) = 4.82$, $p = .01$. The status manipulation was successful.

2.3.3 Manipulation Check on Accountability

Following the methodology used by Sedikides, Herbst, et al., (2002; Study 1), participants in the accountable condition were asked if they believed that they would be required to explain, defend, and justify their self ratings to the staff member during their meeting. Participants in the non-accountable condition were asked if they believed that their self-ratings were entirely anonymous, and not traceable to them in any way. Participants answered either yes or no by checking a box.

The accountability manipulation was successful. All participants in the accountable condition answered yes to indicate that they believed that they

would be required to explain, defend, and justify their self ratings to the psychologist during their meeting. All participants in the non-accountable condition answered yes to indicate that they believed that their self-ratings were entirely anonymous, and not traceable to them in any way.

2.3.4 Correlational Analysis

Of interest in the current investigation was the extent to which narcissism was associated with higher or lower levels of self-worth contingency on certain domains. To examine this, a correlational analysis was conducted testing the relationship between narcissism and each of the seven subscales of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (Crocker et al., 2003). Self-esteem was also included in this analysis. Table 2 presents the findings of this correlational analysis.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Contingencies of Self-Worth Subscales, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem

Domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170	170
1. Appearance											
2. Others' Approval	.50**										
3. Academic	.26**	.33**									
4. Competition	.27**	.34**	.49**								
5. Family Support	.34**	.24**	.20**	.12							
6. Moral Virtue	.10	.21**	.30**	.11	.32**						
7. God's Love	-.01	-.02	.08	.06	.18*	.21**					
8. Overall Internal Contingency	.16*	.16*	.24**	.13	.62**	.63**	.80**				
9. Overall External Contingency	.71**	.78**	.68**	.71**	.31**	.25**	.03	.23**			
10. Narcissism	.22**	.02	.15*	.30**	.15	-.10	.05	.05	.23**		
11. Self-Esteem	-.16*	-.29**	-.12	-.11	.11	-.10	.07	.06	-.24**	.28**	

*p<.05. **p<.01

As predicted, Table 2 indicates that narcissism was positively associated with several of the external contingencies of self-worth, notably physical appearance, academic competence, and outdoing others in competition. No association was found between narcissism and any of the internal contingencies. Self-esteem was negatively associated with several of the external contingencies of self-worth, notably physical appearance and other's approval. Consistent with previous research (Emmons, 1984; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991; Raskin &

Terry, 1988; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995), narcissism and self-esteem were positively and significantly associated. It is notable that although these correlations were significant, they were only small to moderate (Cohen, 1988).

To further examine the distinction between external and internal contingencies of self-worth, and how these may relate separately to narcissism, composite variables were developed for overall level of contingency on external and internal domains. These composite variables were developed by averaging the 4 external contingency subscales and the 3 internal contingency subscales. This created a total measure of how contingent participants were on external and internal domains. The correlational analysis revealed that narcissism was positively associated with overall degree of external self-worth contingency, but no association was found with overall degree of internal self-worth contingency. Self-esteem was negatively associated with overall degree of external self-worth contingency.

2.3.5 Main Analyses

The current study aimed to explore some of the intra- and interpersonal variables that may affect narcissistic self-enhancement on the domains measured by the CSWS. The specific variables under investigation were the status of the audience to whom participants were self-presenting, whether participants were held accountable or non-accountable for their self-presentations, and the degree to which participants' self-worth was contingent in the domain that they were rating themselves on. It was predicted that overall,

narcissists would be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists, but only on external domains. It was further predicted that narcissists would be equally, or more self-enhancing on external domains under conditions of accountability. Non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement strivings on external domains when accountable. These differential effects for narcissism would be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high. Finally, it was predicted that narcissists would be more self-enhancing towards a high than low status audience on external domains. Non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement strivings on external domains when presenting to a high status audience. These differential effects for narcissism would be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high.

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test the predicted effects of narcissism, accountability, audience status, and degree of self-worth contingency on the positivity of participants' self-ratings on the CSWS domains (see Appendix E). Preliminary analysis revealed no significant effects for gender or age. These were therefore removed from the analyses (Judd & Kenny, 1981). This preliminary analysis for gender involved including gender into the regression model, and testing for both main and interaction effects across all the dependent variables.

There were several options available in regards to how the self-ratings were analysed. One option was to analyse each of the 7 CSWS domain self-ratings separately. A second option was to collapse each of the 4 external domain self-ratings (i.e., physical appearance, approval from others, outdoing

others in competition, academic competence) and the three internal domain self-ratings (i.e., family love and support, moral virtue, and God's love) into external and internal self-rating composite variables. This second option was preferred as it capitalised on the theoretical distinction between external and internal domains (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Campbell, et al., 2002). It was also felt that this option would allow for a simpler interpretation of the results, given that the study's hypotheses are largely based around a distinction between internal and external domains. This option also allowed for better economy in regards to the number of regression analyses used (i.e., two instead of seven).

The God's love self-rating was left out of the overall internal domain self-rating composite variable because it was found that 59% of participants rated their ability to win God's love as zero. This finding may be an artefact of the way that the question was worded (i.e., "rate your ability to lead your life in a way that will win the love of God"). Feedback from participants refected this, with nine noting that they found the God's love self-rating difficult to complete. Comments included "you can not win God's love as he loves unconditionally" and "I found the God's love self-rating quizzical". The mean overall internal domain self-rating variable would also have been significantly reduced if the God's love rating was included, and may not have fairly represented participants' internal domain self-ratings.

The four predictor variables of narcissism (continuous variable), accountability (coded: accountable = 1, non-accountable = -1), audience status (coded: high status = 1, low status= -1), and degree of self-worth contingency

(continuous variable) were entered as main effects in step 1 of the regression. Given that overall external and internal domain self-ratings were used as the dependent variables, overall degree of external self-worth contingency and overall degree of internal self-worth contingency (minus the God's love contingency) were used as predictors in the regression. Overall degree of external self-worth contingency was entered in the regression looking at external domain self-ratings and overall degree of internal self-worth contingency was entered in the regression looking at internal domain self-ratings.

The six two-way interaction terms of narcissism x accountability, narcissism x status, narcissism x degree of self-worth contingency, accountability x status, accountability x degree of self-worth contingency, and status x degree of self-worth contingency were entered into step two of the regression.

The four three-way interaction terms of narcissism x accountability x status, narcissism x accountability x degree of self-worth contingency, narcissism x status x degree of self-worth contingency, accountability x status x degree of self-worth contingency were entered into step three of the regression.

Finally, the four-way interaction between narcissism x accountability x status x degree of self-worth contingency was entered into step four of the regression. The data analytic strategy, as well as the presentation of results, was modelled on that of Wallace and Baumeister (2004).

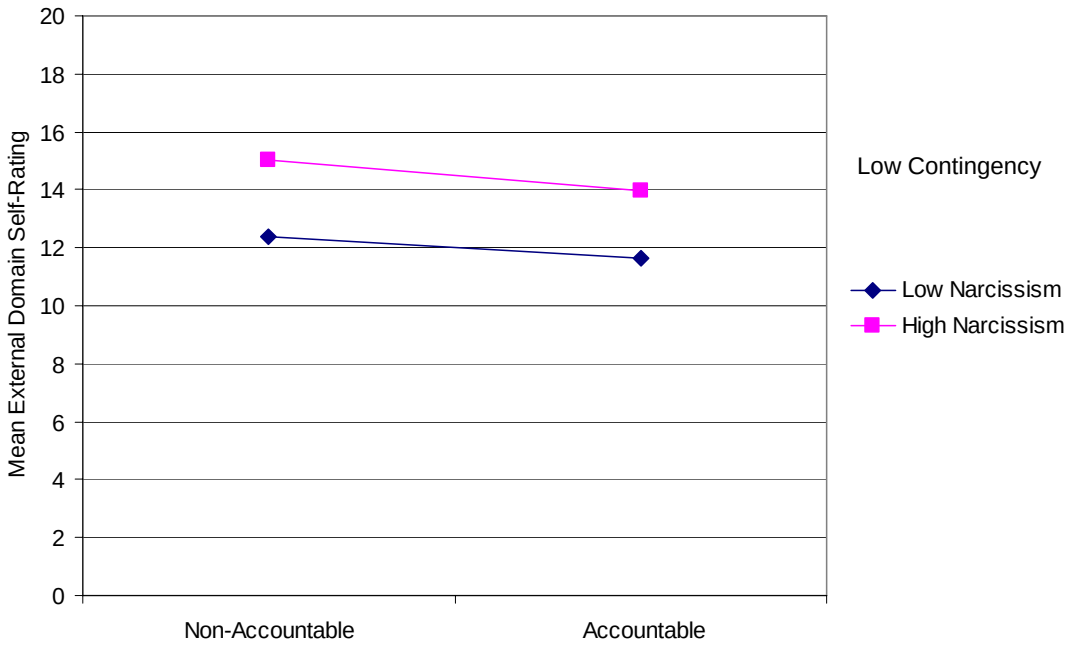
2.3.5.1 External Domain Self-Ratings

Step 1 of the regression revealed a significant main effect for narcissism, β = .56, *t*(166) = 8.44, *p* = .00. As narcissism scores increased, so did participants' self-ratings on external domains. A main effect was also found for accountability, β = .41, *t*(166) = 2.05, *p* = .04, such that participants in the accountable condition (*M* = 12.78, *SD* = 3.23) self-enhanced less than participants in the non-accountable condition (*M* = 13.54, *SD* = 2.18). Accountability reduced self-enhancement on external domains.

The central predictions involved interactions between narcissism, accountability, and degree of external self-worth contingency, as well as narcissism, status, and degree of external self-worth contingency. The two-way interaction between narcissism and accountability was non-significant (although approaching significance), β = .36, *t*(166) = 1.88, *p* = .07. The interaction between narcissism and status was also non-significant, β = .21, *t*(166) = 1.16, *p* = .25. No other significant two-way interactions were found.

However step three revealed a significant three-way interaction between narcissism, accountability, and degree of external self-worth contingency, β = 2.27, *t*(166) = 3.09, *p* = .00. Predicted values (Aiken & West, 1991), which represent a hypothetical individual one standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of external self-worth contingency, were calculated to further understand this significant interaction. As shown in Figure 1, non-narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency reduced their self-ratings under accountable (*PV* = 9.84) compared to non-accountable

(*PV* = 12.92) conditions. In contrast, narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency increased their self-ratings under accountable (*PV* = 16.27) compared to non-accountable (*PV* = 14.19) conditions. When degree of external self-worth contingency was low, narcissists slightly reduced their self-ratings when accountable (*PV* = 13.95) and compared to when non-accountable (*PV* = 15.05). Non-narcissists had a similar pattern of results, reducing their self-ratings when accountable (*PV* = 11.62) and compared to when non-accountable (*PV* = 12.36). No other significant effects were found on external domain self-ratings.



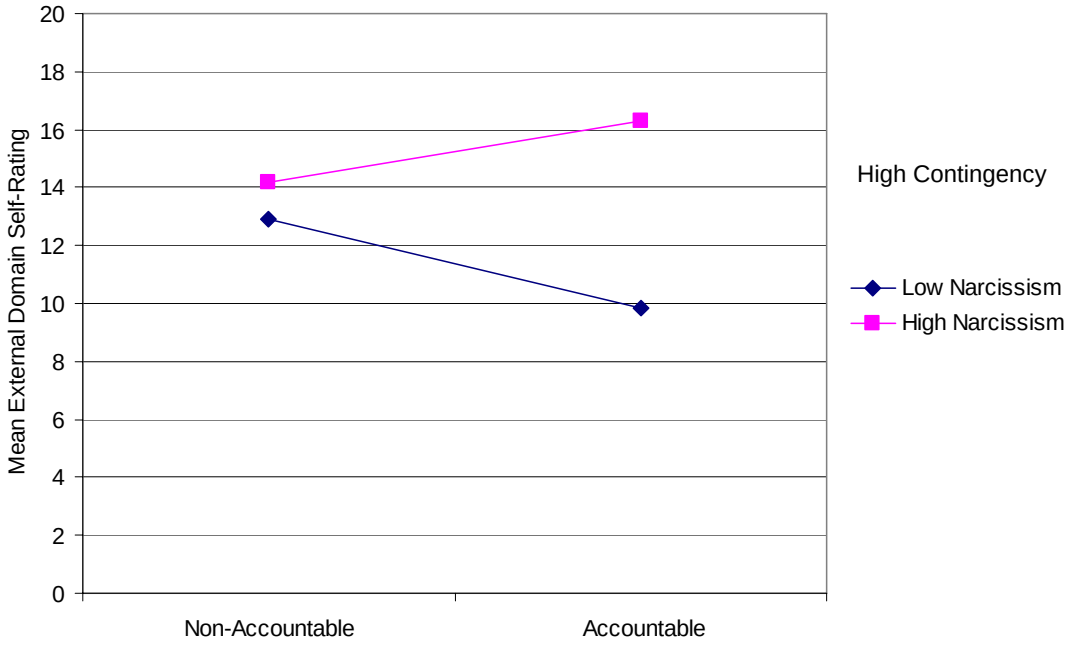


Figure 1. The interactive effects of narcissism, degree of external self-worth contingency, and accountability on external domain self-ratings as represented by predicted values.

Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and external self-worth contingency.

2.3.5.2 Internal Domain Self-Ratings:

Step 1 of the regression revealed no main effect for narcissism, β = .11, $t(166) = 1.49$, $p = .14$. Self-ratings on internal domains did not increase as total narcissism scores increased, contrasting with the findings on external domains. Step 1 also revealed no main effect for accountability, β = .06, $t(166) = .82$, $p = .40$. Accountability did not reduce self-enhancement on internal domains. A main effect was found for status, β = .16, $t(166) = 2.29$, $p = .02$, such that participants self-enhanced more to the high status ($M = 15.27$, $SD = 3.19$) than the low status ($M = 14.43$, $SD = 3.67$) evaluator. A main effect for degree of internal self-worth contingency was also found, β = .42, $t(166) = 5.91$, $p = .00$, such that as degree of internal self-worth contingency increased, so too did internal domain self-ratings.

Step 2 of the regression revealed a significant interaction between accountability and status, β = .14, $t(166) = 2.04$, $p = .04$. When accountable, participants rated themselves more positively when presenting towards the high ($M = 15.51$, $SD = 2.77$) than the low ($M = 13.67$, $SD = 3.75$) status evaluator. Under conditions of non-accountability, no difference was found in participant self-ratings to the high ($M = 15.02$, $SD = 3.59$) and low ($M = 15.19$, $SD = 3.46$) status evaluator (see Figure 2). This result was counter to the experimental hypotheses. No other significant effects were found for internal domains.

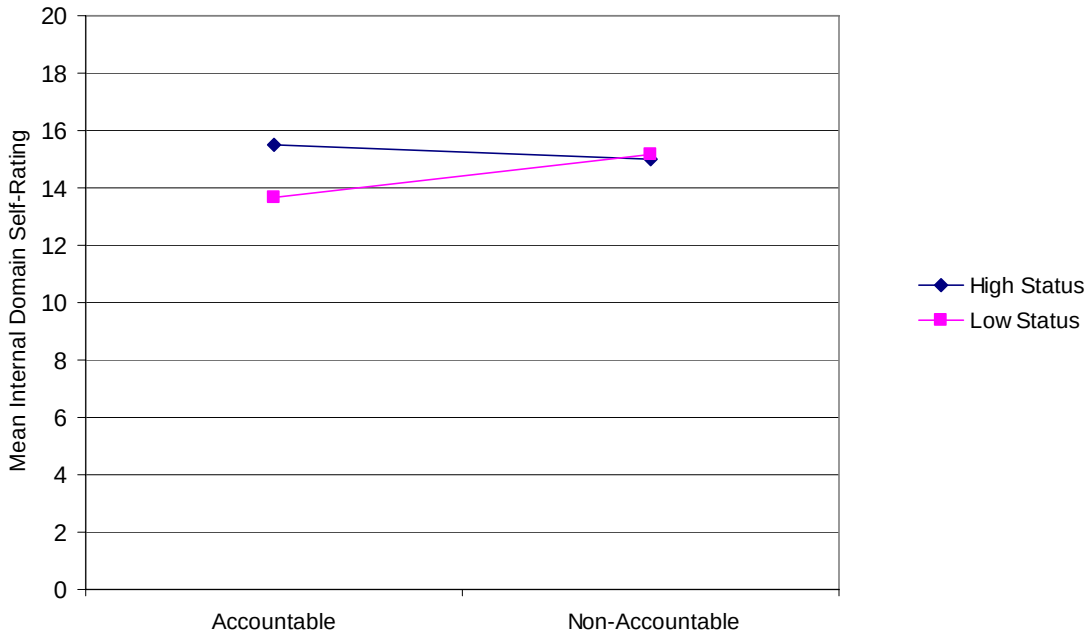


Figure 2. The interactive effects of accountability and audience status on actual mean internal domain self-ratings.

2.3.6 Summary of Main Analyses

The regression analyses indicated that those with higher levels of narcissism appear to possess highly positive self-views on external, but not internal domains. Further, when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, non-narcissists became more modest on external domains under conditions of accountability compared to non-accountability. In contrast, when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, narcissists became more self-enhancing on external domains under accountable as compared to non-accountable conditions. Therefore narcissists only broke accountability demands when rating themselves on external domains and when degree of external self-

worth contingency was high. No effects were found for narcissism and accountability on internal domains.

The status of the audience to whom participants presented did not influence self-presentational efforts relative to level of narcissism. Finally, participants were more self-enhancing on internal domains (but not external domains) when accountable to a high status audience than when accountable to a low status audience.

2.4 Discussion

The aim of Study 1 was to investigate some of the intra- and interpersonal variables that may differentially affect the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists within a self-presentational context. It was hypothesised that narcissists would be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists, but only on external domains. Consistent with this prediction, it was found that overall, narcissists were significantly more self-enhancing than non-narcissists on the external domain composite variable, but not on the internal domain composite variable. Indeed, no main or interaction effects were found that differentiated narcissists from non-narcissists in terms of internal domain self-ratings.

The study's main hypotheses revolved around interactions between narcissism, accountability, audience status, and degree of self-worth contingency. It was predicted that narcissists would show insensitivity to

accountability demands and be equally, or more self-enhancing on external domains under conditions of accountability, whereas non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement strivings when accountable for their self-ratings. This predicted two-way interaction did not eventuate. However, it was found that degree of external self-worth contingency moderated the relationship between narcissism and accountability. When degree of external self-worth contingency was high, it was found that non-narcissists reduced their self-enhancement on external domains when accountable as compared to when non-accountable, whereas narcissists actually increased their self-enhancement on external domains when accountable as compared to when non-accountable. This finding was in line with predictions.

The other hypothesis related to the differential effects of audience status on narcissists' and non-narcissists' self-enhancement strivings. It was predicted that narcissists would be more self-enhancing on external domains when presenting towards a high than low status audience, whereas non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement strivings when presenting to a high status audience. This prediction was not supported, with the two-way interaction between narcissism and status non-significant. Unlike accountability, this relationship was not moderated by degree of self-worth contingency.

Other findings that were more peripheral to the study's main hypotheses are also worthy of note. It was found that, in general, accountability reduced self-enhancement on external, but not internal domains. It was also found that a high degree of internal self-worth contingency predicted higher internal domain self-

ratings. Finally, it was found that when accountable for self-ratings on internal domains, participants were more self-enhancing towards the high than the low status evaluator.

2.4.1 Narcissism, Accountability, and the Role of Self-Worth Contingency

The results from Study 1 provide support for the general hypothesis that narcissists show a lack of contextual sensitivity (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002), and self-enhance in situations (e.g., when accountable) that lead non-narcissists to become more modest. Yet results also indicate that this lack of contextual sensitivity was only apparent on external domains. Narcissists appeared to be highly invested in presenting themselves as positively as possible on external domains, but this was less so on internal domains. This finding was in line with predictions and previous findings (Campbell et al., 2002), and indicates that narcissists appear to be selective in the types of domains in which they seek to construct and enhance their grandiose identities. This self-enhancement pattern on external domains provides support for the idea that for narcissists, the possession of publicly observable or tangible qualities may be more valued and important than qualities that are more internally based. Indeed, successes in external domains represent publicly identifiable indicators of the narcissist's greatness, and as such, identity construction efforts (specifically via self-presentation) appear to be concentrated in these domains.

However results further indicate that the relationship between narcissism and accountability may not be as direct as initially predicted. The predicted two-

way interaction between narcissism and accountability did not occur. It was only when degree of external self-worth contingency was considered that the hypothesised effects of accountability on narcissism were obtained.

When degree of external self-worth contingency was low, both narcissists and non-narcissists showed a general tendency towards modesty on external domains when accountable as compared to when non-accountable. When degree of external self-worth contingency was high however, narcissists and non-narcissists did differ as a function of accountability. Non-narcissists reduced their self-enhancement on external domains when accountable as compared to when non-accountable. Narcissists showed the opposite pattern of results, increasing their self-enhancement on external domains when accountable as compared to when non-accountable. This was a particularly interesting finding, and suggests that narcissists not only fail to follow the prescribed social norm of modesty when accountable, but may actually increase their self-enhancement when accountable compared to when non-accountable.

The results outlined above suggest that non-narcissists became strategic self-presenters when accountable. The need to be a strategic self-presenter appears particularly salient for non-narcissists when degree of external self-worth contingency is high. By reducing their self-enhancement when accountable, non-narcissists may have been attempting to protect the domains in which they had staked their feelings of self-worth from rejection or invalidation. Excessively favourable claims about the self under conditions of accountability may be met with evaluative scrutiny from one’s social audience (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

This evaluation inherently carries the risk of having one's identity claim rejected or invalidated by one's social audience. This was a risk that non-narcissists appeared unwilling to take, and instead, chose to circumvent this potential scrutiny and present themselves in a more modest and self-protective manner. The protection of contingent self-worth from invalidation is important because contingent domains are central to people's global feelings of self-esteem. The loss of self-esteem in such domains therefore has reverberating effects, resulting in painful drops in overall levels of self-esteem (Crocker, 2002b). Yet as is evident in this study's findings, the narcissist appears to show no such self-protective strategy when contingency of self-worth is high.

Not only did narcissists fail to reduce their self-enhancement when accountable, being accountable appeared to actually invigorate their self-enhancement strivings above and beyond their strivings when non-accountable. The notion that narcissists failed to show the socially prescribed response of modesty when accountable is consistent with the functional flexibility literature (e.g., T. Leary, 1957; Paulhus & Martin, 1988), and also with the concept of contextual sensitivity outlined by Sedikides, Campbell, et al. (2002). Narcissists persisted with their self-enhancement strategy when accountable, showing an inability, or at least an unwillingness, to adapt to the contextual demands of the situation.

One possible way to interpret this result is that narcissists incessantly pursue this inflexible self-enhancement strategy across social contexts in a chronic quest for identity construction (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The incessant

and inflexible self-enhancement strategy was not evident on internal domains, perhaps because narcissists are not as invested in constructing their identities around these less publicly identifiable qualities. However, by presenting themselves in highly positive ways to their social audience on external domains, narcissists may attempt to elicit positive or identity confirming feedback that serves to validate their grandiose yet uncertain identities. These attempts appear concentrated on external domains. Narcissists may therefore be people in chronic need for identity validation, and actively seek this validation through their self-presentational behaviour. Yet as is indicated in this study, the legacy of the incessant pursuit of identity validation is that narcissists' self-presentational behaviour becomes rigidly inflexible and insensitive to the demands of the social context.

The validation narcissists seek appears particularly relevant to contingent domains. Contingencies of self-worth not only represent the domains that influence global levels of self-esteem, but also the domains in which positive outcomes serve as evidence that one is indeed capable, competent, and successful in the domains in which self-worth is based. Contingencies of self-worth therefore serve an important self-validation function (Park, Crocker, & Vohs, 2006). As the name implies, validation of external domains comes from sources external to the person (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), such as the positive feedback of others. This process of validation appears particularly characteristic of narcissists, who are heavily reliant on positive social feedback to sustain their feelings of self-worth (Rhodewalt, 2005). By self-enhancing when accountable,

narcissists may be attempting to prove to their audience that they have the necessary qualities, skills, and competencies required to be people of worth in the domains in which they have staked their self-worth, and thus, fulfil their contingencies. By convincing their audience that they have what it takes to be worthy, narcissists may also be attempting to convince themselves, because their sense of self-worth is so closely tied to how they are perceived by others (Beck et al., 2004; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Young & Flanagan, 1998).

2.4.2 Accountability as a Public Context

A somewhat more provocative conclusion based on the finding that narcissists were even more self-enhancing when accountable than when non-accountable is that the public nature of accountability offered narcissists more in terms of identity construction. The more private nature of the non-accountable condition may have offered narcissists less in terms of identity construction. Accountability was manipulated such that participants expected that their self-ratings would be scrutinized by a public audience, while non-accountability was manipulated such that participants expected that their self-ratings were only known to them, and were not personally identifiable to a public audience (i.e., ratings were anonymous). Given that narcissists' identities are so closely related to public opinion about themselves, the more private non-accountable condition may not have been sufficient to instigate their self-enhancement strivings. The lure of positive social feedback was not present when non-accountable, thus the narcissist did not "fire-up" their self-enhancement motive. When the lure of

positive social feedback was available (i.e., when accountable), the narcissist's self-enhancement motive was set into action.

Caution must be applied when proposing this theory however. The accountability versus non-accountability manipulation used in this study is only a rough gauge of public versus private conditions, and was not in fact intended to mimic a public versus private distinction. As Schlenker and Wowra (2003) state, purely public or purely private conditions are extremely difficult to create experimentally, and may not in fact exist. Expanding this point specifically to accountability, Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002) noted that people can also be accountable when no public audience is present (i.e., in strictly private conditions), such as being accountable to a higher moral authority with no physical presence in the actual social context.

Taking inspiration from the work of Greenwald and Breckler (1985), it may also be that when in the apparently private context of social non-accountability, people may actually perceive accountability to the self. Although there is no physical evaluative audience to whom one is accountable, one may still feel accountable for their behaviour to one's own self. Thus, the distinction between private and public situations in the context of accountability is far from clearly defined. Still, accountability, given that it was manipulated as an essentially public context, may have been perceived by narcissists as offering a better opportunity for positive feedback than available in non-accountable conditions. This in turn may have resulted in an increased motivation for self-enhancement on the part of the narcissist when accountable. As Schlenker, Weigold, and

Doherty state (1991), events and behaviour that occur under conditions of accountability have potential implications for identity, whereas those that do not are less meaningful in terms of identity.

It therefore emerges that the difference between narcissists' and non-narcissists' self-presentational strategies when accountable is that narcissists show a highly self-promoting orientation while non-narcissists show a highly self-protective orientation. Yet this was only found when degree of external self-worth contingency was high. Non-narcissists appear to want to protect the self-worth that they already have, whereas narcissists want to further enhance the self-worth they already have (see also Arkin & Lakin, 2001). Non-narcissists appear to readily acknowledge the vulnerability (Crocker, 2002a) that having contingent self-worth creates. They appear to recognise that protection of contingent domains is the strategy of choice when a specific social contextual threat (e.g., accountability) is present. Protection becomes the strategy of choice because it buffers the non-narcissist from the painful drops in self-esteem that may result from failure or social rejection in a contingent domain (Crocker, Karpinski, et al., 2003; Crocker, et al., 2002). The key issue here is perception of threat. Non-narcissists appear perceptive of social threats such as accountability and adjust their behaviour accordingly, whereas narcissists appear insensitive to such threats, and carry on their self-aggrandising interpersonal style regardless. The question therefore becomes just what price, if any, may be paid by the narcissist for failing to adjust his or her self-presentational efforts to accommodate for social contextual threats, specifically, accountability?

2.4.3 Narcissism and Accountability: Incurring the Costs?

The findings of Study 1 suggest that self-enhancement is a controllable motive, at least for non-narcissists. Narcissists on the other hand appear less able to reign in their self-enhancement efforts when there is an opportunity to further increase the positivity of the domains in which they have staked their self-worth. Contingencies of self-worth may therefore represent a specific vulnerability factor for narcissists because they initiate self-presentational strategies (i.e., excessive self-promotion in inappropriate contexts) that may leave them at risk of social rejection and subsequent identity disconfirmation.

Yet it may be unreasonable to propose that self-enhancing when accountable is a definitive pathway to social rejection. It may be that narcissists can, or at least think they can, support the identities that they present when accountable. Schlenker et al. (1991) note that when people believe that they can perform well, accountability may activate internal resources that may lead to improved performance and subsequent success (see also Schlenker & Weigold, 1989). With their overt self-confidence and grandiose self-image, narcissists may be particularly likely to believe that they can perform well and have high outcome expectancies when accountable. In the context of being evaluated by an audience to whom they are accountable, these high outcome expectancies may mean that narcissists perform well in such evaluative conditions, and convince the evaluator to believe, or more pertinently, to validate, the identities that they are presenting. Of course this study's methodology did not allow for measurement of participant performance when explaining, defending, and

justifying self-ratings. Yet it does raise the possibility that narcissists may in fact be successful in justifying their self-presentations, and subsequently, elicit the positive social appraisals from their evaluative audience that they desire.

Although this perspective holds theoretical merit, a deeper analysis of the interaction between the interpersonal functioning of the narcissist and the social context that underpins the concept of accountability suggests that the narcissist's self-presentational behaviour may incur significant costs. Accountability is a fundamental social variable and a cornerstone of society at both the individual and group levels. As Semin and Mainstead (1983) state, accountability bridges the gap between the individual and society by making people answerable to prescribed norms of social conduct. The pressure that accountability creates ensures that people's behaviour becomes predictable because unpredicted behaviour is met with evaluative scrutiny (Shotter, 1984). This predictability facilitates people's ability to make sense of the society in which they operate, because they are able to confidently anticipate the behaviour of their social partners. More broadly construed, norms define what society perceives as right or wrong, what is acceptable or not acceptable. Those who break these norms and thus violate what is considered socially right or acceptable threaten social organisation (Dancy, 2000; Korsgaard, 2000; Raz, 1975).

By showing indifference to such a basic societal norm, the narcissist and his or her self-aggrandising interpersonal behaviour may soon come to the attention of his or her social partners. These social partners may look especially harshly on excessively favourable identity claims when accountable, given that

everyone else appears willing to show respect for accountability demands. The question in the mind of the evaluative audience may therefore be that if everyone else is falling into line with the demands for modesty that accountability brings, why isn't this person doing the same? Although the narcissist may see him or herself as deserving special treatment from his or her social audience (APA, 1994) in the allowance of such self-presentational freedom, his or her audience is unlikely to share the same perspective. The end result may be that narcissists alienate their interaction partners.

The key issue is that accountability is a fundamental canon that underpins society and people's behaviour in it. If people habitually disregard accountability demands, they become unanswerable for their actions, and thus, free to engage in behaviour independent of social checks or repercussions. The implications of this may already be apparent with the ever increasing levels of narcissism inherent in modern Western society (Lasch, 1979), with some authors (e.g., Buttny, 1993; Laufer, 2003; Shotter, 1989) noting a growing trend towards individuality, and a loss of reverence for social morality and traditional social institutions. This may be symptomatic of an increasing disregard for social accountability which may in turn be related to the increasing levels of narcissism apparent in society. This of course is not intended to indicate that society is on a path to chaos, nor is it intended to be a social commentary, but more to suggest the possibility that the narcissistic disregard for accountability may mean that the social order may be compromised should accountability be disregarded on a broad social level.

2.4.4 Narcissism and Audience Status

Audience status was included as an independent variable in Study 1 based on the notion that for narcissists, self-presentational outcomes may be more important with certain audiences. Despite a theoretical basis drawn from both the clinical (e.g., APA, 1994; Svrakic, 1986; Young, et al., 2003) and social psychological (e.g., Campbell, 1999; Cialdini et al., 1976) literature indicating that narcissists may in fact become more self-enhancing towards a high than low status audience, this hypothesised effect was not found. Given that the theoretical basis for this prediction appears sound, it may have been shortcomings in the actual methodology employed that contributed to this finding. An inspection of the specific status manipulation employed in Study 1 indicates that this may be the case.

The high status audience was described as Dr Daniel Walsh, a clinical psychologist. Although the status manipulation gave Dr Walsh high status qualities (as was evident with the pilot test results), the actual label of clinical psychologist may have been disliked by narcissists. Campbell (1999) found that narcissists are attracted to others with positive qualities because they offer the potential to enhance their self-concept through association, yet also found that they are averse to people who offer the potential for a caring relationship. This is because such people offer less in terms of self-enhancement. It may therefore be that the description of clinical psychologist created a perception that the evaluator would be a highly caring and empathetic person, given that these are qualities typically expected of a psychologist (Rogers, 1992). The high status

manipulation may have therefore confounded evaluator status (as represented by expertness) with evaluator caring (as represented by the term clinical psychologist). The expectation that the meeting would involve self-disclosure set in a caring context may have been perceived by narcissists as potentially hindering their self-enhancement efforts. A caring person may be more focused on making them feel comfortable and at ease, and not necessarily concerned with providing admiration, which appears to be the narcissist primary goal in his or her social interactions. The end result may have been that narcissists were averse to the clinical psychologist, and thus, did not self-enhance towards him.

Problems may have also been evident with the low status manipulation. The low status audience was described as Mr Daniel Walsh, a first year undergraduate student. The potential concern here is that because the participants were also first year undergraduate psychology students, a large enough status differential between Mr Walsh and the participant may not have been created. That is, Mr Walsh and the participants were too similar, meaning that the low status manipulation may not have been low enough. It was hypothesised that these potential shortcomings in the status manipulations may have contributed to the inability of Study 1 to find the hypothesised effects for narcissism and audience status. Study 2 therefore kept audience status as an independent variable, but used a reworked status manipulation.

2.4.5 Ancillary Findings

In addition to the effects related to narcissism, it was also found that in general, accountability reduced self-enhancement on external domains, but not on internal domains (this effect appeared to be driven by non-narcissists). The idea that accountability curtailed self-enhancement on external domains is consistent with the findings of Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002). They asked participants to rate themselves on an essay they had written, which can be roughly translated to academic ability, an externally orientated domain. Participants who were accountable for their essay grades were less self-enhancing than those who were non-accountable. The same pattern of results was found in this study on external domains. Yet accountability did not reduce self-enhancement on internal domains. One possible reason for this finding is that external domains are highly tangible with overt and often visible markers or indicators. For example, one's level of physical attractiveness is visibly discernable to an evaluative audience. Similarly, an evaluative audience may ask for evidence in the form of academic grades to support identity claims on academic ability, or trophies from competition wins to support identity claims on competitive ability. External domains may therefore require tangible evidence to support identity claims (see Crocker & Park, 2004, for a discussion on the efforts needed, or evidence required to validate external domains).

Internal domains may be more intangible, with less clearly defined indicators. For example, it may be more difficult for an evaluative audience to challenge people's claims regarding their morality than their physical

attractiveness, given that morality is a fluid and not easily defined concept. People may therefore be reticent to self-enhance too much on external domains, given that tangible evidence may be readily available to their evaluative audience to discredit the self-presentation received. This idea makes the narcissist's disregard for accountability when self-presenting on external domains perhaps even more brazen. Despite the fact that in this study, the evaluative audience may have requested tangible evidence to support the narcissist's identity claims or justifications on external domains, the narcissist still chose to self-enhance when accountable. This represents an extreme level of self-presentational confidence, or perhaps more appropriately, a disregard for the audience and the audience's right or ability to challenge the narcissist's identity claims.

