

## Adaptive and Maladaptive Narcissism in Adolescent Development

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Narcissism is a complex construct with a long history. Its theoretical source is attributed to Freud's (1914) influential essay "On Narcissism," and it has figured prominently ever since in the literatures of psychoanalysis, object relations, self-psychology, psychopathology and clinical psychotherapy (e.g., Morrison, 1986; Mitchell, 1988). These literatures tell a developmental story about the clinical origins of narcissistic personality (e.g., Masterson, 1993; Wink, 1996; P. F. Kernberg, 1998), although empirical research on the development of narcissism is largely absent. This is somewhat surprising given that the concept of narcissism long has been thought, at least in the popular imagination, to capture something fundamental about the developmental experience of adolescents. As Bleiberg (1994, p. 31) put it, "Perhaps like no other phase of life, the passage through adolescence bears the hallmarks of narcissistic vulnerability: a proneness to embarrassment and shame, acute self-consciousness and shyness, and painful questions about self-esteem and self-worth." However, one looks in vain for the term narcissism in the subject index of developmental textbooks or in the proceedings of professional conferences devoted to the study of adolescence.

Yet narcissism has attracted significant attention from social and personality researchers, especially in recent years. Research in these fields tends to focus on problems of assessment, on how narcissism is related to self-esteem, aggression and other affective, relational and behavioral outcomes, and on whether there are subtypes of narcissism that are related differentially to adaptation and dysfunction. For example, on the assessment front, there is an apparent consensus that narcissism is assessed properly by reference to DSM diagnostic criteria of narcissistic personality disorder. It was on this basis that the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was designed (Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Hall, 1979), although the NPI purports to measure narcissistic tendencies in normal, non-clinical samples. The NPI enjoys a measure of construct validity (e.g., Emmons, 1984; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995; Watson, Girsham, Trotter & Biderman, 1984) and it is perhaps the most often used measure of narcissism in the literature. Other assessment options include several MMPI-derived scales (Wink, 1991; Wink & Gough, 1990), scales based on the California Q-set (Wink, 1992), and assessments motivated by Kohut's self-psychology (Robins, 1989; Robins & Patton, 1985; Lapan & Patton, 1986), among others (e.g., O'Brien, 1988; Mullins & Kopelman, 1988).

Research on the link between narcissism and self-esteem underscores the importance of drawing careful conceptual distinctions among different forms of self-esteem. For example, narcissism is predicted differentially by whether self-esteem is implicit or explicit (e.g., Sakellaropoulou & Baldwin, 2007; Zeigler-Hill, 2006), focuses on agentic or communal self-domains (Campbell, Rudich & Sedikides, 2002; Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey & Kernis, 2007) or on themes of dominance (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004). Narcissism is also linked to self-esteem instability (Rhodewalt, Madrian & Cheney, 1998) and to defensive self-esteem regulation strategies (Raskin, Novacek & Hogan, 1991).

Research has focused also on whether self-esteem is related differentially to different forms or sub-types of narcissism. There are now theoretical and empirical literatures that draw distinctions between healthy “normal” narcissism and its dysfunctional type; and between overt and covert forms of dysfunctional narcissism. For example, the possibility of adaptive and healthy narcissism is evident in Winnicott’s (1965) object relational theory and in Kohut’s (1977) self-psychology. For Winnicott (1965), self-absorption and a sense of subjective omnipotence provide the psychological aliments that support self-extension, ambition, creativity and growth. Kohut (1977) argued that normal self-development can follow either a “grandiose” line, characterized by exhibitionism, assertiveness and ambition (“I am perfect, and you admire me”) or else an “idealizing” line, characterized by an idealization of figures and goals (“You are perfect, and I am part of you”). Both theorists suggest that narcissistic “illusions” can be used to creatively sustain psychological growth and self-development (Mitchell, 1988). A narcissistic stance may be particularly adaptive for meeting the developmental challenges of late adolescence and emerging adulthood (Wink, 1992).

