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Racial differences in narcissistic tendencies

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ABSTRACT

Black individuals have been found to report the highest levels of self-esteem of any racial group in the United States. The purpose of the present research was to examine whether Black individuals also report higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. Study 1 ($N = 367$) found that Black individuals reported higher levels of narcissism than White individuals even when controlling for gender, self-esteem level, and socially desirable response tendencies. Study 2 ($N = 967$) and Study 3 ($N = 315$) found similar results such that Black individuals reported higher levels of narcissism than White individuals on the narcissism measures that captured less pathological facets of this construct. Study 3 also included indicators of psychological adjustment and found that the pathological aspects of narcissism were more strongly associated with maladjustment for Black individuals than for White individuals. The implications of these results for understanding the Black self-esteem advantage are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Despite significant efforts to cultivate an environment of equality, minority groups often serve as targets for discrimination and prejudice. Members of these groups are most often aware of the negative view that society has of them and this stigma can lead to several negative consequences (see Major & O'Brien, 2005, for a review). One of the most notable consequences is that members of stigmatized groups often report lower levels of self-esteem than other individuals. This pattern of low self-esteem for members of stigmatized groups has been observed for various groups including women (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999), overweight individuals (Miller & Downey, 1999), individuals with physical abnormalities (e.g., burn victims; Van Loey & Van Son, 2003), and individuals with severe mental illnesses (Markowitz, 1998). The most prominent explanation for the low levels of self-esteem reported by individuals who belong to groups that are devalued by society is that they internalize the negative views of their groups that are held by wider society. However, this *internalization of stigma* explanation does not appear to apply to the members of all stigmatized groups. Perhaps the most notable exception to this pattern is that Black individuals (i.e., African Americans of sub-Saharan biological ancestry) report higher levels of self-esteem than any other racial group in the United States including White individuals (i.e., non-Hispanic

Caucasians of European heritage; see Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000, or Twenge & Crocker, 2002, for meta-analyses concerning this issue).

The heightened level of self-esteem reported by Black individuals is often referred to as the *Black self-esteem advantage* (e.g., Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Findings such as the Black self-esteem advantage have led to an alternative explanation concerning the effect of stigma on self-perception which is referred to as *stigma as self-protection* (Crocker & Major, 1989). In essence, this explanation suggests that being a member of a stigmatized group may serve as a buffer against adversity because members of devalued groups are able to externalize negative experiences by attributing them to discrimination or prejudice. It is assumed that this externalization of negative experiences would help to bolster or protect the self-esteem of stigmatized individuals. This explanation is appealing for a variety of reasons but it has important limitations including the fact that it only appears to apply to the members of certain stigmatized groups. If the simple version of the stigma as self-protection explanation was correct, then other stigmatized groups (e.g., Hispanics) should also report high levels of self-esteem but this has not been observed.

The history of the Black self-esteem advantage is complex. Black individuals reported lower levels of self-esteem than White individuals as recently as the 1960s (Clark & Clark, 1947; Dreger & Miller, 1960; Proshansky & Newton, 1968). This is not surprising given the history of slavery, discrimination, and segregation that Black individuals have experienced in the United States (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Johnson, 1957). However, the self-esteem levels of Black individuals began to increase in the 1960s and were commensurate with White individuals by the 1970s and actually surpassed those of White individuals by the 1980s (see Zeigler-Hill, Wallace, & Myers, submitted for publication). It has generally been assumed

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that the increases in self-esteem reported by Black individuals suggest a positive shift in how these individuals view themselves but a recent series of studies suggest that the truth may be more complicated because the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals appear to be relatively fragile (Zeigler-Hill et al., submitted for publication). This fragility emerged in results showing that Black individuals reported lower levels of implicit self-esteem and greater self-esteem instability than White individuals (Zeigler-Hill et al., submitted for publication, Study 1). Importantly, these differences only emerged among individuals who refrained from engaging in self-deceptive enhancement which suggests that socially desirable response tendencies may generally mask the fragile nature of the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals. That is, Black individuals may not be completely forthcoming in admitting their insecurities and uncertainties. This possibility was further supported by a subsequent study showing that Black individuals reported significant decreases in self-esteem compared to White individuals when they believed the experimenter would know if they were lying about their feelings of self-worth during a bogus pipeline procedure (Zeigler-Hill et al., submitted for publication, Study 2). Taken together, these results suggest that the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals may be at least somewhat uncertain and possibly inflated.

The fragile feelings of self-worth reported by Black individuals are consistent in many ways with the classic *psychodynamic mask model of narcissism* that is derived from the perspectives of Kohut (1966) and Kernberg (1975; see Bosson et al., 2008 or Zeigler-Hill & Jordan, in press, for a review). Despite important differences in their conceptualizations of narcissism, Kohut and Kernberg agree that the grandiosity displayed by narcissists may conceal underlying feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. That is, the grandiose self-views of narcissists are believed to serve as a façade that disguises their deep-seated negative feelings about themselves. The contradictory self-views held by narcissists are believed to be at least partially responsible for many of the defensive behaviors that characterize these individuals (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). It is possible that the positive self-views expressed by Black individuals may be, at least in part, a reaction to the stigma surrounding their group. That is, Black individuals may express highly positive self-views in an effort to protect themselves from the underlying uncertainty that accompanies their membership in a devalued group in a manner that is consistent with the psychodynamic mask model of narcissism. This basic prediction has received initial support in a study by Foster, Campbell, and Twenge (2003) which found that Black individuals reported higher levels of narcissism than any other racial/ethnic group.

2. Overview and predictions

Our goal for the present studies was to examine whether racial differences emerged for narcissism in a manner that was similar to the Black self-esteem advantage. This was accomplished by conducting three studies that compared the narcissism levels of Black and White individuals. The present research extends the findings of Foster et al. (2003) by using various measures of narcissism rather than relying solely on the NPI. Also, the present studies accounted for factors related to narcissism such as self-esteem level and socially desirable response tendencies in order to clarify the nature of any racial differences in narcissism that emerged. Given previous research concerning racial/ethnic differences in narcissism as well as the fragile nature of the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals, we expected Black individuals to report higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. Finally, Study 3 included indicators of psychological adjustment so that we could examine whether race moderated the association between narcissism and psychological adjustment.

3. Study 1: racial differences on the 37-item version of the NPI

The primary goal for Study 1 was to examine whether Black individuals reported higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. This was done by comparing the scores of Black and White participants on a self-report measure of narcissism. We also included a measure of self-esteem because of its connection to narcissism (e.g., Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004) as well as a measure of socially desirable responding due to its importance in previous research concerning racial differences in self-evaluations (Zeigler-Hill et al., submitted for publication).