The other ancillary finding of interest was the interaction between accountability and status on internal domain self-ratings. It was found that when accountable for internal domain self-ratings, participants were more self-enhancing towards the high than the low status evaluator. This finding may suggest that participants perceived the high status evaluator as a more legitimate source of authority. Tyler (1997) noted that people should take more heed of accountability demands when such demands come from a legitimate audience (see also Cvetkovich, 1978). Yet theoretically, the legitimacy given to the high status audience should have reduced the self-enhancement strivings of participants when accountable and not increased them. Perhaps participants felt that the high status audience, given his base of expert power (French & Raven, 1959), was better able to assess the relatively intangible nature of internal

domains, thus making them more confident in their self-presentations? It may also be that people want to appear better in the eyes of high status others on those domains that are more internally judged. This may be because such domains are harder to invalidate, and thus, it is less risky to present positively on such domains. This finding is not easily explained and inconsistent with theoretical considerations, and thus, is only tentatively interpreted.

2.4.6 Methodological Considerations

In addition to potential shortcomings of the status manipulation, the accountability manipulation also warrants discussion. Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002) found that there are various mechanisms through which accountability may influence self-enhancement. Accountability is essentially a multidimensional construct (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Two of the key mechanisms found were identifiability and the expectation that one's weaknesses will be focused on during the evaluation. Participants reduced their self-enhancement when accountable when they believed that their self-evaluations would be linked to them personally and when they expected the evaluation to focus on their incompetencies. Sedikides et al. used an elegant series of 4 studies with different manipulations to uncover the mechanisms by which accountability reduced self-enhancement. The current study used the most basic and fundamental accountability manipulation (taken from Study 1 of Sedikides, Herbst et al.) that did not necessarily tap all the underlying mechanisms associated with accountability. Thus, accountability was manipulated as a relatively unitary

construct, and not as the multidimensional one theoretical considerations may indicate.

Accountability nevertheless produced the hypothesised effects for narcissists and non-narcissists. As Lerner and Tetlock (2003) note, even the minimalist operationalisations of accountability used in experimental research can exert a powerful influence on people's behaviour. Further, a rigorous series of experimental investigations looking at the underlying mechanisms underpinning the effects of accountability on narcissists and non-narcissists was outside the scope of this research, and indeed, not part of the aims. What was found was that accountability reduced self-enhancement in non-narcissists and increased self-enhancement in narcissists on external domains when degree of external self-worth contingency was high. These findings may be due to the differential effects of mechanisms such as identifiability or weaknesses focus on narcissists and non-narcissists, although this study's methodology could not determine this.

2.4.7 Conclusions

The results of Study 1 indicate that narcissists show a lack of contextual sensitivity and self-enhance on external domains in situations that led non-narcissists to reduce their self-enhancement strivings. When degree of external self-worth contingency was high, non-narcissists reduced their self-enhancement when accountable whereas narcissists increased their self-enhancement when accountable. Study 2 was designed to further explore the self-presentational

behaviour of narcissists and non-narcissists relative to other social contextual variables, notably, audience size.

CHAPTER 3: STUDY 2

3.1 Introduction to Study 2

Study 1 established that the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists appear to be inflexible relative to the demands of the social context, with narcissists choosing to self-enhance in situations that led non narcissists to reduce their self-enhancement strivings. This conclusion was based on one specific social contextual variable, accountability. Study 2 attempted to expand on this finding by examining how the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists are affected by another social contextual variable, audience size. The inclusion of audience size was designed to provide further support for the general hypothesis that the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists are rigidly inflexible and insensitive to the requirements of a given social situation.

In addition to audience size, audience status was retained as an independent variable of interest. The status manipulation used in Study 2 differed from that used in Study 1, differences that reflect the previously discussed idea that the description of Dr Daniel Walsh as a clinical psychologist may have evoked a sense that he is a caring and empathetic individual, qualities to which narcissists may be averse (Campbell, 1999). This modified status manipulation was included in Study 2 to determine if audience status was indeed a variable that does differentially affect the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists. Degree of self-worth contingency was also retained as an

independent variable, in an attempt to further explore how this may moderate narcissistic self-enhancement in relation to both audience size and audience status.

3.1.1 Audience Size and Self-Presentation

As was evident from the results of Study 1, people's self-presentational behaviour can be influenced by salient social contextual variables such as accountability. Although audience status (or at least the way audience status was manipulated) did not produce any significant effects on narcissistic self-presentation in Study 1, other audience features have the potential to affect narcissists' self-presentational efforts. The size of the audience that narcissists are presenting to may be one such feature.

Social impact theory (Latane, 1981; Nowak, Szamrej, & Latane, 1990) may be a particularly useful theoretical framework from which to analyse the effect of audience size on self-presentation. Although social impact theory has traditionally been applied to social psychological areas such as helping behaviour (Latane & Nida, 1981), social loafing (Latane, Williams, & Harkins, 1979), and persuasive communication (Wolf & Latane, 1983), it also appears to fit well into a self-presentation framework. Social impact theory posits that the effect of an audience on a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is determined by the audience's significance, immediacy, and size. Audiences that are deemed to be more significant (e.g., attractive, powerful), psychologically immediate (e.g., are either physically present or about to be encountered), and larger in number, have

a greater impact on how people think, feel, and act (Schlenker, 2003). Schlenker notes that in regards to self-presentational behaviour, people tend to tailor their self-presentations to meet with the preferences and expectations of audiences with these characteristics (see also Baumeister, 1982; Jones & Wortman, 1973).

Of most relevance to the current study is the idea that as the size of an audience increases, so too does the impact that audience has on a person's emotions and behaviour. Audiences with a greater number of people have the potential to influence people's emotions and behaviour for a number of reasons. Research on stage fright has demonstrated that the presence of a multiple person audience results in people experiencing greater levels of negative emotionality, most notably anxiety (e.g., Jackson & Latane, 1981; Latane & Harkins, 1976). For example, a study by McKinney, Gatchel, and Paulhus (1983) measured the anxiety levels of participants while giving a speech in front of either a small (i.e., 2 people) or large (i.e., 6 people) audience. Results suggested that both self-reported anxiety, as well as physiological indicators of anxiety (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance) increased when speaking in front of the 6 person audience as compared to the 2 person audience. In addition, when given a choice, participants showed a preference for speaking in front of the small, as compared to the large audience. Similarly, Shearn, Bergman, Hill, Abel, et al. (1992) found that participants watching a video-tape designed to elicit embarrassment with four other people present, displayed significantly more blushing (as measured by a photoplethysmograph on the cheek) than did participants watching the same video with only one other person present. This

study suggests that negative emotionality (i.e., embarrassment) increases when the size of the audience increases.

Research also suggests that the experience of negative emotional states such as anxiety and embarrassment in the presence of a multiple person audience mediates behaviour. For example, Vitulli and Henderson (1995) found that the performance of participants on solutions to computerised mathematical problems was significantly worse in the presence of a multiple person audience as compared to a single person audience (see also Vitulli & Henderson, 1994). In a study investigating the performance of elementary school musicians, Le Blanc, Jin, Obert, and Siivola (1997) found that self-reported anxiety increased and performance decreased when participants performed in a room with several researchers and peers as compared to being alone in a practice room. These studies suggest that the presence of a multiple person audience not only induces an anxiety response, but has a subsequent impact on people's self-regulatory ability. In the cases of these studies, a multiple person audience resulted in a decrease in performance.

In regards to self-presentational behaviour, people are acutely aware of the reward-cost ratio associated with a given self-presentation or identity claim (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Audiences have the power to provide both positive (e.g., approval, respect, validation, material rewards) and negative (e.g., disapproval, disrespect, invalidation, punishment) outcomes in response to self-presentations (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000), with the nature, degree, and impact of these outcomes varying relative to various characteristics that the audience

possesses (e.g., status, power, size). People are likely to tailor their self-presentational efforts so as to increase the likelihood of positive, and decrease the likelihood of negative outcomes handed out by their social audience in response to a given self-presentation (i.e., people aim to optimise the reward-cost ratio of their self-presentations).

Self-presenting to multiple person audiences may trigger a particularly acute focus on a reward-cost analysis. Multiple person audiences may be perceived as a particularly threatening self-presentational scenario, which may result in careful efforts to optimise the reward-cost ratio associated with a chosen self-presentation. The perception of threat associated with a multiple person audience is reflected in the research outlined above, which implicates anxiety as a primary affective response when presenting to a multiple person audience (e.g., McKinney, et al., 1983). The nature of the danger perceived may be disapproval, disrespect, or invalidation, as Schlenker and Pontari (2000) point out. Although these dangers may be present in all self-presentational contexts, they may be particularly salient when presenting towards a multiple person audience.

Having one's self-presentation or identity claim rejected or invalidated by multiple people may produce painful emotional consequences above and beyond those experienced if such rejection was incurred from a single person. The impact of rejection from a multiple person audience may be particularly deeply felt, given that such rejection occurs in a highly public context (i.e., with multiple people present). This may result in painful emotional consequences such as

shame, humiliation, and embarrassment; emotions that are strongly linked to public rejection or failure (Ausubel, 1955; Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, & Stenberg, 1983; Crozier, 1998; Wallbott & Scherer, 1995). Indeed, shame has been empirically shown to result from having one's transgressions or incompetencies publicly exposed (e.g., Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002). When in highly public contexts therefore (e.g., when self-presenting to a multiple person audience), people should work towards avoiding negative emotional states such as shame, and present themselves in a manner that is in line with their audience's expectations and prescribed norms. This should result in more modest self-presentations.

The rejection or invalidation of a particular identity claim may also be especially difficult to deflect when it comes from multiple sources because such feedback may be deemed especially diagnostic or reliable. The use of multiple evaluators in various forms of psychological and other assessments is testament to this idea, with authors (e.g., Groth-Marnat, 2002) noting that the reliability of assessment results is significantly enhanced when the evaluation is undertaken by more than one person (i.e., inter-rater reliability). The reliability of feedback from a multiple person audience may therefore be especially difficult to dispute, and may resonate strongly within a person's self-conception. The law of probability (e.g., Tijms, 2004) also suggest that a multiple person audience increases the likelihood of receiving rejection in response to a chosen self-presentation. The larger the number of people in a given audience, the greater the chance that at least one of those people will reject or invalidate the self-

presentation received. Finally, and perhaps most simplistically, a multiple person audience represents more people to be either accepted or rejected by. In the case of a rejected self-presentation, a multiple person audience means a larger amount of evidence generated to support the idea that the individual in question may in fact be defective or incompetent.

In sum, although the acceptance of a highly positive self-presentation or identity claim may be especially rewarding if it comes from a multiple person audience, the risks associated (e.g., shame, rejection, invalidation, perceived incompetency) with such a strategy may simply be too high, with the behavioural manifestation of this being more modest self-presentations. People may aim to avoid the negative consequences of having an identity claim rejected, and work towards tailoring their self-presentations (i.e., modesty) to make sure that this does not occur. A larger audience may therefore make more salient the need for strategic impression management for most people, yet as with accountability, this may not be the case for narcissists.

3.1.2 Audience Size and Narcissistic Exhibitionism

Narcissists are exhibitionistic people who enjoy performing to a social audience. The exhibitionistic nature of narcissists' social behaviour has been noted by several authors (e.g., Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Dickinson, 2003), and forms a key clinical indicator (although not an explicit diagnostic criterion) for recognising narcissism (Stone, 1998). Wink (1991) noted that a behavioural hallmark of narcissism (or specifically what he termed overt narcissism) was

grandiose exhibitionism, with narcissists displaying an interpersonal pattern characterised by self-assuredness, self-indulgence, disrespect for the needs and perspectives of others, and overconfident public performances. The exhibitionistic nature of narcissists is also hinted at by the empirical findings (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1999) and anecdotal accounts (e.g., Vankin, 1999) stating that high levels of narcissism are associated with both male and female actors, a profession where people inherently take “centre stage”. Similarly, Hill and Yousey (1998) found that narcissistic characteristics were more likely to be found in occupations involving frequent opportunities for public exhibitionism (e.g., politician) than in occupations where such opportunities were less available (e.g., librarian). Narcissists appear to be attracted to contexts that offer the greatest opportunities for public exhibitionism and exposure.

Exhibitionism (e.g., “I like to be the centre of attention”) also forms one of the 7 sub-scales of the 40-item version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI: Raskin & Terry, 1988), and is associated with sensation seeking, extraversion, and lack of impulse control (Raskin & Terry). Buss and Chiodo (1991) also conceptualised exhibitionism as a central dispositional trait of narcissists. They found that participants associated the term narcissistic with exhibitionistic acts such as showing off one’s body while others are watching, talking loudly so others would hear his or her story, showing off one’s possessions in public, and becoming the life of the party so as to receive attention.

As is evident in the preceding paragraphs, narcissistic exhibitionism is closely tied to the public context, specifically, performing to a public audience. The exhibitionistic nature of narcissists may therefore be stimulated by the prospect of self-presenting to a multiple person audience, given narcissists apparent enjoyment of “centre-stage”. Multiple person audiences may also have significant advantages in terms of narcissistic identity construction (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Unlike non-narcissists, who may see a multiple person audience as a distinct self-presentational threat in terms of identity invalidation and painful emotional consequences such as shame and embarrassment, narcissists may see a multiple person audience as a profitable source of social rewards.

The rewards on offer most likely involve the potential to receive positive or identity confirming feedback from an audience whose corroborating feedback is highly prized. Winning over a crowd may not be an easy task, and therefore, if narcissists are able to achieve this, they may generate confirmatory evidence of their self-perceived greatness. Given that the narcissistic self is created and maintained in the social arena (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), it may be that multiple person audiences may trigger a strong self-enhancement pursuit and a search for self-validating or self-verifying (Swann, 1987) feedback that narcissists desire, and indeed, may rely on. This self-enhancement approach towards a multiple person audience may differ from that shown by non-narcissists, who are likely to become more modest. Yet narcissists may instead show insensitivity (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002) or inflexibility (Paulhus & Martin, 1988) to the social

contextual demands for modesty and present themselves in a highly positive manner regardless. It may also be that the opportunity to receive self-verifying feedback from a multiple person audience whose feedback is highly valued leads narcissists to be more self-enhancing than they would otherwise be towards a single person audience. For the narcissist, winning the admiration of several people may be more enticing than winning the admiration of just one.

3.1.3 Narcissism, Self-Presentation, Risk Taking, and Confidence

Other theoretical positions also indicate that narcissists may not reduce, or indeed may actually increase, their self-enhancement when presenting to a multiple person audience. Campbell, Goodie, and Foster (2004) conducted a study investigating the relationship between narcissism and confidence in a decision making task. They reasoned that narcissists' grandiose self-views and chronic investment in self-enhancement would inhibit their ability to realistically appraise their potential for success, leading to overconfidence and subsequent risk taking. They found that narcissists reported greater confidence in their ability to succeed in a computer-based task. This confidence was not however accompanied by greater task performance. They also found that as a result of their overconfidence and risk taking attitude, narcissists were more likely to underperform on a task. Finally, they found that narcissists appraised their own performance on how they expected to perform, and not how they actually performed. These findings suggest that narcissists enter situations with a heightened sense of confidence, leading to riskier decisions, which in turn

creates poorer outcomes. In further support of these findings, Farwell and Wohlwend-Llyod (1998) found that narcissism was significantly associated with optimistic expectations to perform well on an interdependent task. Finally, Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004) found that narcissists feel that they are entitled to experience more positive outcomes in life than others.

What these studies suggest is that narcissists possess both greater confidence and greater outcome expectancies in relation to tasks they undertake or situations they confront. They also hold a pervasive sense of entitlement regarding their right to obtain positive outcomes. The results of Campbell, Goodie, et al., (2004) also suggest that narcissists' overconfidence leads to erroneous and inaccurate appraisals of situations, and subsequently, riskier decisions. These results can be interpreted in the context of the narcissist's chronic efforts to maintain and enhance the positivity of his or her self-views (Campbell, Goodie, et al.). Applied to the framework of the current study, narcissists may take this overconfidence into self-presentational scenarios, meaning that they may fail to recognise, or at least adequately assess, any specific social contextual threats present (e.g., audience size, audience status). The over-confidence and subsequent risk taking attitude that narcissists appear to possess may make them susceptible to making poor decisions, or more specifically, failing to undertake strategic impression management when social contextual threats arise.

Given this overconfidence, narcissists may also have less concern for having their weaknesses exposed. As Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002; see also Sedikides & Herbst, 2002) found, the concern for having one's weaknesses exposed leads to strategic impression management efforts (i.e., modesty) in the context of specific self-presentational threats (accountability in this case). The combination of high outcome expectancies and a relative lack of concern for having their weaknesses exposed may mean that narcissists do no undertake the strategic self-presentational efforts required to successfully navigate the modesty demands required when presenting to a multiple person (or high status) audience. Further, their associated risk-taking attitude may mean that narcissists become even more self-enhancing towards the high status or multiple person audience. Given that the self-constructional payoffs of positive feedback may be larger with these audiences, narcissists may be willing to tolerate a degree of risk to obtain access to such payoffs.

In addition to investigating the effect of audience size, Study 2 aimed to look at other audience characteristics that may differentially influence the self-presentational efforts of narcissists and non-narcissists. It was therefore aimed to revisit the effect of audience status on the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists.

3.1.4 Audience Status: Reworking the Manipulation

Although it was found that audience status did not produce any significant interaction effects with narcissism in Study 1, it was hypothesised that the way

audience status was manipulated may have contributed to this finding. As previously discussed, depicting the high status audience (i.e., Dr Daniel Walsh) as a clinical psychologist may have evoked a sense that he was a highly caring and empathetic individual, characteristics to which narcissists are not attracted, and may be averse to (Campbell, 1999). Further, although depicting the low status audience (i.e., Mr Daniel Walsh) as a first year undergraduate psychology student may have created a significant status differential from the high status audience (as indicated in the Study 1 pilot test), it may not have created a large enough status differential between Mr Daniel Walsh and the actual participant (who was also a first year undergraduate student). Mr Daniel Walsh and participants were equal in relative status, whereas there was a clearly discernable difference in status between Dr Daniel Walsh and participants. Therefore the question arose as to what was the most appropriate way (based on theoretical knowledge of narcissism) to manipulate the relative status of the audiences so as to better optimise the study's ability to find a link between audience status and narcissistic self-enhancement?

The reworked status manipulations, which are detailed in the method section, aimed to both decrease any caring perception of the high status audience and lower the perceived status of the low status audience. In decreasing the caring nature of the high status audience, Dr Daniel Walsh was portrayed as a personality scientist, as opposed to a clinical psychologist. It was felt that a personality scientist reflected a more technical and methodological approach to the personality assessment, as opposed to a caring and empathetic

approach that may have been associated with the clinical psychologist in Study 1. In decreasing the status of the low status audience, direction was taken from Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002; Study 2). Sedikides et al. operationalised the low status audience as a high school student. A high school student would appear to be lower in perceived status than a first year undergraduate student. The low status audience in Study 2 was therefore described as a high school student on work experience at the Personality Assessment Centre.

3.1.5 Contingencies of Self-Worth

As in Study 1, it was predicted that a high degree of self-worth contingency would differentially affect the self-presentational efforts of narcissists and non-narcissists. This prediction was based on the general theoretical consideration that people will attempt to maintain, enhance, and protect their self-worth in those domains in which their feelings of self-worth are staked (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Yet the emphasis given to enhancement and protection may be different for narcissists and non-narcissists, with this difference being particularly evident in self-presentational scenarios that possess the threat of having one's self-presentation rejected or invalidated. One such situation is self-presenting to a multiple person audience.

As previously discussed, narcissists may perceive a multiple person audience as a particularly prized source of identity confirming feedback. Identity confirming feedback in contingent domains may be especially valued, given that these are the domains in which the narcissist has staked his or her feelings of

self-worth. Narcissists may therefore become particularly self-enhancing when presenting towards a multiple person audience when information about a contingent domain is being presented, in an effort to elicit the positive self-verifying feedback they desire to shore up their grandiose yet fragile self-views (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). As was evident in Study 1 however, non-narcissists appear to take a more self-protective approach when there is threat of identity disconfirmation or rejection on a contingent domain. This threat may be particularly evident when presenting to a multiple person audience, leading to modesty when presenting on a domain where contingency of self-worth is high. As in Study 1, it is expected that these differential effects for narcissists and non-narcissists will only be evident on externally orientated domains.

3.1.6 Hypotheses

In line with the theoretical considerations previously outlined, the hypotheses for Study 2 are as follows:

H2a. Level of narcissism will be positively associated with the external contingencies of self-worth and negatively associated with the internal contingencies of self-worth.

H2b. Overall, narcissists will be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists on external, but not internal domains.

H2c. Narcissists will show insensitivity to audience size when self-presenting. Narcissists will be equally, or more self-enhancing on external domains when presenting to a multiple person audience. Non-narcissists will be self-protective when presenting to a multiple person audience, and reduce their self-enhancement strivings on external domains. These differential effects for narcissism regarding promotion and protection will be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high.

H2d. Narcissists' self-enhancement will be stimulated by the prospect of meeting with a high status audience. Narcissists will be more self-enhancing towards a high than low status audience on external domains. Non-narcissists will be more self-protective and reduce their self-enhancement strivings on external domains when presenting to a high status audience. These differential effects for narcissism regarding promotion and protection will be particularly pronounced when degree of external self-worth contingency is high.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Participants

Participants were 68 (28 males, 40 females) La Trobe University undergraduate students from a wide range of academic disciplines. As in Study 1, participants were recruited from a volunteer student participant database

compiled by the La Trobe University School of Psychological Science. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 50, with an average age of 23.09 years (*SD* = 6.21).

A total of 275 participants were approached via email to participate in Study 2, indicating a response rate of 25%. As in Study 1, an accurate response rate is difficult to ascertain given that the recruitment email may have been automatically sent to the “junk-mail” folder of many email systems (e.g., Hotmail, Yahoo) used by participants. There were a further 10 participants who volunteered to participate but did not return the experimental measures to the researchers after they had been sent. An attrition rate of 13% was therefore calculated for the study.

3.2.2 Materials

The same individual difference measures used in Study 1 were again used in Study 2 (see pages 71-73). Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1987) scores ranged from 3 to 27 (M = 14.30, SD = 5.25, α = .75). Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965) scores ranged from 17 to 39 (M = 28.46, SD = 5.05, α = .87). Descriptive statistics for the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (CSW; Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003) were as follows: Physical appearance (M = 4.70, SD = 1.16, α = .82), approval from others (M = 4.09 , SD = 1.24, α = .82), outdoing others in competition (M = 5.08, SD = .99, α = .81), academic competence (M = 5.23, SD = .97, α = .84), overall external contingency (M = 4.72 , SD = .76, α = .87), family love and support (M = 5.27 ,

SD = 1.12, α = .84), moral virtue (*M* = 5.26, *SD* = .96, α = .78), God's love (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.82, α = .98), overall internal contingency (*M* = 4.57, *SD* = .94, α = .87).

3.2.3 Design

The study employed a 2 (audience size: single person, multiple person) x 2 (audience status: high status, low status) factorial independent groups design, with narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency used as continuous predictors. The dependent variables of interest were participant self-ratings on the domains outlined by the contingencies of self-worth scale.

3.2.4 Procedure

Potential participants were approached via email with an identical cover story to that used in Study 1 (see Appendix D). After reading the cover story, potential participants who were interested in the study were asked to send an email to the researchers confirming their willingness to participate. These participants were then randomly assigned to either the high or low status evaluator condition, as well as either the single or multiple audience condition. From this point, the procedure was identical to that used in Study 1, with the exception of the manipulations of the independent variables.

3.2.4.1 Manipulation of Independent Variables

In the high status evaluator condition, participants were told that they would be meeting with, and subsequently evaluated by, Dr Daniel Walsh, a world

renowned Personality Scientist. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> The staff member that will be assessing your responses, and with whom you shall be meeting, is Dr Daniel Walsh. Dr Walsh is a personality scientist who earned his PhD in personality assessment at Princeton University. After completing his doctoral training program, he took up a position at Columbia University, where he won several teaching and research awards. Throughout his career, he has trained graduate students, interns, and post-doctoral fellows in the assessment of personality. Dr Walsh has served as an editor for numerous scientific and professional journals on personality assessment. He is recognised as one of the foremost personality assessment experts in the world, and we are most privileged to have him participating in our trial.

This high status manipulation differed from that used in Study 1 in several key ways. Dr Daniel Walsh was described as a personality scientist, not as a clinical psychologist. As previously discussed, the term clinical psychologist may have evoked a sense that Dr Walsh was a caring and empathetic person, given that these are qualities often expected of a clinical psychologist (Rogers, 1992). As Campbell (1999) found however, narcissists may be averse to people possessing such caring qualities. In accordance with this, Dr Walsh's

professional history was also changed to be perceived as less clinical, and more focused on his skills in personality assessment. As in Study 1, Dr Walsh's educational and professional affiliations were with high status institutions. Finally, he was described as "one of the foremost personality experts in the world", a small change from Study 1, where he was described as "one of the foremost personality experts in the country".

In the low status evaluator condition, participants were told that they would be meeting with, and subsequently evaluated by, Mr Daniel Walsh, a high school student on work experience at the personality assessment centre. Specifically, participants were given the following text:

> The staff member that will be assessing your responses, and with whom you shall be meeting, is Mr Daniel Walsh. Mr Walsh is a high school student who hopes to attend university next year. He participates in a pilot program that provides high school students with an opportunity to gain work-experience at our personality assessment centre. The aim of this is to provide high school students who are interested in going to university with opportunities to gain experience in the types of careers in which they may be working once they have completed their studies. Mr Walsh is hoping that his work experience at the personality assessment centre will better prepare him for going to university.

This low status manipulation also differed from that used in Study 1. Mr Daniel Walsh was described as a high school student on work experience, as opposed to a first year undergraduate student. The description of Mr Daniel Walsh as a first year undergraduate student may have failed to create a large enough status differential between the participant (an undergraduate student) and Mr Walsh. That is, they were too similar, potentially rendering the status manipulation ineffective. Describing Mr Daniel Walsh as a High School student both lowered his status and differentiated him from the first year undergraduate participants. This description also brings the manipulation closer to that used by Sedikides, Herbst, et al. (2002).

Participants in the multiple person audience condition were told that during their meeting with Mr/Dr Daniel Walsh, five other people would be present to observe and participate in their personality assessment. Participants were given the following text:

> A new development being implemented at the Personality Assessment Centre is the use of multiple evaluators for doing a personality assessment. Thus, during your meeting with (Dr/Mr) Daniel Walsh, there will also be five other people present to observe and participate in your personality assessment.

To ensure consistency of the status manipulation, participants in the high status audience condition were given the following description of the audience:

> These people are professional colleagues of Dr Walsh, and being personality scientists themselves, also possess a great deal of expertise in personality assessment.

Participants in the low status audience condition were given the following description of the audience:

> These people will be high school students who attend the same school as Mr Walsh, and who also participate in the pilot program giving high school students work experience at our personality assessment centre.

Participants in the single audience condition were told that they would be meeting Dr/Mr Daniel Walsh alone. As a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate (by checking a box) which assessor/s they had been assigned. They were given the following options: Daniel Walsh alone, Daniel Walsh and colleagues, Chelsea Cornell alone, Chelsea Cornell and colleagues. The latter two bogus options were included to ensure that the correct assessor/s was not

picked by chance (i.e., they would have otherwise had a 50/50 chance of choosing correctly).

Once again, these manipulations were presented to participants immediately before they filled out the self-rating scale. Once the completed tests and self-ratings were received by the researcher, participants were immediately emailed a debriefing statement outlining the true aims and hypotheses of the study (see Appendix I).

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Overview

The data analyses for Study 2 are reported in three sections. The first section details the pilot test and manipulation check undertaken in regards to the independent variables used. Section 2 details the correlational findings between narcissism and each contingency of self-worth. Section 3 presents the main data analyses, investigating the effects of narcissism, audience status, audience size, and degree of self-worth contingency on participants' self-ratings.

3.3.2 Pilot Test

The pilot test used in Study 1 was again used in study 2 to ascertain that a significant differential existed between the perceived status of the high and low status evaluators.

Twenty-two participants were randomly assigned to read the description of either the high or the low status psychologist, and asked to fill out the same measure used in Study 1 (Appendix G). This measure had excellent reliability (α = .95).

A two-tailed independent samples t-test revealed that the high status psychologist (*M* = 7.63, *SD* = 1.80) was deemed to have significantly more status than the low status psychologist (M = 3.63, SD = 1.05), $t(21) = 5.67$, $p = .00$. The status manipulation was successful.

3.3.3 Manipulation Check

One participant failed to correctly choose the evaluator/s that they had been assigned. This participant was in the low status multiple audience condition, and was dropped from the analyses.

3.3.4 Correlational Analysis

A correlational analysis was conducted testing the relationship between narcissism and each of the 7 subscales of the Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). Table 3 presents the findings of this analysis.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Contingencies of Self-Worth Subscales, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68	68
1. Appearance											
2. Others' Approval	.48**										
3. Academic	.12	.25*									
4. Competition	.42**	.29*	.28*								
5. Family Support	.34*	.38**	.13	.01							
6. Morality	-.25*	.01	-.01	-.29*	.36**						
7. God's Love	-.08	-.03	.13	-.07	.18	.27*					
8.Total Internal Contingency	.01	.13	.13	-.14	.63**	.66**	.81**				
9. Total External Contingency	.75**	.76**	.56**	.70**	.33**	-.19	-.02	.05			
10. Narcissism	.26*	-.10	-.09	.33**	.03	-.33**	.14	-.01	.14		
11. Self-Esteem	-.06	-.21	-.01	.05	.01	.08	-.15	-.07	-.09	.14	

*p<.05. **p<.01

Table 3 indicates that narcissism was significantly and positively associated with both the competitiveness and appearance contingencies. Interestingly, narcissism was significantly and negatively associated with the morality contingency. No associations between narcissism and the internal contingencies were found. Self-esteem was not associated with any of the contingencies, nor was it associated with narcissism in this study. As in Study 1,

these correlations, although significant, were only small to moderate (Cohen, 1988).

3.3.5 Main Data Analyses

The current study aimed to build on the results found in Study 1 by further exploring some of the social contextual variables that may moderate self-enhancement for people with varying degrees of narcissism. The specific variables under investigation were audience status (with a modified manipulation from that used in Study 1) and audience size. This study also maintained degree of self-worth contingency, in an attempt to further elucidate the role that it may play in narcissistic self-enhancement.

It was once again predicted that narcissists would be more self-enhancing than non-narcissists, but only on external domains. It was further predicted that non-narcissists would be less self-enhancing on external domains towards a high status evaluator, whereas narcissists would become even more self-enhancing. It was also predicted that non-narcissists would be less self-enhancing on external domains when presenting towards a multiple person audience, whereas narcissists would not reduce their self-enhancement, or would become even more self-enhancing. It was finally hypothesised that these effects would be most prominent when degree of external self-worth contingency was high.

A hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the predicted effects of narcissism, audience status, audience size, and degree of self-worth contingency on participants' self ratings. Preliminary analysis revealed no significant effects

for gender and age. These were therefore excluded from the analyses (Judd & Kenny, 1981). This preliminary analysis for gender involved including gender into the regression model, and testing for both main and interaction effects across all the dependent variables. As in Study 1, overall external and internal domain self-ratings were used as the dependent variables of interest. The God's love self-rating was again left out of the overall internal domain rating variable, both to keep consistency with the results of Study 1, and also because 42% of participants rated their ability to "win gods love" as zero.

The four predictor variables, narcissism (continuous variable), audience status (coded: high status = 1, low status = -1), audience size (coded: single person = 1, multiple people = -1), and degree of self-worth contingency (overall external or internal [depending on whether analysing external or internal domain self-ratings]: continuous variable), were entered as main effects in step 1 of the regression.

The 6 two-way interaction terms of narcissism x status, narcissism x size, narcissism x degree of self-worth contingency, status x size, status x degree of self-worth contingency, and size x degree of self-worth contingency were entered into step 2 of the regression.

The 4 three-way interaction terms for narcissism x status x size, narcissism x status x degree of self-worth contingency, narcissism x size x degree of self-worth contingency, and status x size x degree of self-worth contingency were entered onto step 3 of the regression.

Finally, the four-way interaction term for narcissism x status x size x degree of self-worth contingency was entered into step 4 of the regression. Once again, the data analytic strategy, as well as the presentation of results, was modelled on that of Wallace and Baumeister (2004).

3.3.5.1 External Domain Self-Ratings

Step 1 of the regression revealed a main effect for narcissism, $\beta = .24$, $t(64) = 4.79$, $p = .00$, such that as narcissism levels increased, so too did external domain self-ratings. Step 2 revealed no significant interactions.

Step 3 of the regression revealed a significant interaction between narcissism, audience size, and degree of external self-worth contingency, $\beta = -.23$, $t(64) = 2.32$, $p = .02$. Predicted values (Aiken & West, 1991), which represent a hypothetical individual one standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of external self-worth contingency, were calculated to further understand this significant interaction. As is shown in Figure 3, when presenting to a multiple person audience, non-narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 10.78) rated themselves less positively than did narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 16.28). No difference was found between non-narcissists with a low degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 13.76) and narcissists with a low degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 13.65) when presenting to a multiple person audience. Further, when presenting to a single person audience, the self-ratings of non-narcissists with a high degree of external self-

worth contingency (*PV* = 13.04) and narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 12.28) did not differ. Similarly, when presenting to a single person audience the self-ratings of non-narcissists with a low degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 13.83) and narcissists with a low degree of external self-worth contingency (*PV* = 13.42) did not differ.