Of course, narcissism can be maladaptive as well, taking the form of self-pathology and personality disorder. O. Kernberg (1975) argued that the grandiose self oscillates between cycles of self-admiration and devaluation of others to protect against dependency and disappointment, and tends more toward dysfunction and pathology than it does healthy adaptation. Moreover, dysfunctional narcissism can take overt and covert forms that reflect either two facets of the same individual (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995) or else two expressive “types” of narcissism (Wink, 1996). Hence, alongside overt displays of haughty grandiosity, invulnerability and

entitlement there could reside covert and hypersensitive feelings of anxiety, inferiority and worthlessness.

Although not everyone agrees that narcissism can be covert or even healthy (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2003), there is evidence of different types of narcissism and their differential relationship with adaptation and dysfunction (e.g., Davis, Claridge & Brewer, 1996; Wink, 1992; Wink & Donahue, 1997; Zeigler-Hill, Clark & Pickard, 2008). For example, normal narcissism appears to counterindicate daily and dispositional sadness, depression, neuroticism and anxiety, and to be positively associated with subjective wellbeing (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro & Rusbult, 2004). Moreover, a number of narcissism typologies have been proposed that trade on the distinction between normal and dysfunctional narcissism, and between overt and covert narcissism (Wink, 1991, 1996). In a recent study Lapsley and Aalsma (2006) identified a typology of overt, covert and adaptive narcissism in a cluster analysis of extant assessments. Lapsley and Aalsma found that overt and covert narcissism were both associated with indices of dysfunctional adjustment, including pathology of separation-individuation (with covert narcissism associated with a somewhat poorer profile of adjustment), while a moderate degree of narcissism was associated with positive adaptation.

Finally, there is much research interest in charting the behavioral and interpersonal concomitants of narcissism. There is evidence, for example, that narcissists are prone to rage reactions, violence and aggression, particularly if they are frustrated, insulted or socially rejected (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Moreover, narcissism is detected readily on social networking websites (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008), and may be more prevalent among college students in the present generation than in the past (Twenge, Konrath, Campbell & Bushman, 2008a, 2008b), although this is disputed (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robbins, 2008a, 2008b).

However, this expanding literature on the clinical, social and personality psychology of narcissism is notably absent a significant contribution from developmental science. There are perhaps a number of reasons for this. One is that it is hard to translate narcissism into the language of normative adolescent development in a way that does not presume pathology or personality disorder. Although there are good grounds for asserting a form of narcissism that is adaptive (or perhaps

compensatory) for managing the vicissitudes of the adolescent experience, the work of translation for developmental purposes still needs to be done. Similarly, the very notion that ego development unfolds along the lines of separation-individuation is not a perspective that commands widespread notice in contemporary adolescent psychology, even though separation-individuation is (in our view) the most fundamental developmental challenge facing adolescents and young adults.

Even if one acknowledges that separation-individuation is a crucial developmental challenge, and that narcissistic reactions are one of its characteristic (and possibly adaptive) features, there is still an assessment problem. Most of the extant measures of narcissism were constructed from a pathology-and-disorder perspective. Even newer measures that attempt to measure narcissism in adolescence and childhood (Barry, Frick, & Killian, 2003; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008) are largely downward extensions of assessments that are guided by clinical diagnostic markers of narcissistic personality disorder, though these new measures target normal manifestations of narcissism in community and non-referred samples. Yet we hold out the possibility that adolescent narcissism, as a normative developmental construct, and one that is immanent to the process of separation-individuation, may be different *in kind* from the narcissism of the DSM-IV.

In this chapter we present a developmental approach toward investigating narcissism in adolescence. We argue that traditional accounts of separation-individuation carve out a role for narcissism that is translated best in terms of personal fable constructs that are well known to adolescent psychology. Put differently, we argue that the personal fables of subjective omnipotence and personal uniqueness are instantiations of normal adolescent narcissism. Indeed, these ideational tendencies are concomitants of the separation-individuation process whose function is to manage normative challenges to self-esteem. We next take up the problem of assessment by describing theoretically-derived measures of adolescent narcissism, and in turn show that normative adolescent narcissism takes different forms with differential implications for adjustment.