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were 403 undergraduates at a university in the southern region of the United States. Participants were enrolled in psychology courses and participated in return for partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement. As a result of the present study being concerned with the narcissistic tendencies of Black and White individuals, 35 participants were excluded from the study who did not identify themselves as either Black or White (15 multiethnic, eight Hispanic, seven Asian, three Native American, and two Pacific Islander). Of the remaining 367 participants, 146 were Black (19 men and 127 women) and 221 were White (42 men and 179 women). The mean age of the final participants was 22.04 years ($SD = 5.79$). Participants completed measures of narcissism, self-esteem, and socially desirable responding – along with other measures that are not relevant to the present study – through a secure website.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Narcissistic personality inventory

Narcissistic tendencies were measured using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). The NPI was developed according to diagnostic criteria but appears to assess an emotionally resilient and extraverted form of narcissism (Miller & Campbell, 2008). The form of narcissism captured by the NPI is at least somewhat adaptive with its maladaptive aspects being limited primarily to feelings of entitlement and the tendency to exploit others. The version of the NPI used in the present study contains 37 true-false items that Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) adapted from Emmons's (1987) factor analysis of the original, 54-item instrument. This version of the NPI consists of the following four factors: Leadership/Authority (nine items; e.g., "I see myself as a good leader"), Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (nine items; e.g., "I like to look at myself in the mirror"), Superiority/Arrogance (11 items; e.g., "I can make anybody believe anything"), and Exploitation/Entitlement (eight items; e.g., "I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me"). Despite the low level of internal consistency for the Exploitation/Entitlement subscale, we used these subscales rather than the overall composite score due to the fact that the Exploitation/Entitlement subscale often has a different pattern of associations with related constructs (e.g., self-esteem) than is observed for the other subscales or the total NPI score (see Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009, for a review). The construct validity and internal consistency of the NPI has been previously demonstrated (Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Hall, 1981; Raskin & Terry, 1988).

3.2.2. Rosenberg self-esteem scale

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure of global self-esteem (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"). Participants were instructed to complete the

instrument according to how they typically or generally feel about themselves. Responses were made on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This instrument is regarded as a well-validated and reliable measure of global self-regard (e.g., Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

3.2.3. *Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding*

The *Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding* (Paulhus, 1984) is a 40-item measure that was designed to detect socially desirable response distortions. This instrument is comprised of two subscales referred to as self-deceptive enhancement (20 items; e.g., “I have not always been honest with myself”) and impression management (20 items; e.g., “I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her”). The self-deceptive enhancement subscale captures an unintentional distortion of self-image, whereas the impression management subscale captures a deliberate distortion of one’s public image. Participants were asked to respond on scales ranging from 1 (*not true*) to 7 (*very true*). This instrument is counterbalanced such that there are equal numbers of positively and negatively keyed items. The *Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding* uses a dichotomous scoring system with responses of 6 or 7 being assigned a score of 1 and responses between 1 and 5 being assigned a score of 0.

4. Results

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the measures in Study 1 are presented in Table 1. The psychometric properties of the measures included in Study 1 were similar for Black and White participants which is essential for making comparisons between these groups (e.g., Chen, 2008). It is important to note that Black participants reported higher levels of self-esteem than White

participants ($M_{\text{Black}} = 4.22$, $M_{\text{White}} = 3.92$; $t = 3.83$, $p < .001$, $d = .40$) which is consistent with previous studies concerning the Black self-esteem advantage (e.g., Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether Black and White participants differed in their self-reported levels of narcissistic tendencies. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2. Consistent with our predictions, racial differences emerged for each of the NPI subscales such that Black participants reported higher levels of narcissism than White participants with the size of the effects ranging from small to large. Although Black participants reported higher levels of narcissism and self-esteem than White participants, the strength of the associations between self-esteem and the NPI subscales did not differ between Black and White participants ($z_s < 0.75$, *ns*).

We conducted additional analyses to determine whether self-esteem level, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management would influence the associations between race and narcissism (see Table 3). In essence, we wanted to determine (1) if racial differences in narcissism would persist if self-esteem level and socially desirable response tendencies were controlled in these analyses and (2) whether self-esteem or socially desirable responding would moderate the association between race and narcissism. These goals were accomplished by conducting a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses in which the subscales of the NPI were regressed onto race, gender, self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management. Gender was included as a predictor because men have been found to report higher levels of narcissism than women (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Preliminary analyses included all possible interactions of these main effect terms but none of these interactions reached conventional levels of significance so they were trimmed from the final analyses. As a result, the final analyses examined only main effects since there were no significant moderating effects.

Table 1
Intercorrelations and descriptive statistics for Studies 1 and 2.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Study 1</i>							
1. Leadership/Authority (NPI)	–	.40***	.64***	.52***	.37***	.02	–.12
2. Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (NPI)	.47***	–	.43***	.27***	.43***	.13	.03
3. Superiority/Arrogance (NPI)	.54***	.37***	–	.62***	.14	.01	–.14
4. Exploitation/Entitlement (NPI)	.34***	.34***	.47***	–	–.01	–.02	–.07
5. Self-Esteem	.34***	.39***	.17*	–.09	–	.32***	.07
6. Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.18**	.23***	.14*	–.04	.39***	–	.56***
7. Impression Management	–.04	–.05	–.14*	–.21***	.19**	.50***	–
M_{Black}	6.07	7.01	5.30	3.74	4.22	0.31	0.25
SD_{Black}	2.42	1.71	3.06	2.10	0.68	0.21	0.18
α_{Black}	0.80	0.71	0.82	0.71	0.84	0.81	0.77
M_{White}	5.36	5.33	4.16	3.02	3.92	0.24	0.26
SD_{White}	2.64	2.02	2.74	1.90	0.76	0.17	0.18
α_{White}	0.81	0.71	0.77	0.59	0.91	0.73	0.77
<i>Study 2</i>							
1. Leadership/Authority (NPI)	–	.46***	.11*	.24***	.10	.02	
2. Grandiose Exhibitionism (NPI)	.40***	–	.18***	.05	.09	–.05	
3. Entitlement/Exploitativeness (NPI)	.21***	.22***	–	–.16***	–.10	–.16**	
4. Self-Esteem	.31***	.16***	–.16***	–	.25***	.13*	
5. Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.19***	.01	–.10*	.34***	–	.72***	
6. Impression Management	–.02	–.15***	–.21***	.22***	.66***	–	
M_{Black}	6.48	4.71	0.92	4.22	0.31	0.26	
SD_{Black}	2.54	2.37	1.01	0.76	0.23	0.20	
α_{Black}	0.71	0.71	0.52	0.87	0.85	0.82	
M_{White}	5.23	3.28	0.77	3.93	0.26	0.27	
SD_{White}	2.74	2.43	0.94	0.81	0.20	0.19	
α_{White}	0.73	0.73	0.52	0.91	0.81	0.81	

Note. Correlations for Black participants are presented above the diagonals and correlations for the White participants are presented below the diagonals.

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

Table 2
Racial differences in narcissism across three studies.