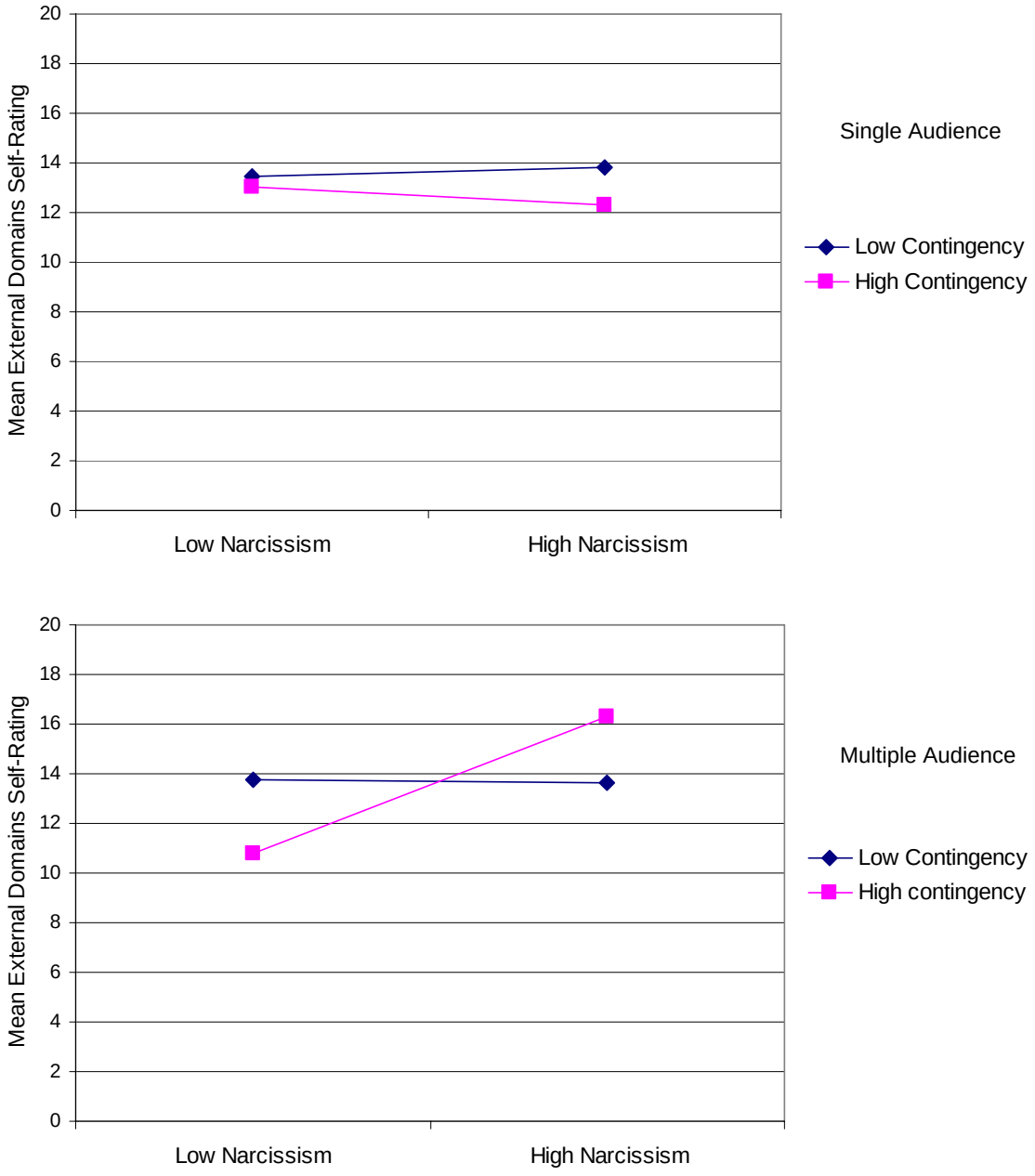


Figure 3. The interactive effects of narcissism, degree of external self-worth contingency, and audience size on external domain self-ratings as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and external self-worth contingency.

Step 3 revealed no other significant interaction effects. No other effects were found on external domain self-ratings.

3.3.5.2 Internal Domain Self-Ratings

Step 1 of the regression revealed a main effect for degree of internal self-worth contingency, $\beta = 2.26$, $t(64) = 3.46$, $p = .00$. As degree of internal self-worth contingency increased, so too did the positivity of self-ratings on internal domains. No other main or interaction effects were found on internal domain self-ratings.

3.3.5 Summary of Main Analyses

Consistent with Study 1, results indicated that in comparison to non-narcissists, narcissists have highly positive self-views, but only on external domains. Results further indicate that when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, non-narcissists became more modest when presenting to a multiple person audience. In contrast, when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, narcissists appeared to actually increase their self-ratings when presenting to a multiple person audience. Internal domain self-ratings were not influenced by level of narcissism or audience size. No significant interactive effects were found for audience status relative to narcissism (or any of the other independent variables) on external or internal domain self-ratings.

3.4 Discussion

The aim of Study 2 was to determine how audience size and audience status differentially affected the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists within a self-presentational context. As in Study 1, it was also aimed to determine how degree of self-worth contingency moderated these relationships. The overarching aim of Study 2 was to provide further support for the general hypothesis that narcissists show a lack of contextual sensitivity, and self-enhance in situations that lead non-narcissists to modesty.

Consistent with the results of Study 1, it was found that narcissists were more self-enhancing than non-narcissists on external, but not on internal domains. It was hypothesised that narcissists would be equally or more self-enhancing on external domains when presenting to a multiple rather than single person audience, whereas non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement when presenting to a multiple as compared to single person audience. This hypothesis was not supported, with no significant two-way interaction found between narcissism and audience size. As with accountability however, it was found that degree of external self-worth contingency moderated the relationship between narcissism and audience size. To the extent that external self-worth contingency was high, narcissists increased their self-ratings when presenting to a multiple as compared to single person audience, whereas non-narcissists decreased their self-enhancement when presenting to a multiple as compared to single person audience. This pattern of results was not found when degree of

self-worth contingency was low, with the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non- narcissists not significantly differing as a function of audience size. This finding mimics the pattern found for accountability in Study 1.

Study 2 also aimed to determine the effects of audience status on the self-presentation of narcissists and non-narcissists using a reworked status manipulation. The hypothesis that narcissists would be equally or more self-enhancing when presenting to a high than low status audience, and non-narcissists would reduce their self-enhancement when presenting to a high status audience was once again not supported. As in Study 1, degree of self-worth contingency did not moderate this relationship. Two studies, using different status manipulations, therefore failed to find support for the hypothesised effects of audience status on the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists.

An ancillary finding was the main effect found for degree of internal self-worth contingency on internal domain self-ratings. Those with higher degrees of internal self-worth contingency rated themselves more positively on internal domains than did those with lower degrees of internal self-worth contingency. This result was also found in Study 1. Thus, for those with a high degree of internal self-worth contingency, it appears important to see themselves in a positive light in the domains in which their self-worth is staked. This finding provides general support for contingencies of self-worth theory, which proposes that people want to see themselves as capable and competent people on the domains in which they have staked their self-worth (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

3.4.1 Narcissism, Audience Size, and the Moderating Role of External Self-Worth Contingency

As with the results for accountability, it was found the relationship between narcissism and audience size was moderated by degree of external self-worth contingency. Differences in the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists as a function of audience size were not found when degree of self-worth contingency was low. When degree of self-worth contingency was high however, it was found that non-narcissists reduced their self-enhancement when presenting towards a multiple as compared to single person audience. Narcissists on the other hand, showed no such contextual sensitivity, and presented themselves in a highly positive manner regardless of audience size. In fact, and consistent with Study 1, narcissists became even more self-enhancing when presenting towards a multiple as compared to single person audience. This strategy is at odds with strategic impression management requirements for modesty, requirements that non-narcissists appeared willing to show deference.

The prospect of presenting to a multiple person audience appeared to stimulate the narcissist's self-enhancement motive. For narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency, multiple person audiences may provide a fitting context in which to engage in exhibitionism and public displays of self-promotion, behaviours that they appear to revel in (APA, 1994; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Buss & Chiodo, 1991; Dickinson, 2003). Winning the praise and adulation of a crowd may have been an opportunity that these narcissists simply could not refuse. Multiple person audiences may also be a lucrative social arena

from which narcissists can construct their desired grandiose identities. Winning the adulation of a crown may be more meaningful in terms of identity construction than winning the adulation of a single person. The meaning ascribed to this adulation may be more pronounced when degree of self-worth contingency is high, given the self-validation (Park et al., 2006) and self-esteem (Crocker, Karpinski, et al., 2003) benefits that may be associated with this positive feedback in terms of fulfilling contingencies. Further, the carry-over effect (Tice, 1992) in which one's identity is constructed via audience validation of one's self-presentations may be strongest when such validation comes from a multiple person audience. The positive appraisals of a crowd may be more meaningful because they may be harder to win, and thus, such appraisals may hold more weight in terms of identity construction.

It may also be argued that the positive appraisals of a crowd are more public because there are multiple witnesses to identity validating feedback. Given that the narcissistic self is predominantly created and maintained in the interpersonal arena via feedback from others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), multiple witnesses to their greatness (and the validation of their greatness) may be highly sought after. The end result of this may have been that narcissists became especially self-enhancing towards the multiple person audience in an effort to gain access to this highly valued (and validating) adulation from the crowd in the domains where their self-worth is staked. This research proposes that such adulation is used in the services of narcissistic identity construction, with construction particularly focused on those domains where self-worth is invested.

Despite the potential benefits of self-enhancing towards a multiple person audience when degree of self-worth contingency is high, such a strategy does not come without risk. Presenting oneself too positively towards a multiple person audience may result in identity invalidation. The consequences of this invalidation may be more acutely felt when it comes from a multiple person audience because the highly public nature of the context may result in painful emotional consequences such as shame, embarrassment, and humiliation (emotions that are related to public rejection and failure; Smith et al., 2002). This pain may be intensified if invalidation is experienced in a domain where degree of self-worth contingency is high, given that these are the domains in which self-worth is staked. Non-narcissists may have been more aware of these risks, and chose to present themselves in a more modest manner. That is, they became protective of the domains in which they had staked their feelings of self-worth, perhaps because they were cognizant of the painful emotional consequences that public invalidation of a contingent domain may create.

Narcissists may not have been as cognizant of these potential consequences, with the result being the presentation of a highly positive identity to the multiple person audience. When degree of self-worth contingency was high, the narcissist's focus was on self-promotion. Although the social norms for modesty may not be as clearly defined for audience size as they are for accountability (given accountability's fundamental place in the social order; Semin & Manstead, 1983), costs may still be incurred for excessive self-enhancement to a crowd. As the saying goes, no one likes a show off. This self-

presentational strategy leaves the narcissist open to having their identity claim rejected or invalidated, and thus, they may be left to experience the potentially painful emotional consequences that such invalidation may bring (particularly when incurred on contingent domains; Crocker, Karpinski, et al., 2003). Yet with their positive outcome expectancies (Farwell & Wohlwend-Lloyd (1998), sense of entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, et al., 2004), and overt sense of confidence, narcissists may have perceived the multiple person audience as creating a less risky situation than did non-narcissists. This raises the possibility that these factors heighten narcissists' willingness to undertake more risky (Campbell, Goodie, et al., 2004) self-presentations in front of a multiple person audience, resulting in the self-aggrandising displays observed.

3.4.2 Alternative Explanations for Audience Status

As in Study 1, the status of the audience failed to differentially affect the self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists. Even with a reworked status manipulation designed to reduce the caring and empathetic perception of the high status audience, the audience status variable failed to produce the hypothesised effects. The theoretic basis of the audience status predictions may therefore need to be analysed, and alternative explanations considered.

The clinical literature (e.g., APA, 1994; Millon, 1996; Svrakic, 1986) proposes that narcissists are attracted to high status others because they offer the opportunity to enhance the positivity of the self. However, the specific

methodology of Studies 1 and 2 was based on the theory that the positivity of the narcissistic self is enhanced by high status audiences because the positive feedback of high status others is more diagnostic and thus means more in terms of identity construction. The narcissist should therefore present him or herself in a highly positive way to elicit such feedback. Given the results of Studies 1 and 2, it may be that the mechanism by which the narcissist's self-concept is enhanced by high status others is not via self-presentation, but instead, via association. Simply showing one's association with a high status other may be enough for the self-concept to be enhanced. Basking in the reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976) of high status others, or being seen with the "in crowd", may therefore be the mechanism for self-enhancement, independent of any feedback they may receive from such a person. Still, given that the narcissistic self is so dependent on interpersonal feedback (Rhodewalt & Morf, 2005), it may be that they seek high status others both for association benefits and positive feedback; both of which enhance the self-concept. The methodologies of Studies 1 and 2 were unable to differentiate self-presentation and association.

Another explanation for the audience status findings is that type of status portrayed in these studies is not the type of status to which narcissists are attracted. Status was essentially manipulated relative to expertise, intellectual capability, and career achievement. Although these are positive characteristics, it may be that narcissists are attracted to different types of positive characteristics such as beauty, wealth, power, or fame (APA, 1994). The narcissist may be attracted to the movie star, the rock singer, the star athlete, the wealthy

businessperson, or the pin-up model, as opposed to the relatively unglamorous clinical psychologist or personality scientist. These famous people have highly visible status characteristics, which fits with the narcissist's need for overt and easily recognisable symbols of eminence. Given that the clinical psychologist or personality scientist did not possess such symbols, they may not have offered as much in terms of self-concept enhancement.

A final possible explanation for the lack of effects found on audience status in both studies is that the status manipulation may have been too extreme. That is, the high status person was made so expert that participants may have deemed it too difficult to convince him that they were indeed as great as they had made themselves out to be. This possibility is supported by the finding that as the status manipulations got more extreme between Studies 1 and 2, the effects for status became even smaller.

3.4.3 Methodological Considerations

The accountability manipulation included in Study 1 meant that participants felt that they were going to be evaluated on their self-ratings because being accountable naturally entails having one's actions assessed and scrutinized. Without the accountability manipulation to carry this expectancy for evaluation, Study 2 needed to ensure that this expectancy was still embedded in the text participants were given. Participants needed to feel that there would be an evaluative reckoning (Schlenker et al., 1991) during their meeting, so it would be possible to determine how the expectation that one's self-ratings would be

analysed by different audience sizes and statuses differentially affected the self-presentation of narcissists and non-narcissists. Study 2 therefore attempted to ensure that this expectation for evaluation was not confounded with accountability. This was done by telling participants that their self-ratings would be thoroughly assessed and evaluated, but omitting the specific accountable/non-accountable manipulation. Study 2 therefore aimed to ensure that participants expected their self-ratings to be evaluated, while also ensuring that explicit accountability was not inadvertently included in the text.

3.4.4 Conclusions

Consistent with the results of Study 1, narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency once again showed a lack of contextual sensitivity and self-enhanced when presenting to a multiple person audience. The multiple person audience situation lead non-narcissists with a high degree of external self-worth contingency to more modest self-presentations. A clear difference in self-promotion and self-protection in the presence of social contextual threats was once again apparent between these two groups. These findings may suggest that the multiple person audience offered narcissists more in terms of potential self-validating positive feedback and subsequent identity construction when degree of external self-worth contingency was high than when it was low. These findings also provide support for Social Impact Theory (SIT; Latane, 1981), in that audience size did affect people's behaviour, although these

findings also extend SIT by finding that the effects of audience size may vary according to individual differences, in this case, level of narcissism.

Yet the narcissist's rigid and inflexible self-enhancement strategy may not be well received by his or her social partners. By self-enhancing in situations that call for modesty, narcissists may alienate the people to whom they are self-presenting because they are violating socially prescribed norms for modesty. This may in turn result in narcissists receiving a steady supply of negative social feedback from their interaction partners. Study 3 was designed to investigate how narcissists respond to such feedback.

CHAPTER 4: STUDY 3

4.1 Introduction to Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 showed that narcissists exhibit a pervasive self-enhancing approach to social interactions. Further, this self-enhancing approach appears rigidly inflexible to the demands of the social context. When degree of external self-worth contingency was high, narcissists lacked contextual sensitivity, presenting themselves in highly positive ways in situations that otherwise led non-narcissists to become more modest (i.e., when accountable, when presenting to a multiple person audience). Given that narcissists self-enhance in situations where social norms call for modesty, the possibility arises that such a strategy may lead to narcissists alienating their social interaction partners. Sedikides, Campbell, at al. (2002) discussed this idea, stating that the price narcissists may pay for their rigid self-enhancement is damage to the interpersonal bond. Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) also discussed this idea, noting that narcissists' grandiose interpersonal behaviour, which is aimed at eliciting positive self-verifying social feedback designed to validate their grandiose identity, is in fact counterproductive, and undermines the very identity that they are attempting to validate. It is counterproductive because the inflexibility inherent within their self-enhancement strategy alienates their social partners as it is insensitive to social constraints and the concerns of others. This means that the positive feedback they seek, and indeed rely on, may not be forthcoming.

Narcissists' inflexible self-enhancement strategy may not only result in an absence of positive social feedback, but may also result in them actually receiving negative social feedback. How do narcissists respond to such negative feedback? Or as Sedikides, Campbell, et al. asked, what happens when the narcissistic script does not go to plan?

4.1.1 Narcissism and Anger: Clinical Accounts

Narcissists appear to be particularly sensitive to interpersonal feedback, be it positive or negative (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Young et al., 2003). As previously discussed, positive feedback is highly valued by narcissists because it provides confirmatory evidence of their grandiose yet fragile self-views. Narcissists thus become pre-occupied with garnering this feedback in an effort to sustain their grandiose self-image, both in their own minds, and in the minds of others. Yet as the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) states, when such feedback is not forthcoming, or narcissists encounter negative social feedback, they may respond with intense feelings of rage, shame, or humiliation. Narcissists may therefore be characterised by extremes of affectivity, extremes that are tied to their perceptions of how well (or poorly) they are viewed by others.

Several psychodynamic accounts have discussed the relationship between narcissism and anger. The term *narcissistic rage* is often cited by theorists of the psychodynamic orientation (e.g., Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1972). Kernberg contended that narcissistic rage begins

in response to parental rejection during infancy. This rage perpetuates into adulthood, although remains largely hidden from the external world, unless the adult narcissist is rejected by another person, in which case the underlying rage becomes the primary affective response. Kohut contended that narcissistic rage is a response to injury to the narcissists' self-esteem, usually in the context of an affront from another. In response, the narcissist seeks revenge against the source of the insult, in an attempt to undo the hurt the injury has caused (see also Nemiah, 1961). A. M. Cooper (1998) also notes that narcissists are apt to show disproportionate anger when social supplies of admiration are inadequate, stating that the narcissist mood state is highly contingent on external events, particularly in relation to praise or derogation from others.

Millon (1981; see also Millon 1996), using his social learning approach to personality, argued that narcissists typically experience a sense of well-being and buoyancy of mood in their everyday lives. This however can turn to anger when their grandiosity or sense of superiority is punctured by unwanted negative social feedback. Shaken by this feedback, the normally nonchalant narcissist's affective state can abruptly shift to anger in the event that his or her grandiose bubble is burst.

The common theme posited by these clinical accounts is that narcissists' anger is triggered by personal slights, insults, or rejections, and that narcissists' affective states are strongly tied to how well they feel they are perceived by others. Although the relationship between narcissism and anger has long been

documented in the clinical literature, empirical documentation of this relationship has been lacking until relatively recently.

4.1.2 Narcissism and Anger: Empirical Accounts

Research conducted over the last two decades has documented the relationship between narcissism and anger that has long been noted in the clinical literature. McCann and Biaggio (1989) found that participants with higher levels of narcissism reported higher levels of self-reported anger, both in terms of physical arousal and verbal expression of anger. Similarly, Papps and O'Carroll (1998) reasoned that those with high levels of both narcissism and self-esteem would report greater levels of anger and aggression than those with low narcissism and high self-esteem. Results supported this hypothesis, with the authors concluding that high self-esteem in itself is not sufficient to predict anger, unless it is coupled with high levels of narcissism. Finally, Witte, Callahan, and Perez-Lopez (2002) hypothesised that specific narcissistic character traits, namely a sense of entitlement and authority over others, would be specifically associated with anger. They hypothesised that these traits make narcissists particularly sensitive to slights or insults because their subjective perception of authority over others and sense of entitlement makes them prone to seeing negative feedback as threatening. This subsequently leads them to becoming angry. Results were consistent with this hypothesis, with the entitlement and authority subscales of the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988) significantly associated

with self-reported anger, as measured by the Novaco Anger Scale (Novaco, 1994).

Baumeister and colleagues (e.g., Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, Van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003), using experimental methodologies, developed the *threatened egotism* hypothesis to account for the relationship between narcissism, anger, and aggression. The threatened egotism hypothesis, in essence, holds that anger and aggression are a means of defending a highly positive or favorable self-view against attack from a person who seeks to challenge or discredit that self-view. In contrast to traditional views (e.g., Long, 1990; Oates & Forrest, 1985) that link low self-esteem to violence and aggression, the threatened egotism hypothesis links highly positive self-views to the aggression process. Moreover, narcissism is directly implicated in this theory, with Baumeister, Bushman, and Campbell (2000) noting that the grandiose self-views, inflated sense of entitlement, and lack of empathy shown by narcissists makes them particularly inclined to aggression and violence when their self-views are threatened.

In support of this theory, Bushman and Baumeister (1998) had a research confederate either insult or praise participants. Participants were then given the opportunity to aggress against the confederate by delivering an aversive blast of noise as loudly or softly as they saw fit. Results suggested that the loudest blasts of noise (i.e., greatest levels of aggression) were delivered by those with high levels of narcissism who had been insulted, and that self-esteem by itself did not predict aggression after insult. Importantly, it was found that narcissism in and of

itself was not directly linked to aggression, with this link only found when combined with an insulting provocation. That is, narcissists were no more aggressive that other people so long as there was no personal insult or provocation. Once this insult or provocation arose, narcissists became more aggressive and hostile than other participants. It was also found that narcissists only directed their aggression towards the source of the insult and not to an innocent third person, indicting that aggression is a specific and targeted response aimed at protecting their highly positive self-views against those who attempt undermine them (for a review of the threatened egotism literature, see Baumeister et al., 2000).

It may also be that narcissists work harder to defend some self-views from negative feedback than they do others. As shown in Studies 1 and 2 (see also Campbell et al., 2002), narcissists have highly positive self-views on external domains such as outdoing others in competition, but not on internal domains such as morality. Given that anger and aggression may be narcissists' method of protecting a highly positive self-views from negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), it may be that negative feedback on an external domain will provide a trigger for anger. It may therefore be predicted that negative feedback on an external domain will result in more anger than may negative feedback on an internal domain.

Studies investigating the threatened egotism hypothesis, although giving theoretical consideration to anger, generally use aggression (a behavioural measure) as the outcome variable of interest. Rhodewalt and Morf (1998) sought

to determine how positive and negative feedback about the self influences narcissists' affective states, particularly anger. They began with the general hypothesis that narcissists would show more extreme affective reactions in response to positive (success) and negative (failure) feedback than would those with lower levels of narcissism. Participants were asked to fill out a bogus intelligence test and subsequently were given positive or negative feedback on their test results. Consistent with predictions, it was found that narcissists responded with larger changes in anger and state self-esteem in response to negative feedback than did non-narcissists. Study 1 specifically found that after initially receiving positive feedback, narcissists responded to subsequent negative feedback with greater levels of anger than did non-narcissists. Study 2 found a similar pattern of results for anger, and also found that narcissists displayed greater fluctuations in state self-esteem than did non-narcissists in response to positive and negative feedback. Morf and Rhodewalt note that the affective reactivity shown by narcissists is not simply a response to environmental events in general, but is specifically tied to feedback that they receive about themselves. This provides confirmatory evidence for the idea that narcissists are highly preoccupied with how well they are perceived by others (APA, 1994; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Young & Flanagan, 1998), and indeed, their affective state may become dependent upon the valence of the feedback they receive.

The Rhodewalt and Morf (1998) studies implicated anger as narcissists' primary affective response to negative feedback, with the conclusion being that

narcissistic anger is a response to a perceived affront or insult to their grandiose self-image. This link between anger and narcissistic grandiosity was highlighted by Raskin, Novacek and Hogan (1991), who found that grandiosity mediated that relationship between narcissism and anger. Yet Morf and Rhodewalt also found that in addition to anger, the state self-esteem of narcissists was affected by positive and negative feedback about themselves (Study 2). This raises the interesting question as to whether narcissists' affective reactions to failure are limited to anger, or if other affective states such as depression, although not empirically documented as yet, may also be triggered; and if so, does anything moderate the relationship between narcissism and depression in the context of negative feedback?

4.1.3 Narcissism and Depression: Clinical Accounts

Several clinical theorists have noted the association between narcissism and depression, although solid empirical evidence for this association is currently lacking. Dimaggio et al. (2002) noted that the subjective emotional experience of narcissists oscillates between states of grandiosity, characterised by euphoria, self-sufficiency, and an omnipotent sense of power, and depressed emptiness, characterised by self-deprecation, feeling of social rejection, and sadness that is accompanied by a sense of paradise lost. This paradise lost represents the narcissist's sense of connectedness to others, which is disturbed by the narcissist's maladaptive interpersonal cycles, resulting in a sense of isolation and social separation (see also Morf and Rhodewalt's, 2001, concept of the

narcissistic paradox). Missing the social connectedness that would otherwise give them access to the self-esteem regulating mechanisms of public exhibitionism and admiration, narcissists are cast into a state of depression.

Kohut (1972, 1984) also wrote on this issue. Kohut (1984) contended that depression is a response to a narcissistic injury stemming from a social insult. The developmental underpinnings of this depressive response form in early childhood, when infants experience a loss of self-perceived grandiosity and shattering of their fantasies of omnipotence in the context of losing their narcissistic supply of veneration provided by idealised others (usually parental figures). Repeated negative evaluation from parental figures during childhood therefore sets the stage for a depressive response in adulthood, when the narcissist is once again confronted with negative appraisals.

Beck et al. (2004) also note that narcissists are prone to periods of depression. They contend that in times when others fail to validate narcissists' special status or greatness, narcissists become susceptible to bouts of depression because their underlying beliefs of inferiority, unimportance, and powerlessness become activated. The narcissist's inner sense of value and importance is highly contingent on achieving continuous success and external admiration from others. If such success and admiration are not forthcoming, or if the narcissist experiences failure or disapproval, his or her typical sense of wellbeing may be transformed into a mood of melancholic dejection.

Kernberg (1975, 1984) however, provides an opposing clinical account. He argues that narcissists are characterized by a non-integrated superego structure,

and are therefore limited in their ability to experience emotions that are linked with the super-ego such as shame and depression. Situations that would otherwise lead to shame or depression are denied or projected, with narcissists externalizing their negative affect, usually in the form of anger or aggression.

4.1.4 Narcissism and Depression: Empirical Accounts

The empirical literature on narcissism and depression, although scant, is also equivocal. Wright, O'Leary, and Balkin (1989) found no association between narcissism and depression, whereas Watson, Taylor, and Morris (1987) found a negative correlation between depression and narcissism using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988) to measure narcissism, and a moderately positive correlation using the Narcissistic Personality Disorder Scale (Solomon, 1982) to measure narcissism. Watson, Sawrie, Greene, and Arredondo (2002) found a positive association between MMPI-2 measured narcissism and depression, although their findings are limited in terms of generalisability as their sample consisted of people receiving treatment for alcohol dependence.

Stucke (2003) examined the relationship between narcissism, performance attributions, and negative emotions (e.g., anger, depression) in participants who had received either positive or negative performance feedback on an intelligence test. She found that attributions for task difficulty and ability mediated the relationship between narcissism and negative emotions after receiving failure feedback. Narcissists made external attributions for negative feedback and

subsequently responded with higher levels of anger, whereas non-narcissists made internal attributions for the negative feedback and responded with greater levels of depression. This study, although not consistent with clinical accounts highlighting the positive relationship between narcissism and depression, is promising in that it implicates potential mediating variables in the relationship between narcissism and negative emotional states (see also Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998).

The idea that other variables may mediate or moderate the relationship between narcissism and negative emotional states such as depression brings to light the need to identify such potential variables. Given that narcissists are typically characterised by an air of grandiosity and overt sense of wellbeing (Millon, 1981), the relationship between narcissism and depression may not be a direct one. It therefore makes theoretical sense to conceptualise the relationship between narcissism and depression in the context of negative feedback as being mediated or moderated by other key variables.

4.1.5 Contingencies of Self-Worth: Affective Implications

One potential moderator of the relationship between narcissism and depression is degree of self-worth contingency. Contingencies of self-worth represent those domains in which people stake their feelings of self-worth, with success and failure in these domains making people more or less worthy (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). Affective reactions to particular events are therefore likely to be more intense the closer such events are linked to people's

contingencies of self-worth (Crocker, Karpinski et al., 2003). The basic tenet is that if it is taken that people possess the goal of seeing themselves as a person of worth, then affective reactions to events in a given domain should be more intense the more a person's self-worth is contingent on doing well (and thus becoming a person of worth) on that particular domain. Positive affective states therefore follow from achieving success in contingent domains, whereas negative affective states follow from experiencing failure in contingent domains (Crocker & Park, 2004). A study described earlier (Crocker et al., 2002) lends empirical support to this idea.

Crocker et al. (2002) investigated the daily self-esteem fluctuations of 32 university students applying for graduate programs. They found that the more a student's self-esteem was contingent on achieving success in the academic domain (i.e., they had a high degree of academic self-worth contingency), the more their self-esteem increased on days they were accepted, and decreased on days they were rejected, from graduate programs. Participants also filled out a daily measure of affect, with results suggesting that the association between daily self-esteem and daily affect was strongest for those with a high degree of academic contingency. This suggests that affect and self-esteem are closely related in people with a high degree of self-worth contingency that experience events that are relevant to their contingencies of self-worth (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Participants were also asked to complete a self-report measure of depression (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale; Randloff, 1977) before and after the period for offers of admission (this spanned a period of two

months). It was found that after controlling for baseline levels of depression, depressive symptoms in participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency at the end of the admission period were predicted by fluctuations in daily self-esteem across time. A high degree of self-worth contingency therefore made participants' daily self-esteem particularly unstable and reactive to positive and negative life events, which in turn increased their level of self-reported depressive symptomatology.

A study by Crocker, Karpinski, et al. (2003) provides further support for this idea. This study investigated the impact of academic grades received on the daily self-esteem of 122 male and female engineering students. Consistent with the findings of Crocker et al. (2002), this study found that the daily self-esteem of participants increased on days that they received good grades, and decreased on days when they received poor grades. Importantly, it was found that degree of self-worth contingency moderated this effect. The higher a participant's degree of academic self-worth contingency, the more that participant's self-esteem was likely to fluctuate relative to good and poor grades. This resulted in unstable self-esteem over time. The instability in self-esteem associated with contingent self-worth also predicted increases in self-reported depressive symptoms over the 3-week course of the study, particularly in participants who were more depressed before the beginning of the study. Thus, participants who based their self-worth on being academically successful experienced greater fluctuations in self-esteem associated with positive and negative life events (i.e., grades) that implicated their contingent domain, which in turn predicted depressive symptomatology.

These findings are consistent with clinical theorists (e.g., Blatt, Quinlan, Chevron, McDonald, & Zuroff, 1982; McKay & Fanning, 2000), who have argued that people vulnerable to depression have self-esteem that is dependent or conditional on the achievement of specific outcomes. If such outcomes are not achieved, if an individual's self-standards (i.e., outcomes expectations) are unrealistic, or if the individual becomes self-denigrating if such outcomes are not realised, the emotional consequence may be depression. The findings outlined above also parallel the work of Kernis and colleagues' (e.g., Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989; Kernis, Paradise, Whitaker, Wheatman, & Goldman, 2000) work on self-esteem stability. Kernis (2003) argued that the stability of a person's self-esteem is represented by the degree to which his or her momentary feelings of self-esteem fluctuate across time and situations. The greater number of momentary, contextually based fluctuations in self-esteem, the more unstable is one's self-esteem. Kernis and Goldman (2003) argued that stable self-esteem is characterised by feelings of self-worth that are relatively impervious to environmental or evaluative events, whereas unstable self-esteem is more fragile and changeable relative to environmental or evaluative events. Research has shown that in comparison to those with relatively stable self-esteem, those with unstable self-esteem have affective states that are more affected by daily positive and negative life events (Greenier et al., 1999). Those with unstable self-esteem have also been shown to experience greater increases in self-reported depressive symptoms when faced with a variety of daily hassles or negative events (Kernis et al., 1998).

In sum, self-esteem instability, which is associated with sensitivity and reactivity to positive and negative life events, has been shown to be a predictor of depression (e.g., Kernis et al., 1998). Contingencies of self-worth appear to add another layer of complexity onto this relationship. The instability in self-esteem that is associated with success and failure in domains where one's self-worth is contingent is predictive of depressive symptoms (e.g., Crocker et al., 2002; Crocker et al., 2003). Contingencies of self-worth may therefore represent a specific vulnerability factor in the development of depression (Crocker, Luhtanen, & Sommers, 2004). This risk may be particularly relevant to narcissists, given that their affective state and sense of self-worth appear highly contingent on external events, most notably, how well or poorly they are perceived by others.

4.1.6 Narcissism, Depression, and Self-Worth Contingency

Narcissists are pre-occupied with displaying their greatness on the social stage, and are highly invested in garnering positive social appraisals or admiration from their social audience. As Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) argue, these positive social appraisals serve to provide validation of their grandiose, yet uncertain self-views. Narcissists may therefore become hypersensitive to positive and negative social feedback. Therefore, although narcissists' self-views are highly positive, they may also be highly unstable. This is because their affect and self-esteem is highly dependent upon the type of feedback they receive from others (Millon, 1981; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). A study conducted by Rhodewalt, Madrian, and Cheney (1998) lends support to this idea.

Rhodewalt et al. (1998) measured the daily self-esteem and affect of participants with varying levels of narcissism over a period of 5 (Study 1) and 6 (Study 2) days. Results of these studies found that participants with higher levels of narcissism showed more emotional reactivity and greater day-to-day fluctuations in self-esteem than did participants with lower levels of narcissism (see also Emmons, 1987). Importantly, it was found that the instability in self-esteem shown by narcissists was specifically related to negative social interactions, as opposed to negative events in general. This finding has important implications because it highlights narcissists' sensitivity to negative social feedback and the subsequent destabilising influence that this has on their affective state, in this case, their state self-esteem.

This sensitivity to social feedback shown by narcissists may be heightened when such feedback pertains to a domain in which they have staked their feelings of self-worth. In turn, their affective reactions to such feedback should also be heightened, given that such feedback is targeted towards a domain where the narcissist's self-worth is contingent upon achieving success. In regards to depression, the underpinnings of this response may lie in the instability in the narcissist's self-esteem that is caused by negative social appraisals in a contingent domain (see Crocker et al., 2002; Crocker, Karpinski et al., 2003). Negative feedback may also foil the narcissist's chronic goal of obtaining positive feedback that would otherwise serve to fulfil their contingencies of self-worth. The consequences of failing to realise self-worth on contingent domains may be amplified for narcissists, given that they appear to be highly

invested in constructing their desired grandiose identities around these domains (Studies 1 and 2). Also, given that narcissists have a chronic goal of self-validation, and that the fulfilment of contingencies allows for self-validation in that it provides evidence that one does indeed possess the qualities on which one's self-esteem is based (i.e., they have been authenticated; Park et al., 2006), failure to fulfil contingencies may be especially painful for narcissists. The end result may be that narcissists show increased levels of negative affect (e.g., depression, lowered self-esteem) in addition to the already documented anger response (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Stucke, 2003) upon receiving negative feedback on a contingent domain.

The narcissist's reliance on positive social appraisals may make them particularly vulnerable to negative affective states when negative social feedback is targeted at a contingent domain. Yet it may be a mistake to paint narcissists as passive victims of social feedback, as they may have a range of defences (beyond anger and aggression) that serve to buffer them against the painful emotional consequences that negative feedback may create. One such defence may be their cognitive reactions to negative feedback.

4.1.7 Narcissism and Cognitive Reactions to Feedback

Several studies have shown that narcissists show differing cognitive reactions to positive and negative social feedback than do others. Kernis and Sun (1994) gave participants randomly assigned bogus positive or negative performance feedback by an evaluator on a speech that they had delivered.

