



Vulnerable past, grandiose present: The relationship between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism, time perspective and personality



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ABSTRACT

Previous investigations showed that there are significant differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. In the present study associations between the two types of narcissism, time perspective (TP) and the five factor model of personality were examined. The two forms of narcissism were associated with different TP profiles. Specifically, grandiose narcissists exhibited high present hedonistic orientation. This result was significant after controlling for extraversion, and was consistent with grandiose narcissists' tendency toward risk-taking, impulsive behavior, and little consideration for future consequences. Vulnerable narcissists showed higher levels of past negative, present fatalistic and present hedonistic TPs. Controlling for personality traits (extraversion, emotional stability and agreeableness), past negative and present hedonism remained significant predictors of vulnerable narcissism. Moreover, when the two types of narcissism have been analyzed together in one model as predictors of hedonism, only grandiose narcissism predicted hedonistic orientation. Additionally, vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with Deviation from Balanced Time Perspective, meaning that vulnerable narcissists manifest less balanced TP.

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1. Introduction

Narcissism is one of the oldest psychological constructs and was historically used to describe individual attitude of patients highly concentrated on self (e.g., Freud, 1914; Kohut, 1966). Nowadays, a growing interest in narcissism as a typical, non-clinical personality trait is observed among psychologists. The construct of non-pathological narcissism was proposed by Raskin and Hall's (1979) who attempted to delineate a subclinical version of the DSM-defined personality disorder. The successful migration from clinical to subclinical construct was supported by a number of studies (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), showing that narcissism is related to many important outcomes, including cognitive biases (e.g., Zajenkowski & Czarna, 2015), interpersonal behavior (e.g., Miller, Campbell, & Pilkonis, 2007), and affect (e.g. Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004). An increasing body of evidence suggests that narcissism is not a unitary construct and that there might be two variants of narcissism: grandiose and vulnerable. The two forms were first conceptualized and examined by Wink (1991). It is believed that they share some basic phenomena, such as the sense of entitlement, disregard of others, and grandiose self-relevant fantasies (Miller et al., 2011). However, they differ in many other aspects, each having unique characteristic. Grandiose narcissism is characterized by an inflated positive self-image, high self esteem, exhibitionism, attitudes of entitlement, a tendency toward exploitativeness, self-

assuredness, aggression, and the need to be admired by others (Miller et al., 2011; Pincus et al., 2009; Wink, 1991). Grandiose narcissism positively correlates with extraversion and negatively with neuroticism and agreeableness (Miller et al., 2011). Vulnerable narcissism, in contrast, is characterized by hypersensitivity, vulnerability, anxiety, defensiveness, and insecurity (Wink, 1991; Miller et al., 2011). Vulnerable narcissism is characterized by a need for other people's recognition (e.g., validation or admiration) and a sense of self-worth that is contingent upon this recognition. Lack of other people's recognition might result in social avoidance and withdrawal (Wink, 1991; Miller et al., 2011; Pincus et al., 2009). Vulnerable narcissists have a low sense of self-worth (e.g., Miller et al., 2011 and Pincus et al., 2009). They are also fearful or suspicious of interdependency, thus they have been described as 'hypersensitive' or 'hypervigilant' (Ronningstam, 2005; Hendin & Cheek, 1997). Vulnerable narcissism is positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively correlated with extraversion and agreeableness (Miller et al., 2011). In the present study we focus on the concept of time perspective (TP) proposed by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) to investigate the time-orientation profiles of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists. TPs have been shown to predict a number of important outcomes such as health, risky behavior, consumer behavior, subjective well-being, social relations, coping with stress, mood and motivation (see Stolarski, Fioulaine, & van Beek, 2015), thus we believe that their potential associations with two forms of narcissism may provide some novel insights into narcissisms nomological network.