	Black participants M (SD)	White participants M (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>Study 1</i>				
Leadership/Authority (NPI)	6.07 (2.42)	5.36 (2.64)	2.61**	0.26
Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration (NPI)	7.01 (1.71)	5.33 (2.02)	8.29***	0.83
Superiority/Arrogance (NPI)	5.30 (3.06)	4.16 (2.74)	3.73***	0.37
Exploitation/Entitlement (NPI)	3.74 (2.10)	3.02 (1.90)	3.39**	0.39
<i>Study 2</i>				
Leadership/Authority (NPI)	6.48 (2.54)	5.23 (2.74)	7.25***	0.45
Grandiose Exhibitionism (NPI)	4.71 (2.37)	3.28 (2.43)	9.10***	0.57
Entitlement/Exploitativeness (NPI)	0.92 (1.01)	0.77 (0.94)	2.36*	0.15
<i>Study 3</i>				
Leadership/Authority (NPI)	5.97 (2.72)	5.07 (2.43)	3.11**	0.34
Grandiose Exhibitionism (NPI)	5.14 (2.10)	3.76 (2.24)	5.63***	0.61
Entitlement/Exploitativeness (NPI)	1.20 (1.11)	0.94 (1.01)	2.16*	0.24
Grandiosity Scale	3.82 (1.41)	3.14 (1.39)	4.32***	0.47
Psychological Entitlement Scale	4.00 (1.34)	3.13 (1.38)	5.62***	0.61
Contingent Self-Esteem (PNI)	2.60 (1.19)	3.00 (1.18)	-2.99**	-0.33
Exploitative (PNI)	3.10 (1.11)	3.05 (1.02)	0.42	0.05
Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement (PNI)	3.35 (1.16)	3.65 (1.03)	-2.45*	-0.27
Hiding the Self (PNI)	3.38 (1.23)	3.51 (0.99)	-1.02	-0.12
Grandiose Fantasy (PNI)	3.50 (1.30)	3.70 (1.20)	-1.37	-0.15
Devaluing (PNI)	2.75 (1.19)	2.57 (1.05)	1.41	0.16
Entitlement Rage (PNI)	2.93 (1.18)	2.91 (1.13)	0.13	0.01
Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale	2.77 (0.89)	2.77 (0.69)	-0.06	-0.01
Personality Disorder Questionnaire	0.52 (0.29)	0.87 (1.79)	-2.37*	-0.26
Poisonous Pedagogy (OMNI)	7.67 (2.70)	6.86 (2.63)	2.70**	0.29
Narcissistic Personality Dimension (OMNI)	6.79 (3.47)	6.60 (3.15)	0.51	0.06
Narcissistically Abused Personality (OMNI)	5.16 (2.20)	4.63 (2.08)	2.22*	0.24

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

The results of these analyses found that Black individuals reported higher scores than White individuals on each of the NPI subscales even when gender, self-esteem level, and socially desirable response tendencies were controlled ($\beta s > .12$, $t s > 2.44$, $p s < .05$, $d s > .25$). The main effect of self-esteem emerged for three of the NPI subscales: Leadership/Authority ($\beta = .35$, $t = 6.63$, $p < .001$, $d = .69$), Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration ($\beta = .35$, $t = 7.31$, $p < .001$, $d = .77$), and Superiority/Arrogance ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.64$, $p < .01$, $d = .28$). The main effect of self-deceptive enhancement emerged for two of the NPI subscales: Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.18$, $p < .05$, $d = .23$) and Superiority/Arrogance ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.24$, $p < .05$, $d = .23$). The main effect of impression management emerged for each of the NPI subscales: Leadership/Authority ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -2.64$, $p < .01$, $d = -.28$), Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.56$, $p < .05$, $d = -.27$), Superiority/Arrogance ($\beta = -.22$, $t = -3.64$, $p < .001$, $d = -.38$), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness ($\beta = -.21$, $t = -3.43$, $p < .001$, $d = -.36$). Taken together, these results suggest that higher levels of narcissism were reported by individuals with high self-esteem who engaged in self-deceptive enhancement but refrained from impression management.

5. Discussion

The results of Study 1 provided support for our prediction by showing that Black individuals reported higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. Importantly, this effect persisted even when gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies were controlled. These findings suggest that the positive feelings of self-worth reflected in the Black self-esteem advantage may also include elements of narcissism which may require a reconsideration of the benefits that are believed to be associated with the Black self-esteem advantage. It is important to note that the associations between self-esteem and the subscales of the NPI were

similar for Black and White individuals which suggest that the connections between feelings of self-worth and narcissistic tendencies may be similar for both racial/ethnic groups.

6. Study 2: racial differences on the 40-item version of the NPI

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 using the 40-item forced-choice version of the NPI. This version of the NPI is more widely-used than the 37-item true-false version used in Study 1. We expected that Black individuals would report higher narcissism scores than White individuals on the 40-item version of the NPI just as they did on the 37-item version in Study 1.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were 1028 undergraduates who participated in return for partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement. Due to the present study being concerned with the narcissistic tendencies of Black and White individuals, 61 participants were excluded from the study who did not identify themselves as either Black or White (22 Hispanic, 20 multiethnic, 11 Asian, three Native American, and five Pacific Islander). Of the remaining 967 participants, 397 were Black (66 men and 331 women) and 570 were White (138 men and 432 women). The mean age of the final participants was 21.01 years ($SD = 5.84$). Participants completed measures of narcissism, self-esteem, and socially desirable responding through a secure website.

6.2. Measures

The measures of self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management from Study 1 were used in Study 2.

Table 3
Regressions of narcissism on race, gender, self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management.

	NPI L/A		NPI S/S		NPI S/A		NPI E/E	
	Normal narcissism	Pathological narcissism	Normal narcissism	Pathological narcissism	Normal narcissism	Pathological narcissism	Normal narcissism	Pathological narcissism
	NPI L/A	NPI G/E	NPI L/A	NPI G/E	NPI L/A	NPI G/E	NPI L/A	NPI G/E
Study 1								
Race	.12*		.30***		.14**		.16**	
Gender	.03		-.01		.07		.07	
Self-Esteem	.35***		.35***		.15**		-.07	
Self-deceptive Enhancement	.07		.12*		.14*		.11	
Impression Management	-.15**		-.14*		-.22***		-.21***	
		NPI L/A		NPI G/E		NPI G/E		NPI E/E
Study 2								
Race	.16***		.24***		.11***		.06	
Gender	.02		.07*		.11**		-.16***	
Self-Esteem	.26***		.10*		.10*		.10*	
Self-deceptive Enhancement	.12**		-.25***					
Impression Management	-.19***							
		NPI L/A <td></td> <td>NPI G/E <td></td> <td>NPI G/E <td></td> <td>NPI E/E </td></td></td>		NPI G/E <td></td> <td>NPI G/E <td></td> <td>NPI E/E </td></td>		NPI G/E <td></td> <td>NPI E/E </td>		NPI E/E
Study 3								
Race	.14*	.26***	.31***	.16**	.00	.09	.14*	.13*
Gender	.07	.20***	.00	.18**	-.21***	-.08	.11	.09
Self-esteem	.21***	-.32***	-.18*	-.19*	-.12*	-.25***	-.26***	-.12*
Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.07	.09	.08	.08	.13	-.21**	-.15	-.24**
Impression Management	-.11	-.19**	-.19**	-.14*	-.33***	-.12	-.07	-.14