### **Narcissism and Separation-Individuation**

The psychodynamic tradition suggests that the various features of narcissism are mobilized as part of a defensive, compensatory stance,

perhaps to help the adolescent cope with the vulnerabilities that coincide with separation-individuation and other aspects of ego development (Blos, 1962; Josselson, 1988). Separation-individuation requires adolescents to shed parental dependencies, exercise autonomous agency and become an individuated self, but in the context of ongoing relational commitments. Narcissistic reactions emerge as a concomitant of this process to ward off the mourning reactions that attend the loss of childhood identifications and to fortify the adolescent against the vulnerabilities that attend this developmental transition. A surge of narcissism helps the adolescent maintain self-esteem until it can be established on a footing independent of the childhood identifications that are being updated and reconstructed over the course the individuation process.

It is important to note how this tradition understands the role of narcissism in the separation-individuation process. Sarnoff (1987) argued, for example, that this compensatory and “reactive narcissism” involves a *sense of omnipotence* that includes “grandiose ideas, plans and views of the self” (p. 26). In his view narcissistic omnipotence “denotes a defensive and reactive heightening of self-esteem to cope with inner feelings of low self-worth, depressive mood and empty feelings” (Sarnoff, 1987, p. 25). Similarly, Blos (1962, p. 98) suggested that the upsurge of narcissism is a “restitution strategy” whereby the adolescent’s newly keen perception of inner life, and his or her “willful creation of ego states of a poignant internal perception of the self,” leads to a heightened sense of *uniqueness*, *indestructibility* and *personal agency*. Blos (1962) also believed, however, that such “narcissistic” ideation tended to impair the adolescent’s judgment, and therefore was a problematic aspect of ego development, its defensive qualities notwithstanding.

We make two observations about this psychodynamic account of separation-individuation and narcissism. First, adolescent narcissism, as a natural outgrowth of the individuation process, takes certain recognizable forms. It takes the form of *subjective omnipotence*, of a heightened sense of *uniqueness* and of “*indestructibility*” (which we understand as adolescent invulnerability, see Lapsley, 2003). As “reactive narcissism” (Sarnoff) or as a “narcissistic restitution strategy” (Blos), omnipotence, uniqueness and invulnerability are forms of narcissism that have not yet been captured adequately by the nomological net of assessments of narcissism.

### *Personal Fables*

Yet there is an allied developmental literature where the notions of omnipotence, uniqueness and invulnerability are quite prominent, although they are not understood in terms of adolescent narcissism or in the context of separation-individuation. The theory of adolescent egocentrism, for example, is one of the venerable theories of adolescent development, a staple of every textbook. Although the notion of adolescent egocentrism has its critics (e.g., Lapsley & Murphy, 1985; Lapsley, 1993), it does yield a number of constructs that provide strong integrative possibilities for a theory of adolescent narcissism.

According to Elkind (1967) adolescents are prone to a form of cognitive egocentrism when they make the transition into formal operations. During this transition adolescents tend to over-assimilate their experience, making them vulnerable to cognitive differentiation errors that result in a number of distinctive patterns of ideation. One pattern is the tendency to construct *personal fables*. Personal fables typically include themes of *invulnerability* (an incapability of being harmed or injured), *omnipotence* (viewing the self as a source of special authority, influence or power), and *personal uniqueness* (“no one understands me”). These are, of course, the very terms of reference noted in psychodynamic accounts of the transitory narcissism of separation-individuation. On Elkind’s view (1967) view the personal fable describes the adolescent’s conviction of personal uniqueness such that subjective experience cannot be understood adequately by others or meaningfully shared; and that the omnipotence of one’s reflections should be sufficient to compel others to submit to one’s idealistic schemes. Hence, according to Elkind (1967, p. 1031)

“Perhaps because he believes he is of importance to so many people...he comes to regard himself, and particularly his feelings, as something special and unique. Only he can suffer with such agonized intensity or experience such exquisite rapture. The emotional torments...exemplify the adolescent’s belief in the uniqueness of his own emotional experience.”

Blos (1962, p. 93) uses almost identical language to describe the transitory narcissism of separation-individuation. He writes “It is as if the adolescent experiences the world with a unique sensory quality that is not shared by others: ‘Nobody ever felt the way I do’, ‘Nobody sees the world the way I

do.’” The grandiosity of the personal fable is reflected also in the surge of personal agency, omnipotence and sense of indestructibility that Blos (1962) describes as an outcome of the “self-induced ego state of a poignant internal perception of the self” (p. 98).