TP has been defined as "the often non-conscious process whereby the continual flows of personal and social experiences are assigned to

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temporal categories, or time frames, that help to give order, coherence, and meaning to those events” (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, p. 1271), TP can be considered as a process; an online way of cognitive framing of experience, and as a trait; a stable, habitual focus on a particular temporal frame, i.e. the past, the present or the future. Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), on the basis of the empirical data, described five perspectives of time. The past positive dimension refers to a positive perception of past events, sentimentality and acceptance of the past, as well as attachment to traditions and rituals. It correlates positively with extraversion (Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015), self-esteem (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and positive mood (Stolarski, Matthews, Postek, Zimbardo, & Bitner, 2014). The past negative TP bases on a negative and aversive view of the past events. It is associated with negative emotionality and correlates positively with neuroticism (Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015), depression, anxiety, aggression and negatively with self-esteem (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and extraversion (Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015). Present fatalism describes a belief that life is hopeless, unpredictable and unstable. People with high present fatalism feel and think that luck and fate decide about their lives. Fatalism correlates positively with neuroticism, depression, anxiety, aggression, low consideration of future consequences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Present hedonistic TP focuses on pleasant activities, which can lead to immediate gratification. Hedonically oriented people act impulsively, have a high desire to take risk as well as low conscientiousness and low consideration of future consequences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; MacKillop, Anderson, Castelda, Mattson, & Donovick, 2006). Present hedonism is positively related with extraversion, openness to experience (Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015), sensation seeking, energy (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and positive mood (Stolarski et al., 2014). Future orientation includes thinking about long-term goals and is strongly associated with consideration of future consequences. Focusing on the future is connected to low risk, low impulsivity (MacKillop et al., 2006) and low aggression (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Moreover, future-oriented people are able to be conscientious (Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015) and patient (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Additionally, authors of the time perspective theory take into account the importance of a specific, particularly adaptive combination of time perspectives. Balanced Time Perspective (BTP) is a composition defined as the ability to interlock and switch among TPs, depending on situational demands, values and needs (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). BTP has been recently operationalized as Deviation from Balanced Time Perspective (DBTP) by Stolarski, Bitner, and Zimbardo (2011). Research findings have shown that more balanced TP is related to high satisfaction with life (Zhang, Howell, & Stolarski, 2013), emotional intelligence (Stolarski et al., 2011) and mindfulness (Stolarski, Vowinckel, Jankowski & Zajenkowski, in press).

The role of time has been emphasized in early theories of narcissism, such as Kohut's (1966) idea that narcissistic self is shaped by past experiences, and reconstructions of one's own history. Interestingly, these intuitions have been confirmed in a recent study showing that grandiose narcissism is associated with childhood experiences, in the way that the quality of maternal care decreases, while the quality of paternal care increases the level of narcissism in adulthood (Jonason, Lyons, & Bethell, 2014). Although these findings suggest grandiose narcissists to be more past oriented, Birkás and Csathó (2015) found recently that among the Dark Triad traits, narcissism was the only one not correlating with past negative TP. Additionally, the authors reported grandiose narcissism to be positively linked with present hedonism (Birkás & Csathó, 2015). The latter result is in agreement with the data showing that both grandiose narcissism and hedonistic orientation are correlated positively with impulsivity, extraversion, and life satisfaction, and negatively with neuroticism (Miller et al., 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Zhang & Howell, 2011). To date, no study explored the TP of vulnerable narcissism. Basing on previous research, however, one may expect the latter to correlate positively with past negative and present fatalistic TP, since all these constructs are associated with various aspects of negative emotionality, including neuroticism, anxiety, depression,

aggression and low self-esteem (Miller et al., 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Moreover, vulnerable narcissists exhibit low positive affect. Since high level of the latter is a core characteristic of past positive and present hedonistic TP (Stolarski et al., 2014), one may expect a negative link between vulnerable narcissism and these TPs. Additionally, vulnerable narcissism has been systematically shown to be less adaptive (e.g. correlations with psychopathological symptoms, Miller et al., 2011) in comparison to grandiose narcissism (e.g. correlations with good psychological health, Sedikides et al., 2004). Therefore, one may expect vulnerable narcissists to have less balanced TP, than grandiose narcissists.

In the current study, we formulated the following hypotheses:

- (H1) grandiose narcissism will be positively associated with present hedonism;
- (H2) vulnerable narcissism will be positively related to past negative and present fatalism, and negatively to past positive and present hedonism; and
- (H3) vulnerable narcissism will be linked with less balanced TP, whereas grandiose narcissism with more balanced TP.