Results suggested that after receiving positive feedback, those with higher levels of narcissism showed greater propensity to rate the evaluator as more competent and likable, and the evaluation technique as more diagnostic, than those with lower levels of narcissism. Similarly, after receiving negative feedback, those with higher levels of narcissism showed a greater propensity to rate the evaluator as less competent and likeable, and the evaluation technique as less diagnostic, than those with lower levels of narcissism. The authors concluded that the cognitive reactions observed in narcissists served as a mechanism for protecting and maintaining their self-regard and highly positive self-views against negative feedback. By derogating the feedback and the feedback source, the narcissist may have been attempting to externalise the cause of the negative feedback, shifting the focus away from any potential personal faults or shortcomings, towards faults or shortcoming that are based outside themselves (in this case, faults in the evaluator and evaluation technique).

Similar findings were obtained by Rhodewalt and Morf (1998). This study (already described) found that after receiving positive (success) feedback on a bogus intelligence test, those with higher levels of narcissism showed a greater propensity to attribute the feedback to their ability (i.e., internal attribution), as opposed to other external factors such as luck (i.e., external attributions). Interestingly the attributions made for negative feedback did not differ as a function of narcissism. In a similar study, Smalley and Stake (1996) found that after receiving negative feedback, narcissism predicted negative evaluations of the feedback source. Evidence therefore exists suggesting that narcissists are

apt to take credit for positive outcomes (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt) while systematically deflecting the effects of negative outcomes (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake). These cognitive strategies in turn serve to protect the narcissist's highly positive self-views from the potential deleterious intrapersonal effects that negative feedback may create. These cognitive efforts to externalize negative feedback may be especially pronounced when such feedback is targeted in contingent domains. Indeed, given that these domains represent the areas in which self-worth is staked, narcissists may be especially motivated to protect their feelings of self-worth in these areas. The end result may be that these cognitive strategies will be especially pronounced when negative feedback is received on a contingent domain.

In addition to these cognitive defences, the narcissist may also use self-presentational behaviour as a tool for deflecting the effects of negative social feedback directed towards the self.

4.1.8 Narcissism and Self-Presentational Responses to Feedback

Given that narcissists are highly preoccupied with how they are perceived by others, and are chronically invested in winning adoration and admiration, being seen in a negative manner by their social audience represents a significant obstacle to the achievement of this goal. The receipt of negative self-relevant feedback conflicts with narcissists' quest for greatness, and thus, may trigger a response designed to reassert their self-perceived greatness. This response may come in the form of self-presentation. Indeed, self-presentation is one of the key

strategies that narcissists use to construct and maintain their grandiose self-views (Arkin & Lakin, 2001; see also Studies 1 and 2), and as such, this strategy may also be used to defend these self-views from potential threats. This defensive strategy may come in the form of reactive and excessive self-promotion, with the narcissist attempting to re-establish the highly positive identity that has been threatened or called into question by the negative social feedback. The targets of this strategy are most likely two-fold, the narcissist, and his or her social audience. The social audience becomes a key target because as Tice (1992) noted, any serious identity claims require validation from a social audience. Without this social validation that comes from positive feedback, narcissists may be left in a continued state of self-doubt regarding their greatness. It therefore becomes possible to see why narcissists may be particularly invested in re-establishing their greatness in the eyes of others after negative feedback.

Narcissists' self-presentational response to negative feedback may be very different to that shown by non-narcissists because the self-views of non-narcissists are less tied to, or dependent upon, the feedback they receive from others. As such, the excessive displays of self-promotion that may be seen by narcissists following negative feedback may not be observed in non-narcissists. This may be because there is less at stake for the non-narcissist as their sense of self-worth is not as invested in the valence of the feedback they receive from others, and thus, the defensive (i.e., excessively self-promoting) self-presentational reaction observed in narcissists may not be required.

Narcissists' pervasive sense of entitlement (APA, 1994; Campbell, Bonacci, et al. 2004) may also pre-dispose them to self-aggrandisement or excessive self-promotion after receiving negative feedback. This sense of entitlement pervades much of their inter-personal behaviour (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992), and may also extend to the type of feedback they expect to receive. Narcissists may feel that they have a fundamental right to receive a constant supply of positive social feedback or admiration. Coming into contact with negative feedback violates this expectation. The response to this negative feedback may therefore be self-promotion that is driven by narcissists' expectation for receiving the positive social feedback that they feel they deserve, and indeed, to which they are entitled.

The self-promoting response to negative feedback may be particularly evident when such feedback is targeted at contingent domains. As was evident in Studies 1 and 2, contingencies of self-worth have implications for motivation and behaviour (see also Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003), in that people are motivated to maintain, enhance, and also protect their self-esteem on such domains. Crocker discusses various protective strategies that people employ to ensure that their feelings of self-worth on contingent domains remain shielded from potential threats. These strategies include avoiding a situation that has the potential to threaten contingencies, or lowering one's expectations for success on a contingent domain (see Crocker & Park, 2004, for a review). Yet these a priori (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001) self-protective strategies designed to shield contingent self-worth from potential threats do not seem characteristic of the self-promoting

narcissist. Indeed, the self-protective strategies employed by narcissists in response to negative feedback in contingent domains may be more offensive (i.e., attacking) than this. Narcissists may respond to potential threats in contingent domains with excessive displays of self-promotion, as this may be the only self-presentational strategy that they know (Young et al., 2002; see Studies 1 and 2). This perspective is also consistent with theories of compensation (e.g., Baumeister & Jones, 1978; Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985), which indicate that when people experience a threat to a domain that is central to their self-definition, they respond with inflated self-descriptions. Narcissists may therefore subscribe to the old adage that attack is the best form of defence.

4.1.9 A Comment on Methodology

The methodology used in Study 3 is consistent with the traditional experimental paradigm used in social psychological and other types of psychological research to induce affective states in participants (e.g., J. D. Brown & Dutton, 1995a; J. D. Brown & Marshall, 2001; Cohen, Pane, & Smith, 1997; Egloff, 1998; Ingram, 1984; Krohne, Pieper, Knoll, & Breimer, 2002; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Neumann, Seibt, & Strack, 2001). The basic paradigm involves providing participants with randomly assigned positive or negative feedback that has ostensibly been derived from some bogus test or measure (e.g., intelligence test, personality test, test of social skills). Participants' affective and or cognitive (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994; Swann et al., 1987) reactions are then measured,

usually through self-report, which then become the dependent variables of interest.

Although these laboratory based experimental manipulations have been criticised for lacking external validity (e.g., Clore, 1994), they hold the advantage of being able to expressly target and manipulate specific independent variables of interest, and for being able to control for extraneous factors that may otherwise be present in field studies (see Nummenmaa & Niemi, 2004, for a review). As such, this laboratory based methodology was chosen for Study 3.

4.1.10 Hypotheses

In regards to affective reactions, it is generally hypothesised that narcissists will display more extreme affective reactions to positive and negative feedback than will non-narcissists. Specifically:

H3a. Narcissists will display more anger than non-narcissists in response to negative feedback. Narcissists will also show more anger when the negative feedback is targeted at an external domain as opposed to an internal domain.

H3b. Narcissists will show both greater increases in state depressive symptoms and greater decreases in state self-esteem in response to negative feedback than will non-narcissists. Importantly, this relationship will be moderated by degree of self-worth contingency. The combination of high

narcissism, high degree of self-worth contingency, and negative feedback will result in depression and lowered self-esteem.

H3c. Narcissists will report greater levels of happiness after receiving positive feedback than will non-narcissists.

In regards to cognitive reactions, it is generally hypothesised that narcissists will show more extreme cognitive reactions to positive and negative feedback than will non-narcissists. Specifically:

H3d. Narcissists will be more attracted to the feedback source than will non-narcissists in response to positive feedback. Narcissists will be less attracted to the feedback source than will non-narcissists in response to negative feedback.

H3e. Narcissists will perceive the testing procedure from which the feedback was derived to be more diagnostic than will non-narcissists in response to positive feedback. Narcissists will perceive the testing procedure from which the feedback was derived to be less diagnostic than will non-narcissists in response to negative feedback.

H3f. Narcissists will perceive positive feedback to be more accurate, and negative feedback to be less accurate, than will non-narcissists.

H3g. Narcissists will make more internal attributions for positive feedback, and more external attributions for negative feedback than will non-narcissists.

H3h. These cognitive differences for narcissists and non-narcissists will be particularly evident when degree of self-worth contingency is high on the domain that the feedback is received on.

In regards to self-presentational reactions, it is generally hypothesised that narcissists will show more extreme self-presentational reactions to negative feedback than will non-narcissists. Specifically:

H3i. Narcissists' self-presentations will not be constrained by negative feedback. Narcissists will be more self-enhancing after receiving negative feedback than will non-narcissists. This will be particularly evident when degree of self-worth contingency is high.

4.2 Method

4.2.1 Participants

Participants were 82 (18 males, 64 females) La Trobe University undergraduate students from a wide range of academic disciplines. As in Studies 1 and 2, participants were recruited from a volunteer student participant database compiled by the La Trobe University School of Psychological Science.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 63, with an average age of 20.61 years (*SD* = 5.71).

A total of 311 participants were approached via email to participate in Study 3, indicating a response rate of 26%. As in Studies 1 and 2, an accurate response rate is difficult to ascertain given that the recruitment email may have been automatically sent to the “junk-mail” folder of many popular email systems (e.g., Hotmail, Yahoo) used by participants. There were 12 participants who completed and returned the initial measures but failed to complete the feedback response form after receiving their personality feedback. An attrition rate of 13% was therefore calculated for this study. The initial measures collected from these participants were not used in the analyses. These participants were fully debriefed after they did not respond to the feedback within a 24 hour period. There was not a significantly larger number of drop-outs from any one group than others.

4.2.2 Materials

4.2.2.1 *Individual Difference Measures*

The individual difference measures for Study 3 were the same as those used in Studies 1 and 2. Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Emmons, 1987) scores ranged from 4 to 33 (M = 15.65, SD = 5.90, α = .74). Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965) scores ranged from 17 to 39 (M = 29.19, SD = 5.01, α = .89). Descriptive statistics for the Contingencies of Self-Worth

Scale (CSWS; Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003) were as follows: Physical appearance (*M* = 4.72, *SD* = 1.34, α = .82), approval from others (*M* = 4.09 , *SD* = 1.35, α = .86), outdoing others in competition (*M* = 4.60, *SD* = 1.29, α = .90), academic competence (*M* = 5.10, *SD* = .96, α = .85), overall external contingency (*M* = 4.72 , *SD* = 1.02, α = .92), family love and support (*M* = 5.22 , *SD* = 1.33, α = .89), moral virtue (*M* = 4.94, *SD* = 1.27, α = .88), God's love (*M* = 2.73, *SD* = 1.81, α = .97), and overall internal contingency (*M* = 4.30, *SD* = 1.12, α = .91).

4.2.2.2 Bogus Personality Tests

Bogus measures of morality (The Morality Questionnaire) and competitiveness (The Competitiveness Questionnaire) were created. Participants were lead to believe that these were valid personality measures, and that these measures would be used by Daniel Walsh at the Personality Assessment Centre to develop their personality profile and subsequent feedback.

The Morality Questionnaire (see Appendix J) consisted of 6 free response items, and was based loosely around the Visions of Morality Scale (Shelton & McAdams, 1990). Example items included "do you believe in euthanasia?" and "Do you think that people should make certain that their actions never harm another person, even if there are potential benefits to be gained by such actions?" Participants were asked to provide brief 2-3 sentence answers for each item.

The Competitiveness Questionnaire (see Appendix K) also consisted of 6 free response items. Example items included “is beating your personal best more important than beating your opposition” and “is success in life based on survival of the fittest?” Participants were asked to provide brief 2-3 sentence answers for each item.

Both questionnaires were designed to have high face validity, and were also designed with free response items to ensure that no exact correct answer was apparent. This also helped to make the feedback given more subjective, in that the feedback was supposedly a reflection of the evaluator’s opinion, as opposed to an objective test.

4.2.2.3 Measurement of Affective Reactions

Consistent with the approach taken by Rhodewalt and Morf (1998), as well as Bogart, Benotsch, and Pavlovic (2004), participants’ affective reactions immediately after reading the feedback were measured using the Resultant Self-Esteem Scale (RSES: McFarland & Ross, 1982). The RSES has 36-items measuring 5 different mood states, including anger (angry, mad, disgusted, annoyed, irritated, furious, frustrated), anxiety (worried, apprehensive, tense, uptight, nervous, anxious, troubled), depression (disappointed, displeased, downhearted, depressed), happiness (satisfied, pleased, joyful, happy, hopeful, optimistic), and self-esteem (proud, competent, confident, smart, resourceful, effective, inadequate [reversed scored], incompetent [reversed scored], stupid [reversed scored], worthless [reversed scored], shamed [reversed scored], guilty

[reversed scored]. Participants were required to indicate, on an 11-point scale (ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*), the extent to which each term described how they felt “right now”. Each subscale was shown to have excellent reliability: anger (α = .98), anxiety (α = .97), depression (α = .95), happiness (α = .96), and self-esteem (α = .96). The RSES can be found in Appendix L.

4.2.2.4 Measurement of Cognitive Reactions

Participants’ cognitive reactions were measured using a modified version of a scale developed by Swann et al., (1987). The scale was modified to fit the cover story employed by the current study (see Appendix M). This modified scale consisted of 21 items, each answerable on a 9-point scale. Within these 21 items were six subscales measuring six distinct cognitive reactions to the feedback: perceived accuracy of the feedback (4 items, α = .95; e.g., how accurate do you think Daniel Walsh’s feedback about you was?), perceived competence of the evaluator (4 items, α = .96; e.g., how competent do you believe Daniel Walsh is?), perceived diagnosticity of the test (3 items, α = .96; e.g., how much do you think that a person’s answers on the competitiveness/morality questionnaire [depending on condition] reveals about their overall competitiveness/morality [depending on condition]?), external attributions for the feedback (3 items, α = .74; e.g., how much was the feedback you received on the competitiveness/morality questionnaire [depending on condition] due to an incorrect interpretation of your test responses by Daniel Walsh?), internal attributions for the feedback (4 items, α = .93; e.g., how much was the feedback

you received on the competitiveness/morality questionnaire [depending on condition] due to your actual levels of competitiveness/morality [depending on condition]?), and attraction to the evaluator (3 items, α = .82; e.g., how much do you think that you would like Daniel Walsh?).

4.2.2.5 Measurement of Self-Presentational Reactions

Participants' self-presentational reactions to the feedback were measured using a single item from the self-rating scale used in Studies 1 and 2 (see Appendix N). After reading the feedback (which contained the evaluators rating of them), participants were asked to rate themselves, on a scale of 1-100 (with 100 being the most positive), on how positively they saw themselves on the attribute being assessed (either moral virtue or competitive spirit, depending on condition). Although Studies 1 and 2 used a 1-20 scale, a 1-100 scale was used in Study 3 so as to maintain consistency with the percentile ranks given in the feedback.

4.2.2.6 Measurement of Behavioural Reactions

A single item attempted to measure participants' behavioural reactions to the feedback. Participants were asked whether they would recommend that their evaluator (i.e., Daniel Walsh) be employed by the Personality Assessment Centre at the conclusion of the trial. Specifically, participants were asked "would you recommend that Dr/Mr Walsh be employed at the personality assessment centre once the trial has been concluded?" This item was answerable on a 9-

point scale, ranging from 1 (*would not recommend at all)* to 9 (*would strongly recommend*). Although not a direct behavioural measure, it was thought that this item tapped participants' willingness to exert an influence over the interests of the evaluator. This item, as it was presented to participants, can be found in Appendix O.

4.2.3 Procedure

Potential participants were approached via email with an almost identical cover story to that used in Studies 1 and 2 (see Appendix P). The only difference was that participants were told that they would be receiving their personality feedback via email (as opposed to in a face-to-face meeting).

After reading the cover story, potential participants who were interested in the study were asked to send an email to the researchers confirming their willingness to participate. Participants were then randomly assigned to receive either positive or negative feedback on either their moral virtue or competitive spirit. Participants were then emailed the NPI, SES, CSWS, RSES, and either the Morality or Competitiveness Questionnaire (depending on condition assigned). Once completed, participants were asked to return the tests via email, and informed that they would be emailed their personality results within the next 24 hours.

Participants were then emailed the randomly assigned bogus personality feedback, supposedly developed by Daniel Walsh, a staff member at the personality assessment centre. Participants were informed that the feedback

they received was based on their responses to the morality questionnaire/competitiveness questionnaire (depending on condition).

4.2.3.1 Feedback Manipulations

Participants in the positive feedback condition were told that they had been classified as falling into the 80th percentile (high range) in regards to their competitive spirit/moral virtue. Excerpts from the positive moral virtue feedback condition included:

> You have strengths in your ability to take the perspectives of other people, and systematically think about how your actions may affect those around you… your behaviour transcends your own personal needs, wants and desires, and instead, is based upon what actions you feel are most just and fair in any given circumstance… your highly refined moral code that was evident in your test responses also allows you the insight to differentiate between what is right and wrong in a sophisticated way… and a clear capacity to unwaveringly adhere to your moral code, even in times when that code is tested, is evident in your personality profile.

Appendix Q contains the complete positive moral virtue feedback as presented to participants. Excerpts from the positive competitive spirit feedback condition included:

> You have strengths in your ability to approach competitive situations in a systematic and measured way… you expect to win, and you do not question your ability to do what it takes to win… you possess a personality structure that enables you to thrive under the pressure of a contest… a clear capacity to maintain an unwavering level of competitiveness and tenacity, even in the most intensive competitive situations, is evident in your personality profile… and you have the capacity to consistently outperform your rivals and produce winning results, even in the face of the toughest opposition or performance demands.

Appendix R contains the complete positive competitive spirit feedback as presented to participants. Participants in the negative feedback condition were told that they had been classified as falling into the 30th percentile (low range) in regards to their competitive spirit/moral virtue. Excerpts from the negative moral virtue feedback condition included:

> You have weaknesses in your ability to take the perspective of other people, and systematically think about how your actions and behaviour may affect those around you… your behaviour may sometimes transcend what is just and fair in any given circumstance, and instead, may be based upon your own personal needs, wants and desires… your moral code may be somewhat

> diffuse, meaning that you may sometimes lack the insight to differentiate between what is right and wrong in a sophisticated way… and evident in your personality profile may be a tendency to waver from your moral code, particularly in times when that code is tested.

Appendix S contains the complete negative moral feedback as presented to participants. Excerpts from the negative competitive spirit feedback condition included:

> You have weaknesses in your ability to approach competitive situations in a systematic and measured way… your expectations for winning may be low, and you may sometimes question your ability to do what it takes to win… you possess a personality structure that may not allow you to thrive under the pressure of a contest… you may have difficulty in maintaining an unwavering level of competitiveness and tenacity, particularly in the most intensive competitive situations… and you may lack the capacity to consistently outperform your rivals and produce winning results, particularly in the face of the toughest opposition or performance demands.

Appendix T contains the complete negative competitive spirit feedback as presented to participants. After reading the feedback, participants were asked to immediately complete their affective, cognitive, and self-presentational responses to the feedback. Once participants emailed these responses back to the researchers, they were immediately (i.e., within 24 hours) emailed a debriefing document outlining the true aims and hypotheses of the study (see Appendix U). The debriefing procedure also included a comprehensive safety process. Each debriefing email sent requested a read receipt to indicate that the participant had read the debriefing document. In a case where a read receipt was not received by the researchers, a follow-up phone call was made to the participant to fully debrief him or her in a verbal manner.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Overview

The data analyses for Study 3 are reported in three sections. Section 1 details the pilot test undertaken. Section 2 details the correlational findings between narcissism and each of the contingencies of self-worth. Section 3 presents the main data analyses, investigating the effects of narcissism, feedback valence, feedback domain, and degree of self-worth contingency on the reactions to the feedback provided.

4.3.2 Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted to check that the positive and negative feedback for moral virtue and competitive spirit were equal in valence across domains. Thirty participants were randomly assigned to read either the positive or negative feedback pertaining to either moral virtue or competitive spirit. After reading the feedback, participants were asked to fill out a 4-item measure (α =.96) designed to assess how positive they perceived the feedback to be (see Appendix V). Each item was answerable on a 10-point scale, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of positivity attributed to the feedback. Example items included “how positive do you think this feedback was?” and “how much do you think a person would like to receive this feedback from another person?” The 4 items were then averaged to create a composite measure for overall positivity attributed to the feedback. Table 4 provides the means and standard deviations on this measure for each of the four feedback conditions.

Table 4

Mean Positivity Ratings across Feedback Conditions for Pilot Test

	Positive Feedback	Negative Feedback
Moral Virtue	7.25 (*SD* = 2.14)	3.62 (*SD* = 1.85)
Competitive Spirit	6.25 (*SD* = 3.21)	2.38 (*SD* = 1.27)

No significant differences were found between participant ratings of negative moral virtue (*M* = 3.62) and negative competitive spirit feedback (*M* =

2.38), $t(28) = 1.11$, $p = .30$. No significant differences were found between participant ratings of positive moral virtue ($M = 7.25$) and positive competitive spirit feedback ($M = 6.25$), $t(28) = .56$, $p = .59$. A significant difference was found between participant ratings of negative moral virtue ($M = 3.62$) and positive moral virtue feedback ($M = 7.25$), $t(28) = 2.67$, $p = .02$. A significant difference was also found between participant ratings of negative competitive spirit ($M = 2.38$) and positive competitive spirit feedback ($M = 6.25$), $t(28) = 2.25$, $p =.02$. The manipulations were successful.

4.3.3 Correlational Analysis

A correlational analysis was conducted testing the relationships between narcissism and the 7 subscales of the contingencies of self-worth scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). Table 5 presents these findings.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Contingencies of Self-Worth Subscales, Narcissism, and Self-Esteem.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82	82
1. Attractiveness											
2. Others' Approval	.59**	1									
3. Academic	.50**	.43**	1								
4. Competition	.56**	.37**	.64**	1							
5. Family Support	.22*	.49**	.36**	.24*	1						
6. Moral Virtue	.13	.31**	.42**	.23*	.56**	1					
7. God's Love	.01	.03	.19	.11	.19	.40**	1				
8. External Contingency	.77**	.66**	.71**	.75**	.25*	.18	.08	1			
9. Internal Contingency	.14	.33**	.40**	.24*	.71**	.82**	.77**	.21	1		
10. Narcissism	.21	-.02	.17	.32**	-.13	-.11	.05	.41**	-.07	1	
11. Self-Esteem	-.32**	-.30**	-.12	-.13	-.02	-.11	-.12	-.24*	-.11	.21	

*p<.05. **p<.01

Narcissism was significantly associated with both the competition contingency and overall external contingency. Narcissism was not associated with any of the internal contingencies. Self-esteem was significantly and negatively associated with overall external contingency, as well as with the attractiveness and others' approval contingencies. No significant association was

found between narcissism and self-esteem in this study. As in Studies 1 and 2, these correlations, although significant, were small to moderate (Cohen, 1988).

4.3.4 Main Analyses

Study 3 aimed to determine how people with differing levels of narcissism react to various types of feedback about themselves. More specifically, it was aimed to determine how level of narcissism, feedback valence (positive or negative), feedback domain (moral virtue or competitive spirit), and degree of self-worth contingency, affected self-presentational, affective, and cognitive reactions to self-relevant social feedback.

In regards to affective reactions, it was predicted that overall, narcissists would show more reactivity to the feedback provided. It was expected that narcissists would display levels of anger after receiving negative feedback, with this reaction being especially prominent on competitive spirit feedback (i.e., an external domain), and when self-worth contingency was high. It was also predicted that a combination of high narcissism, high self-worth contingency, and negative feedback would produce both increases in depression and drops in self-esteem.

In regards to cognitive reactions, it was expected that narcissists would show greater external attributions for negative feedback, and greater internal attributions for positive feedback. It was also predicted that narcissists would show greater attraction to the evaluator after receiving positive feedback, and greater rejection of the evaluator after receiving negative feedback. In regards to

self-presentational reactions, it was predicted that those with higher levels of narcissism would respond to negative feedback with greater displays of self-promotion (i.e., self-enhancement) than those with lower levels of narcissism.

Hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the predicted effects of narcissism, feedback type, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency on participants' reactions to the personality feedback provided. These self-presentational, affective, and cognitive reactions were the dependent variables of interest. Preliminary analysis revealed no significant effects for gender or age. These were therefore excluded from the analyses (Judd & Kenny, 1981). This preliminary analysis for gender involved including gender into the regression model, and testing for both main and interaction effects across all the dependent variables.

It was essential to ensure that the regression analysis was able to match the domain in which a participant received feedback (i.e., competitiveness or morality) with the relevant self-worth contingency (i.e., competitiveness or morality). Thus scores for degree of competitiveness self-worth contingency were used for participants receiving feedback on competitiveness and scores for degree of moral virtue self-worth contingency were used for participants receiving feedback on morality. However, to better reflect the distinction between external and internal domains, and to maintain consistency with Studies 1 and 2, overall degree of external self-worth contingency was substituted for the degree of competitiveness self-worth contingency and overall degree of internal self-worth contingency was substituted for the degree of moral virtue self-worth

contingency. Thus, any referral made to self-worth contingency hereafter refers to the degree of contingency on the domain feedback was received in.

The four predictor variables of narcissism (continuous variable), feedback valence (coded: positive = 1, negative = -1), feedback domain (coded: moral virtue = 1, competitive spirit = -1), and degree of self-worth contingency (continuous variable), were entered as main effects in step 1 of the regression.

The six two-way interaction terms of narcissism x feedback valence, narcissism x feedback domain, narcissism x degree of self-worth contingency, valence x feedback domain, feedback valence x degree of self-worth contingency, and feedback domain x degree of self-worth contingency, were entered into step 2 of the regression.

The four three-way interaction terms of narcissism x feedback valence x feedback domain, narcissism x feedback valence x degree of self-worth contingency, narcissism x feedback domain x degree of self-worth contingency, and feedback valence x feedback domain x degree of self-worth contingency, were entered into step 3 of the regression.

Finally, the four-way interaction term of narcissism x feedback valence x feedback domain x degree of self-worth contingency, was entered into step 4 of the regression. As in Studies 1 and 2, the data analytic strategy, as well as the presentation of results, was modelled on that of Wallace and Baumeister (2004).

4.3.4.1 Affective Reactions

Anger

Step 1 of the regression revealed a significant main effect for narcissism, $\beta = .18$, $t(78) = 5.43$, $p = .00$, such that those with greater levels of narcissism reported greater levels of anger after reading the feedback. A main effect was also found for feedback valence, $\beta = -1.12$, $t(78) = 5.87$, $p = .00$, with participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 3.17$) reporting more anger than participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 1.53$, $SD = .76$). A main effect was also found for degree of self-worth contingency, $\beta = .41$, $t(78) = 2.19$, $p = .01$, such that participants with higher degrees of self-worth contingency reported greater anger after reading feedback that pertained to that contingency.

Step 2 of the regression revealed a significant two-way interaction between narcissism and feedback valence $\beta = -.57$, $t(78) = 4.60$, $p = .00$. As shown by the predicted values (Aiken & West, 1991) in Figure 4, narcissists ($PV = 7.33$) responded to the negative feedback with more anger than did non-narcissists ($PV = 3.10$). Narcissists ($PV = 1.24$) and non-narcissists ($PV = 1.10$) did not differ on anger in response to positive feedback.

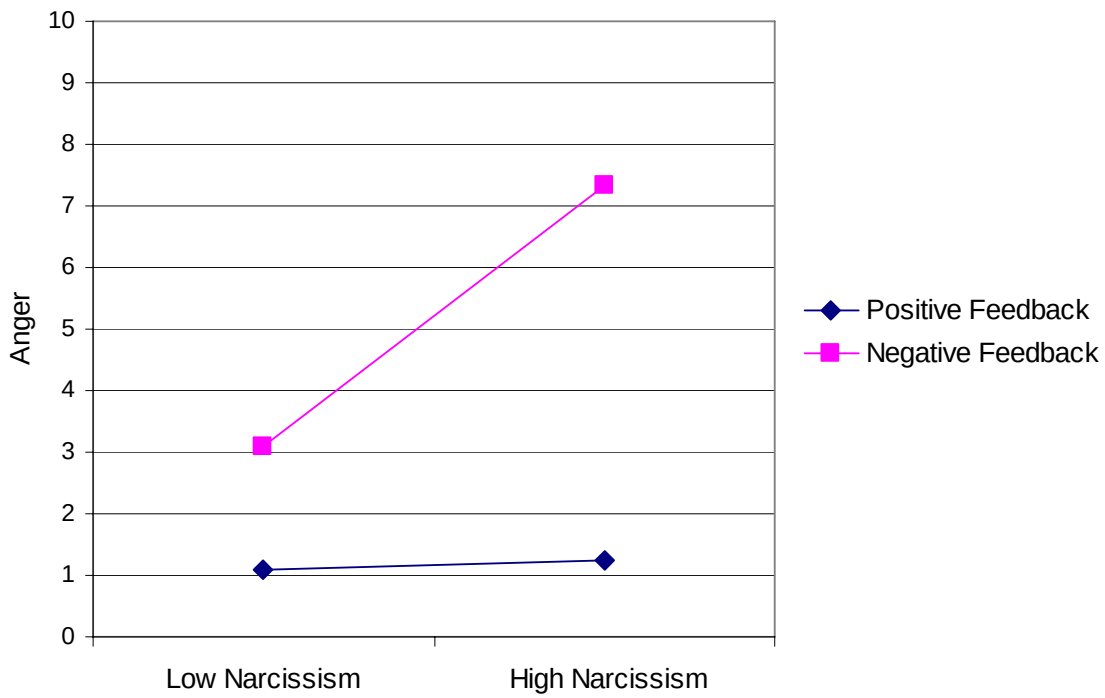


Figure 4. The interactive effects of narcissism and feedback valence on anger as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism.

Step 3 of the regression clarified this two-way interaction, by revealing a three-way interaction between narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency, β = -1.60, $t(78) = 2.06$, $p = .04$. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 5, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 9.40) responded to the negative feedback with more anger than did non-narcissists (*PV* = 1.92) with a high degree of self-worth contingency. This difference was much less between narcissists (*PV* = 3.94) and non-narcissists (*PV* = 2.36) with a low degree of self-worth contingency after receiving negative feedback. After receiving positive feedback, narcissists with a high degree of self-

worth contingency (*PV* = 1.51) and non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.69) did not differ on anger. Similarly, after receiving positive feedback, narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.41) and non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.47) did not differ on anger.

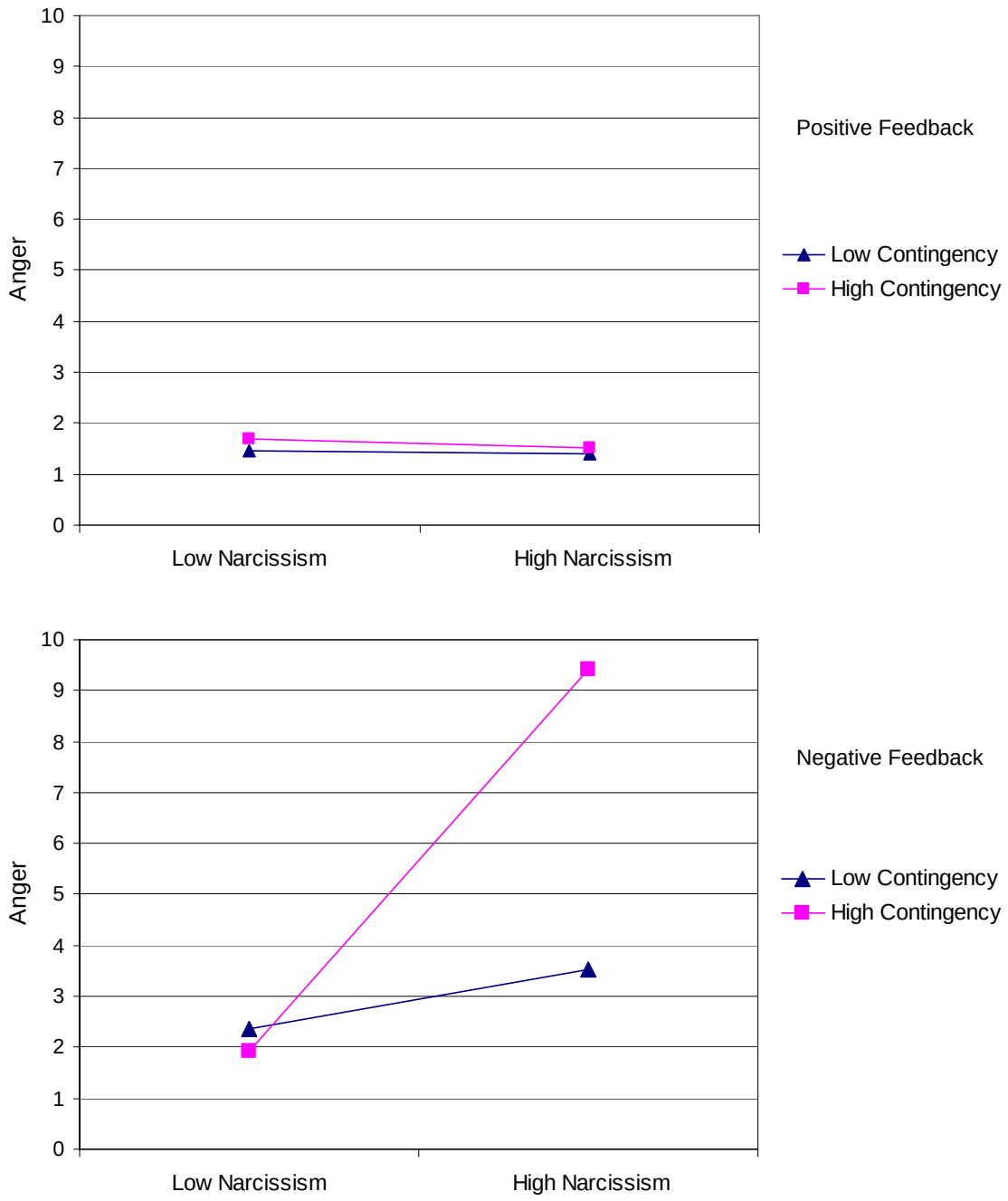


Figure 5. The interactive effects of narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency on anger as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency.

The hypothesised interaction between narcissism, feedback valence, and feedback domain was not found. The domain in which the feedback was received did not appear to affect narcissists' anger in response to the feedback.

Anxiety

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect of feedback valence β = .38, $t(78) = 4.06$, $p = .00$, such that participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 2.48$) reacted with more anxiety than participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.59$). Step 1 also revealed a main effect of degree of self-worth contingency, β = .36, $t(78) = 3.56$, $p = .00$, such that participants with higher degrees of self-worth contingency reported higher levels of anxiety after reading the feedback. No other effects were found for anxiety.

Depression

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect of feedback valence β = -.59, $t(78) = 6.35$, $p = .00$, such that participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 2.86$) reacted with more depression than participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.31$).

Step 3 revealed a significant three-way interaction between narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency, β = -.88, $t(78) = 2.23$, $p = .03$. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 6, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency ($PV = 8.06$) responded to negative feedback with greater levels of depression than did non-narcissists with a high degree of

self-worth contingency (*PV* = 4.40). In contrast, narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.90) responded to negative feedback with lower levels of depression than did non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 5.26). Narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.70) and non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 2.26) did not differ in terms of depression in response to positive feedback. Similarly, narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.62) and non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.74) did not differ in terms of depression in response to positive feedback. No other effects were found for depression.