Clearly there is a close alignment of constructs across two very different theoretical traditions of adolescent development. Indeed, there is little difference between Elkind’s account of the personal fable ideation that results from cognitive egocentrism and Blos’s account of the transitory narcissism (as a restitution strategy) that emerges in separation-individuation. This suggests that the importance of personal uniqueness, omnipotence and invulnerability for understanding the developmental challenges of adolescence is vouchsafed not only by the psychodynamic tradition, but by cognitive developmental theory as well.

Moreover, the two theories agree on the fact that transitory narcissism (Blos) and personal fable ideation (Elkind) can be problematic features of adolescent development. Although transitory narcissism has a defensive and compensatory role to play in supporting the self-esteem of individuating adolescents, Blos (1962) worried that it might compromise the judgment of adolescents in critical situations. Similarly, the tendency to construct personal fables has been linked both to reckless and delinquent behavior (Arnett, 1992; Greene, Krcmar, Walters, Rubin, & Hale, 2000) and to “negative cognitions” that predict anxiety and depression (Garber, Weiss & Shanley, 1993).

### *The New Look*

In a number of papers Lapsley and his colleagues have been critical of Elkind’s (1967) theory, on both theoretical and empirical grounds (Lapsley, 1993; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985; Lapsley & Rice, 1988). In their view the personal fable constructs (subjective omnipotence, personal uniqueness and invulnerability) are poorly grounded by treating them as instantiations of logical egocentrism but are understood better as Blosian examples of a “narcissistic restitution strategy” for coping with self-image vulnerabilities that attend separation-individuation. Moreover, as in the narcissism literature, the personal fable ideations do not have uniform implications for successful adaptation.

For example, Aalsma, Lapsley, and Flannery (2006) found that subjective omnipotence and personal uniqueness are differentially related to measures of overt narcissism, depression, and self-worth among a cross-sectional sample of 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Omnipotence was positively related to overt narcissism (as measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory) and self-worth, but negatively related to depression. In contrast, personal uniqueness was unrelated to overt narcissism, negatively related to self-worth, but positively related to depressive symptoms. This suggests that perceptions of subjective omnipotence are substantially more beneficial for adolescents than are perceptions of personal uniqueness. The relatively strong positive correlation between personal uniqueness and internalizing symptoms is an indication that the “personal fable” constructs point in different directions with respect to adaptation and dysfunction. Indeed, the extant literature supports the notion that these have dramatically distinct influences on the adolescent (e.g., Goossens, Beyers, Emmen, & van Aken, 2002; Hill, Lapsley, & Gadbois, 2008; Schonert-Reichl, 1994).

Hence, if the personal fable constructs are manifestations of adolescent narcissism, then perhaps they present with “two faces” as well, and in a double sense. First, one personal fable (omnipotence) points toward adaptation and successful coping, while the other personal fable (personal uniqueness) points toward dysfunction. Second, one construct (omnipotence) is the “overt” form of narcissism, given its robust correlation with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory in the Aalsma et al. (2006) study, while the other construct (personal uniqueness) is the “covert” form.

### *Two Faces of Narcissism*

Counter to the classical view that narcissism is linked invariably to negative psychological wellbeing (e.g., O. Kernberg, 1975), narcissists often report better psychological health than do non-narcissists. Narcissism appears to counterindicate anxiety and depression (Watson & Bideman, 1993; Wink, 1992). Indeed, Rose (2002) suggests that narcissism is correlated positively with self-esteem and satisfaction with life. However, these findings are often only with respect to “overt” narcissism (Wink, 1991), and thus suggest the need for a more nuanced analysis of narcissism and wellbeing.

As one example, Rose (2002) further assessed the relationships underlying the differences in wellbeing for overt and covert narcissists, a distinction that follows previous work (Wink, 1991, 1996). Overt narcissism is characterized by the traits most often associated with narcissistic: exhibitionism, an increased sense of self-importance, and being preoccupied with getting attention from others. Covert narcissism is characterized by hypersensitivity, increased anxiety and timidity; yet, these narcissists still harbor visions of grandiosity. As Wink (1996, p. 167) put it, “narcissistic fantasies of power and grandeur can equally well lurk behind a bombastic and exhibitionistic facade as one of shyness, vulnerability and depletion.”

