The Strategic Helper: Narcissism and Prosocial Behavior

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ALS Ice Bucket Challenge
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2 million people tagged in Ice Bucket Challenge videos on Facebook
17 million Facebook videos related to the Ice Bucket Challenge
Videos viewed over 10 billion times by more than 440 million people
$220 million raised total ($115 million for ALSA during an 8-week period)

Forbes.com (Chowdhry, 2015)
ALSAn.com
Narcissism

- Personality trait
- Unrealistically high self-esteem
- Extreme need for self-enhancement
- Low empathy (Miller & Campbell 2008)
Narcissism and Negative Correlates

- Increased aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998)
- Increased hostility and antagonism (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995)
- Lower empathy (Watson, et al, 1984)
- Increased Machiavellianism (Paulhaus & Williams, 2002)
- Increased psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)
- Lower agreeableness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)
Prosocial behavior

• Any action intended to benefit someone other than the person completing the action (Batson & Powell, 2003)

• Can be motivated by altruism or egoism (Batson & Powell, 2003)
What do narcissists do when presented with an opportunity to act prosocially?

Research Question #1
Prior Research on Narcissism and Prosocial Behavior

• More narcissistic people report engaging in more prosocial behaviors (Zhou, Zhou, & Zhang, 2010)
• Adolescents who scored higher on narcissism reported higher rates of prosocial behavior, but were not perceived as more prosocial by their peers (Kauten & Barry, 2014)
Study 1: Ice Bucket Challenge Methods

• 2198 respondents (24.3% of the total sample) were challenged to do the ice bucket challenge
  1) Have not heard about the ice bucket challenge (N=302; 3.3%)
  2) Heard of it, but not challenged (N=6562; 72.4%)
  3) Challenged, but did not participate (N=1288; 14.2%; 58.6% of those challenged)
  4) Made a donation only (N=237; 2.6%; 10.8% of those challenged)
  5) Posted an ice bucket video of themselves online only (N=336; 3.7%; 15.3% of those challenged)
  6) Both donated and posted an ice bucket video (N=337; 3.7%; 15.3% of those challenged)

• Single Item Narcissism Scale (Konrath, et al, 2014)
  • M=2.88, SD=1.48
Study 1: Ice Bucket Challenge Results (Konrath, Ho, Zarins, 2016)

- Those who posted a video scored significantly higher in narcissism.
- Those who made a donation scored significantly lower in narcissism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posted a Video</th>
<th>Made a Donation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>M=2.99 (SD=1.43)</td>
<td>M=2.68 (SD=1.41)(^\dagger)</td>
<td>M=2.86 (SD=1.43)(^\wedge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>M=3.14 (SD=1.61)(^2)</td>
<td>M=2.98 (SD=1.51)</td>
<td>M=3.02 (SD=1.53)(^\wedge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>M=3.06 (SD=1.52)(^*)</td>
<td>M=2.94 (SD=1.50)(^*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^\wedge F(1,2194)=8.57, p=.003\)  \(^* F(1,2194)=8.68, p=.003\)
Why do narcissists act prosocially?

Research Question #2
Study 2 Prior Research

• Prior research: 30-item Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al, 1998) (Brunell, Tumblin, & Buelow, 2014)
  • Positive association between narcissism and career volunteer functions, social volunteer functions, protective volunteer functions
  • Negative association between narcissism and altruism (values) volunteer functions
  • No association between narcissism and understanding volunteer function or esteem (enhancement) volunteer function
  • NPI-entitlement associated with lower reporting of volunteering over the past year
  • NPI-entitlement positively associated with career and social motives
  • NPI-exploitativeness positively associated with understanding motives
Study 2 Methods

• Part of a larger online questionnaire (N=819)
  • Part A: 800 adults (Mean age = 27.86, SD=13.86; 73.6% female; 84.3% Caucasian
    • Only participants who completed the narcissism measure
  • Part B: 670 adults (Mean age = 27.99, SD=13.86; 72.2% female; 84.5% Caucasian
    • Only participants who completed the narcissism measure and watched at least some of the video were included