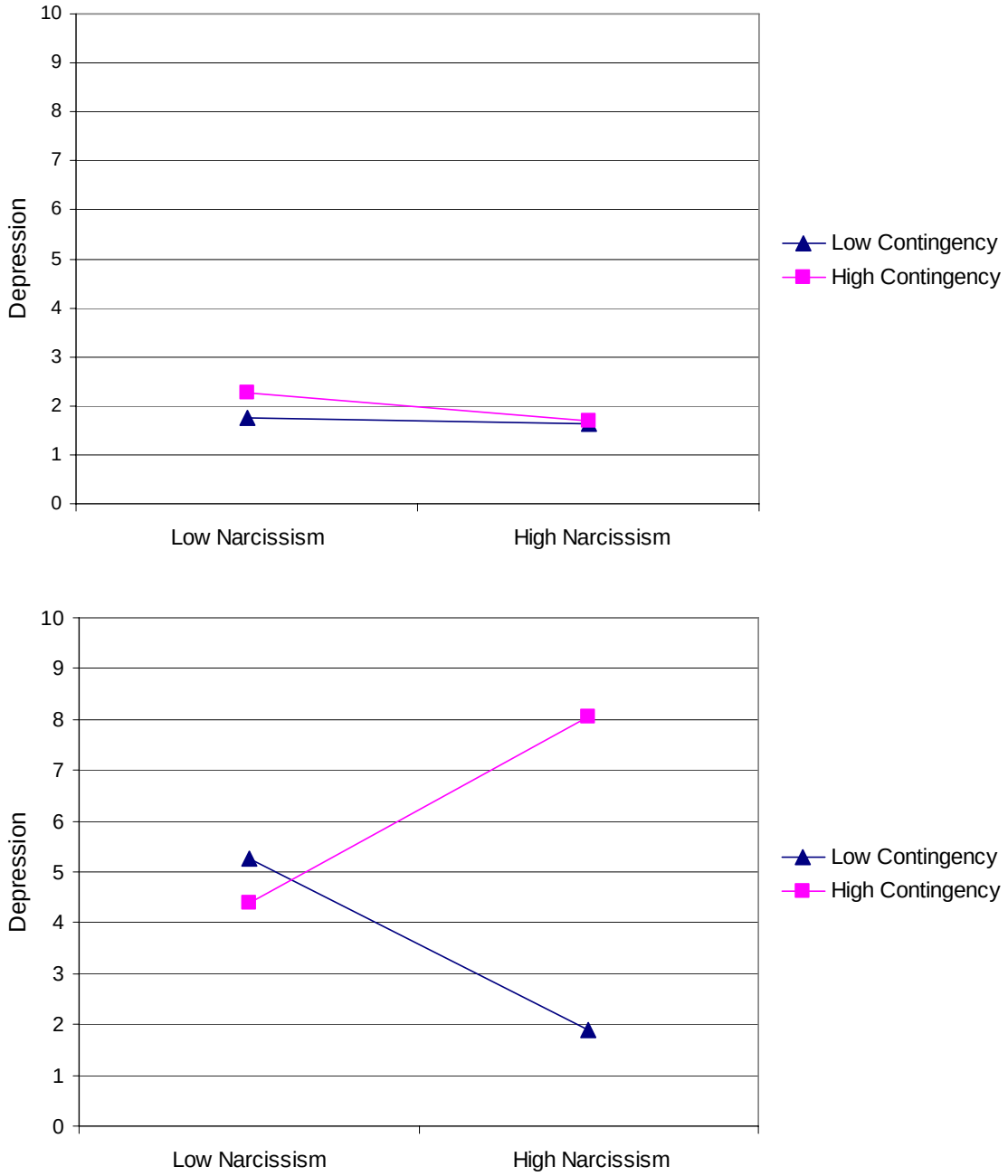


Figure 6. The interactive effects of narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency on depression as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency.

Happiness

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect of feedback valence, β = .24, $t(78) = 2.24$, $p = .03$, such that participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 6.56$, $SD = 2.16$) reacted with more happiness than participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 2.22$). Step 1 also revealed a significant main effect for degree of self-worth contingency, β = .25, $t(78) = 2.15$, $p = .04$, such that as degree of self-worth contingency increased, so did the level of happiness reported about the feedback.

Step 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between feedback valence and feedback domain, β = .31, $t(78) = 2.71$, $p = .01$. Overall, participants receiving positive feedback on moral virtue ($M = 7.21$, $SD = 2.00$) were significantly happier than participants receiving positive feedback on competitive spirit ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 2.12$), $t\ (81) = 2.46$, $p = .02$. This interaction is shown in Figure 7. No other effects were found for happiness.

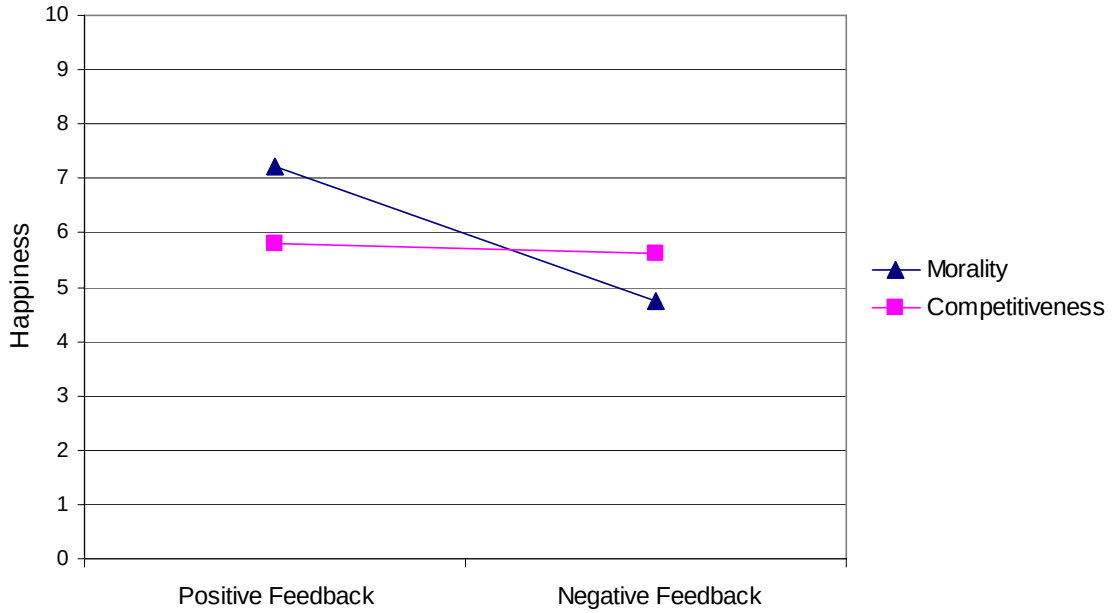


Figure 7. The interactive effects of feedback valence and feedback domain on happiness.

Self-Esteem

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect of feedback valence β = .52, *t*(78) = 5.86, *p* = .00, such that participants receiving positive feedback (*M* = 8.63, *SD* = 1.12) reported higher levels of self-esteem than participants receiving negative feedback (*M* = 6.12, *SD* = 2.60). Step 1 also revealed a significant main effect of narcissism, β = -1.40, *t*(78) = 2.50, *p* = .02, such that as narcissism levels increased, self-esteem levels decreased after reading the feedback.

Step 3 of the regression revealed a significant three-way interaction between narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency, β = .57, *t*(78) = 2.76, *p* = .01. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 8, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 4.54) responded to

negative feedback with lower state self-esteem than did non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 7.38). In contrast, narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 8.02) responded to negative feedback with somewhat higher levels of state self-esteem than did non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 6.65). Narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 8.35) and non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 8.53) did not differ on self-esteem after receiving positive feedback. Similarly, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 9.11) and non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 8.25) did not differ on self-esteem after receiving positive feedback. No other effects were found for self-esteem.

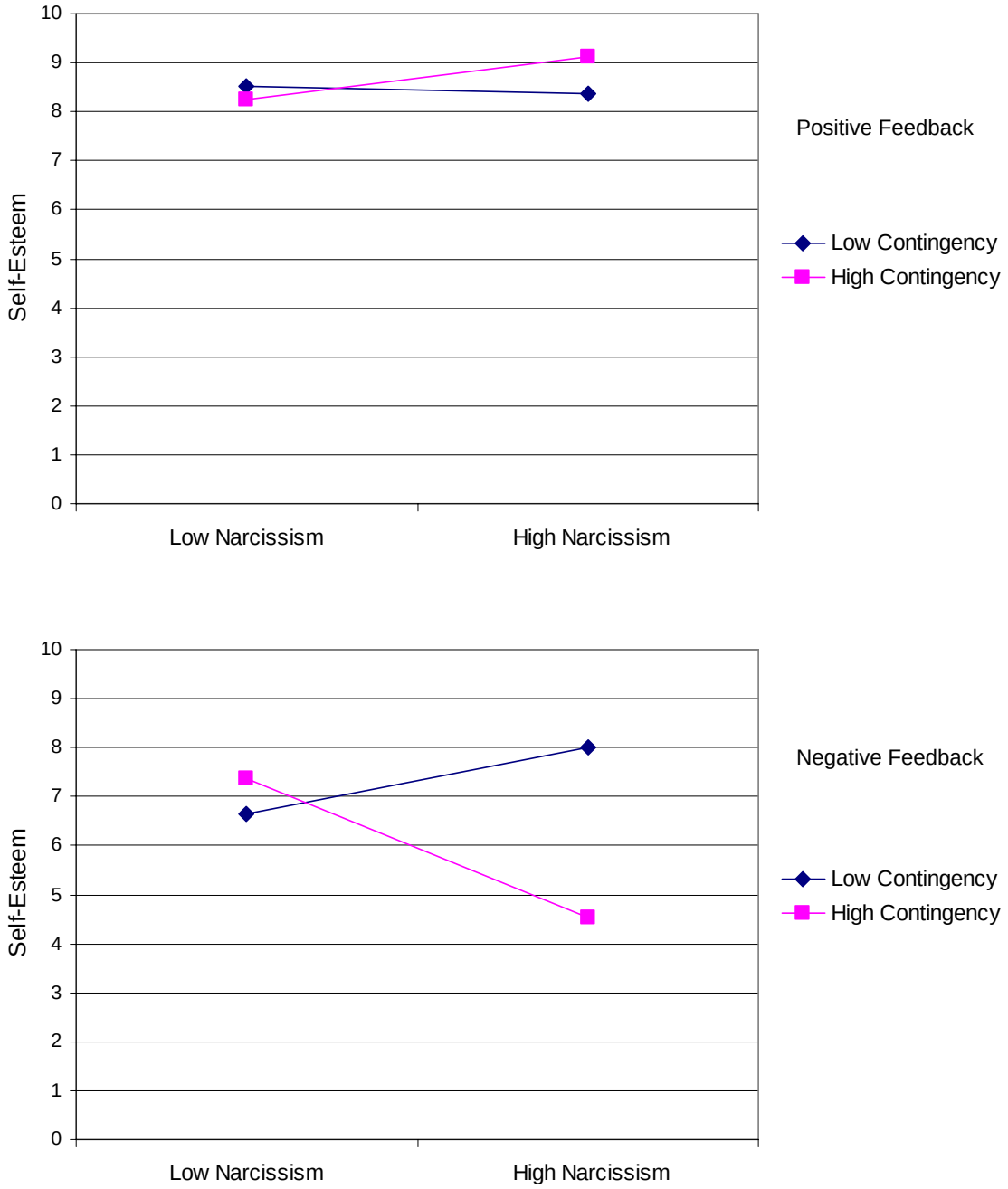


Figure 8. The interactive effects of narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency on state self-esteem as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency.

4.3.4.2 Cognitive Reactions

Feedback Accuracy

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect for feedback valence, β = .54, *t*(78) = 5.75, *p* = .00, such that participants receiving positive feedback (*M* = 5.63, *SD* = 1.87) rated the feedback as significantly more accurate than participants receiving negative feedback (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.65).

Step 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between feedback valence and degree of self-worth contingency, β = 1.20, *t*(78) = 2.49, *p* = .00. As shown by the predicted valued in Figure 9, participants with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.03) rated the negative feedback as less accurate than did participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 3.95). Further, participants with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 6.70) rated the positive feedback as more accurate than did participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 4.47). This was the opposite pattern than expected.

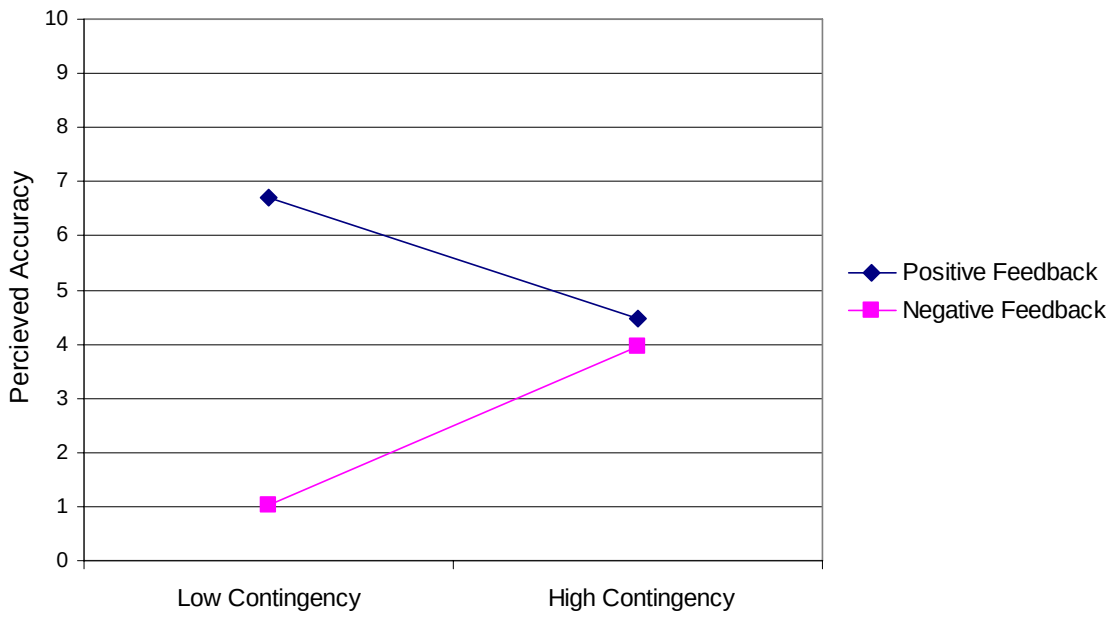


Figure 9. The interactive effects of feedback valence and degree of self-worth contingency on perceived accuracy of the feedback as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on degree of self-worth contingency.

Step 3 of the regression revealed a significant three-way interaction between narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency, β = .23, $t(78) = 2.75$, $p = .01$. As represented by the predicted values in Figure 10, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 1.37) rated the negative feedback as less accurate than did non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 2.78). In contrast, narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 6.71) rated the positive feedback as more accurate than did non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 5.48). Narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 4.83) rated the

negative feedback as more accurate than did non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 2.75). Narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 3.99) rated the positive feedback as less accurate than did non-narcissists with a low degree of self-worth contingency (*PV* = 5.47). No other effects were found on ratings of feedback accuracy.

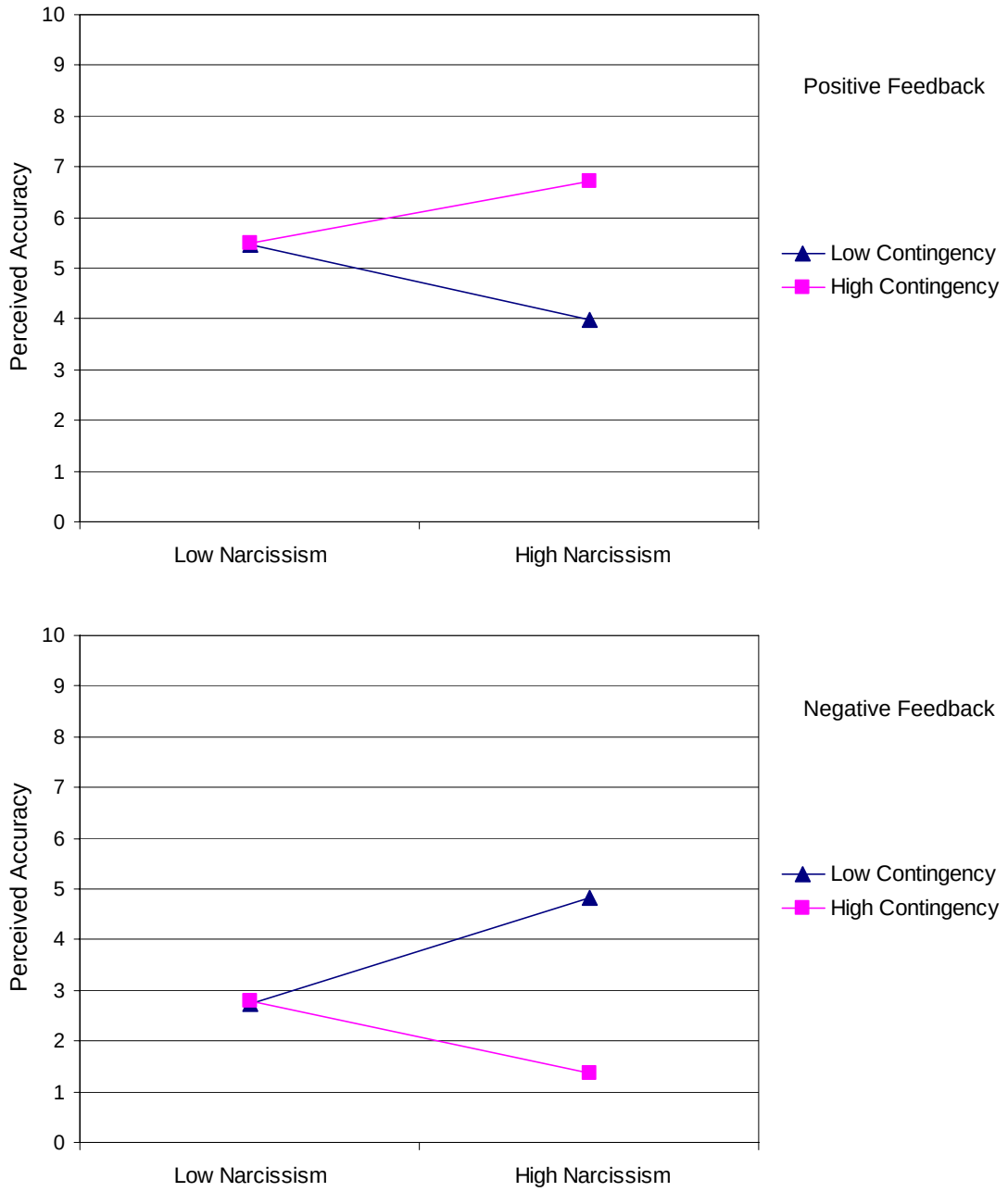


Figure 10. The interactive effects of narcissism, feedback valence, and degree of self-worth contingency on perceived accuracy of the feedback as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism and degree of self-worth contingency.

Evaluator Competence

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect for feedback valence, β = .50, $t(78) = 4.53$, $p = .00$, such that participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.78$) rated the evaluator (i.e., Daniel Walsh) as more competent than participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.92$).

Step 1 also revealed a significant main effect for feedback domain, β = .20, $t(78) = 2.01$, $p = .05$, such that participants receiving morality feedback ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 2.10$) rated the evaluator as more competent than participants receiving competitiveness feedback ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 2.01$). No other effects were found for evaluator competence.

Test Diagnosticity

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect for feedback valence, β = .33, $t(78) = 3.03$, $p = .00$, such that participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.99$) rated the test (i.e., morality or competitiveness questionnaire) as significantly more diagnostic than participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.80$).

Step 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between feedback valence and degree of self-worth contingency, β = 1.29, $t(78) = 2.32$, $p = .02$. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 11, participants with a low degree of self-worth contingency rated the test as less diagnostic after receiving negative feedback ($PV = 3.51$) than positive feedback ($PV = 5.90$). Participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency did not show this difference after receiving

negative (*PV* = 4.39) than positive feedback (*PV* = 4.44). This was the opposite pattern than expected. No other effects were found for test diagnosticity.

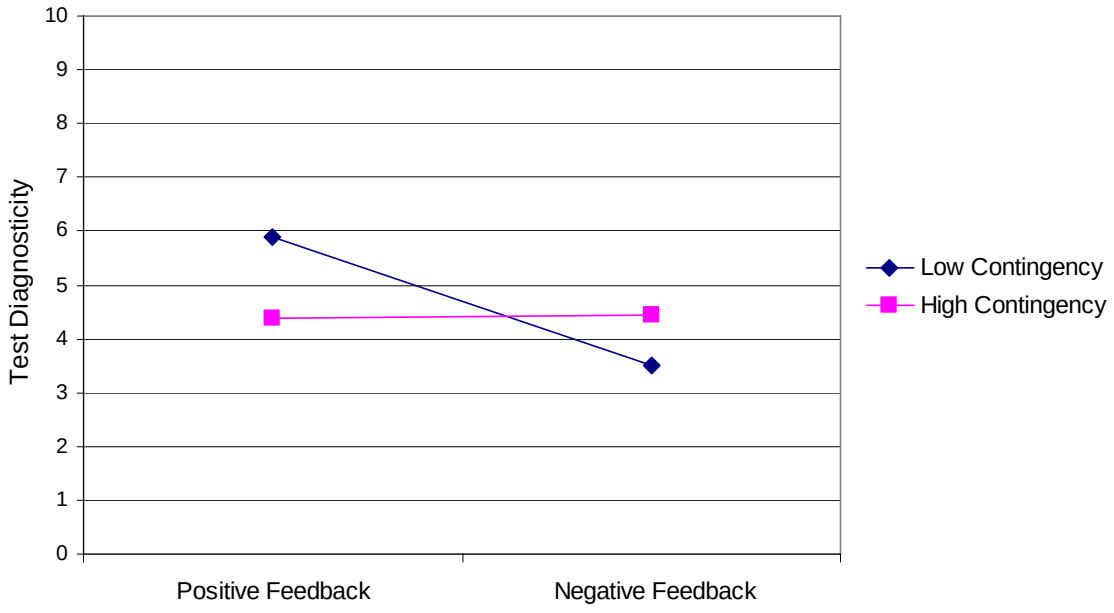


Figure 11. The interactive effects of feedback valence and degree of self-worth contingency on test diagnosticity ratings as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on degree of self-worth contingency.

Internal Attributions

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect for feedback valence, β = .30, $t(78) = 2.73$, $p = .01$, such that participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.87$) made greater internal attributions for the feedback than did participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.83$). No other effects were found for internal attributions.

External Attributions

Step 1 revealed a significant main effect for feedback valence, β = -.30, $t(78) = 2.81$, $p = .01$, such that participants receiving negative feedback ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.83$) made more external attributions for the feedback than did participants receiving positive feedback ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.49$). No other effects were found for external attributions.

Attraction to the Evaluator

No main effects of attraction to the evaluator were found. However, step 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between narcissism and feedback valence, β = .90, $t(78) = 2.44$, $p = .02$. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 12, narcissists ($PV = 2.47$) reported less attraction to the evaluator after receiving negative feedback than did non-narcissists ($PV = 5.54$). No difference was apparent between narcissists' ($PV = 6.73$) and non-narcissists' ($PV = 6.60$) attraction to the evaluator after receiving positive feedback. No other effects were found.

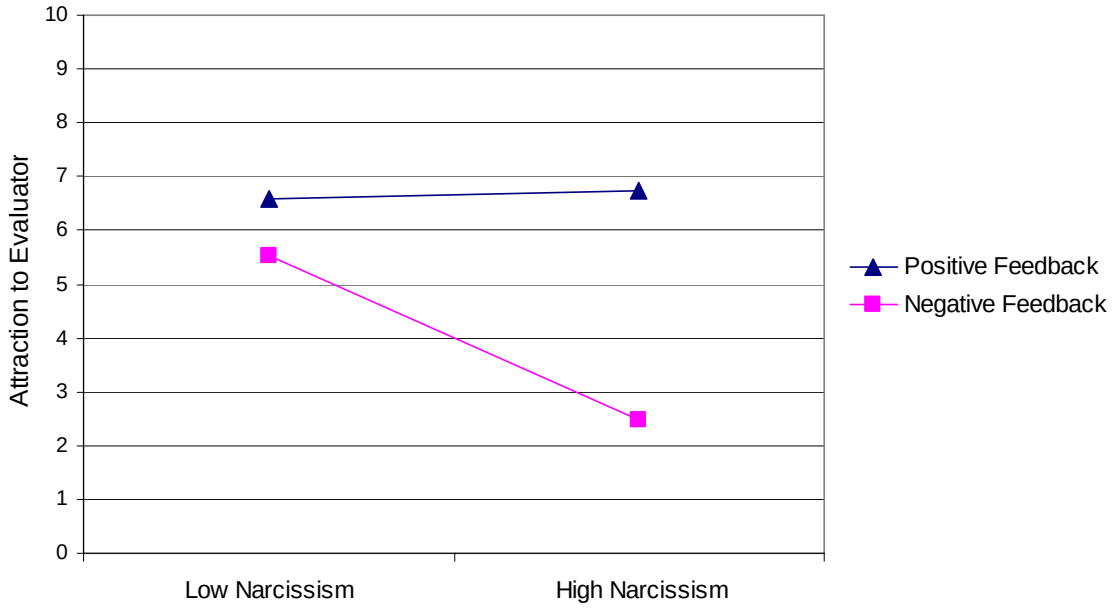


Figure 12. The interactive effects of narcissism and feedback valence on evaluator attraction as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism.

4.3.4.3 Self-Presentational Reactions

Step 1 of the regression revealed a main effect for narcissism, β = .42, $t(67) = 3.34$, $p = .02$, such that as narcissism levels increased, so too did the positivity of self-ratings. Step 2 revealed a significant two-way interaction between narcissism and feedback valence, β = 1.57, $t(78) = 3.76$, $p = .01$. As shown by the predicted values in Figure 13, narcissists (*PV* = 82.99), after receiving negative feedback on a domain, rated themselves more positively on that domain than did non-narcissists (*PV* = 52.79). The self-ratings of narcissists

(*PV* = 74.99) and non-narcissists (*PV* = 71.86) did not differ after receiving positive feedback. No other effects were found for self-presentational reactions.

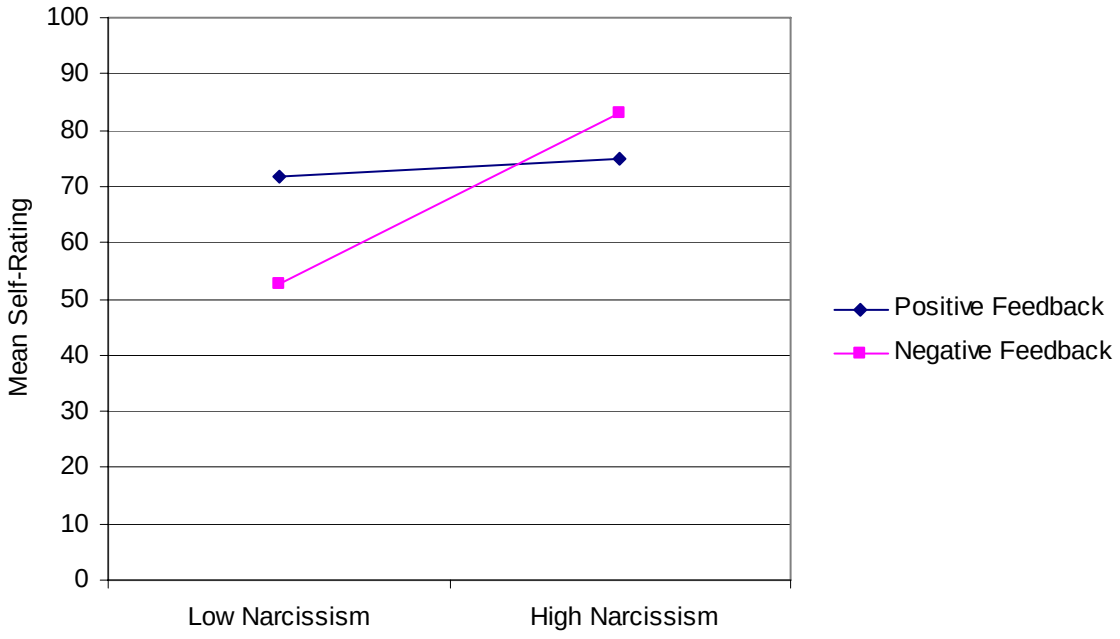


Figure 13. The interactive effects of narcissism and feedback valence on self-ratings after receiving feedback as represented by predicted values. Predicted values represent hypothetical individuals 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on narcissism.

4.3.4.4 Behavioural Reactions

No significant main or interaction effects were found on the behavioural measure asking participants to state whether they believed that the evaluator should be retained as an employee of the personality assessment centre. The overall mean for this measure was 5.34 (*SD* = 2.32).

4.3.5 Summary of Main Analyses

Results indicated that narcissists responded with greater levels of anger than did non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback. Results also indicated that narcissists responded to negative feedback with increased levels of anger and depression, as well as decreased state self-esteem when such feedback was targeted at a domain where contingency of self-worth was high. It was also found that narcissists reported less attraction to the evaluator than did non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback. Narcissists also perceived positive feedback as more accurate and negative feedback as less accurate than did non-narcissists when the feedback related to a domain where degree of self-worth contingency was high. Narcissists also responded to negative feedback with more positively inflated self-ratings as compared with non-narcissists. Finally, findings counter to theoretical considerations were obtained. It was found that those with a low degree of self-worth contingency rated the negative feedback as less accurate and less diagnostic, and the positive feedback as more accurate and more diagnostic than did participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency.

4.4 Discussion

Study 3 generally aimed to determine how positive and negative social feedback differentially affected narcissists and non-narcissists. It was specifically aimed to determine how the domain in which the feedback was targeted, as well

as degree of self-worth contingency in that domain, influenced affective, cognitive, and self-presentational reactions to such feedback. It was generally hypothesised that narcissists would show more extreme reactions to the feedback provided than would non-narcissists.

Consistent with predictions, it was found that narcissists reported more anger after receiving negative feedback than did non-narcissists. It was also found that degree of self-worth contingency further moderated this relationship, with the combination of a high level of narcissism and a high degree of self-worth contingency predicting anger after receiving negative feedback. Degree of self-worth contingency also moderated the relationship between narcissism and depression, as well as narcissism and lowered state self-esteem, after receiving negative feedback. That is, the combination of a high level of narcissism and a high degree of self-worth contingency predicted both increased levels of self-reported depression and decreased levels of state self-esteem after receiving negative feedback.

It was also hypothesised that narcissists would show more extreme cognitive reactions to the feedback. Consistent with this prediction, it was found that degree of self-worth contingency moderated the relationship between narcissism and perceptions of feedback accuracy. Narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency rated the negative feedback as less accurate and the positive feedback as more accurate than did non-narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency. It was also found that after receiving negative

feedback, narcissists reported significantly less attraction to the evaluator than did non-narcissists (regardless of contingency).

It was also predicted that narcissists would become more self-enhancing after receiving negative feedback than would non-narcissists. Consistent with this prediction, narcissists were more self-enhancing than non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback. Non-narcissists' self-enhancement appeared to be constrained by the negative feedback, whereas narcissists continued their typically inflated self-presentations. The self-enhancement strivings of narcissists and non-narcissists did not differ after receiving positive feedback.

4.4.1 Ancillary Findings

A range of ancillary findings that did not directly implicate narcissism were also obtained. Negative feedback was met with more anger, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem drops than was positive feedback. Positive feedback was met with more happiness than negative feedback. In general, participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency reported more anger and anxiety, as well as more happiness than participants with lower degrees of self-worth contingency after reading all types of feedback. Participants receiving positive feedback on their moral virtue reported being significantly happier than did participants receiving negative feedback on their moral virtue. Participants receiving positive feedback on their competitive spirit were not significantly happier than participants receiving negative feedback on their competitive spirit.

Other ancillary findings were also found for cognitive reactions. Participants receiving negative feedback reported the feedback to be less accurate, the evaluator to be less competent, the test to be less diagnostic, the test results to be less personally attributable to them, and the feedback to be more attributable to external factors, than did participants receiving positive feedback. Participants with a low degree of self-worth contingency rated the negative feedback as less accurate and less diagnostic than they did the positive feedback. Participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency did not differ on these ratings relative to feedback valence. These results were not consistent with theoretical considerations.

4.4.2 Narcissism and Anger

Both clinical theory and empirical evidence suggest that narcissists are prone to anger. This idea was further supported by the results of this study. Narcissistic anger appeared to be fuelled by negative feedback. As noted by Bushman and Baumeister (1998; see also Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991), anger may be narcissists' method of defending their highly positive self-views against attack from a person who seeks to challenge or discredit them via the provision of negative feedback. Yet narcissists also appear to be sensitive to which self-view is under attack. Negative feedback that is targeted at a domain in which the narcissist has staked his or her feelings of self-worth appears to further lead the narcissist towards anger. Narcissists' attempts to defend their highly positive self-views through displays of anger may therefore

be particularly salient when their sense of self-worth is contingent upon achieving success and positive feedback in the domain under attack.

As well as providing further support for the link between narcissism and anger, Study 3 followed the tradition of experimental research (e.g., Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Stucke, 2003) exploring the intra- and interpersonal contexts in which this link occurs. Narcissists only appeared to become angry when they received negative feedback about themselves. When positive feedback was offered, narcissists' affective states appeared much the same as everyone else's. Negative feedback, however, appeared to set narcissists on the path to rage, rage that was further compounded when feedback was received in a domain where self-worth was contingent. These findings also provide support for the psychodynamic concept of narcissistic rage (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1972), in that anger was specifically linked to a personal insult or slight, or in psychodynamic terminology, a narcissistic injury.

4.4.3 Narcissism and Other Negative Affective States

An important contribution of Study 3 was the finding that narcissists appear prone to other affective states in addition to anger after receiving negative feedback. It was found that narcissists reported higher levels of self-reported depression and lower levels of state self-esteem after receiving negative feedback. This was not a direct relationship however. Of key importance was the finding that the relationship between narcissism and depression, and narcissism and lowered self-esteem, was moderated by degree of self-worth contingency.

Narcissists only reported feeling depressed and experiencing drops in self-esteem to the extent that the negative feedback was received in a domain in which they had staked their feelings of self-worth. Narcissists with low self-worth contingency in the feedback domain, and non-narcissists in general, did not display this kind of affective reactivity to negative feedback.

Study 3 therefore provides initial empirical support for the clinical notion (e.g., Beck, et al., 2004; Kohut, 1984) that narcissists are prone to negative affective states such as depression when exposed to social rejection. Yet Study 3 also indicates that in order for narcissists to be induced into such affective states, the feedback must be in a domain where they have staked their feelings of self-worth. Feedback in non-contingent domains apparently has little effect on the narcissist, aside from the typical and predictable anger response (as was evident by the two-way interaction between narcissism and feedback valence on anger). Anger may be the narcissist's primary affective response to negative feedback in the normal course of events. However, if the negative feedback is targeted at a contingent domain, the narcissist may be led down the path to other affective states, namely depression and lowered state self-esteem.