Note: The values presented are standardized regression coefficients. L/A = Leadership/Authority; S/S = Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration; S/A = Superiority/Arrogance; E/E = Entitlement/Exploitativeness; G/E = Grandiose Exhibitionism; NGS = Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale; PES = Psychological Entitlement Scale; CSE = Contingent Self-Esteem; EXP = Exploitative Tendencies; SE = Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement; HS = Hiding of the Self; GF = Grandiose Fantasy; DV = Devaluing; ER = Entitlement Rage; HSNB = Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale; PDQ = Personality Disorder Questionnaire; PP = Poisonous Pedagogy; NPD = Narcissistic Personality Dimension; NAPP = Narcissistically Abused Personality.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

6.2.1. Narcissistic personality inventory

Narcissism was measured using the 40-item version of the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). This is the most commonly used version of the NPI and it employs a forced-choice format such that participants are made to decide between a narcissistic alternative and a non-narcissistic alternative for each item (e.g., “I really like to be the center of attention” vs. “It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention”). There has been considerable debate about the factor structure of the 40-item NPI over the years (see Brown et al., 2009, for a review) but Ackerman et al. (2011) have recently provided compelling evidence for the following three factors: Leadership/Authority (11 items; e.g., “If I ruled the world it would be a much better place”), Grandiose Exhibitionism (10 items; e.g., “I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so”), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness (four items; e.g., “I find it easy to manipulate people”).

7. Results

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the measures in Study 2 are presented in Table 1. Consistent with previous research concerning the Black self-esteem advantage, Black participants reported higher levels of self-esteem than White participants ($M_{\text{Black}} = 4.22$, $M_{\text{White}} = 3.93$; $t = 5.64$, $p < .001$, $d = .36$). As in Study 1, racial differences emerged for each of the NPI subscales such that Black participants reported higher levels of narcissism than White participants with the size of the effects ranging from small to medium (see Table 2). Although Black participants reported higher levels of narcissism and self-esteem than White participants, the strength of the associations between self-esteem and the NPI subscales did not differ between Black and White participants ($z_s < 1.59$, *ns*).

We also conducted regression analyses that controlled for gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies (see Table 3). The results of these analyses found that Black individuals reported higher scores than White individuals for each of the NPI subscales even when gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies were controlled ($\beta_s > .11$, $t_s > 3.32$, $p_s < .001$, $d_s > .21$). The main effect of self-esteem emerged for each of the NPI subscales: Leadership/Authority ($\beta = .26$, $t = 7.77$, $p < .001$, $d = .50$), Grandiose Exhibitionism ($\beta = .11$, $t = 3.17$, $p < .01$, $d = .20$), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness ($\beta = -.16$, $t = -4.46$, $p < .001$, $d = -.29$). The main effect of self-deceptive enhancement emerged for each of the NPI subscales: Leadership/Authority ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.44$, $p < .001$, $d = .15$), Grandiose Exhibitionism ($\beta = .10$, $t = 2.14$, $p < .001$, $d = .13$), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness ($\beta = .10$, $t = 2.09$, $p < .05$, $d = .13$). The main effect of impression management emerged for each of the NPI subscales: Leadership/Authority ($\beta = -.19$, $t = -4.29$, $p < .001$, $d = -.28$), Grandiose Exhibitionism ($\beta = -.25$, $t = -5.76$, $p < .001$, $d = -.37$), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness ($\beta = -.22$, $t = -4.87$, $p < .001$, $d = -.31$). Taken together, these results suggest that higher levels of narcissism were generally reported by individuals with high self-esteem who engaged in self-deceptive enhancement but refrained from impression management. The exception to this pattern was that self-esteem had a negative association with Entitlement/Exploitativeness such that individuals with high self-esteem reported lower levels of this facet of narcissism.

8. Discussion

The results of Study 2 provided additional support for our prediction that Black individuals would report higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. As in Study 1, this pattern emerged even when gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response

tendencies were controlled. The consistency of the results for these studies increases our confidence that Black individuals possess higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. The magnitude of the differences varied across the facets of narcissism such that the largest differences were found for those facets that captured grandiosity and self-absorption whereas smaller differences emerged for those facets of narcissism concerning exploitation and entitlement.

9. Study 3: racial differences on various measures of narcissism

Narcissism is a multifaceted construct that is defined and assessed in a wide variety of ways (e.g., Miller & Campbell, 2008). In order to account for the complexity of this construct, we included an array of narcissism measures in an effort to capture its various aspects in Study 3 rather than relying solely on the NPI. This is important because the pathological aspects of narcissism are sometimes emphasized (e.g., arrogant or haughty behaviors, feelings of entitlement, lack of empathy, willingness to exploit others, emotional instability; American Psychiatric Association, 2000), whereas other conceptualizations of narcissism focus on the emotionally resilient and extraverted aspects of the construct (i.e., normal narcissism; see Miller & Campbell, 2008 or Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010, for extended discussions). We selected measures of narcissism based on their popularity and perceived utility in the existing literature. We were also interested in the possibility that narcissism may have different associations with psychological adjustment for Black and White individuals. Our interest in psychological adjustment was due to the possibility that narcissism may have a particularly strong association with maladjustment for Black individuals.

9.1. Method

9.1.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were 338 undergraduates who participated in return for partial fulfillment of a research participation requirement. Due to our concern with differences in narcissistic tendencies reported by Black and White individuals, 23 participants were excluded from the study who did not identify themselves as either Black or White. Of these 23 participants, seven failed to indicate their race and 16 claimed membership in a group other than Black or White (12 multiethnic, two Asian, one Hispanic, and one Native American). Of the remaining 315 participants, 148 were Black (41 men and 107 women) and 167 were White (51 men and 116 women). The mean age of participants was 21.91 years ($SD = 4.12$). Participants completed measures of narcissism, self-esteem, socially desirable responding, and psychological adjustment during laboratory sessions consisting of small groups of no more than five participants per session.

9.2. Measures

The measures of self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management from the previous studies as well as the 40-item version of the NPI from Study 2 were used in Study 3. A variety of additional measures were also included in Study 3 to capture diverse facets of narcissism and aspects of psychological adjustment.