Rose (2002) predicted that overt narcissists should demonstrate greater happiness than covert narcissists. Furthermore, he evaluated whether these relationships were mediated by self-esteem, because while overt narcissists report higher self-esteem (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988), covert narcissists report lower self-esteem (Solomon, 1982). As self-esteem is related to subjective wellbeing (Myers & Diener, 1995), overt and covert narcissism may differentially influence wellbeing because of their differential relationships with self-esteem. Indeed, Rose found that overt narcissism positively predicted happiness, while covert narcissism was negatively predictive. Furthermore, he demonstrated that the relationships between overt narcissism and happiness, and covert narcissism and happiness were both mediated by self-esteem.

Sedikides et al. (2004) found further support that narcissism may only be adaptive when it leads to high self-esteem. In their Study 1, overt narcissism positively predicted self-esteem, which counterindicated depressive symptoms. In Study 2, self-esteem was shown to mediate the influence of overt narcissism on both sadness and anxiety. Finally, in Study 3, they demonstrate that overt narcissism positively predicted wellbeing in dyadic relationships, and that this relationship was also mediated by self-esteem. Hence evidence has accrued across multiple studies to suggest that narcissism may be adaptive if it leads to high self-esteem, and that this is more likely with respect to overt rather than covert narcissism.

With respect to the adolescent domain we suggest that evaluating adolescent’ perceptions of omnipotence and personal uniqueness can better elucidate the complexity of adolescent narcissism. Omnipotence appears to be an adolescent manifestation of overt narcissism, because a sense of

omnipotence leads adolescents to perceive high self-importance. Personal uniqueness though may be the adolescent manifestation of covert narcissism, as it leads to an increased sense of vulnerability and social anxiety. Furthermore, the relationships between these manifestations and self-esteem also point to their conceptual resemblance to overt and covert narcissism: omnipotence appears to lead to increased self-worth, while personal uniqueness does not (Aalsma et al., 2006). Thus, we suggest that omnipotence and personal uniqueness resemble two faces of adolescent narcissism, and that omnipotence should be more adaptive. In the next section we outline our approach to the assessment of subjective omnipotence and personal uniqueness, which we consider two facets of normal adolescent narcissism.

### Assessing Adolescent Narcissism

Traditionally, subjective omnipotence and personal uniqueness were considered manifestations of personal fable ideation which were thought to emerge as a result of cognitive egocentrism. We now understand these constructs as manifestations of normal adolescent narcissism. Although at least one measure of personal fable ideation includes sub-scales for subjective omnipotence and personal uniqueness (Lapsley et al., 1989), new measures have been developed to better capture these perceptions as separate instantiations of adolescent narcissism.

#### Scale Development and Extension

Lapsley, Earley and Dumford (2006) report on the first attempts to develop an adolescent narcissism scale that focuses on subjective omnipotence. Standard scale development procedures yielded a 33-item scale that coalesced into three factors, accounting for 40% of the variance. One factor was called Omnipotent Action/Control (12 items,  $\alpha = .85$ ), and was indicated by items such as “*Everybody knows that I am in charge.*” A second factor was called Omnipotent Leadership (13 items,  $\alpha = .83$ ), and was indicated by items such as “*I would make a great leader because of my abilities.*” The third factor was called Omnipotent Influence (7 items,  $\alpha = .80$ ) and included items such as “*I influence how others behave.*”

In a study of 228 emergent adults ( $M_{age} = 21.85$ ) the omnipotence scales were positively correlated with the total scale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory ( $M_r = .47$ ) and were differentially related

to indices of risk behavior ( $M_r = .20$ ) and depressive symptoms (Leadership:  $r = -.21$ ). A second study documented the convergent validity of the omnipotence scale(s) in younger sample of 142 male adolescents ( $M_{age} = 16$ ) using new Narcissistic Personality Inventory-Child (NPI-C) scale designed by Barry et al. (2003) for use with adolescents. The omnipotence scales were correlated robustly with the NPI-C scale ( $M_r = .59$ ) and with indices of superior adjustment and mastery coping. Hence these studies showed that a theoretically-derived and reliable measure of adolescent narcissism (as subjective omnipotence) showed convergent validity with the NPI and NPI-C, predicted risk behavior positively but counter-indicated internalizing affect, and was positively associated with mastery coping and adjustment.