These findings also provide general support for the theory that positive and negative events in contingent domains have greater ramifications for self-esteem and affect than do events in non-contingent domains (Crocker, Karpinski, et al., 2003; Crocker et al., 2002). But findings suggest that these events may be felt more sharply by the narcissist than by others. This may be because the narcissist's sense of self-worth is continually at stake or on the line during

interpersonal interactions (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). For narcissists to feel worthy, they may need to be publicly seen to have met some criteria for success or achievement (Beck et al., 2004). Their self-worth may therefore be contingent on receiving positive social appraisals that confirm that they have met some criteria for success or achievement in the domains where their self-worth is staked. As a result of this reliance on positive social feedback to validate their contingencies of self-worth, negative feedback on contingent domains may be more emotionally painful for the narcissist than it may be for others whose sense of self-worth is less tied to social feedback.

4.4.4 Narcissism and Cognitive Reactions to Feedback

Degree of self-worth contingency was also found to moderate narcissists' cognitive reactions to the feedback. Narcissists rated the negative feedback as less accurate and the positive feedback as more accurate, but only to the extent that they had a high degree of self-worth contingency on the domain in question. This is consistent with previous findings (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake, 1996) suggesting that narcissists use cognitive strategies that are designed to deflect the effects of negative social feedback. By labelling negative feedback as inaccurate, narcissists may be able to deflect the effects of such feedback, because the focus is shifted away from any potential flaws or shortcomings in them, to flaws or shortcomings in the feedback itself. Yet narcissists may have been more than happy to accept the positive feedback as highly accurate because such feedback is consistent (Swann et al., 1987) with

their grandiose self-views, and also provides important material in terms of identity construction. Narcissists appeared especially motivated to cognitively deflect the effects of negative feedback on contingent domains, perhaps because such negative feedback is highly invalidating given that it is targeted at a domain central to their overall feelings of self-worth. If such feedback is accepted as accurate, it has the potential to undermine the core components of the narcissist's self-esteem and identity. Contingencies of self-worth therefore appear not only to motivate behaviour (as seen in Studies 1 and 2), but also cognition.

Narcissists reported relative dislike for the evaluator compared to non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback. This finding is consistent with clinical accounts noting that narcissists have a tendency to oscillate between extremes of idealisation and devaluation of their relationship partners (e.g., APA, 1994). The findings of Study 3 provides context to this idea, by indicating that narcissists idealise or devalue their social partners relative to the type of feedback that they are given. Positive feedback was met with a relative attraction to the evaluator, whereas negative feedback was met with devaluation associated with a relative lack of attraction to the evaluator. Narcissists' perceptions of their social partners therefore appear to be highly dependent on the type of feedback that they receive from them.

4.4.5 Narcissism and Self-Presentational Reactions to Feedback

The self-presentational behaviour of narcissists and non-narcissists did not differ after receiving positive feedback. It appeared that narcissists and non-narcissists were both content with the positive feedback. Differences in the self-presentations of narcissists and non-narcissists only came about in the context of negative feedback. Narcissists were more self-enhancing than non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback. Negative feedback acted as a restraining mechanism on the self-enhancement of non-narcissists. Yet narcissists engaged in inflated self-presentations after receiving negative feedback. This may have been narcissists' attempt to defend their highly positive self-views from the effects of the negative feedback. Participants were told that their self-presentational reactions would be sent to the provider of the feedback. Thus, by inflating their self-presentations, narcissists may have been attempting to show the feedback provider that the feedback was erroneous, and that they are actually great. This finding is consistent with self-verification theory (Swann et al., 1987). By attempting to show the evaluator that his feedback was inaccurate, narcissists may have been attempting to develop consistency between their own views and those of the evaluator (Swann & Ely, 1984). By quickly re-establishing their grandiosity within the interpersonal arena, narcissists may have been attempting to ensure the integrity of their grandiose identities, both in their own minds, and in the minds of others.

This pattern of results may also be taken as further evidence for narcissists' insensitivity to the social context. Negative feedback should, relative

to social norms, restrain self-enhancement because it anchors people to a given rating or positivity level. Yet as with accountability and audience size, narcissists showed no such sensitivity to social norms, and chose to self-enhance even when they should have been restrained by the negative feedback.

4.4.6 What about Feedback Domain?

An interesting finding was that the specific domain at which the feedback was targeted (i.e., moral virtue or competitive spirit) did not appear to differentially affect narcissists and non-narcissists' reactions to the feedback. It was predicted that narcissists would be more reactive to feedback on the external domain of competitive spirit than would non-narcissists This is because narcissists' appear particularly invested in constructing highly positive self-views in these external domains (Campbell et al., 2002; see also Studies 1 and 2). It was specifically predicted that narcissists would become particularly angry when receiving negative feedback on competitive spirit, given that anger may be a strategy that narcissists use to defend their highly positive self-views from the threat of negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

Therefore, although degree of self-worth contingency in a given domain predicted reactions to the feedback in that domain, the actual domain in which the feedback was given appears relatively unimportant. It may be that although narcissists appear invested in constructing their grandiose identities around externally orientated domains, any and all feedback has the potential to produce affective, cognitive, and self-presentational responses, regardless of the domain

at which it is targeted. Thus, it was degree of self-worth contingency in the domain, and not the domain itself, that appeared to predict reactions to feedback in this case.

Narcissists may be sensitive to negative feedback regardless of domain because they may have lower self complexity. Self complexity refers to the extent to which one's self-concept is differentiated or undifferentiated (Linville, 1985). Those with more self complexity have a greater number of aspects or facets to their self-conceptions, and generally, have stable mood states. Those with lesser degrees of self complexity have fewer aspects or facets to their self-conceptions, and are more prone to extremities of mood (see Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2003, for a review). Rhodewalt and Morf (1995; see also Emmons, 1987) found a negative correlation between narcissism and self-concept complexity (although this failed to be replicated in subsequent studies [e.g., Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998]). It may therefore be that narcissists showed more extreme reactions to the feedback regardless of domain because their self-concepts are more unitary and simplistic, meaning that all negative feedback permeates through their entire self-concept. Those with greater self-concept complexity may be able to stop this from occurring by re-routing the negative feedback received on specific domains to other facets of the self (Showers, 1992). Further, for those with higher self complexity, negative feedback on a given domain may be confined to a small portion of their self-concept specifically containing self-knowledge on the domain in question. Narcissists, with their potentially lower degrees of self-complexity, may not have these compartmentalised self-views that allow specific feedback to

be contained in its relevant self-concept storage area. This may mean that a spill-over effect (Linville, 1987) occurs when feedback is received, with all feedback, regardless of domain, implicating the narcissist's overall self-concept.

4.4.7 Interpretation of Ancillary Findings

Results suggested that participants responded to positive moral feedback with more happiness than negative moral feedback, but did not report being happier after receiving positive competitive feedback than negative competitive feedback. Feedback on morality produced more extreme responses in terms of happiness than did feedback on competitiveness. Although the pilot test suggested that the valence of the morality and competitiveness feedback did not differ, it may be that when actually receiving the feedback in "real life" (or at least an experimental approximation of real-life), feedback on morality was more significant, and thus produced more pronounced reactions in terms of happiness. Feedback on morality may have been more meaningful to participants, resulting in the positive feedback making participants happier and negative feedback making participants less happy. Interestingly, no effects were found for narcissism on happiness. This may suggest that differences between narcissists and non-narcissists are most apparent on negative affective states (e.g., anger, depression).

Findings inconsistent with theoretical considerations were also obtained. It was found that those with a low degree of self-worth contingency rated the negative feedback as less accurate and less diagnostic, and the positive

feedback as more accurate and more diagnostic than did participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency. One would expect the opposite pattern of results, with participants with a high degree of self-worth contingency showing more cognitive reactivity to the feedback, given that the feedback was targeted at a domain where self-worth was staked. No clear theoretical considerations appear to reliably explain these findings, although other results are in line with predictions and contingencies of self-worth theory (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

4.4.8 Methodological Considerations

Although the study generally produced findings that were consistent with predictions, some characteristics of the methodology used are worthy of note. One potential criticism lies with the email methodology used to deliver the feedback. It may be argued that feedback given via email may not have as much impact on the recipient as feedback given face-to-face by an experimenter or research confederate. Face-to-face feedback may be seen as a more public context where the participant is visibly evident, whereas email is a more private context. Feedback delivered in public may therefore be more influential, especially for the narcissist, whose sense of self is so bound to the interpersonal arena. The email method of feedback delivery may have also lacked external validity, given that much of the feedback in the real world is delivered within the context of a face-to-face interaction. Regardless of these potential criticisms, the feedback used in this study still produced affective, cognitive, and self-presentational reactions that differentiated narcissists and non-narcissists in

accordance with the hypotheses proposed (see also Collins & Stukas, in press, for an example of a study employing email delivered feedback).

A somewhat related issue is the question of why narcissists reported depression and lowered self-esteem after receiving negative feedback, effectively showing weakness and vulnerability. Narcissists, as was shown with the self-presentational results of Studies 1 and 2, are chronic self-enhancers who appear pre-occupied with presenting the most positive image of themselves possible. If it is taken that filling out the self-report Resultant Self-Esteem Scale (McFarland & Ross, 1982) used to measure affective reactions was essentially an exercise in self-presentation, narcissists' admission that they were emotionally hurt by the feedback may be seen as somewhat surprising. Indeed, Kernis and Sun (1994) note that narcissists may mask their emotional reactions to feedback with an air of cool indifference (see also APA, 1994), making it difficult to assess such reactions. Yet the relatively private nature of the feedback delivery (i.e., via email) may have made the narcissist feel safer in showing his or her emotional vulnerability. Perhaps had the study been done in a more public context (e.g., a traditional face-to-face experimental methodology), such emotional reactions may not have been found because narcissists may have felt the need to engage in more face-saving behaviour and deny the presence of such emotions. The email methodology may have therefore worked in favour of eliciting affective reactions such as depression and lowered self-esteem that have not been shown by other studies. Still, it is important to note that narcissists did attempt to engage

in face-saving behaviour after receiving negative feedback through inflated self-presentations.

Another methodological issue to consider is the order in which the dependent variables were presented to participants. The lack of effects found for some of the cognitive reactions (e.g., evaluator competence, attributions, test diagnosticity) and the behavioural reaction may have been due to the fact that they were assessed after other variables (e.g., anger) had allowed participants to take care of their self-presentational needs. In a related manner, the lack of effect found for test diagnosticity may have been because participants were asked about the diagnosticity of the test, and not the diagnosticity of the actual feedback.

Finally, it should be noted that although there were several regression analyses run in Study 3, all predictions were a-priori and based on theoretical considerations. Given that this study was not exploratory and had clearly defined predictions, and based on the direction of Tabachnic and Fidell (1996), a Bonferroni correction was deemed unnecessary.

4.4.9 Conclusions

The results of Study 3 provide support for the general hypothesis that narcissists show more extreme reactions to feedback about themselves than do non-narcissists. These findings suggest that narcissists' affective states are highly dependent on social feedback, and specifically, the valence of the feedback they receive. Study 3 also indicates that it is not simply whether the

feedback is positive or negative, but whether the feedback is targeted at a contingent domain that determines narcissists' affective responses, particularly relating to depression and drops in state self-esteem. Narcissists may however have various cognitive and self-presentational strategies to protect their highly positive self-views from the effects of negative feedback. Yet when negative feedback is targeted at a contingent domain, it appears that narcissists may have particular difficulty in deflecting the affective consequences of such feedback.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

5.1 Review

The overarching aim of the current research was to investigate some of the various strategies that narcissists employ to maintain, enhance, and protect their grandiose identities; what can broadly be described as identity construction efforts (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Schlenker, 1986). Given that narcissists' identities appear to be largely constructed in the social arena (Rhodewalt, 2005), self-presentation was identified as a key strategy that narcissists use in the services of identity construction. As such, all 3 studies attempted to determine some of the social contextual and within-person variables that may influence narcissistic self-enhancement within a self-presentation context. Study 3 was perhaps the most comprehensive of the 3 studies, not only looking at self-presentation efforts, but also investigating both the affective and cognitive implications of narcissists' quest to construct their desired grandiose identities.

The experimental approach used in all three studies was consistent with the perspective of Schlenker (1986), who proposed that identity is constructed in a dynamic interaction between the person, the situation, and an audience. Consistent with this perspective, each study either measured or manipulated independent variables that mapped onto these three domains. In line with the general hypothesis that narcissists would show contextual insensitivity (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002) or functional inflexibility (Paulhus & Martin,

1988) in their self-presentational behaviour, it was found that narcissists self-enhanced in situations that called for modesty, and indeed, which lead non-narcissists to more modest self-presentations. It was specifically found that narcissists failed to show the situationally appropriate response of modesty when accountable for their self-presentations. When asked to explain, defend, and justify their self-presentations to an evaluative audience, a situation that typically leads to modesty (Sedikides et al., 2002), non-narcissists reduced the positivity of their self-presentations, while narcissists continued their chronic self-enhancing pattern. Similarly, it was found that when presenting to a multiple person audience, a situation that should create evaluation apprehension and subsequent modesty, non-narcissists reduced the positivity of their self-presentations, while narcissists continued with their chronic self-enhancement pattern.

It is important to note that these patterns were only found on external domains, and when degree of external self-worth contingency was high. This suggests that narcissists appear primarily concerned with constructing their grandiose identities around externally orientated domains (e.g., physical attractiveness, competitiveness), and show a relative lack of interest in building a grandiose identity around internally orientated domains (e.g., morality; although narcissists did show negative affective reactions to feedback in all domains [i.e., both external and internal] as long as self-worth contingency was high in the domain feedback was received). The findings pertaining to contingencies of self-worth suggest that a high degree of self-worth contingency lays the foundation

for, or makes narcissists vulnerable to, the contextual insensitivity or functional inflexibility that was apparent in Studies 1 and 2, as well as the negative affective reactions to negative feedback apparent in Study 3. In regards to Studies 1 and 2, it was only when degree of external self-worth contingency was high that narcissists showed an inability to engage in strategic self-presentation relative to situational requirements. When degree of external self-worth contingency was low, narcissists appeared better able to navigate the situational requirements of the self-presentational situation in question. This is perhaps because narcissists with a lower degree of self-worth contingency were less invested in bringing about their desired grandiose identities through their self-presentational behaviour. Thus, it appears that only a subgroup of narcissists (i.e., those with highly contingent self-worth) are vulnerable to the maladaptive interpersonal and affective patterns observed in this research.

What was particularly interesting in Studies 1 and 2 was that when degree of external self-worth contingency was high, narcissists not only showed contextual insensitivity, but actually increased their self-enhancement strivings when accountable and when presenting to a multiple person audience. It may therefore be that for narcissists, situations that pose the most threat of rejection or identity invalidation may also be the most lucrative in terms of identity construction. Positive feedback under conditions of accountability is harder to garner because being accountable inherently means passing a scrutiny test by an evaluative audience. Similarly, winning the admiration of a crowd may be more important than winning the adulation of a single person, because the

positive appraisals of multiple people mean more than the positive appraisals of just one person. It may be that as a result of having the integrity of their grandiose yet fragile self-views so reliant on the positive appraisals of others, narcissists become willing to risk interpersonal rejection or identity invalidation in order to gain access to the positive self-verifying feedback that they require. It may also be that narcissists are aware of the situations that offer them the most in terms of positive feedback and self-enhance in order to obtain such feedback, even if such situations possess the risk of self-presentational rejection or identity invalidation. Narcissists may therefore be characterised by a risk taking (Campbell, Goodie, et al., 2004) self-presentational approach, an approach that attempts to maximise the identity construction payoff regardless of the potential intra- or interpersonal costs.

Study 3 provided further support for narcissists' self-presentational inflexibility, finding that narcissists self-enhanced even after receiving negative feedback. The self-enhancement strivings of narcissists were not constrained by negative feedback. In contrast, the self-enhancement strivings of non-narcissists appeared to be more anchored by the negative feedback. Non-narcissists appeared to show more heed to the rating given in the feedback, with narcissists self-enhancing more above the rating given to them than non-narcissists. Given that negative feedback should keep people's self-enhancement strivings restrained because it gives a specific criterion with which to compare one's own self-view, narcissists' failure to change their self-presentational behaviour to accommodate the negative feedback may be taken as further evidence of their

pervasive, chronic, and inflexible self-enhancing approach to interpersonal situations. It may also be that narcissists were attempting to reassert their grandiose self-views in the eyes of their evaluator, possibly to bring the evaluator's views in line with their own in (i.e., they were seeking self-verification; Swann et al., 1987). By self-enhancing after negative feedback, narcissists may have also been attempting to reduce the dissonance (Festinger, 1957) created between their own self-views and that of the evaluator. It therefore appears that portraying a public image of greatness is of paramount importance to narcissists.

So the strategic use of the self-enhancement motive may elude the narcissist. Yet by breaking the self-presentational demands of the situation, and self-enhancing in situations where social norms call for modesty, narcissists may alienate their interaction partners. People expect others to fall in line with social norms, and those who do not may become unpopular, disliked, or ostracised. It therefore appears possible that by self-enhancing to an excessive degree in inappropriate situations, narcissists may expose themselves to the potential for receiving negative social feedback from their social partners. Study 3 indicated that narcissists show more extreme affective reactions to such negative feedback than do non-narcissists. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998), narcissists reported more anger than did non-narcissists after receiving negative feedback, possibly indicating that narcissists use anger as a mechanism for defending their highly positive self-views from potential damage caused by negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). What was perhaps more interesting was that narcissists also responded to negative

feedback with greater levels of depression, as well as greater drops in state self-esteem than did non-narcissists. This was only apparent when degree of self-worth contingency was high, suggesting that a high degree of self-worth contingency may make narcissists vulnerable to negative affective states beyond anger, states that may involve a lowered mood (i.e., depression) and a reduction in the positivity of self-views (i.e., lowered self-esteem).

Narcissists may however have strategies that buffer them against the effects of negative feedback. It was apparent that narcissists employed cognitive strategies, specifically rejecting both the accuracy and source of the feedback, that may have been used in the services of deflecting the effects of the negative feedback received. The inflated self-presentations observed in narcissists after receiving negative social feedback may also be viewed as a behavioural strategy for deflecting the negative effects of the feedback received (Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake, 1996). Perhaps the key goal of these cognitive and self-presentational strategies is to protect the narcissist's highly positive self-views from any potential drop in valence that negative feedback may create. By employing these defensive strategies, narcissists may be able to maintain the coherency, and in their mind, the validity, of their grandiose self-views. These self-views may otherwise be compromised by the negative feedback received. These strategies may be conceptualised as the protective component of identity construction (Schlenker et al., 1996).

Perhaps the most salient finding across all three studies was that contingencies of self-worth appeared to pervasively affect all aspects of the

narcissist's functioning measured. Indeed, degree of self-worth contingency moderated narcissists' self-presentational behaviour relative to social contextual variables (Studies 1 & 2), as well as their affective and cognitive functioning relative to positive and negative feedback (Study 3). Therefore, in the current research, contingencies of self-worth appeared to take centre stage in terms of narcissistic self-regulation, particularly in terms of narcissists' efforts to construct, enhance, and also protect their desired grandiose identities. Yet despite narcissists' best efforts to construct their desired grandiose identities, such efforts may eventually become self-defeating and indeed, perpetuate the fragility (Rhodewalt & Morf, 2005; Kohut, 1972; Young et al., 2004) inherent in their self-views. This is because the chronic and inflexible self-enhancing strategy that narcissists' use to construct their grandiose self-views may lead to the receipt of negative social feedback. Even if narcissists' cognitive and self-presentational defensive strategies are able to temporarily deflect the effects of such feedback, they still may nevertheless elude the positive feedback that they require to construct their desired identities, and the cycle of fragility perpetuates. Indeed, because the narcissist's sense of self is so reliant on interpersonal feedback, this sense of self is constantly on the line in the social arena, and the coherency and integrity of this self is threatened each time negative feedback is received. The end result may be that narcissists' attempts to construct their grandiose identity actually work to ensure that that identity is never realised, what Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) described as "the narcissistic paradox".

A representation of this paradox, as interpreted through this series of studies, is presented in Figure 14. This figure suggests that narcissists have grandiose yet fragile self-views that are in chronic need of social validation (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This social validation is perhaps even more paramount for narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency, given that success and positive feedback is essential in both validating them in contingent domains and allowing them to feel worthy. Narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency may therefore present themselves in highly positive ways to their social audience to gain access to the identity confirming positive feedback that would serve to shore-up their fragile and uncertain self-views on contingent domains. Yet this self-presentational approach may be rigid, one-dimensional, and insensitive to the self-presentational requirements that come with different social contexts. This may mean that narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency present themselves in excessively self-enhancing ways in situations that may otherwise lead non-narcissists to modesty (Studies 1 and 2). This strategy may be especially salient when self-presenting on external domains, given that these are the domains narcissists appear invested in constructing their desired grandiose identities around (Campbell, et al., 2002; Studies 1 and 2).

Yet because this strategy breaks the demands of the social context and socially prescribed norms for modesty, narcissists may alienate their social interaction partners, being perceived as self-absorbed and egotistical braggarts. This in turn may result in narcissists receiving negative social feedback. Narcissists in general appear apt to respond to this feedback with anger and

hostility (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998; Study 3), which in turn may further alienate their interaction partners, possibly leading to the receipt of further negative feedback. Narcissists with a high degree of self-worth contingency in the domain on which negative feedback is received may also be likely to respond with other negative affective states such as depression and lowered self-esteem (Study 3). Although narcissists may attempt to deflect the effects of negative feedback with inflated self-presentations and by discrediting the feedback and the feedback source, such strategies still do not secure the positive social appraisals they may rely on to feel worthy and validate their fragile self-views on contingent domains. The end result may be that narcissists elude the positive identity-confirming feedback that they require, and the cycle of fragility and uncertainty perpetuates. Thus, the narcissist's self-enhancement strategy, which is used in the services of identity construction and enhancement, may actually work to make narcissists vulnerable to negative affective states, and more broadly, undermine the very identity that narcissists are attempting to create.

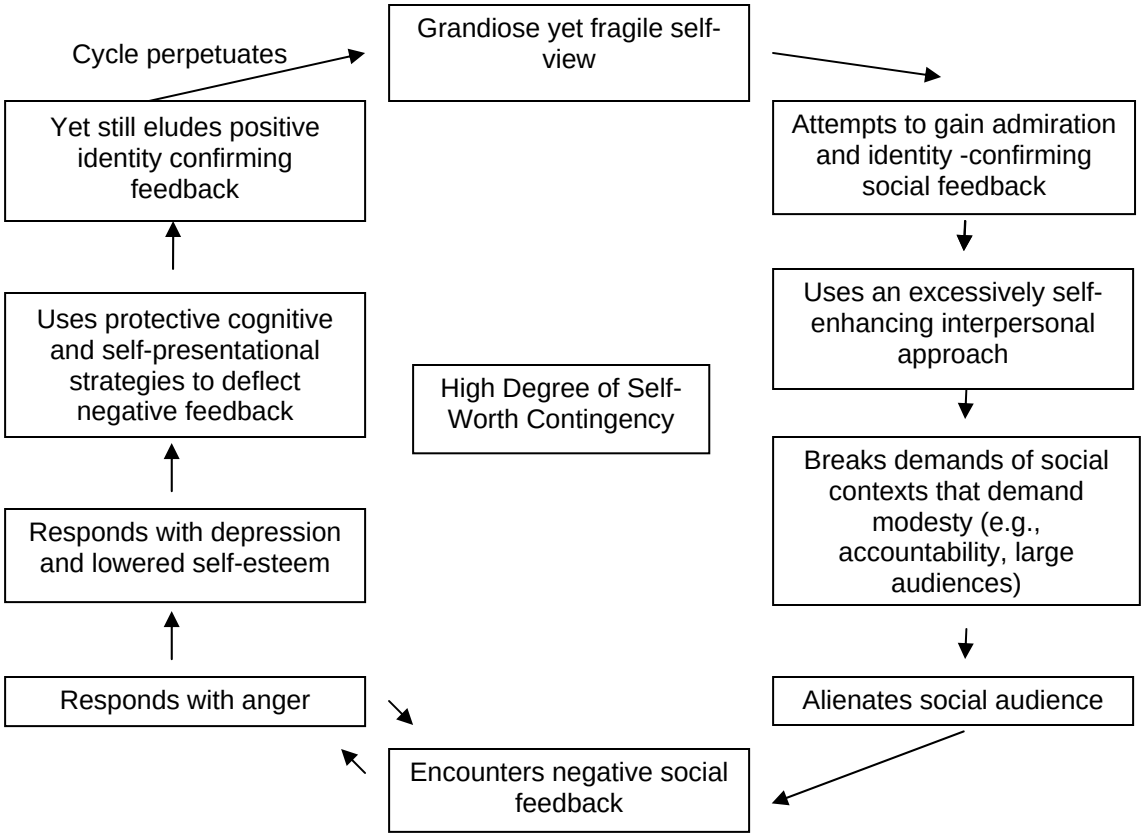


Figure 14. The narcissistic paradox, as represented by the current series of studies.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Narcissism and Identity Construction: Incurring the Costs?

The introductory section of this thesis brought forward the idea of positive illusions about the self (e.g., Taylor & J. D. Brown, 1988), and discussed the literature debating whether positive illusions are adaptive or maladaptive (e.g., Colvin & Block, 1994; Paulhus, 1998; Taylor & Amor, 1996). This literature primarily discusses whether excessively positive self-views are psychologically or physically healthy or unhealthy, but does not necessarily consider the context in

which positive illusions occur when making conclusions about their relative adaptiveness. The current research highlights the idea that it is not so much how self-enhancing a person is willing to be, but more specifically, where and when a person is willing to be self-enhancing that may determine the relative adaptiveness or maladaptiveness of the self-enhancement motive.

The difference between narcissists and non-narcissists is therefore not simply that narcissists have more positive self-views. The difference may instead be in the contexts in which narcissists are willing to promote these self-views. This idea of context may be a key factor that determines how psychologically adaptive the self-enhancement motive is. Self-enhancement that occurs in more private contexts (i.e., people's inner thoughts and perceptions of themselves) may be healthy because such thoughts foster happiness, resilience, and self-confidence, and also protect against depression (Cain, 1990; Taylor & J. D. Brown, 1988). Self-enhancement that occurs in public settings is not necessarily maladaptive though, and indeed, can be psychologically adaptive, as long as it is flexible enough to conform to the varying demands of everyday social contexts (Beck et al., 2004). A flexible self-enhancement strategy allows people to reap such intrapersonal benefits as increased happiness, resilience, and self-confidence, while at the same time avoiding the interpersonal costs that may be associated with excessive and rigid self-enhancement. Narcissists, with their inflexible self-enhancement strategy, appear less adept at achieving this balance.

5.2.1.1 Interpersonal Costs

As Sedikides, Campbell et al. (2002) suggest, narcissists' pervasive and inflexible self-enhancement strategy may damage their interpersonal relationships. Yet narcissists may have strategies to prevent such damage. It may be that narcissists work to surround themselves with a group of close admirers who do not challenge the validity of their identity claims (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001), and who provide a constant source of admiration and positive feedback (Campbell, 1999). Even the most admiring social partner may tire of the narcissist's relentless self-promotion however. As Paulhus (1998) found, although narcissists may initially be perceived as likeable, agreeable, and well-adjusted, over time they are eventually perceived far less positively. Thus, the narcissist's relationship bonds, be they with friends, co-workers, or romantic partners, may become strained, eventually leading to relationship dissolution. In such instances, the narcissist may simply move on to the next available source of admiration to quench their desire for positive identity confirming feedback (Baumeister & Vohs), an idea consistent with Campbell and Foster's (2002) finding that narcissists are relatively uncommitted to romantic relationships, and are constantly on the look out for alternative relationship partners. Yet given that they likely enter these new relationships with the same interpersonal strategies, it is possible that they will encounter the same relationship dissolution. The end result may be that narcissists leave a trail of used relationship partners in the wake of their efforts to extract as much social admiration as they can.

The broader implication of this idea is that narcissists may miss out on meaningful interpersonal attachments. Narcissists may see others merely as sources of admiration, and cast aside those who can no longer offer this. Yet as Baumeister and M. R. Leary (1995) note, the desire for interpersonal attachments is a fundamental human motive. Interpersonal attachments create adjustment and wellbeing, while lack of interpersonal attachment is linked to ill effects on physical (e.g., immunological deficiencies, heart disease) and psychological (e.g., anxiety, depression, guilt, jealousy, post-traumatic stress) health. The narcissist may however have other motivational priorities outside of developing interpersonal attachments, most likely in the form of garnering as much admiration as they can. Yet such a strategy may make narcissists vulnerable to the longer term physical and psychological consequences that are associated with a lack of interpersonal relatedness. Further, a chronic pursuit of admiration and self-esteem may interfere with the establishment of mutually supportive relationships because narcissists become so focused on themselves, they forget about the needs, perspectives, and feelings of others (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Relationships may simply become a tool for validating oneself, and not an arena from which to nurture, give to, and support others. It is likely that others will tire of the one-sidedness of these types of relationships.

Narcissists' preference for admiration over interpersonal attachment, and their subsequent lack of respect for modesty demands revealed in certain social contexts, may also mean that their social behaviour is likely to come under close scrutiny by their interaction partners. Although some partners may allow

narcissists' self-aggrandisement to go unchecked, it is likely that others will require more convincing. It therefore becomes possible that narcissists will be required to chronically defend their identity claims in response to audience demands for substantiation. Narcissists' social functioning may therefore be characterised by chronic attempts to win their audience over and convince them of their greatness, at the expense of developing mutually reciprocal interpersonal relations. These may of course be the exact type of relationship that narcissists do not want (Campbell, 1999), but nevertheless, without such relationships, narcissists may expose themselves to the potential physical and psychological costs associated with a lack of interpersonal attachment (Baumeister & M. R. Leary, 1995).

Moreover, chronic efforts to substantiate identity claims may result in a "me versus them" mentality, in that narcissists may view their social audience (or at least those members who challenge their identity claims) as a barrier or nuisance on their road to identity construction. Alternatively, it may be that narcissists do not pay much attention to the reactions or requests of their social audience, and continue on their self-aggrandising way regardless (Arkin & Lakin, 2001). This of course may change if narcissists are explicitly met with negative feedback, in which case they are likely to respond with anger and hostility. What is apparent either way is that the positive feedback they desire may not be as readily available as they would like. Yet the more that narcissists attempt to convince their social audience of their greatness, the more likely they are to alienate them, given that the very vehicle they use to do this (i.e., self-

aggrandisement) is the very thing that others object to. The end result may be that the carry-over effect (Tice, 1992) where one's self-concept is shaped by social feedback, is never elicited, and the narcissist's identity never substantiated, both in the minds of others and importantly, in the mind of the narcissist.

5.2.1.2 Intrapersonal Costs

The intrapersonal costs of excessive self-enhancement may be less observable or salient, but still as important. Wachtel (1994), when discussing cyclical patterns in psychopathology, argues that although the positive self-views of narcissists may be based in some partial reality, their efforts to continually impress means that they present themselves as more important, accomplished, and praiseworthy than they really are. Although they may experience some short lived feelings of gratification and enhanced self-esteem as a result of this strategy, narcissists at some level may realise that they are not what they make themselves out to be. This may create an internal sense of fraudulency and self-doubt (although this has not been explicitly and empirically verified to date). Yet the more they attempt to overcome this fraudulency by presenting themselves in a grandiose manner, the more fraudulent they feel. The irony is that narcissists, at some level, may realise that their identity is on shaky ground and therefore requires further displays of grandiosity, which perpetuate further feelings of fraudulence. Wachtel's account in many ways mirrors the narcissistic paradox outlined by Morf and Rhodewalt (2001).

Young et al. (2003) provide further expansion of this idea, noting that many narcissistic people believe that they have somehow managed to achieve well beyond their true capacity, or somehow tricked everybody into believing that they are great. They feel that they will not be able to keep meeting the expectations that have been borne out of their excessive displays of self-promotion. They therefore experience a sense that the areas of their life in which they have overcompensated are on the verge of collapse. The end result may be that narcissists do not feel an internal sense of coherency and genuineness that would otherwise allow them to perceive themselves as valid, independent of the opinions others hold of them. This also has relevance to self-verification. Self-verification posits that self-views represent the lenses through which people perceive reality and make sense of their world (Swann et al., 1987). Coherent self-views therefore facilitate predictability and understanding of the world and one's place in it. Should a person's self-view lack coherency, Swann, et al. (2003) argue that they no longer have a secure basis for understanding and making sense of the world, given that they have lost their fundamental means of knowing that world.

The idea that narcissists may, at some level, feel that their social image is fraudulent also parallels with the impostor phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978). People who experience the impostor phenomenon are unable to recognise or internalise their accomplishments, even in the face of external proof of their competence and achievements. Such people remain internally unconvinced that they do in fact deserve these achievements, seeing themselves instead as frauds

or impostors. Narcissists appear slightly different however, in that their investment in publicly displaying their greatness (often in the absence of external proof of their competence or achievements; APA, 1994) may actually contribute to, and indeed perpetuate, their internal feelings of fraudulence. People suffering from the impostor phenomenon appear to experience this sense of fraudulence not because they have fabricated a public image that they can not live up to, but because they simply do not believe the public image that they have created, an image that is in fact built on real world achievements (Clance, 1985).

The intra- and interpersonal costs incurred by rigid self-enhancement may be construed as more general problems that narcissists face as a result of their interpersonal behaviour. These costs may become even more pervasive in the context of a high degree of self-worth contingency.

5.2.2 Contingencies of Self-Worth and Narcissistic Vulnerability

Having a high degree of self-worth contingency essentially means that feeling worthy is contingent upon meeting some external or internal standard of performance (Crocker, Lee et al., 2004). In order to fulfil their contingencies and feel worthy, people are therefore required to incessantly pursue a quest to meet these externally or internally imposed standards of performance. Success or failure in contingent domains determines self-worth. People therefore tend to organise their self-regulatory activities around seeking out or avoiding those activities that protect, maintain, and enhance their self-worth. Although this

strategy may produce at least short term benefits in terms of affect and self-esteem gains, it does not come without costs.

Crocker and Park (2004) note that it is the strategies people employ to pursue self-esteem in contingent domains, and not simply whether self-esteem is contingent or non-contingent, that determines the relative costs associated with contingent of self-worth. In the current series of studies, it was found that narcissists only pursued their rigid and inflexible self-enhancement strategy when degree of self-worth contingency was high. This indicates that the maladaptive elements of the narcissistic personality (at least those elements measured in this research) appear only to occur in the context of a high degree of self-worth contingency. When degree of self-worth contingency was low, these maladaptive elements were not observed. Contingencies of self-worth, and the associated pursuit of self-esteem that they create, may therefore lay the foundation for these maladaptive patterns observed in narcissists, patterns that are likely to incur costs across a range of domains.