9.2.1. Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale

The Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale (Rosenthal, Hooley, & Steshenko, in preparation) was used to assess the grandiose beliefs that often characterize narcissism. The Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale asks respondents to rate the extent to which each of 16 trait

adjectives (e.g., perfect, glorious) describe them using scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

9.2.2. Psychological Entitlement Scale

The Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) was used to capture the sense of entitlement that typically accompanies narcissism. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each of nine statements (e.g., "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others") using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

9.2.3. Pathological narcissism

The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009) was used to assess grandiose and vulnerable aspects of pathological narcissism. The PNI is a 52-item measure for which responses were made on scales ranging from 0 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). This instrument captures seven dimensions of pathological narcissism: Contingent Self-Esteem (12 items; e.g., "It's hard for me to feel good about myself unless I know other people like me"), exploitative tendencies (five items; e.g., "I can make anyone believe anything I want them to"), self-sacrificing self-enhancement (six items; e.g., "I try to show what a good person I am through my sacrifices"), hiding of the self (seven items; e.g., "When others get a glimpse of my needs, I feel anxious and ashamed"), grandiose fantasy (seven items; e.g., "I often fantasize about being recognized for my accomplishments"), devaluing (seven items; e.g., "When others don't meet my expectations, I often feel ashamed about what I wanted"), and entitlement rage (eight items; e.g., "It irritates me when people don't notice how good a person I am"). Initial information concerning the reliability and validity of the PNI has shown that it is correlated in the expected direction with other measures of narcissism (e.g., NPI) as well as related constructs such as self-esteem level, interpersonal style, clinical outcomes, and Contingent Self-Esteem (e.g., Pincus et al., 2009; Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008).

9.2.4. Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale

The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (Hendin & Cheek, 1997) is a 10-item measure of narcissism derived from Murray's (1938) Narcism Scale. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement (e.g., "I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present") using scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

9.2.5. Personality Disorder Questionnaire

The Personality Disorder Questionnaire (PDQ-4+; Hyler, 1994) measures narcissism in a manner that is consistent with the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The PDQ-4+ consists of nine true-false items that assess specific DSM-IV NPD criteria (e.g., "Some people think that I take advantage of others").

9.2.6. O'Brien Multiphasic Narcissism Inventory

The O'Brien Multiphasic Narcissism Inventory (OMNI; O'Brien, 1987) is a 41-item measure of narcissism that consists of three subscales: Poisonous Pedagogy (15 items; e.g., "Are you clever enough to fool most people?"), Narcissistic Personality Dimension (16 items; e.g., "Do you find yourself fantasizing about your greatness?"), and Narcissistically Abused Personality (10 items; e.g., "Do you try to avoid rejection at all costs?"). The OMNI has been found to possess adequate psychometric properties (e.g., O'Brien, 1987, 1988).

9.2.7. Scales of Psychological Well-Being

Positive adjustment was measured using the Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989) which includes six dimensions: autonomy (three items; e.g., "I am not afraid to voice my opinions,

even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people"), environmental mastery (three items; e.g., "I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life"), personal growth (three items; e.g., "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world"), positive relations with others (three items; e.g., "Most people see me as loving and affectionate"), purpose in life (three items; e.g., "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them"), and self-acceptance (three items; e.g., "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out"). Responses were made on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). A composite score reflecting total well-being was used in the present study ($\alpha_{\text{White}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{Black}} = .89$) rather than the constituent subscales in the interest of parsimony.

9.2.8. Brief Symptom Inventory

Psychological distress was measured using the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983) which is a 53-item instrument that assesses the degree to which respondents have been distressed by problems in nine areas of potential dysfunction: somatization (seven items; e.g., "Faintness or dizziness"), obsessive compulsive (six items; e.g., "Having to check and doublecheck what you do"), interpersonal sensitivity (four items; e.g., "Your feelings being easily hurt"), depression (six items; e.g., "Feeling hopeless about the future"), anxiety (six items; e.g., "Nervousness or shakiness inside"), hostility (five items; e.g., "Feeling easily annoyed or irritated"), phobic anxiety (five items; e.g., "Having to avoid certain things, places, or activities because they frighten you"), paranoid ideation (five items; e.g., "Feeling that most people cannot be trusted"), and psychoticism (five items; e.g., "The idea that someone else can control your thoughts"). Respondents were asked to indicate how much they were distressed by symptoms from each area of dysfunction during the past week on scales ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*extremely*). A composite score was used as an indicator of global distress ($\alpha_{\text{White}} = .98$, $\alpha_{\text{Black}} = .96$).

10. Results

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the measures in Study 3 are presented in Table 4. Consistent with the previous studies, Black participants reported higher levels of self-esteem than White participants ($M_{\text{Black}} = 4.12$, $M_{\text{White}} = 3.89$; $t = 2.87$, $p < .01$, $d = .32$). The results of analyses comparing the self-reported narcissism scores of Black and White participants are presented in Table 2. As in the previous studies, racial differences emerged for each of the NPI subscales such that Black participants reported higher levels of narcissism than White participants. Similar results emerged for the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale, the Psychological Entitlement Scale, the PDQ-4+, the Poisonous Pedagogy subscale of the OMNI, and the Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI. The size of these effects ranged from small to medium. It is important to note that racial differences did not emerge for the Exploitative subscale of the PNI, the Hiding the Self subscale of the PNI, the Grandiose Fantasy subscale of the PNI, the Devaluing subscale of the PNI, the Entitlement Rage subscale of the PNI, the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, or the Narcissistic Personality Dimension of the OMNI. White participants reported higher scores than Black participants for the Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI, the Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement subscale of the PNI, and the PDQ-4+. These results suggest that the heightened narcissistic tendencies observed for Black individuals do not emerge for all facets of narcissism and that White individuals actually reported higher scores than Black individuals on some of the measures capturing pathological aspects of narcissism. Despite the differences that emerged between Black and White participants for self-esteem