Duggan, Lapsley and Norman (2000) reported similar scale development with respect to the assessment of personal uniqueness. The personal uniqueness scale consists of 21 items ( $\alpha = .85$ ) which coalesced into two factors. One factor was called “Being Understood” (13 items:  $\alpha = .85$ ) and included items such as “*I sometimes wonder if anybody could ever know what I am like*” and “*I wish other people could really understand what it’s like to be me, but they just can’t*”. A second factor was called “Being the Same” (8 items:  $\alpha = .69$ ) and included items such as “*I am very different from my friends*” and “*I think deep down everybody is the same*” (Reverse-scored). Duggan et al (2000) showed the personal uniqueness was positively correlated with depressive symptoms ( $r = .44$ ). A second study (Duggan, 2001) of 248 seventh- and eighth-graders showed that the total personal uniqueness score was correlated positively with depressive symptoms ( $r = .52$ ), suicidal ideation ( $r = .37$ ), risk behavior ( $r = .22$ ) and lifetime drug use ( $r = .18$ ); and was correlated negatively with mastery coping ( $r = -.26$ ), superior adjustment ( $r = -.29$ ), and even academic grades ( $r = -.14$ ).

These results for omnipotence and personal uniqueness replicate those reported were in by Aalsma et al. (2006) in their work with the New Personal Fables Scale. We now report on preliminary data from an ongoing study ( $N = 99$ , 52% female,  $M_{age} = 19.6$  years) that attempts to extend this work. First, we assessed whether the distinction between omnipotence and personal uniqueness manifested itself similarly to the overt-covert distinction among adults. Second, we tested the prediction that those high in omnipotence should demonstrate a more positive psychological profile than

those high in personal uniqueness, particularly with respect to self-esteem issues.

To test our first prediction, in addition to the omnipotence and personal uniqueness scales, we administered the NPI as our measure of overt narcissism, which should be positively linked to omnipotence. Previous research has suggested that the Authority and Self-Sufficiency subscales demonstrate an “adaptive” form of covert narcissism among adolescents (Barry et al., 2003; Barry, Frick, Adler, & Grafeman, 2007). Therefore, we focused on these as measures of the adaptive nature of omnipotence. We also included Hendin and Creek’s (1997) measure of hypersensitive narcissism. Hypersensitive narcissism is a covert subtype indicated by an increased sensitivity to the opinions of others, a sense that one is fundamentally different in thought and emotion from others, and decreased self-esteem. This is clearly linked to our conception of personal uniqueness as a subtype of narcissism among adolescents. Therefore, a positive relationship between hypersensitive narcissism and our Personal Uniqueness Scale would suggest construct validity for conceptualizing personal uniqueness as a subtype of adolescent narcissism.

To test our second prediction, we administered measures of psychological symptoms (Brief Symptom Inventory; Derogatis, 1993) and adjustment (College Adjustment Scales; Anton & Reed, 1991). Participants high in omnipotence should demonstrate a much more adaptive psychological profile compared to those high in personal uniqueness. Omnipotence should be linked to better adjustment and decreased pathological symptoms. Personal uniqueness however should be linked to poorer adjustment and increased symptoms. We would predict that these differences should be particularly true with respect to self-esteem issues.

#### *Evidence for Convergent Validity*

First, we assessed the relationships between the NPI subscales and our two measures of adolescent narcissism. Following predictions, the Omnipotence Scale was positively correlated with the two NPI subscales: authority,  $r(96) = .55, p < .001$ , and self-sufficiency,  $r(96) = .51, p < .001$ . However, the Personal Uniqueness Scale was negatively correlated with the authority,  $r(96) = -.24, p < .05$ , and self-sufficiency subscales,  $r(96) = -.22, p < .05$ . This provides evidence that omnipotence appears to be overt in nature, and a more adaptive form of narcissism than personal uniqueness.