5.2.2.1 Costs to Mental Health

A high degree of self-worth contingency may make narcissists vulnerable to a range of mental health problems. Study 3 demonstrated that narcissists respond to insults in contingent domains with increased levels of depression and decreased levels of state self-esteem. The combination of narcissism and contingent self-worth may therefore create a specific vulnerability to depression and lowered mood states. That is, narcissists in general have a heavy reliance

on the positive feedback of others to sustain their feelings of self-worth. This reliance is intensified when contingency of self-worth is high, given that the fulfilment of contingencies is dependent upon achieving success and avoiding failure in contingent domains. However, success is never guaranteed, and people will naturally experience both successes and failures throughout life. Narcissists, given their combined reliance on positive appraisals of others and incessant pursuit of self-esteem in contingent domains, are likely to experience temporal fluctuations in their self-esteem as a result of these successes and failures (see also Rhodewalt, et al., 1998). These temporal fluctuations in self-esteem have been identified as a risk factor for depression (Roberts, Kassel, & Gotlib, 1996). Although the current research only demonstrated state depression and lowered self-esteem associated with combined narcissism and high degree of self-worth contingency after a failure experience, the self-esteem instability that this combination may create over time may make narcissists vulnerable to longer-term depressive states.

Further to this point, emotions such as depression and lowered self-esteem involve a perception of the self in a negative, or at least a non-positive way. For example, Beck's (1976) notion of the cognitive triad of depression proposes that depression is characterised by a negative view of the world, the future, and the self. Thus, the presence of depression and lowered self-esteem after negative feedback suggests that narcissists, at least momentarily, may have seen themselves in a less positive manner than they may have before the feedback was received. The negative feedback may have temporarily stripped

them of their positive illusions, with narcissists being met with the reality of their human flaws and weaknesses. Take for example the narcissistic actress whose acting career burns out. Her sense of self-worth may have been contingent on her physical appearance. Robbed of opportunities to fulfil her contingencies through positive appraisals offered by fans, or perhaps incurring rejections on contingent domains (e.g., “you have lost your looks”, “you are too old for it now”), the narcissistic actress may be cast into a state of depression.

There may also be other mental health costs associated with the combination of narcissism and a high degree of self-worth contingency. When an insult, or perhaps more likely, a series of insults, is received on a contingent domain, narcissists may turn to alcohol or other substances to cope with the negative affective states that such insults create. Negative affect may be dampened down by the physiological and psychological effects of substances. Indeed, alcohol and substance abuse have been characterised as mechanisms by which people attempt to manage the effect of negative mood states (M. L. Cooper, Frone, Russell, & Mudar, 1995; Hull & Young, 1983). Because narcissists are intensely uncomfortable experiencing negative affective states (Millon, 1981), substances may be an opportune method of numbing their emotional faculties. This idea is consistent with clinical literature (e.g., Forrest, 1994), which notes that narcissists can turn to substances, particularly cocaine (McCowan & Carlson, 2004), when their perceptions of grandiosity are shattered. Thus, a high degree of contingent self-worth may represent a pathway to the

development of substance abuse and dependence disorders amongst narcissists.

Narcissists (particularly narcissistic women) may also be vulnerable to the development of eating disorders in the context of a high degree of self-worth contingency. This vulnerability may be especially pronounced when self-worth is contingent in external domains such as attractiveness. Beliefs about the need to be physically attractive and meet externalised or socially prescribed standards of beauty are particularly pervasive amongst those with eating disorders (Garner & Bemis, 1985). Given narcissists' sensitivity to negative feedback in contingent domains, such feedback may result in negative emotional states (as shown in Study 3), which in turn may precipitate efforts (e.g., bingeing, purging, or dieting behaviour) to avoid weight gain (and possibly further negative feedback) that are associated with eating disorders (Fairburn, 1988). In general support of this idea, Crocker (2002b) found that external contingencies of self-worth predicted symptoms of disordered eating amongst college students, particularly women. In further support of this idea, Steinberg and Shaw (1997) found a positive correlation between narcissism and two self-report measures of eating disorders.

Thus, the combination of narcissism and a high degree of self-worth contingency may be associated with a range of mental health problems. Non-narcissists would appear less vulnerable to these mental health costs because their sense of self worth is less reliant on the positive appraisals of others, and further, they may be less invested in the chronic pursuit of validating and fulfilling their contingencies of self-worth. They therefore may be less vulnerable to the

negative affective states (demonstrated in Study 3) that precipitate, and indeed, may perpetuate, the psychopathology outlined above.

5.2.2.2 Other Costs

Other costs may be incurred by narcissists for having highly contingent self-worth, including costs to their physical health. People who are highly concerned with how they are perceived by others are more likely to exhibit behaviours such as smoking, sunbathing without appropriate protection, undergoing cosmetic surgery to improve one's physical attractiveness, using steroids, driving recklessly, and engaging in unsafe sexual practices (for a full review of this research see Crocker et al., 2004). Given that such behaviours are partly concerned with establishing a more favourable image of oneself in the eyes of others, these behaviours may be conceptualised as the narcissist's pursuit of self-esteem in contingent domains. Such behaviours may however result in harmful consequences to the narcissist's physical wellbeing.

A high degree of self-worth contingency may also threaten narcissists' ability to effectively regulate their behaviour. Effective self-regulation allows people to restrain their impulses to engage in behaviours that have immediate rewards but longer term costs (Baumeister, 1997). Yet the negative emotional states that come with insults in contingent domains may have the capacity to short-circuit the narcissist's self-regulatory behaviour. Baumeister notes that following a threat to self-esteem, people attempt to find avenues to alleviate the negative emotions experienced and restore emotional equilibrium. These

avenues may include impulsive behaviours such as overeating, drug and alcohol use, overspending, or gambling - behaviours that essentially represent a disruption to self-regulatory ability. In the context of the current research, this self-regulatory breakdown may have come in narcissists' failure to acknowledge the social context when promoting their grandiose self-image. As Crocker, Luhtanen et al. (2004) note, this self-regulatory breakdown is most likely when negative outcomes are experienced in contingent domains because the affective consequences of such outcomes are more pronounced in these domains. It appears that narcissists may be particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of self-regulation breakdown that come with negative experiences in contingent domains, given their affective reactivity to such experiences.

Crocker (2002b) also notes that contingencies of self-worth may result in costs to learning. People attempt to avoid or to discredit information that threatens to expose any personal weaknesses or shortcomings. These attempts may be particularly pervasive on contingent domains, because these are the domains in which self-worth is staked. The cognitive strategies that narcissists use to discredit negative information pertaining to contingent domains observed in Study 3 may be seen as an attempt to deflect the spotlight off their personal weaknesses or shortcomings. This strategy is problematic because it reduces a person's ability to learn from such feedback, and subsequently, improve performance, skill, and competency (Dweck, 1986). By adopting such strategies, narcissists may be erecting a significant barrier to self-improvement (see Crocker & Park, 2004, for a full review of the costs associated with contingent self-worth).

A final comment to make regarding the costs of contingent self-worth is that it is not necessarily that non-narcissists do not have contingent self-worth and narcissists do. Both narcissists and non-narcissists may in fact have contingent self-worth and therefore possess a vulnerability to the costs outlined above. It may be more that non-narcissists are better at protecting this vulnerability than are narcissists. By following socially prescribed rules for modesty, non-narcissists may manage to retain the integrity of their interpersonal relationships and thus, avoid the negative social feedback that comes from alienating one's social audience with excessive displays of self-promotion. Non-narcissists may therefore become less susceptible to the negative emotional states generated by such feedback, emotional states that are clearly implicated in the costs outlined above.

5.2.3 Narcissism and External Domains

A consistent finding across all three studies was that narcissism was correlated with a high degree of external self-worth contingency. Narcissists also showed a preference for self-enhancement on external, but not internal domains in Studies 1 and 2. As previously indicated, external domains have relatively tangible indicators to signal success or achievement in those domains. For example, a person's physical attractiveness is relatively obvious to others (although it is often said that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder"), or a person's competitive ability can be measured by, or substantiated with, competition wins or trophies. Internal domains are more intangible, and thus, success in these

domains may be harder to define and measure. The apparent orientation towards external domains may have its roots in the developmental experiences of narcissists.

Livesley et al. (1993) note that as children, narcissists are often given conditional love and approval. They were loved and approved of when they met some high standard of performance imposed by the parent. In the absence of meeting these parental expectations, the child was largely ignored. The child's self-esteem therefore becomes contingent upon meeting the expectations of his or her parents. Meeting these expectations results in momentary feelings of happiness and self-worth, whereas failure to meet expectations results in feelings of worthlessness, accompanied by parental disapproval or rejection. In order to win parental approval, the child has to strive for perfection in the areas that his or her parents value and deem important. Parents of children who grow up to be narcissists are largely focused on appearances, meaning that visible and tangible indicators of the child's success (and therefore worth) were highly prized (Young & Flanagan, 1998). External symbols that validate the child's success are paramount. Having their child win beauty pageants, individual sporting accolades, topping their class, or being associated with prestigious organisations (for just a few examples) is considered key in "keeping up appearances".

This may go some way towards explaining why narcissists appear to have contingent self-worth on external domains. It may also explain why narcissists appear chronically invested in presenting themselves as positively as possible on external domains, at the expense of strategically navigating the contextual

requirements of the situation. Narcissists may have learnt at an early age that by showing success and presenting themselves as positively as possible on external domains, they increase the likelihood of receiving positive appraisals from others (and avoiding rejection). In effect, they have been socialised into this pattern of self-esteem seeking during childhood, and in many ways, it may be the only road to self-worth that they know.

However as Crocker (2002b) notes, external contingencies may not represent a reliable base for self-worth. External contingencies are vulnerable because they require validation from others in order to be fulfilled (and are thus not under one's direct control). One must earn the approval of yet another person, top the class once again, outdo yet another in competition, or be more attractive than yet another person to meet criteria for what it means to be worthy (Crocker, 2002a). Given that all people experience a mixture of success and failure in life, and that the appraisals people receive from others are often conflicting (i.e., positive and negative), external domains become unreliable as a basis for self-esteem. This may be especially true for narcissists, given that their maladaptive interpersonal styles make it difficult for them to consistently receive the positive social appraisals that would otherwise serve to fulfil their external contingencies of self-worth. Unable to fulfil their feelings of self-worth on externally contingent domains, narcissists may be left in a perpetual state of uncertainty and fragility.

A final point to make regarding external contingencies was the lack of association found between narcissism and the other's approval contingency of

self-worth. Given narcissists' reliance on feedback from others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), one may have expected a relationship between narcissism and the other's approval contingency. Yet this relationship was not found in any of the three studies. One explanation for this is that for narcissists, admitting that one's self-worth is dependent on the regard of others is dangerous, in that it has the potential to undermine their feelings of superiority and grandiosity. Millon (1996) notes that narcissists believe that relying on others for self-esteem is a sign of weakness, which is considered threatening to their sense of power and control over others. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that narcissists did not endorse being contingent upon others' approval, given that this endorsement may have undermined the personal qualities that narcissists pride themselves on.

5.3 Some Remaining Questions

5.3.1 What about Internal Domains?

Although narcissists appeared orientated towards external domains in the current series of studies, it may not necessarily be that they completely disregard the value of internal domains. Indeed, there may be people with narcissistic characteristics who are crusaders for the downtrodden, and who are found in places such as soup kitchens and international aid organisations. It may be that there is a sub-group of narcissists who do in fact orientate their behaviour towards more internally orientated domains (although this was not found using the methodologies employed in this research). Jones and Pittman's (1982)

concept of *exemplification* may be relevant to this idea. Within a self-presentational context, exemplification refers to a person's desire to project a sense that he or she has integrity and moral worthiness. These people want to be seen as honest, generous, and self-sacrificing. Although these qualities appear to have little resemblance to the qualities that narcissists seem to covet, it may be that when certain social contexts (or partners) explicitly value morality, narcissists may be motivated to project moral exemplification. Importantly, the motivation behind this may be a desire to have others recognise and validate their moral exemplification, essentially providing narcissists with a source of admiration and positive feedback. Yet narcissists may also realise that simply claiming moral worthiness is not enough (Jones & Pittman), and thus, they may be motivated to pursue moral behaviour in their everyday lives. This may be a reason why a subgroup of narcissists could be found in roles that promote moral exemplification, such as working soup kitchens or international aid organisations. Further empirical tests are needed to investigate these ideas.

5.3.2 What about level of self-esteem?

An association between narcissism and high self-esteem has been previously shown (e.g., Emmons, 1984). Some studies (e.g., Campbell, et al., 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004) have therefore explicitly investigated differences between those with high levels of narcissism and those with high levels of self-esteem, or otherwise controlled for the effects of self-esteem when investigating narcissism. These three studies were however more concerned with the effects

of contingent self-worth, as opposed to overall levels of global self-esteem. These studies still recognised self-esteem, but followed the ever-increasing tradition of conceptualising self-esteem as a multi-dimensional construct (Kernis, 2003) by investigating how degree of self-worth contingency affected the self-presentational, affective, and cognitive functioning of narcissists. It was felt that contingencies of self-worth represented a more insightful lens through which to view and uncover the dynamics of the narcissistic character than would overall levels of global self-esteem. Finally, it should also be noted that the correlations between narcissism and self-esteem found across the current three studies were small (Cohen, 1988).

5.3.3 What would it mean not to self-enhance?

Narcissists' chronic self-enhancement strategy can also be viewed as a way of keeping their underlying beliefs of inferiority (Young et al., 2003) outside of their conscious everyday awareness. If narcissists do not present themselves more positively than others, they may condemn themselves to being the same as everyone else, and therefore abandon their fantasies of omnipotence and greatness. Thus, although it has previously been mentioned that narcissists are not typically characterised by anxiety (Choca & Van Denburg, 1997; Steiner, 1998), a very specific and pervasive fear that narcissists may possess is the fear of being average. Given that being average may be the worst possible scenario for narcissists (Beck, et al., 2004), they may become invested in self-presentational strategies that will stand them out from the crowd, even if such

strategies come at the expense of strategic self-presentational concerns. The potential anxiety associated with the fear of being average may therefore impair narcissists' capacity to effectively regulate their behaviour, meaning that they present themselves in overly positive ways in contexts that call for modesty.

5.3.4 Can Narcissists Really Achieve Self-Verification?

This research has used self-verification (Swann et al., 1987) as a theoretical explanation for narcissists' identity construction efforts. Narcissists are essentially motivated to seek validation of their grandiose yet fragile self-views via positive feedback from others, which in turn serves to provide more certainty and coherency to these self-views. Such feedback also serves to create less dissonance between narcissists' self-views and the views that others may hold of them. Yet even if narcissists do obtain the positive social appraisals that they desire, the question becomes whether these appraisals are actually self-verifying, given that the innermost part of narcissists may not truly believe that these positive appraisals are an accurate reflection of who they really are? In this way, validation of their grandiose yet uncertain self-views may elude narcissists, meaning that they may be in a chronic state of flux, neither certain that they are as extraordinary as they paint themselves to be, nor willing to abandon their ideals of personal greatness. The end result may be that the grandiose and simultaneously certain identity that the narcissist desires proves to be a very elusive end.

5.3.5 Can Narcissists Perform Under Pressure?

The results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that narcissists, given their disregard for social contextual variables that call for modesty, may be called upon to substantiate their identity claims. That is, they may be required to actually show others that they are great, and not simply claim that they are great. Yet it may be that narcissists are actually able to perform when the pressure of evaluation or audience scrutiny is on. Wallace and Baumeister (2002) hypothesised that the relationship between narcissism and performance would be moderated by perceived opportunity for self-enhancement. They subsequently found that narcissists performed better on tasks in which success was a sign that they had a high level of skill, talent, and superiority over others, but did not perform as well on tasks that did not offer such opportunity for self-enhancement. The performance of non-narcissists did not differ as a function of self-enhancement opportunity.

It has been argued throughout this research that being accountable and presenting to a multiple person audience may offer narcissists more in terms of self-enhancement than being non-accountable or presenting to a single person audience. It may therefore be that narcissists are motivated to produce maximum effort when accountable and when presenting to a multiple person audience because of the self-enhancement opportunities such situations may provide. It may therefore be that when the spotlight is on them, or when the pressure is on, narcissists may rise to the challenge. The difficulty of the task at hand may not deter the narcissists, and indeed, the glory to be gained from performing well in

difficult situations may be perceived as another mechanism to enhance the positivity of the self. For example, the performance of a narcissistic businessman may rise to a higher level when he is presenting his company's latest product to a large group of national and international buyers. Yet his performance at selling the qualities and benefits of the product may well be mediocre if he was to meet with each buyer individually. Further, if asked to explain, defend, and justify the benefits of this latest product, the businessman might quickly and confidently refer to data related to product testing, market research, and initial sales figures for the product, rising to the task with aplomb. These buyers may perceive the narcissist as a confident, sharp, and savvy salesman, and subsequently chose to do business with him once again. At the end of the meeting, when the buyers have left the boardroom, the narcissist may sit alone reflecting on his performance; a performance that he has taken to be further evidence for his greatness. Yet the real test for the narcissist may well come in his ongoing interactions with these buyers, who may possibly tire of his self-aggrandising ways over time (see Paulhus, 1998).

5.3.6 What about Gender?

Although narcissistic personality disorder is commonly associated with men (Millon, 1996), a review of the literature indicates that much of the research within social and personality psychology does not explicitly investigate the role of gender (but see Morf, Weir, Davidov, 2000). Following this precedent, this research did not include gender in theoretical or statistical considerations.

Although there were more females than males in each study (a result of having a significantly higher proportion of females than males on the La Trobe University volunteer participant database), preliminary analyses revealed no effects for gender. Moreover, the current state of the literature indicates that there is no theoretically compelling reason to investigate gender when conducting research on narcissism. Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) note that although males tend to score slightly higher than females on the NPI, there is not a body of empirical research which shows that gender moderates the relationship between narcissism and behaviour in any systematic, consistent, or reliable way.

5.3.7 Is the Narcissistic Self Necessarily Unhealthy?

Although the current discussion has focused predominantly on the costs of narcissism, it is important that one does not over-pathologise the narcissistic character. Campbell (2001) notes that narcissism is often viewed as a negative trait, but research does not necessarily support this position. Although by definition, those with narcissistic personality disorder are deemed to have maladjusted personalities, such maladjustment may not be as characteristic of normal narcissists (i.e., those with narcissistic traits but not pathological narcissism as defined by narcissistic personality disorder). Normal narcissism has been shown to be positively associated with satisfaction with life (Rose, 2002) and daily experiences of positive (but also negative) affect (Rhodewalt, et al., 1998), while also negatively associated with anxiety (Raskin & Novacek, 1989) and depression (Rathvon & Holmstrom, 1996; Watson et al., 1987), and

has no significant association with loneliness (Joubert, 1986; for reviews of this literature, see Rose & Campbell, 2004; Sedikides et al., 2004).

Yet one must be careful in applying linear models to understand the relationship between narcissism and psychological health. Given that narcissists are characterised by a general feeling of grandiosity and well-being (Millon, 1996), linear models or simple correlational analyses are unlikely to be sufficient in capturing the complexity inherent in the relationship between narcissism and psychological health. In the spirit of this idea, Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult (2004) found a positive relationship between narcissism and psychological health. Narcissists reported lower levels of daily sadness and dispositional depression, daily and dispositional loneliness, daily anxiety, and dispositional neuroticism, and higher levels of subjective and couple wellbeing. Importantly, these relationships were mediated by self-esteem. That is, narcissism was associated with psychological health because of its overlap with high self-esteem.

In many ways, the current research casts narcissists in a negative light, describing them as people with grandiose self-views, but who harbour underlying feelings of fragility and uncertainty. In response to this underlying uncertainty, they use highly positive self-presentations in an effort to elicit the positive feedback that they require to shore-up their grandiose but fragile identities. This position was informed by the theoretical framework developed by Morf and Rhodewalt (2001). Importantly however, this position was also driven by specific theoretical considerations derived from contingencies of self-worth theory

(Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). That is, contingencies of self-worth would moderate the relationship between narcissism and inflexible self-presentational behaviour, as well as the relationship between narcissism and more extreme emotional reactions to negative feedback. It was only when degree of self-worth contingency was high that these maladaptive or unhealthy aspects of the narcissistic character would become apparent. This was indeed the case. Thus, it may not be that normal narcissism on its own is unhealthy, but the combination of normal narcissism and a high degree of self-worth contingency may pave the way for maladjustment in both the intra- and interpersonal arenas. The current research therefore suggests that narcissism on its own is not necessarily a bad thing.

This research therefore provides support for the idea that at least a sub-group of narcissists may in fact possess this characteristic of fragility so commonly identified in the clinical literature. The self-esteem of narcissists with high self-worth contingency may be fragile because it is contingent upon meeting some externally or perhaps less frequently, internally imposed standard of performance. In the absence of not meeting these standards, these narcissists' contingencies of self-worth may go unfulfilled, and their feelings of self-worth remain in question. Thus, a high degree of self-worth contingency has been used as the vehicle to carry the fragility hypothesis in the current research. This research does not however definitively answer the question of whether narcissists do in fact possess underlying feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. What it does indicate is that a high degree of self-worth contingency appears to

make narcissists vulnerable to both interpersonal (e.g., alienating one's social audience through inappropriate displays of self-promotion) and intrapersonal (e.g., depression and lowered self-esteem after receiving negative feedback) difficulties.

5.3.8 Are Narcissists Really Inflexible?

Throughout this research the argument has been made that narcissists show a lack of contextual sensitivity. An alternative possibility is that narcissists simply do not care about social norms or social contextual variables that demand modesty. It may therefore be that instead of being blind to social contextual variables that call for modesty, narcissists' pervasive sense of entitlement and lack of empathy means that they deem themselves above the rules of social interactions. It may also be argued that narcissists actually did show flexibility in their self-presentations throughout this research. When there was a large self-constructional payoff on offer (e.g., when accountable, when presenting to a multiple person audience), narcissists actually increased their self-enhancement. However, when the self-constructional payoff was small (i.e., when non-accountable, when presenting to a single person audience), the self-presentation of narcissists appeared much the same as that of non-narcissists. There is therefore evidence to suggest that narcissists may place all their eggs in one basket (Showers, 1992), and these are the areas to which their self-regulatory strategies are directed. This may be indicative of flexibility, given that narcissists

appear to resist engaging in inflated self-presentation in areas that are not important to their feelings of self-worth (i.e., non-contingent domains).

5.4 Broader Issues

5.4.1 A Behaviourist Perspective on Narcissism

The grandiose interpersonal displays that are associated with narcissists' attempts to garner positive social feedback may be viewed from a behaviourist perspective. It may be that such behaviour is sustained by a variable ratio of reinforcement (Ferster & Skinner, 1957). Narcissists may have frequent instances where grandiose interpersonal behaviour is not successful in eliciting positive social feedback, but every so often, it is successful in eliciting the positive social feedback that they desire. When achieved, such feedback is highly reinforcing, and motivates further attempts to elicit more positive feedback. Narcissists learn that grandiose interpersonal displays have the capacity to produce the feedback they desire, no matter how infrequently. The narcissist may be likened to the slot-machine player who sits in front of a machine for hours at a time in search of "that big win". When that win does come, it serves to maintain the gambling behaviour because the next instance of winning is unpredictable, and thus, one is compelled to keep playing because reinforcement could occur at any time (Dickerson, Hinchy, England, Fabre, & Cunningham, 1992; Lewis, 1952; Petry & Roll, 2001). So for narcissists, one instance of

identity confirming feedback may be so reinforcing that it maintains their grandiose interpersonal sequence of behaviour.

5.4.2 Narcissism and Self-Protective Strategies

What was apparent in Study 3 was that narcissists' defensive strategies were only set in motion after the receipt of negative feedback. It was only when they were given negative feedback that they engaged in the defensive cognitive and self-presentational strategies, perhaps in an effort deflect the effects of negative feedback and maintain the integrity of their highly positive self-views. In contrast, non-narcissists' self-protective strategies appeared to be set in motion immediately upon perceiving a potential threat to their identity. That is, they chose not to self-enhance in situations where an overly positive self-presentation could be met with invalidation or social rejection. Non-narcissists' defensive strategies may therefore be thought of as proactive, in that they occur in order to prevent potential losses of self-esteem, whereas narcissists' defensive strategies may be thought of as reactive, in that they are employed only after losses in self-esteem have occurred. Yet this defensive strategy of self-inflation used by narcissists may not be self-protective at all, because it may actually serve to elicit further negative feedback from their social partners.

It may also be that narcissists do not brace themselves for negative feedback. Given that they have a pervasive sense of entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, et al., 2004), narcissists may simply expect others to provide them with the admiration they feel that they deserve (APA, 1994). Unprepared for social

insults, negative feedback may catch the narcissist unawares, possibly leading to more pronounced emotional consequences. Although narcissists' cognitive and self-presentational behaviour may serve to return them to emotional equilibrium after negative feedback, it may be that such defences become burnt-out after being constantly called upon to protect narcissists' identities (although empirical evidence is required to support this burn-out idea). In the absence of protective strategies to deflect the emotional consequences of negative feedback, narcissists may become vulnerable to depressive states.

5.4.3 Narcissism and the Cultural Context

Foster, Campbell, and Twenge (2003) found that levels of narcissism vary between different cultural contexts and world regions. They found that people from societies with a more individualistic orientation (e.g., United States of America) reported significantly higher levels of narcissism than did people from societies with a less individualistic orientation (e.g., Asia, Middle East). However, it may be important to consider issues beyond whether level of narcissism differs across cultures, by focusing on how the intra- and interpersonal dynamics of the narcissistic personality may interact with a given cultural context. It may be that certain cultures (possibly more individualistic cultures traditionally found in Western societies) are more tolerant of the narcissist's pervasive and inflexible self-aggrandising interpersonal patterns. Concerns for modesty may not be as paramount in these cultures as they are in others. These cultures may even reinforce narcissists' self-enhancing ways, given that there may be a pervasive

societal focus on public symbols of wealth, power, prestige, and beauty (Lasch, 1979). In a society that covets these constructs, the narcissistic quest for external signs of greatness is understandable, and maybe even acceptable. Narcissists seek external indicators of success that will make them noticeable in society and differentiate them from the others, thus paving the way for the admiration that they desire. This may contrast with other cultures (possibly more collectivist in nature), which may have a much sharper focus on modesty (Muramoto, 2003). Grandiose and contextually inappropriate displays may not be tolerated in these cultural contexts, with unbridled self-enhancement suppressed because the demands for assimilating to cultural requirements may supersede identity construction concerns (although it is not necessarily the case that people in such cultures do not find other pathways to self-enhancement such as self-enhancing on collectivist traits [traits that may be more closely linked to cultural ideals]; see Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Vevea, 2005).

5.5 Other Theoretical Perspectives

5.5.1 Sociometer Theory

The results of the current research may be interpreted through a variety of other theoretical positions from those already described. Sociometer theory (M. R. Leary & Downs, 1995) argues that one's level of self-esteem is determined by the degree to which one feels valued and accepted by other individuals. According to this perspective, self-esteem is not a result of how people perceive

themselves, but a result of how people feel they are perceived by others. Such a perspective may be characteristic of narcissists, who appear highly pre-occupied with how favourably or unfavourably they are viewed by others in their social world. The idea that narcissists' feelings about themselves vary as a function of how well or poorly they are perceived by others is consistent with the results of Study 3. Study 3 indicated that drops in self-esteem for narcissists may only occur when they are perceived poorly on a domain where degree of self-worth contingency is high. However, a variation of sociometer theory may be needed to explain narcissists' self-esteem fluctuations in the context of positive and negative social feedback. It may not be that the self-esteem of narcissists is determined by how much they are accepted by others, as is proposed by traditional sociometer theory, but is determined instead by how much they are admired by others. As Morf and Rhodewalt (2001) note, given the choice between acceptance and admiration, narcissists go for admiration.

5.5.2 Promotion versus Prevention

Narcissists' apparent disregard for the social context when self-presenting may be explained by other theoretical perspectives than functional flexibility (Paulhus & Martin, 1988) or contextual insensitivity (Sedikides, Campbell, et al., 2002). It may be that narcissists are characterised by a promotion rather than prevention (Higgins, 1998) approach to interpersonal interactions. A promotion orientation is defined by attempts to maximise positive outcomes while a prevention orientation is defined by attempts to minimise negative outcomes. A

promotion focus is associated with a motivation to engage in behaviours that advance success, whereas a prevention focus is associated with a motivation to engage in behaviours that aim to avoid failure (Higgins, 2001). This framework may facilitate understanding of narcissists' approach to self-presentation, where the focus appears to be extracting as much self-esteem as they can, at the expense of protecting themselves against the potentially aversive interpersonal consequences that such a strategy may create.

5.5.3 Social Intelligence

The notion of social intelligence may also be relevant to this idea. Thorndike (1920) originally defined social intelligence as the ability to engage in adaptive social interactions. Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987), providing a slightly different definition, argue that social intelligence refers to an individual's fund of knowledge about his or her social world. Both definitions essentially define social intelligence as the ability to manage the behaviour of oneself and others, as well as the ability to develop and maintain insight into perspectives of others (see also Moss & Hunt, 1927). At first blush, narcissists' apparent disregard for the social context in which they operate may be seen as a deficit in social intelligence (see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, for a more complete discussion).

Yet the idea of social intelligence raises the interesting question of whether narcissists are simply oblivious to the social context, or instead, use the social context strategically to enhance self-esteem and identity in contingent domains. The finding that narcissists were even more self-enhancing on

contingent domains in situations that required modesty may indicate that they recognise that certain social contexts may offer more in terms of self-esteem and identity construction, and strategically use self-presentational behaviour to obtain such desired outcomes (a point elaborated on in an earlier discussion). The issue here, in terms of whether such behaviour constitutes social intelligence, appears to be in the definition of adaptiveness. If one looks at the idea of intrapersonal adaptiveness, then the positive affective states generated by excessive self-enhancement may make narcissists' self-presentational strategy appear more socially intelligent. Yet if one looks at the idea of interpersonal adaptiveness, inflexible self-enhancement may be maladaptive because it may lead to the breakdown of interpersonal relationships. Thus, although narcissists' self-enhancement strategy may be motivated and perhaps even goal directed, it is not necessarily intelligent. Narcissists instead appear to be characterised by a blatant disregard for the social context and concerns of others, perhaps the antithesis of social intelligence.

5.5.4 Self-Deception

Paulhus' work on self-deception may also be relevant to the current findings. Paulhus (1998) found that narcissists scored highly on his measure of self-deception. Thus it may be that through their grandiose interpersonal behaviour, narcissists may not only be attempting to deceive others, but also themselves, into believing their own greatness (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This raises interesting questions regarding the narcissist's inner private audience

(Greenwald & Breckler, 1985). Do narcissists simply ignore their inner private audience which may be telling them that they are not as great as they are making themselves out to be? Perhaps fidelity to their private audience is superseded by their desire to make a favourable impression in the eyes of others, given that narcissists' identities appear largely constructed around social feedback from others. It may also be that this self-deception takes the form of attempting to gain enough evidence from their public audience to convince their private audience that they are indeed great (see also Tice, 1992). Thus, narcissists may not be attempting to ignore, but instead convince, their inner private audience of their socially projected greatness. Research looking at discrepancies between explicit and implicit self-esteem in narcissists may be useful in further exploring these ideas (see section 5.7)

5.6 General Methodological Considerations

Although the methodologies employed in the current research were largely successful in supporting the experimental hypotheses, they were not without potential drawbacks. Internet-based methods have commonly been used for survey style research but are less often used for experimental research where manipulations of the independent variables occur over the internet (as in the current research). Foster et al. (2003), who used a survey-based internet methodology, questioned whether completing questionnaires over the internet results in less truthful responding from participants. As they point out however,

such concerns are also present in traditional pen and paper methods. It is also important to note that strictly speaking, the method used was an email method, as opposed to an internet-based method. Although the email method required the internet to transmit the email, it differed to traditional internet studies which establish their own uniform resource locator (URL) or web address, and are often open to anyone to participate in. We limited our sample to La Trobe University undergraduate students.

Another important methodological consideration is the effectiveness of the independent variables that were manipulated via email. It may be that a traditional face-to-face method may have resulted in more pronounced experimental effects. Social impact theory (Nowak et al., 1990) states that the effect of an audience on a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours can be determined by the audience's immediacy. Audiences that are deemed to be more psychologically immediate (e.g., are either physically present or about to be encountered) have a greater impact on how people think, feel, and act (Schlenker, 2003). Given that the audiences in all three studies were not as psychologically immediate as they may have been if the participant was in a laboratory and told that the audience was in an adjacent room (e.g., Sedikides, Herbst, et al., 2002), the audience may not have had as much effect on participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. It is therefore possible that the results may have been more pronounced if a traditional laboratory based methodology was used (i.e., this may have been a conservative test).

Despite these potential limitations, it may be that email or internet-based experimental studies (see also Collins & Stukas, in press) represent a useful way forward for some experimental paradigms in social and personality psychology. Indeed, they represent a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to run psychological research. Future work is required to determine if there are any systematic differences in terms of research outcomes found between email and laboratory based methods across various experimental paradigms.

5.7 Caveats and Future Research

It has been proposed that the consequence of the narcissist's inflexible self-enhancement strategy is the undermining of his or her interpersonal relationships. Throughout this discussion however, any disturbance to narcissists' interpersonal relationships caused by their inflexible self-enhancement strategy has been viewed as a potential vulnerability factor, and not necessarily a definite consequence. Future research needs to be undertaken to determine how the pervasive and inflexible self-enhancement behaviour of narcissists is perceived by others. This research could employ dyadic interactions that manipulate the presence or absence of variables such as accountability. Such studies would extend upon the current research by actually observing how an audience reacts when narcissists break the demands of relevant social contextual variables. If it were found that they react with scepticism, or even rejection towards narcissists, further support would be

generated for the idea that the cost of narcissists' inflexible self-enhancement is damaging interpersonal relationships.

Research investigating the role of self-focus in the self-presentational behaviour of narcissists may also be of interest. Sedikides and Herbst (2002) found that when accountable, participants who were focused on their personal weaknesses self-enhanced less than did participants who were not. Weakness focus was therefore used as a mechanism to explain how accountability reduces self-enhancement. It may be that narcissists have a relative lack of concern about having their weaknesses exposed. What may be of greater interest is a study that explicitly manipulates a weakness focus. It may be that when narcissists' personal weaknesses are primed experimentally (e.g., when they are asked to write about their weaknesses immediately before rating themselves; Sedikides & Herbst), narcissists become less self-enhancing. This may be because such an experimental manipulation primes narcissists' usually covert feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty, resulting in efforts to protect these feelings via more modest self-presentations. The finding that narcissists responded to self-esteem threats (i.e., the negative feedback in Study 3) with inflated self-presentations suggests that they may however be apt to actually increase the positivity of their self-presentations when they are led to focus on their weaknesses. Self-promotion, as opposed to modesty, may be the narcissist's method of protecting his or her fragile self-views from threat.