Table 4
Intercorrelations and descriptive statistics for Study 3.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1. Leadership/Authority (NPI)	-.38***																				
2. Grandiose Exhibitionism (NPI)	.33***	-.06																			
3. Entitlement/Exploitativeness (NPI)	.30***	.30***	-.08																		
4. Grandiosity Scale	.32***	.16*	.24***	-.08																	
5. Psychological Entitlement Scale	.28***	.22**	.48***	.65***	-.08																
6. Contingent Self-Esteem (PNI)	.04	.02	.25***	.29***	.34***	-.08															
7. Exploitative (PNI)	.36***	.08	.25***	.56***	.50***	.33***	-.08														
8. Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement (PNI)	.21**	-.10	.04	.64***	.62***	.54***	.44***	-.08													
9. Hiding the Self (PNI)	.30***	-.05	.20**	.46***	.50***	.60***	.39***	.60***	-.08												
10. Grandiose Fantasy (PNI)	.27***	-.02	.16*	.47***	.51***	.63***	.30***	.72***	.67***	-.08											
11. Devaluing (PNI)	.17*	-.04	.25***	.48***	.41***	.69***	.52***	.48***	.52***	.46***	-.08										
12. Entitlement Rage (PNI)	.26***	.01	.30***	.46***	.55***	.78***	.42***	.57***	.66***	.61***	.80***	-.08									
13. Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale	.21**	.07	.31***	.31***	.46***	.52***	.21**	.31***	.46***	.49***	.49***	.62***	-.08								
14. Personality Disorder Questionnaire	.07	.09	.09	.10	.13	-.10	.12	.08	.10	.06	.02	-.07	.04	-.08							
15. Poisonous Pedagogy (OMNI)	.22**	.13	.45***	.42***	.42***	.33***	.36***	.18*	.25**	.21*	.47***	.48***	.31***	.05	-.08						
16. Narcissistic Personality Dimension (OMNI)	.06	.07	.43***	.33***	.39***	.51***	.26***	.23**	.28**	.33***	.50***	.53***	.37***	-.09	.67***	-.08					
17. Narcissistically Abused Personality (OMNI)	.09	-.22**	.25***	.26***	.21**	.49***	.25***	.44***	.48***	.40***	.51***	.52***	.33***	.09	.51***	.51***	-.08				
18. Self-esteem Enhancement	.25***	.29***	-.40***	-.07	-.25***	-.39***	-.09	-.18*	-.22**	-.29***	-.28***	-.23***	-.29***	-.24**	-.27***	-.36***	-.37***	-.08			
19. Self-Deceptive Enhancement	.05	.03	-.25***	-.18*	-.26***	-.21**	.05	.10	.02	.01	-.30***	-.23***	-.23***	.01	-.18*	-.30***	-.21**	.32***	-.08		
20. Impression Management	-.05	-.10	-.29***	-.22**	-.31***	-.12	-.11	.19*	.08	.06	-.23**	-.15	-.15	-.06	-.22**	-.28**	-.13	.15	.59***	-.08	
M _{Black}	5.97	5.14	1.20	3.82	4.00	2.60	3.10	3.35	3.38	3.50	2.75	2.93	2.77	0.52	7.67	6.79	5.16	4.12	4.23	0.20	0.20
SD _{Black}	2.72	2.10	1.11	1.41	1.34	1.19	1.11	1.16	1.23	1.30	1.19	1.18	0.89	0.29	2.70	3.47	2.20	0.69	0.21	0.20	0.20
α _{Black}	0.74	0.70	0.53	0.97	0.89	0.96	0.86	0.87	0.80	0.93	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.82	0.78	0.72	0.76	0.86	0.84	0.86	0.86
M _{White}	5.07	3.76	0.94	3.14	3.13	3.00	3.05	3.65	3.51	3.70	2.57	2.91	2.77	0.87	6.86	6.60	4.63	3.89	0.25	0.25	0.25
SD _{White}	2.43	2.24	1.01	1.39	1.38	1.18	1.02	1.03	0.99	1.20	1.05	1.13	0.69	1.79	2.63	3.15	2.08	0.72	0.18	0.19	0.19
α _{White}	0.71	0.79	0.52	0.97	0.91	0.95	0.80	0.82	0.89	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.83	0.73	0.75	0.74	0.75	0.88	0.76	0.76	0.79

Note. Correlations for Black participants are presented above the diagonal and correlations for the White participants are presented below the diagonal.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

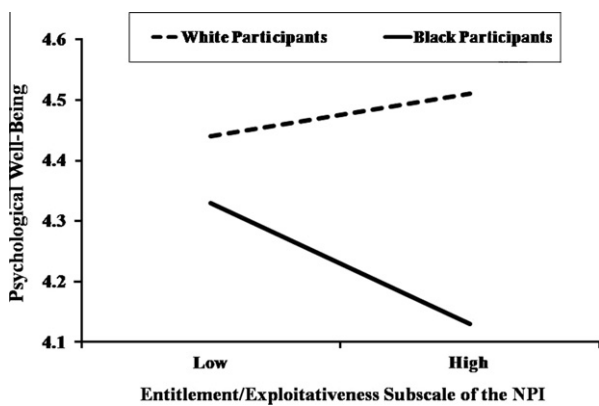


Fig. 1. Predicted values for Psychological Well-Being illustrating the interaction of race and the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI at values that are one standard deviation above and below its mean.

and various measures of narcissism, the strength of the associations between self-esteem and narcissism only differed for the PDQ-4+ ($r_{White} = -.24$, $r_{Black} = .19$; $z = 3.83$, $p < .001$), the Poisonous Pedagogy subscale of the OMNI ($r_{White} = -.27$, $r_{Black} = .21$; $z = 4.29$, $p < .001$), the Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI ($r_{White} = -.36$, $r_{Black} = -.03$; $z = 3.04$, $p < .01$), and the Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI ($r_{White} = -.37$, $r_{Black} = .01$; $z = 3.49$, $p < .001$). In each case, self-esteem had a stronger negative association with these pathological aspects of narcissism for White participants than it did for Black participants.

Regression analyses found that controlling for gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable responding had very little impact on the racial differences that were previously observed for the Leadership/Authority subscale of the NPI ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.50$, $p < .05$, $d = .28$), Grandiose Exhibitionism subscale of the NPI ($\beta = .26$, $t = 4.90$, $p < .001$, $d = .56$), Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI ($\beta = .16$, $t = 3.02$, $p < .01$, $d = .34$), Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale ($\beta = .23$, $t = 4.14$, $p < .001$, $d = .47$), Psychological Entitlement Scale ($\beta = .31$, $t = 5.75$, $p < .001$, $d = .65$), the Poisonous Pedagogy subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .14$, $t = 2.47$, $p < .05$, $d = .28$), the Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.33$, $p < .05$, $d = .26$), and the Contingent Self-Esteem scale of the PNI ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.69$, $p < .01$, $d = -.31$). In fact, the only substantive changes that emerged when controlling for gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable responding were that two of the facets of narcissism for which White participants had reported higher scores than Black participants were no longer significant: the Self-Sacrificing

Self-Enhancement subscale of the PNI ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -1.95$, ns , $d = -.22$) and the PDQ-4+ ($\beta = -.09$, $t = -1.71$, ns , $d = -.19$).

10.1. Narcissism and psychological adjustment

Moderational analyses were conducted to determine whether race qualified the association between narcissism and psychological adjustment. This was accomplished by conducting a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses in which psychological adjustment (i.e., psychological well-being and general distress) was regressed onto race, gender, self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, impression management, and each facet of narcissism. The measures of narcissism were included in separate regression models because of the associations between the various facets of narcissism. For these analyses, the main effect terms for race, gender, self-esteem, self-deceptive enhancement, and impression management were entered on Step 1. The measure of narcissism was included on Step 2 and the two-way interaction of race and narcissism was entered on Step 3.² The continuous predictor variables were centered for the purpose of testing interactions (Aiken & West, 1991). These regression analyses were followed by the simple slopes tests recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to describe interactions involving a continuous variable. These simple slopes were conducted using values that were one standard deviation above the mean to represent those with high levels of narcissism and one standard deviation below the mean to represent those with low levels of narcissism.