Second, we assessed the relationships between our two measures and hypersensitive narcissism. Omnipotence was unrelated to this measure,  $r(97) = -.03, p > .1$ , which follows past work suggesting only negligible relationships between overt and covert measures of narcissism (Wink, 1991). However, personal uniqueness was positively correlated with hypersensitive narcissism,  $r(97) = .48, p < .001$ . This supports our view that personal uniqueness is a covert subtype of narcissism. Furthermore, we suggest that this provides strong support that our scales measure distinguishably different subtypes of narcissism. Indeed, omnipotence and personal uniqueness were unrelated in our sample. Further support of their distinctive character comes from their different psychological profiles.

#### *Evidence for Construct Validity*

Participants were asked to complete the College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1993) as measures of psychological wellbeing and adjustment. When examining the correlations between these measures and our two measures of adolescent narcissism, our measures demonstrate clearly distinct psychological profiles. First, as illustrated in Table 1, omnipotence was negatively related to depressive symptoms, self-esteem problems, and interpersonal sensitivity. In line with Hill et al. (2008), these results suggest that omnipotence may counteract psychological symptomatology among adolescents.

Second, personal uniqueness demonstrated a clearly maladaptive psychological profile. Higher personal uniqueness scores were related to more academic, interpersonal, self-esteem and family problems. In addition, it was linked to greater anxiety, suicidal ideation, somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, depressive symptoms, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. Clearly then, personal uniqueness appears to tap the maladaptive element of adolescent narcissism. In addition, these results support our predictions that perceptions of omnipotence should lead to decreased self-esteem problems, while perceptions of personal uniqueness should lead to increased self-esteem problems. Thus, following work with adults (Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004), narcissism appears to be psychologically adaptive only when it leads to an increased sense of self-esteem.

## Conclusion

In adulthood narcissism manifests itself as a multifaceted construct. On one hand, narcissism can be maladaptive when it takes a more covert form, highlighted by a hypersensitivity to others and increased anxiety in social situations. On the other hand, narcissism can be adaptive when it takes a more overt form, boosting one's self-esteem and leading to a greater propensity to take part in social activities. In this chapter, we suggest that this distinction is as relevant, or perhaps more so, among adolescents as it is for adults. Indeed, following Blos (1962), it appears as though narcissism naturally manifests in adolescence in both an adaptive and overt form (omnipotence), and a maladaptive and overt form (personal uniqueness). Adolescents who increase their feelings of self-worth through perceived omnipotence demonstrate a more adaptive psychological profile than those who perceive a sense of personal uniqueness. We suggest that these two perceptions can thus be theoretically and empirically linked to overt and covert narcissism among adults (Wink, 1991, 1996). However, it may be even more informative to assess narcissism as a multifaceted construct when evaluating adolescents, because adolescents' perceived self-worth may dramatically influence their ability to navigate the difficult processes involved in self and identity formation (Blos, 1962; Kohut, 1977; Winnicott, 1965).

The thrust of our discussion thus centers on our claim that adolescent narcissism may demonstrate either adaptive or maladaptive characteristics, depending on whether its influence on the adolescent's self-esteem. In preliminary results, we find support for our claims along these lines: that omnipotence was negatively related to self-esteem problems while personal uniqueness was positively related, which coincides with Aalsma et al.'s (2006) findings. However, it is as yet uncertain whether the relationships between these manifestations and wellbeing are mediated by self-esteem, as found among adult samples (Rose, 2002; Sedikides et al., 2004). This provides a necessary avenue for future research, in order to connect our results with those found among adults. In addition, we now suggest three further avenues with respect to areas other than self-esteem.

### *Future Research*

First, while omnipotence appears largely positive and personal uniqueness largely negative, it will be of interest to assess the maladaptive

nature of omnipotence, as well as the adaptive nature of personal uniqueness. For example, a sense of omnipotence may lead to increased risk-taking. Believing in one's superiority may lead one to view actions as less risky for oneself relative to others. Several studies on personal fable ideation have found positive correlations between omnipotence and a sense of personal invulnerability (e.g., Goossens et al., 2002; Lapsley et al., 1989; Vartanian, 1997). Therefore, future work should better assess the unique role of omnipotence on risk-taking.