In regards to audience status, it may be, as previously suggested, that narcissists are attracted to qualities such as beauty, fame, and power, as

opposed to the status qualities that were manipulated in Studies 1 and 2 (i.e., professional expertise and experience). Future research may employ a similar methodology to Studies 1 and 2, but manipulate status according to qualities such as beauty, fame, or power. For example, participants may be told that they will be meeting with a glamorous model or person of reputed fame. It may also be interesting to manipulate the status of the feedback giver using a methodology similar to Study 3. Although audience status did not affect the self-presentational efforts of narcissists in the current research, it may be that narcissists react in a more extreme manner (both cognitively and affectively) to feedback from a high status, as opposed to a low status, person. Positive and negative feedback from a high status person may be more meaningful because it holds more value in terms of narcissists' self-constructive efforts.

Another important consideration is the enduringness of the mood states induced in narcissists as a result of negative feedback. As previously argued, it may be that narcissists quickly return to their emotional equilibrium shortly after receiving the feedback, possibly via the use of cognitive and self-presentational self-protective strategies. This would appear likely, given that the real world context of the feedback was questionable. An interesting question for future research is whether social insults or rejections in real life (i.e., non-experimental) scenarios results in longer term or more chronic negative mood states such as depression. Diary methods similar to those used by Rhodewalt et al. (1998) may be employed to test these ideas. Such studies may categorise social interactions or social feedback into those that relate to each of the seven contingencies of

self-worth domains. It may be that real life social insults in contingent domains have a more pronounced and longer term impact on mood and self-esteem than those generated in a laboratory context. Further, such a study may be able to determine if repeated insults in a contingent domain result in longer term negative affective states.

Future research may also focus more specifically on the relationship between narcissism, contingencies of self-worth, and physical and psychological health. Although the current research demonstrated that narcissists reacted to negative feedback with more extreme negative emotional states than did non-narcissists, it said little about the longer term implications of this. A study similar to Sedikides et al. (2004), that incorporates a range of psychological health indices, but which also measures degree of self-worth contingency, may be interesting. It may be that degree of self-worth contingency mediates the relationship between narcissism and longer term psychological problems or difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety, loneliness, adjustment, substance use, or eating disorders). It would also be interesting to include indices of physical health in this study, as in the study by Taylor et al. (2003), to determine how contingencies of self-worth may mediate the relationship between narcissism and physical health.

It was found in Study 3 that narcissists responded with greater levels of anger than non-narcissists when insulted in a contingent domain. This research only measured emotional reactions, and further research is required to determine if such anger results in actual aggression in normal populations. Given that

aggression has been conceptualised as the narcissist's strategy for protecting a highly positive self-view (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), it may be that insults in contingent domains result in more severe or pronounced aggression, given that these are the domains in which having a highly positive self-view is paramount. Insults in domains where self-worth is staked may therefore be a potential antecedent to both verbal and physical aggression. Clinical research employing criminal correctional samples may be especially worthwhile when investigating the link between narcissism, contingencies of self-worth, and violence, given evidence suggesting that violent offenders are often characterised by narcissistic traits (Gunderson & Ronningstam, 2001). The link between narcissism, contingencies of self-worth, and aggression may be strongest when co-morbid psychopathic traits are apparent. Indeed, psychopathy and narcissistic personality disorder have shown a strong association in clinical samples, while psychopathy has been consistently identified as a risk factor for violent offending (Douglas, Ogloff, Nicholls, & Grant, 1999).

Research looking at the distinction between overt and covert narcissism also has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of narcissism. Overt narcissism (which was measured in the current series of studies) describes the grandiose and exhibitionistic side of narcissism, whereas covert narcissism describes the vulnerable and sensitive side of narcissism (Wink, 1991). Covert narcissists lack self-confidence, are highly concerned with appearance, and are highly sensitive to social rejections (Graham, 1987; overt and covert narcissism have been found to be unrelated [Wink]). In line with this,

Rose (2002) found that overt narcissists were characterised by relative happiness whereas covert narcissists were characterised by relative unhappiness. It may be that covert narcissists are hypersensitive and emotionally reactive to all social insults, whereas for overt narcissists, the insult may be required on a contingent domain in order to result in depression and lowered self-esteem. It would be interesting to determine if covert narcissists have more contingent self-worth than overt narcissists, and whether the domains in which they are contingent mirror the domains in which overt narcissists are contingent. One could speculate that given their sensitivity to social rejection and concern with appearance, covert narcissists may also have self-worth that is contingent on external domains, but perhaps their degree of self-worth contingency is more extreme than narcissists. Although one may expect the same, or perhaps more pronounced emotional reactions to negative feedback from covert narcissists, one may not expect the same self-aggrandising displays shown by overt narcissists in Studies 1 and 2.

In a similar manner, further research looking at the relationship between narcissism and explicit and implicit self-esteem (e.g., Bosson, R. P. Brown, Zeigler-Hill, & Swann, 2003) is also needed. It may be that narcissists possess high levels of explicit self-esteem but relatively low levels of implicit self-esteem. Implicit self-esteem represents automatic or unconscious self-evaluations. Implicit self-esteem research is therefore valuable because it has the potential to uncover some of the more unconscious processes referred to in the psychodynamic literature, particularly in regards to the narcissist's potential

underlying feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. This is what R. P. Brown and Bosson (2001) describe as the paradox between self-love and self-loathing. They further argue that it is the discrepancy between implicit and explicit self-esteem that drives the narcissist's fragility. Thus, implicit self-esteem, like contingencies of self-worth, may be a further avenue down which to explore the dynamics of the narcissistic character structure, particularly the vulnerable and fragile components. Empirical efforts are now underway looking at the relationship of implicit and explicit self-esteem to narcissism (e.g., Zeigler-Hill, 2006).

Finally, the process model of narcissism employed in the current research has the potential to inform research investigating other personality syndromes. For example, future research may look at the self-presentational styles of those with histrionic personalities. The DSM-IV (APA, 1994) describes the histrionic personality as a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking. Such people are uncomfortable when they are not the centre of attention, and employ emotional and behavioural strategies to draw attention to themselves. People with histrionic personalities may employ similarly pervasive self-presentational strategies to narcissists, although their strategies may be more about behavioural and emotional dramatics than self-aggrandisement. The motivation behind this self-presentational behaviour may also be somewhat different. For the grandiose narcissist, the motivation is to be admired and adored, but for the dramatic histrionic, the motivation may be to gain the attention (and not necessarily the admiration) of others. This highlights the utility of a functional approach to personality research (M. Snyder & Cantor, 1998), where

the focus is not simply on what people do, but why they do it. Uncovering these motives and answering the question of “why” may be facilitated with reference to the clinical literature. Indeed, the cognitive, behavioural, and affective patterns associated with various personalities documented in the clinical literature may have a great deal to offer in uncovering these motives in normal populations. This was indeed the case in the current research.

5.8 Conclusions

This research began with the idea that the life of the narcissist is characterised by a quest to build a highly positive or even grandiose identity, what Arkin and Lakin (2001) describe as the Taj Mahal of selves. While trekking their path on this quest, they may be ever vigilant for materials that will add further lustre to the grand self that they are building. They may therefore be pervasively motivated to seek out opportunities to construct, maintain, and perhaps above all, enhance their grandiose selves. Yet this pervasive motivation to self-enhance may mean that narcissists walk around their social worlds wearing what is akin to narcissistic goggles, or as Baumeister and Vohs (2001) termed it, they suffer narcissistic myopia. As a result of their chronic efforts to enhance the positivity of their identities and garner social applause, narcissists may become insensitive, even blind to the specific demands of the social context and the perspectives of others. Social norms for modesty appear a mere hindrance in their identity construction efforts, with narcissists continuing their

hedonistic quest for positivity regardless of such concerns. However, this self-indulgence may well come at the expense of their interpersonal relationships, as narcissists proceed to alienate others with their contextually inappropriate and all too frequent displays of self-aggrandisement. Yet narcissists' lack of attention to the nuances of their social worlds is rapidly changed when they are confronted with negative feedback. Such feedback threatens to take the proverbial sledgehammer to this grandiose identity that they have worked so hard to construct. As such, they respond with anger and hostility towards those who may seek to undermine what they have built.

What was also apparent in the current research was that contingencies of self-worth took centre stage in the narcissist's identity construction efforts. Throughout the research, degree of self-worth contingency moderated the narcissist's self-presentational, affective, and cognitive functioning. It may also be that for narcissists, certain material is more valuable when building their Taj Mahal of selves. Indeed, external indicators of worth appeared to be pursued with more fervour than were more internal indicators. It may therefore be that for narcissists, it is what their building looks like on the outside, and not necessarily what occurs inside, that is of paramount concern. Yet narcissists' (at least those with highly contingent self-worth) attempts to construct their grandiose selves may perhaps be more accurately described as a facade, as opposed to any authentically robust structure. This is because narcissists' sense of self appears so dependent on the feedback they receive from others. Given that people inherently receive a mixture of positive and negative feedback about themselves,

narcissists' sense of self may be ever unstable and vulnerable to challenge. It is almost as if the grandiose self that they are attempting to construct is built on a foundation of quicksand (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Only chronic efforts to garner further admiration stop it from sinking further. The paradox here is that these efforts are likely to create further instability in the foundations of the narcissistic self, given that they may serve to create further interpersonal discord and negatively valanced feedback. In response to this feedback, particularly when such feedback is in a contingent domain, the narcissist may respond with depression and lowered self-esteem. This may be the point where the narcissist's illusions of greatness are brought into the realm of a stark and all too painful reality.

This research has in many ways been designed to uncover the unhealthy aspects of narcissism, or put another way, the costs of being a narcissist. These costs appear particularly salient when degree of self-worth contingency is high. Yet there is little doubt that narcissists also have other aspects to their personality structure, aspects that are more positive and adaptive. Indeed, if it were the case that all narcissists were maladjusted, the offices of clinical psychologists and psychiatrists would be full of narcissists in varying degrees of intra- and interpersonal distress. This is certainly not the case. What is apparent is that the combination of narcissism and highly contingent self-worth appears to create a vulnerability to intra- and interpersonal problems. Further research is required not only to uncover other maladaptive elements, but also potentially adaptive elements of the narcissistic personality. From a classic therapeutic

perspective, these elements may then be used to overcome the more maladaptive components of the narcissistic personality that have been identified in this research.

Appendix A: The Narcissistic Personality Inventory

(Emmons, 1987)

This material has been removed due to copyright

Appendix B: The Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale

(Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003)

This material has been removed due to copyright

Appendix C: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

(Rosenberg, 1965)

This material has been removed due to copyright

Appendix D: Information Statement and Cover Story (Studies 1 and 2)

School of Psychological Science
Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering
Bundoora, VIC 3086
Australia

-The Trial of a New Australian Personality Assessment Centre-

Dear La Trobe University Student,

You are invited to volunteer in a research study that will trial the viability of a new Australian personality assessment centre being run at La Trobe University. You were selected as a possible participant because you volunteered to be contacted to participate in psychological research at La Trobe University. If you decide to participate in the trial, your requirements will be minimal. We simply ask that you complete and return (via e-mail) some personality tests that we will e-mail you. In addition, you will also meet with one of our staff members so that they can provide you with feedback on the results of your personality tests. This meeting, which usually lasts around 15 minutes, will provide you with a chance to learn a little bit more about yourself and your personality guided by our staff member. The meeting will take place in the School of Psychological Science at La Trobe University.

If you decide to volunteer for our trial, simply send an e-mail with the words **"I volunteer"** to - personality@latrobe.edu.au

We ask that you please read the following information before deciding to volunteer for this study.

Some Information about the Trial
The trial of the New Australian Personality Assessment Centre is a nationwide initiative, involving a number of different universities around the country. If you choose to volunteer in our study, your e-mail address will not be used for any other purpose than for this study, and will be deleted from our records at the completion of the research.

What is required of you?
You will be asked to complete and e-mail back several psychological tests that we will send to your e-mail account (which should take around 20 minutes to complete). Once one of our staff members has assessed your results (it will take between 1-2 days), you will be e-mailed to organise a time to meet them. The meeting will run for approximately 15 minutes. Thus, in total, the study should take around 35 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

If you decide to participate in this study, you may gain an insight into the type of personality that you possess. Further, you will be placed into a draw to win one of 20 double pass movie tickets to Hoyts cinemas (your odds of winning are 1 in 8). This study does not contain any overt risks; however it is sometimes essential for the validity of research results not to disclose the true purpose of the research to participants. If this occurs, participants will be debriefed as soon as possible and at that time given the opportunity to withdraw from the research and have records of their participation erased. Please consider these points before deciding to participate.

Confidentiality

The records of this study, including your test results, will be kept confidential – locked securely in a filing cabinet in the School of Psychological Science. At the end of the study, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw any data that you contribute. Results of this study may be published in an academic journal. Research data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room in the School of Psychological Science, and only the researchers will have access to them. After five years, all data will be destroyed.

All possible measures will be taken to protect the security of the psychological tests that you email to us. Your tests will be stored in a password protected email account on a password protected (non-networked) computer. In addition, the computer that you will be sending your emails to is protected by "Firewall", one of the most effective internet security programs available. However, despite these security measures, it is important for you to consider some of the security risks associated with sending psychological tests over the internet before deciding to volunteer for our research. These risks include the potential for misdirected email correspondence, the possibility that your emails may retain a digital code on our hard drive once we have deleted them, and the risks associated with sending information through intermediaries (i.e., internet providers). Additionally, risks also pertain to issues at your end of the communication chain. For example, the possibility of multiple users accessing the computer from which you sent the email, security of stored emails if you use a networked computer, others accessing your email account via an internet connection (e.g., not having “firewall” installed on your computer can allow for remote “spyware” installation), deleted emails retaining digital coding on your hard drive, and the potential for you to send a misdirected email. These risks are small, however please consider them before volunteering.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision to participate in this study is purely voluntary, and will not affect your current or future relations with La Trobe University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, with all your data removed from the study.

Contacts and Questions

Any questions regarding this research may be directed to the research supervisor, Dr Arthur Stukas, of the School of Psychological Science on 9479 1515 or at a.stukas@latrobe.edu.au. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee, Faculty of Science, Technology, and Engineering, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (ph: (03) 9479 1784, e-mail: s.cook@latrobe.edu.au.

Thank you for kindly considering volunteering in our research.

Regards

David Collins
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology Candidate, La Trobe University

Dr Art Stukas
School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Appendix E: The Self-Rating Scale

Before returning this attachment to us, we ask finally that you complete the following short questionnaire. Unlike the more general test that you completed in Section 2, the following questions are specifically related to you, and are designed to give Dr Walsh a more complete picture of who you are as a unique individual.

The Self-Rating Scale

The Self-Rating Scale requires you to give yourself a rating on various attributes. The ratings range from 1-20, with 20 being the most positive.

Most Negative ├──────┼──────┤ Most Positive

1 10 20

Simply click on the grey box and type in your self-rating

Your Self-Rating (1-20)

1. Your physical attractiveness

2. Your ability to win the approval or regard of others

3. Your academic ability

4. Your ability to win the love of your family

5. Your ability to outdo others in competition

6. Your ability to lead your life according to strong moral virtues

7. Your ability to live life in a way that will win God's love

Appendix F: Reinforcing the Manipulations

Accountable Condition

Office Use Only
Section 3
Send to:
Daniel Walsh
Check mailing records for electronic address

Non-Accountable Condition

Office Use Only
Section 3
Susan Redcroft
Staff Training Program Co-ordinator
Check mailing records for electronic address

Appendix G: Participant Debriefing (Study 1)

School of Psychological Science
Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering
Bundoora, VIC 3086
Australia

Dear La Trobe University student,

Thank you for kindly participating in our study.

Please read the following information carefully

Occasionally in psychology, it is necessary for us to hide the true aims of our research in order to protect the validity of our results. The study that you have just participated in is an example of this.

You were told that the study was a trial for a new Australian personality assessment centre. In fact, the study was actually investigating how positively people are willing to rate themselves on a variety of different attributes. The specific attributes that we measured in our study were attractiveness, the ability to win the approval or regard of others, one's personal competency, level of love from one's family, the ability to outdo others in competition, moral virtue, and religious faith. The study also looked at whether being asked to explain, justify, and defend one's self-ratings to another person would affect how positively one is willing to rate themselves on the above attributes. Previous research has found that when people are asked to explain, justify, and defend their self-ratings to another person, they tend to rate themselves in a more modest fashion. We were also interested in the notion that people may place more importance on certain attributes and not others. For example, a sports person may place a high level of importance on his or her ability to outdo others in competition, or a model may place a high degree of importance on his or her attractiveness. Essentially, people stake their feelings of self-worth in certain areas and not others. We were interested in whether the types of attributes that participants had staked their self-worth on would affect the positivity of their self-ratings on those attributes.

To investigate these ideas, we set up a situation whereby participants were told that they were participating in the trial of a new Australian personality assessment centre. Participants were asked to fill out a variety of personality tests, so that a staff member from the centre could assess them. In reality, these tests were aimed at determining the types of attributes that participants had staked their self-worth on, and were not assessed by a staff member. Participants were also asked to rate themselves on a variety of attributes (e.g., attractiveness, academic ability). Half of our participants were told that they would have to explain, justify, and defend his or her self-ratings to the staff member. Using this method, we were attempting to determine whether

participants would rate themselves more modestly when they expected that they would have to defend, justify, and explain their self-ratings to the staff member. The other half of our participants were told that they would not be required to defend, justify, and explain their self-ratings. Using this method, we were attempting to determine whether participants would tend to rate themselves more positively when they did not have to justify their self-ratings to another person. We also predicted that participants would rate themselves more positively on those attributes on which they had staked their feelings of self-worth (e.g., academic ability, attractiveness).

Essential Information to Consider

You did not participate in the trial of a new on-line personality assessment centre. This was a cover story that allowed us to hide the true aims and hypotheses of our study from participants. The on-line personality assessment centre was entirely fictional.

You may be wondering why we went to such lengths to hide the true nature of our research. The answer is that if participants had known that we were explicitly measuring how positively they were willing to rate themselves on various attributes, their self-ratings may have changed. It was also important for us to have participants believe that they would be interacting with a staff member. This was done so that we could determine how positively participants were willing to rate themselves when they expected that they would have to justify their self-ratings to this staff member.

Using methods such as this is deemed necessary for achieving the type of results that will push the field of clinical psychology ahead and allow us to gain a better understanding of our clients. We hope that you are comfortable in the knowledge that you have contributed to our research, and maybe learned a bit about yourself along the way. We will not be sending you any more e-mails, and your address will be stored confidentially and securely for a period of 5 years.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, feel free to contact Dr Arthur Stukas on 9479 1515, or e-mail at a.stukas@latrobe.edu.au.

Again, thank you for kindly participating in our study

Kind regards

David Collins
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology Candidate, La Trobe University

Dr Art Stukas
School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Appendix H: Pilot Test Measure to Assess Perceived Status

Below is a description of a person. Please read the description and then answer the subsequent questions.

1. How capable do you think this person is at providing personality assessments?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Not at all capable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very capable

2. How accurate do you think a personality assessment from this person would be?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Not at all accurate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very accurate

3. How much expertise do you think that this person has in personality assessment?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
None at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	A great deal

4. How much credibility do you think this person has?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
None at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	A great deal

5. How much status do you think that this person has in regards to personality assessment?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
None at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	A great deal

6. How much status do you think that this person has in general?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
None at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	A great deal

Appendix I: Participant Debriefing (Study 2)

School of Psychological Science
Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering
Bundoora, VIC 3086
Australia

Dear La Trobe University student,

Thank you for kindly participating in our study.

Please read the following information carefully

Occasionally in psychology, it is necessary for us to hide the true aims of our research in order to protect the validity of our results. The study that you have just participated in is an example of this. You were told that the study was a trial for a new Australian personality assessment centre. In fact, the study was actually investigating how people are willing to rate themselves on a variety of different attributes when they expect to present these self-ratings to another person. The specific attributes that we measured in our study were attractiveness, the ability to win the approval or regard of others, one's academic ability, level of love from one's family, competitiveness, moral virtue, and religious faith. The study also looked at whether the characteristics of the audience that one is presenting to will influence the positivity of one's self-ratings. Specifically, we were interested in finding out whether the size of the audience, as well as the relative status they possess, will influence how people are willing to present themselves. To test these ideas, we set up a situation whereby participants expected to interact with another person, specifically, a staff member at the Personality Assessment Centre. We manipulated both audience size and status, with participants in the multiple audience condition told that they would be meeting with 5 people to discuss their test results, and people in the single audience condition told that they would be meeting with a single person to discuss their test results. Similarly, those in the high status audience condition were told that they would be meeting with Dr Daniel Walsh, a well renowned personality expert, while those in the low status audience condition were told that they would be meeting with Mr Daniel Walsh, a high school student on work experience.

As you may recall, after reading the descriptions of the audience to whom you would be meeting, we asked you to then rate yourself on the attributes listed above. We predicted that having to present oneself to either a high status or large audience would curtail people's tendency to rate themselves positively (i.e., it would lead to more modest self-ratings). On the other hand, we predicted that presenting oneself to a single or low status audience is less risky, and as such, may lead people to rate themselves more positively.

Essential Information to Consider

You did not participate in a trial of a new Personality Assessment Centre. This was a cover story that allowed us to hide the true aims and hypotheses of our study from participants. **The on-line personality assessment centre was entirely fictional, as too was the proposed meeting between you and the staff member.**

You may be wondering why we went to such lengths to hide the true nature of our research. The answer is that if participants had known that we were explicitly measuring how positively they were willing to rate themselves on various attributes, their self-ratings may have changed. It was also important for us to have participants believe that they would be interacting with another person (in this case, a staff member from the Personality Assessment Centre). This was done so that we could determine how the characteristics of the audience with which one was expecting to interact (i.e., size and status) would influenced how positively one was willing to rate him or her self to that audience.

Using methods such as this is deemed necessary for achieving scientifically based results that will push the fields of social and clinical psychology ahead and allow us to gain a better understanding of people and the way they think and behave in the world. We hope that you are comfortable in the knowledge that you have contributed to our research, and maybe learned a bit about yourself along the way. We will not be sending you any more e-mails, and your data will be stored confidentially, anonymously and securely for a period of 5 years in a locked office in the School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, feel free to contact Dr Arthur Stukas on 9479 1515, or e-mail at a.stukas@latrobe.edu.au. Alternatively, if you have an immediate concern, or are distressed in any way by your participation in our study, please call the researcher directly on 0401 029 881 (or if less urgent, you can email at personality@latrobe.edu.au). If you wish to withdraw your data from our study, please phone or email us so this can be arranged.

Thank you once again for kindly participating in our study

Kind regards

David Collins
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology student, La Trobe University

Dr Art Stukas
School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Appendix J: The Morality Questionnaire

Below is a series of scenarios designed to measure a person's morality. Please read each scenario and provide ***a brief 2-3 sentence*** *answer on what you would do in this scenario and why. There are many different ways to act in each of the scenarios. We are interested in how you would act.*

1. A charity organisation has telephoned you asking for your help to serve free meals on Christmas day to homeless people in your local area. Christmas day is a very special time for your family, and is the only time of the year where you get to see many of your relatives. What would you do and why?
   (simply click on the grey box and begin typing)

2. After graduating from university, you are able to obtain an excellent job in your chosen profession. Your new employer tells you that he is interested in employing another recent graduate from your university course. He asks you to recommend someone. You know that several of your close and very loyal friends, who did not work particularly hard during university, would like to have this job. You also know that the hardest working student in the course, who you know casually, is looking for a job. Who would you recommend and why?

3. You are in a meeting when a colleague takes credit for work that you have done. This colleague has recently been cautioned about his poor work performance. What do you do and why?

Below is a list of 3 questions. We are interested in your reaction to such matters of opinion. Please provide ***a brief 2-3 sentence*** *answer for each question.*

4. Should people who commit minor offences (e.g., speeding, shoplifting) be punished? If so, what methods should be used? Please justify your answer.

5. Do you believe in the "Right to Die" (i.e., euthanasia)? Please justify your answer.

6. People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another person, even if there are potential benefits to be gained from such actions. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please justify your answer.

Appendix K: The Competitiveness Questionnaire

Below is a series of scenarios designed to measure a person's competitive spirit. Please read each scenario and provide ***a brief 2-3 sentence*** *answer on what you would do in this scenario and why. There are many different ways to act in each of the scenarios. We are interested in how you would act.*

1. You are attempting to transfer over to a new university course. Your friend, who is currently doing the same course as you, also wants to transfer over to this new course. You have been told that only the top student from your course will be accepted into this new course. Your friend is currently having difficulty with some of the class material and asks for your help. What would you do? Why?
   (simply click on the grey box and begin typing)

2. You are participating in a major competition when you find out that one of the competitors has been cheating. You are the only person who knows about the cheating. What would you do? Why?

3. You are a university student who had hoped to get an A in a subject that was important for your future career aspirations. You have just found out you got a C on the final exam. What do you do? Why?

Below is a list of 3 questions. We are interested in your reaction to such matters of opinion. Please provide ***a brief 2-3 sentence*** *answer for each question.*

4. Beating your personal best is more important that beating your opposition. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

5. Success in life is based on survival of the fittest. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

6. People with a strong competitive spirit are self-reliant, and do not depend on other people for helping them achieve their goals. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Appendix L: The Resultant Self-Esteem Scale

(McFarland & Ross, 1982)

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Appendix M: Scale used to Measure Cognitive Reactions to Feedback

(Adapted from Swann, Griffin, Predmore, and Gaines, 1987)

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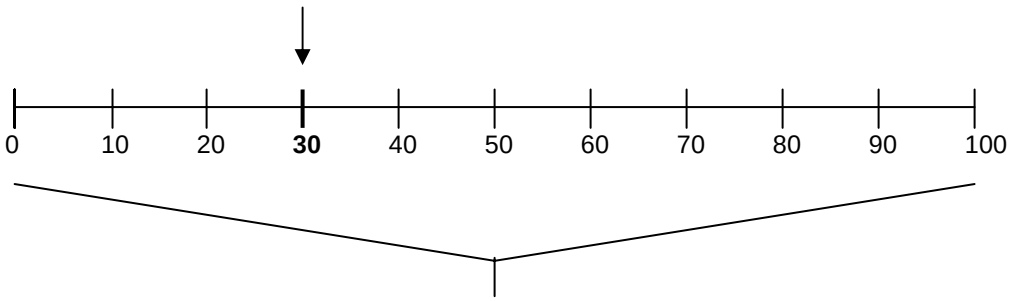
Appendix N: Self-Presentational Measure (Study 3)*

*Taken from a participant receiving negative feedback on their competitive spirit

Daniel Walsh has classified you as falling in the 30th percentile (low range) with regard to your Competitive Spirit. Below is an opportunity for you to tell Daniel Walsh exactly where **you think** you fall in relation to your level of competitive spirit. Your rating may be higher, lower, or the same as Daniel Walsh's rating of you.

Daniel Walsh has rated you here



Please rate where ***you*** think you fall in terms of your level of competitive spirit
(simply click on the grey box and type a number from 1-100)

Appendix O: Behavioural Measure (Study 3)

Throughout the trial of our new on-line personality assessment centre, we are not only testing the viability of doing personality assessments on-line, but also testing the competence of staff members we are employing. Below is an opportunity for you to give your appraisal of Daniel Walsh. Your appraisal will help us in deciding Daniel Walsh's future employment with the on-line personality assessment centre once the trial has concluded.

22) Would you recommend that Daniel Walsh be employed at the Personality Assessment Centre once the trial has been concluded?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Would not recommend at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly recommend

Appendix P: Information Statement and Cover Story (Study 3)

School of Psychological Science
Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering
Bundoora, VIC 3086
Australia

-The Trial of a New Australian On-line Personality Assessment Centre-

Dear La Trobe University Student,

You are invited to volunteer in a research study that will trial the viability of a new Australian on-line personality assessment centre being run at La Trobe University. You were selected as a possible participant because you volunteered to be contacted to participate in psychological research at La Trobe University. If you decide to participate in the trial, your requirements will be minimal. We simply ask that you complete and return (via e-mail) some personality tests that we will e-mail you. Once these tests are received, they will be analysed by one of our staff members working at the centre. After analysing your tests, our staff member will email you with feedback about your results within 48 hours - so you may get to know a little more about yourself and your personality along the way.

If you decide to volunteer for our trial, simply send an e-mail with the words **"I volunteer"** to - **personality@latrobe.edu.au**

We ask that you please read the following information before deciding to volunteer for our study.

Some Information about the Trial
The trial of the New Australian On-line Personality Assessment Centre is a nationwide initiative, involving a number of different universities and psychology practices around the country. If you choose to volunteer for our study, your e-mail address will not be used for any other purpose than for this study and will be deleted from our records at the completion of the research.

What is required of you?
You will be asked to complete and e-mail back several psychological tests that we will send to your e-mail account (which should take around 20 minutes to complete). Once one of our staff members has assessed your results (it will take 48 hours), you will be e-mailed with feedback regarding your results. You will also be given an opportunity to respond to the feedback provided. In total, the study should take around 40 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

If you decide to participate in this study, you may gain an insight into the type of personality that you possess. Further, you will be placed into a draw to win one of 10 movie tickets to Hoyts cinemas (your odds of winning are 1 in 16). This study does not contain any overt risks; however it is sometimes essential for the validity of research results not to disclose the true purpose of the research to participants. If this occurs, participants will be debriefed as soon as possible and at that time given the opportunity to withdraw from the research and have records of their participation erased. Please consider these points before deciding to participate.

Confidentiality

No identifying information will be attached to your data (you will be identified only as a number). The records of this study, including your test results, will be kept confidential. At the end of the study, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw any data that you contribute. Results of this study may be published in an academic journal; however, there will be no information included that would make it possible to identify any participants. Research data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room in the School of Psychological Science, and only the researchers will have access to them. After five years, all data will be destroyed.

All possible measures will be taken to protect the security of the psychological tests that you email to us. Your tests will be stored in a password protected email account on a password protected (non-networked) computer. In addition, the computer that you will be sending your emails to is protected by "Firewall", one of the most effective internet security programs available. However, despite these security measures, it is important for you to consider some of the security risks associated with sending psychological tests over the internet before deciding to volunteer for our research. These risks include the potential for misdirected email correspondence, the possibility that your emails may retain a digital code on our hard drive once we have deleted them, and the risks associated with sending information through intermediaries (i.e., internet providers). Additionally, risks also pertain to issues at your end of the communication chain. For example, the possibility of multiple users accessing the computer form which you sent the email, security of stored emails if you use a networked computer, others accessing your email account via an internet connection (e.g., not having “firewall” installed on your computer can allow for remote “spyware” installation), deleted emails retaining digital coding on your hard drive, and the potential for you to send a misdirected email. These risks are small, however please consider them before volunteering.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your decision to participate in this study is purely voluntary, and will not affect your current or future relations with La Trobe University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time and have all of your data removed from the study.

Contacts and Questions

Any questions regarding this research may be directed to the research supervisor, Dr Arthur Stukas of the School of Psychological Science, on 9479 1515 or at a.stukas@latrobe.edu.au. If you have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee, Faculty of Science, Technology, and Engineering, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (ph: (03) 9479 1784, e-mail: s.cook@latrobe.edu.au.

Thank you for kindly considering volunteering in our research.

Kind regards

David Collins

Doctorate of Clinical Psychology Student, La Trobe University

Dr Art Stukas

School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Appendix Q: Moral Virtue Positive Feedback

This material has been removed due to copyright

Appendix R: Competitive Spirit Positive Feedback

Appendix S: Moral Virtue Negative Feedback

Appendix T: Competitive Spirit Negative Feedback

Appendix U: Participant Debriefing (Study 3)

School of Psychological Science
Faculty of Science, Technology & Engineering
Bundoora, VIC 3086
Australia

Dear La Trobe University Student,

Please read the following information carefully

Occasionally in psychology, it is necessary for us to hide the true aims of our research in order to protect the validity of our results. **The study that you have just participated in is an example of this. In particular, the feedback you received from us about your moral virtue or competitive spirit was part of our standard experimental method, completely unrelated to your actual personality and traits, and therefore should not be taken seriously**. Please read the accompanying attachment for more details.

If you are experiencing any adverse reactions as a result of the feedback you received, please call the researchers on – 0401 029 881 or send an email to personality@latrobe.edu.au

You were told that the study was a trial for a new on-line personality assessment service. In fact, the study was actually investigating how people react to certain types of feedback given about certain personal attributes. The specific attributes that we measured in our study were competitive spirit and moral virtue. The study also looked at whether people's reactions were different depending on whether they received positive or negative feedback. We were also interested in the notion that people may place more importance on certain attributes than others. For example, a sportsperson may place a high level of importance on his or her competitive spirit, and a priest may place a high degree of importance on his or her morality. Essentially, research suggests that people stake their feelings of self-worth on certain areas and not others. We were interested in whether the types of attributes that participants staked their self-worth on affected their reaction to the feedback provided.

To investigate these ideas, we set up a situation whereby participants were told that they were participating in the trial of a new on-line Personality Assessment Centre. Participants were asked to fill out a variety of personality scales, so that a clinical psychologist (Dr Daniel Walsh) could assess them. We then provided participants with feedback supposedly from this clinical psychologist regarding their test performance. In reality, this feedback was completely fictional, and allocated randomly, depending on whether a participant had been randomly assigned to receive positive (classified in top 80%) or negative feedback (classified in bottom 30%). Once participants had read the feedback, they were asked to complete a response to feedback form. This was our way of determining

participants' emotional and cognitive reactions to the feedback provided. It was hypothesised that participants receiving positive feedback would have more positive emotional and cognitive reactions than those receiving negative feedback, especially if the feedback was provided on an attribute on which the person has staked his or her self-worth.

Essential Information to Consider

You did not participate in the trial of a new on-line personality assessment centre. This was a cover story that allowed us to hide the true aims and hypotheses of our study from participants. **Both the on-line personality assessment centre, and the clinical psychologist (Dr Daniel Walsh), were entirely fictional.**

The feedback that you received was completely fictional, and in no way reflects your standing on (moral virtue/competitive spirit). The feedback was devised by the researchers, and allocated randomly to each participant. Essentially, the feedback you received was completely unrelated to your real traits and abilities, and may not reflect your personality in any way.

You may be wondering why we went to such lengths to hide the true nature of our research. The answer is that if participants had known that we were explicitly measuring their reactions to the feedback provided, their reactions may have changed. It was also important for us to create a situation where participants truly believed that they were receiving real feedback from a real clinical psychologist. However, as stated above, the psychologist was completely fictional, and the feedback provided was completely random, and therefore unrelated to your real personality and traits.

Using methods such as these is necessary for achieving scientifically-based results that can push the field of clinical psychology ahead and allow us to gain a better understanding of our clients. We hope that you are comfortable in the knowledge that you have contributed to our research, and maybe learned a bit about yourself along the way. If you have any questions or comments about this study, feel free to contact Dr Arthur Stukas on 9479 1515, or e-mail at a.stukas@latrobe.edu.au.

Again, thank you for kindly participating in our study

Kind regards

David Collins
Doctorate of Clinical Psychology student, La Trobe University

Dr Art Stukas
School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University

Appendix V: Pilot Test Scale to Measure Perceived Feedback Valence (Study 3)

1. Please rate, on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the most negative and 10 being the most positive, how positive/negative you thought the above feedback was

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very negative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very positive

2. How much do you think that a person would like to receive this feedback from another person?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very much like to

3. Would you like to receive this feedback from another person?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very much like to

4. What sort of reaction do you think a person may have to this feedback?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very Negative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Very Positive

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