The results of the analysis concerning psychological well-being found main effects for race ($\beta = -.18$, $t = -4.75$, $p < .001$, $d = -.54$), gender ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -3.84$, $p < .001$, $d = -.44$), self-esteem ($\beta = .45$, $t = 11.49$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.31$), and self-deceptive enhancement ($\beta = .39$, $t = 7.14$, $p < .001$, $d = .81$) such that higher levels of psychological well-being were reported by White individuals, women, individuals with high self-esteem, and individuals who engaged in self-deceptive enhancement. The only main effects for the measures of narcissism that reached conventional levels of significance after controlling for race, gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies were for the Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = -.12$, $t = -2.88$, $p < .01$, $d = -.33$) and the Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = -.10$, $t = -2.68$, $p < .01$, $d = -.30$) such that individuals who possessed higher levels of these forms of narcissism reported low levels of well-being. The interaction of race and narcissism only emerged for three of the narcissism measures: race \times the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -2.87$, $p < .01$, $d = -.33$), race \times PDQ-4+ ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -3.16$, $p < .01$, $d = -.36$), and race \times the Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = -.13$, $t = -2.48$, $p < .05$, $d = -.28$). The predicted values for the interaction of race and the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI are presented in Fig. 1. Simple slopes tests found that the slope of the line representing the association between Entitlement/Exploitativeness and psychological well-being was negative for Black participants ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.26$, $p < .05$, $d = -.26$) but was not significant for White participants ($\beta = .08$, $t = 1.49$, ns , $d = .17$). These results show that the lowest levels of psychological well-being were reported by Black individuals with high levels of Entitlement/Exploitativeness. The same pattern was observed for the other interactions that emerged from these analyses (i.e., race \times PDQ-4+ and race \times the Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI).

The results of the analysis concerning general distress found main effects for race ($\beta = .24$, $t = 4.82$, $p < .001$, $d = .55$), self-esteem ($\beta = -.33$, $t = -6.59$, $p < .001$, $d = -.75$), and self-deceptive enhancement ($\beta = -.31$, $t = -4.38$, $p < .001$, $d = -.50$) such that higher levels of general distress were reported by Black individuals, individuals with low self-esteem, and individuals who did not engage in

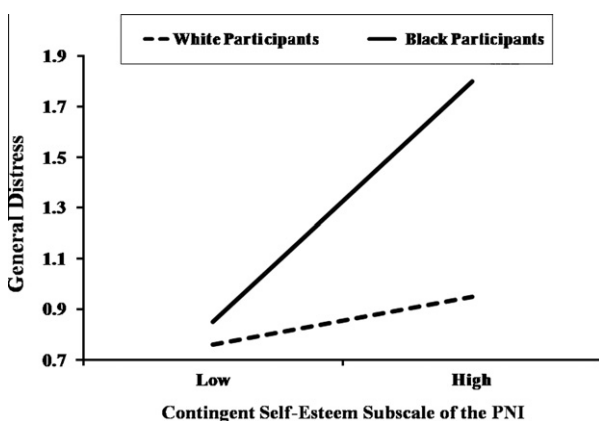


Fig. 2. Predicted values for general distress illustrating the interaction of race and the Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI at values that are one standard deviation above and below its mean.

self-deceptive enhancement. The main effects for the measures of narcissism that reached conventional levels of significance after controlling for race, gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies were the Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .35, t = 6.97, p < .001, d = .79$), the Exploitative subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .25, t = 5.24, p < .001, d = .60$), the Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .34, t = 7.29, p < .001, d = .83$), the Hiding of the Self subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .28, t = 5.94, p < .001, d = .67$), the Grandiose Fantasy subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .25, t = 5.04, p < .001, d = .57$), the Devaluing subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .45, t = 9.51, p < .001, d = 1.08$), the Entitlement Rage subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .34, t = 7.18, p < .001, d = .82$), the Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale ($\beta = .27, t = 5.66, p < .001, d = .64$), the Psychological Entitlement Scale ($\beta = .20, t = 4.07, p < .001, d = .46$), the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale ($\beta = .27, t = 5.61, p < .001, d = .64$), the Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .22, t = 4.36, p < .001, d = .50$), and the Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .11, t = 2.18, p < .05, d = .25$). These results suggest that high scores on many of the measures that capture the pathological aspects of narcissism were associated with higher levels of general psychological distress. However, it is important to note that each of these main effects was qualified by the interaction of race with the following indicators of narcissism: Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .34, t = 5.63, p < .001, d = .64$), Exploitative subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .21, t = 3.18, p < .01, d = .36$), Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .27, t = 4.21, p < .001, d = .48$), Hiding of the Self subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .23, t = 3.26, p < .001, d = .37$), Grandiose Fantasy subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .24, t = 3.60, p < .001, d = .41$), Devaluing subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .28, t = 4.74, p < .001, d = .54$), Entitlement Rage subscale of the PNI ($\beta = .25, t = 4.08, p < .001, d = .46$), Narcissistic Grandiosity Scale ($\beta = .22, t = 3.42, p < .001, d = .39$), Psychological Entitlement Scale ($\beta = .14, t = 2.01, p < .05, d = .23$), Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale ($\beta = .35, t = 4.90, p < .001, d = .56$), Narcissistic Personality Dimension subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .14, t = 1.99, p < .05, d = .23$), and Narcissistically Abused Personality subscale of the OMNI ($\beta = .14, t = 2.03, p < .05, d = .23$). The predicted values for the interaction of race and the Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI are presented in Fig. 2. Simple slopes tests found that the slope of the line representing the association between Contingent Self-Esteem and general distress was positive for Black participants ($\beta = .37, t = 7.61, p < .001, d = .86$) but was not significant for White participants ($\beta = .12, t = 1.28, ns, d = .15$). These results show that the highest levels of distress were reported by Black individuals with high levels of Contingent Self-Esteem. The same pattern was observed for the other interactions that emerged from these analyses showing that the highest levels of distress were reported by Black participants who had high scores on measures of pathological narcissism.