In addition, it is possible that a sense of personal uniqueness may not be wholly maladaptive. Blos (1962) has suggested previously that adolescence is a period marked by increased creativity and originality (see also Winnicott, 1965), which may occur because adolescents believe that their thoughts are unique and original. Correspondingly, one indicator of creativity appears to be one's uniqueness in thought (e.g., Hammaker, Shafto, & Trabasso, 1975; Wallach & Kogan, 1965), and Dollinger (2003) suggests that one's need for uniqueness is predictive of creative activity. Thus, it seems plausible that perceived personal uniqueness may lead one to creative production. Future research should thus assess whether a sense of personal uniqueness may lead to adaptive benefits, such as increased creative thought.

Second, further work should examine whether other subtypes of adolescent narcissism also exist. We suggest that our omnipotence and personal uniqueness scales appear to assess two conceptually and empirically separable subtypes of adolescent narcissism; however, we do not exclude the possibility that other subtypes exist. Given that narcissism is linked to personal fable ideation (Aalsma et al., 2006; Lapsley & Rice, 1988), another possibility would be to further evaluate the link between invulnerability and narcissism. Indeed, Aalsma et al. (2006) found that invulnerability was positively related to the NPI total score, although not as strongly as omnipotence.

Third, it would be of interest to chart these constructs longitudinally, in order to assess whether their adaptive and maladaptive elements have consistent effects across adolescence. Aalsma et al. (2006) have provided some initial results along this line. In their cross-sectional study of 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, they tested whether the relationships between personal fable ideation and adjustment measures differed systematically with time. With respect to personal uniqueness, its

relationship with internalizing behavior demonstrated a quadratic function. Specifically, it appears most closely related to internalizing during middle adolescence, but the relationship begins to attenuate by 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This suggests that personal uniqueness may be most maladaptive during middle adolescence. With respect to omnipotence, though, its profile remained largely consistent and positive across the four assessments. Future research should continue along this line in order to profile a fuller picture of the two faces of narcissism across adolescent development.

### Summary

Despite the popularity of narcissism in the mainstream and in research within personality and clinical domains, developmental accounts of narcissism are surprisingly absent, particularly with respect to adolescence. In this chapter we promote a view of adolescent narcissism that aligns with past theories of separation-individuation and personal fable ideation. From these theories, we suggest that narcissism manifests itself in adolescence as perceived omnipotence and personal uniqueness. Omnipotence is an adaptive and overt form, leading to an increased sense of self-worth that buffers adolescents against internalizing symptoms. Personal uniqueness is a maladaptive, covert form that leads to social anxiety and timidity, which in turn makes the adolescent more susceptible to internalizing symptoms. Indeed, we suggest that assessing these constructs, rather than using measures of narcissism derived from diagnostics of pathology, better correspond with the adolescent experience. With these new measures in tow, as well as a theoretical background that supports the notion that adolescent narcissism is not wholly maladaptive, we hope that developmental research can expound on the topic of narcissism in adolescence.

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<b>Indices of Symptoms</b>	<b>Omnipotence r =</b>	<b>Personal Uniqueness r =</b>
Somatization	.00	<b>.33**</b>
Obsessive Compulsion	-.06	<b>.39**</b>
Interpersonal Sensitivity	<b>-.29**</b>	<b>.44**</b>
Depressive Symptoms	<b>-.23*</b>	<b>.45**</b>
Anxiety	-.07	<b>.42**</b>
Hostility	.03	<b>.34**</b>
Phobic Anxiety	-.09	<b>.43**</b>
.Paranoid Ideation	.07	<b>.34**</b>
.Psychoticism	-.16	<b>.53**</b>
Academic Problems	.01	<b>.33**</b>
Self-Esteem Problems	<b>-.36**</b>	<b>.55**</b>
Family Problems	.02	<b>.40**</b>

Note: \* indicates  $p < .05$ , \*\* indicates  $p < .01$ .