• 16-item Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI-16; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006)
• Empathic Concern & Perspective Taking subscales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983)
• Prosocial behaviors measure of the 2002 General Social Survey altruism module (Smith et al, 2013)
• 12-item Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al, 1998)
• Karen Klein video
  • Half of participants asked to remain objective
  • Half of participants asked to take the perspective of Karen
### Study 2: Part A (Motives) Results
(Konrath, Ho, Zarins, 2016)

- Study 3

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<th>Empathic Concern</th>
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<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Protective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
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Study 2: Part A (Motives) Results (Konrath, Ho, Zarins, 2016)

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Study 2: Part B (Emotions) Results

- Narcissism was associated with more positive emotions, $\beta=.13$, $p=.001$ ($\beta=.12$, $p=.002$).
- There was no relationship between narcissism and compassionate emotions, $\beta=-.04$, $p=.28$ ($\beta=-.04$, $p=.34$), or negative emotions, $\beta=-.01$, $p=.75$ ($\beta=-.02$, $p=.63$).
- No effect of condition.
When do narcissists act prosocially?
Study 3 Methods
(Konrath, Ho, Zarins, 2016)

• 289 undergraduates (M age = 18.9, SD=.80; 74% female)
• 16-item Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI-16; Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006)
• 23-item Prosocial Tendencies Scale (Carlo & Randall, 2002)
Study 3 Results
(Konrath, Ho, Zarins, 2016)

• No relationship between narcissism and frequency of volunteering
• More narcissistic people were more likely to engage in public prosocial behaviors and less likely to engage in anonymous prosocial behaviors
## Studies 4 & 5: Katie Banks Methods

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 college students (Mean age = 20.99, SD=4.28; 60% female; 53% Caucasian)</td>
<td>75 college students (Mean age=20.95, SD=3.24; 68% female; 61% Caucasian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-item Narcissism Personality Inventory** (NPI-16; Ames, et. al., 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathic Concern subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index* (IRI; Davis, 1983)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katie Banks task: All participants asked to take the perspective of Katie</td>
<td>Katie Banks task: Randomly assigned to either take the perspective of Katie or remain objective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>After “end” of study, participants were asked to help the professor test materials</td>
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*Part of a longer social skills training study; Only data from the baseline wave was used in these analyses

**In study 5, administered 1 week prior to coming into lab
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<td>More narcissistic people felt marginally less empathic distress towards Katie, $\beta=-.20$, $p=.066$, but narcissism was unrelated to personal distress emotions, $\beta=-.12$, $p=.29$.</td>
<td>There was no effect of condition, $\beta=.06$, $p=.90$, O.R.=1.06 [C.I. .43-2.63], trait narcissism, $\beta=-.02$, $p=.81$, O.R.=.98 [C.I. .84-1.15], or their interaction, $\beta=.03$, $p=.85$, O.R.=1.03 [C.I. .75-1.42], on the decision to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait narcissism predicted a lower likelihood of making a helping commitment, $\beta=-.17$, $p=.04$, O.R.=.84 [C.I. .71-1.00].</td>
<td>More narcissistic participants spent marginally less time helping compared to less narcissistic participants, $\beta=-.30$, $p=.07$.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narcissism did not predict the number of hours offered, $F(1,37)=.75$, $p=.39$.</td>
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Take Home Points

• More narcissistic individuals exhibit reduced empathy, even when asked to empathize.

• Narcissists are more likely to help when there is a personal benefit (e.g. publicity) and less likely to help for altruistic reasons or when the other person is in distress
Strengths & Limitations

• Strengths
  • More comprehensive approach to prosociality
  • *Experimental* research on narcissism and helping behaviors
    • Measured actual behaviors

• Limitations
  • Non-representative samples
  • Limited behavioral measures
  • *Correlational* research
Future Directions

• Compare helping distressed vs non-distressed and direct vs indirect targets in the same study
• Stronger difference between public and private helping
• Motivations for helping and *actual* volunteering (as opposed to self-report)
Implications

• Personal implications: May not experience the health and well-being benefits of volunteering (Konrath et al., 2012; Stukas et al., 2016)

• Implications for non-profits: Better understand narcissistic volunteers to determine when they will help and when they won’t.

• Theoretical implications: Adds to the growing literature on narcissism and positive behaviors
Thank you

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