11. Discussion

The results of Study 3 show that the heightened levels of narcissism reported by Black individuals extend beyond the NPI to other measures of narcissism that capture additional facets of this construct. It is important to note that Black individuals did not report higher scores than White individuals on all of the narcissism measures. Rather, the racial differences in narcissism were limited for the most part to the measures of narcissism that captured the less pathological elements of narcissism. For example, Black individuals reported much higher scores on the Grandiose Exhibitionism subscale of the NPI than White individuals but there was no difference between the scores of Black and White individuals for the Entitlement Rage subscale of the PNI. Although Black individuals did not report elevated levels of pathological narcissism, the connection between maladjustment and pathological narcissism was

particularly strong for Black individuals. This suggests the possibility that pathological forms of narcissism may serve as a marker of vulnerability to psychological distress for Black individuals. This could be due to the manner in which Black individuals with narcissistic tendencies are treated by broader society. That is, narcissism may be less tolerated in social situations when it is exhibited by a Black individual than when similar characteristics are displayed by a White individual. For example, the narcissistic rage that sometimes accompanies frustration may lead to more negative repercussions for Black individuals than their White counterparts. These results are intriguing but the number of analyses reported – and the associated risk of Type I errors – makes it important for future research to replicate these patterns. It may also be helpful for future studies to focus on more specific indicators of psychological adjustment such as depression or anger rather than using broadband indicators of psychological adjustment.

12. General discussion

The results of the present studies provide consistent support for racial differences in narcissism such that Black individuals tend to report higher levels of narcissism than White individuals. This basic pattern emerged across three samples using various measures of narcissism even when controlling for gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies. Importantly, the heightened levels of narcissism reported by Black individuals were primarily limited to the measures of narcissism that capture the somewhat less pathological elements of the construct. For example, the largest differences were observed for the measures capturing self-absorption and grandiosity with smaller differences emerging for measures that assessed feelings of entitlement or a willingness to exploit others. This pattern may be explained by the fact that the aspects of narcissism that emphasize self-aggrandizement, feelings of entitlement, and a willingness to exploit others are at the very heart of individualistic cultures and the possession of these qualities may be especially important for stigmatized minority group members who feel devalued by broader society because they may experience difficulty obtaining affirmation from external sources (see Foster et al., 2003, or Twenge & Crocker, 2002, for similar arguments). This explanation is consistent with the observation that Black individuals reported lower scores on the Contingent Self-Esteem subscale of the PNI than White individuals. The reluctance of Black individuals to base their feelings of self-worth on the approval of others may be helpful in some respects (e.g., maintaining and enhancing their self-esteem) but it may also lead to negative consequences associated with a lack of attention to social feedback (e.g., less motivation, dismissal of suggestions for improvement following failure; Zeigler-Hill, 2007). Taken together, these results suggest that the heightened levels of narcissism reported by Black individuals may serve as a self-protective mechanism to buffer them from the deleterious consequences of racism.

The present findings also revealed that the pathological aspects of narcissism had an especially strong association with maladjustment for Black individuals. This is important because it suggests that the pathological aspects of narcissism may have particularly negative implications for the psychological adjustment of Black individuals. It is possible that pathological narcissism causes maladjustment for Black individuals. This could certainly happen if Black individuals with pathological narcissism were viewed in an especially negative manner by others in their social environment (e.g., viewed as “uppity” by their White peers). However, it is also possible that poor adjustment may lead to the development of pathological narcissism. That is, individuals who harbor negative feelings about themselves may develop a façade of grandiosity to disguise these vulnerabilities. This possibility is consistent with

the psychodynamic mask model of narcissism (e.g., Bosson et al., 2008). Further research will be necessary to unravel the underlying causal mechanisms that explain the association between pathological narcissism and maladjustment for Black individuals.

Given the delicate nature of the issues examined in the present research, it is important for us to be absolutely clear about our interpretation of these results. The present studies show that Black individuals report higher scores on measures that capture the less pathological facets of narcissism. In addition, the pathological forms of narcissism were associated with heightened psychological maladjustment for Black individuals even though Black individuals did not report especially high scores on measures capturing these aspects of narcissism. Future research is needed to gain a better understanding of the underlying causal mechanisms that led to such a strong association between pathological narcissism and maladjustment for Black individuals.

These results provide additional support for the idea that the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals may be less secure than has often been assumed in the past. The present results – along with previous studies (Foster et al., 2003; Zeigler-Hill et al., submitted for publication) – suggest that the grandiose self-views reported by Black individuals may be an attempt to protect themselves from the underlying insecurities that are suggested by the internalization of stigma explanation. That is, it seems possible that unlike other stigmatized groups (e.g., overweight individuals) who report low self-esteem, Black individuals may defend themselves from negative self-evaluations by developing overt expressions of positivity. This approach may have positive intrapsychic consequences (e.g., fosters positive self-views) and interpersonal benefits (e.g., signals status to others). However, these short-term benefits may be offset to some degree by the long-term costs of narcissism which include impaired interpersonal relationships (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The reason that Black individuals develop such positive self-views may stem from parenting strategies intended to protect their children from the harmful effects of racism (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). That is, Black parents may teach their children to be confident, express highly positive self-views, develop feelings of pride in their own group, and avoid basing their feelings of self-worth on the opinions of others in order to inoculate their self-esteem from the racial bias they are likely to encounter during their lives (e.g., Zeigler-Hill, 2007). However, these self-esteem inoculation strategies may inadvertently result in narcissistic tendencies (e.g., grandiose exhibitionism).

The present studies extend previous research concerning the Black self-esteem advantage by examining racial differences in narcissism. Despite the strengths of the present studies, this research has a number of limitations. The first limitation is that these studies were conducted using undergraduates at a university in Mississippi which may limit the extent to which these results can be generalized beyond these samples. This may be especially important given that Twenge and Crocker (2002) found that the Black self-esteem advantage was stronger in the southern regions of the United States than in other areas. Living in the southern region of the United States, given its history of slavery and current levels of racism (e.g., the confederate flag remains part of the state flag of Mississippi), may make it more likely for Black individuals to engage in the sort of narcissistic defensive processes that we observed in the present studies. The extent to which the present results would replicate in other regions of the United States is an open empirical question that is important to answer due to issues such as the potential importance of reference group effects for racial differences in narcissism (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). The second limitation of the present research is that all of the data collected in these studies were from self-report measures. This limitation may be important because racial differences in response styles (e.g., extreme responding, acqui-

escence) could have influenced the results of the present studies. This problem was partially addressed by accounting for socially desirable response tendencies and using various response formats (e.g., true-false items, forced-choice items, Likert-type scales) but this could be dealt with more effectively in future research by incorporating methods for assessing narcissism that do not rely on self-report (e.g., clinical interviews, peer-reports). The third limitation is that none of the narcissism measures used in these studies were developed using primarily Black samples. As a result, it is possible that our results may reflect a bias in the way that narcissism is captured by these measures rather than reflecting a true difference in the narcissistic tendencies of Black and White individuals.

13. Conclusion

The present studies found that Black individuals reported higher scores on the measures that captured the less pathological elements of narcissism than White individuals. This pattern emerged even when gender, self-esteem, and socially desirable response tendencies were controlled. Further, these results showed that pathological forms of narcissism were strongly associated with maladjustment for Black individuals. These results provide additional support for the idea that the high levels of self-esteem reported by Black individuals may not be entirely secure because these heightened feelings of self-worth are accompanied by narcissistic tendencies.

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