A number of studies indicate that TP and narcissism are strongly related with personality traits (see Miller et al., 2011; Stolarski, in press). Most of these studies were based on the five factor model, or “Big Five” (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992). Thus, in the present research we decided to control for the five personality dimensions (extraversion, neuroticism, openness/intellect, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) to examine the unique associations between two types of narcissism and TP.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 226 subjects took part in the study (120 females and 106 males). Their mean age was 23.49 (SD = 3.74) with a range 18–39. Each participant was individually tested in a quiet laboratory at the University of [XXX] in the presence of one experimenter. The sample was composed of undergraduate students from various universities in [XXX]. Volunteer participants were recruited via publicly accessible social networking websites. Each participant was offered a small gift (e.g. a cup) for taking part in the study.

2.2. Materials

Grandiose narcissism was assessed with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). The validated Polish adaptation of the NPI (Bazińska & Drat-Ruszczak, 2000) is composed of 34 items with a five-point response format (from 1 which means does *not apply to me* to 5 – *applies to me*). It has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$), and good convergent validity (correlations with self-esteem, well-being, depression, social anxiety, extraversion and neuroticism).

Vulnerable narcissism was measured with the Polish version (see Czarna, Dufner, & Clifton, 2014) of the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 1997). It contains ten items with a five point Likert-like response scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Polish version correlates negatively with self-esteem and positively with grandiose narcissism, similarly to the original version.

Time perspective was assessed with the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) in the Polish adaptation by Kozak and Mażewski (2007). It has five scales: Past Negative (10 items; $\alpha = .81$), Present Hedonistic (15 items; $\alpha = .78$), Future (13 items; $\alpha = .74$), Past Positive (9 items; $\alpha = .65$) and Present Fatalistic (9 items; $\alpha = .73$). Respondents rate their degree of endorsement of each statement on a five point Likert-like response scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*)

to 5 (*strongly agree*). Additionally, we calculated the deviation from a balanced time perspective (DBTP) a continuous indicator describing the fit between individuals' time perceptions and the optimal time perspective profile. An optimal score on each for each TP scale has been proposed by *Zimbardo and Boyd (2008)*, basing on their collective crosscultural database. The Polish adaptation shows reliabilities similar to the original version (α s ranging from .65 to .81) and its validity has been tested in a number of studies, including Big Five traits (*Stolarski, in press*), aggression components (*Stolarski, Zajenkowski & Zajenkowska, in press*), or mood (*Stolarski et al., 2014*).

Big Five was measured with the Polish adaptation (*Strus, Ciecuch, & Rowiński, 2014*) of the 50-item set of International Personality Items Pool Big Five Factor Markers questionnaire (*Goldberg, 1992*). The measure consists of five subscales: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect/imagination and has five-point Likert-type response format, from 1-very inaccurate to 5-very accurate. The reliability and validity of the Polish version was tested on a large sample, showing high internal consistency (α s ranging from .73 to .91), adequate factor structure and correlations (from .47 to .70) with the scales from other Big Five measures (*Strus, Ciecuch, & Rowiński, 2014*).

3. Results

In *Table 1* we present correlations between narcissisms, TPs and personality traits. Vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with past negative, present fatalistic, and present hedonistic TP. Moreover, vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with Deviation from Balanced Time Perspective, meaning that the higher the level of vulnerable narcissism was, the greater the distance from balanced TP. Vulnerable narcissism was negatively associated with personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability. Grandiose narcissism correlated with only one time perspective, i.e. present hedonism. In addition, grandiose narcissism was significantly, positively associated with extraversion and intellect/imagination. Finally, the results indicate correlation between vulnerable and grandiose narcissism. Subsequently, we examined sex differences for the measured variables. The results indicated that women scored higher on extraversion, agreeableness, past positive and future TPs, while men scored higher on emotional stability and balanced TP.

Furthermore, we examined whether time perspectives predict a unique variance in each narcissism dimension beyond personality traits. We conducted four regression analyses (see *Table 2*). Each time vulnerable or grandiose narcissism were dependent variables, sex and age were predictors added in step 1, personality characteristics were

predictors added in step 2, and time perspectives were predictors added in step 3.

In the first model, vulnerable narcissism was a dependent variable, while demographic variables were entered in step 1, extraversion and emotional stability were predictors entered in step 2, followed by past negative TP (step 3). Interestingly, in the final model, all three variables (extraversion, emotional stability and past negative) significantly predicted vulnerable narcissism. This result suggests that past negative TP is associated with vulnerable narcissism even after controlling for important personality correlates of the two constructs.

In model 2, sex and age were entered first (step 1) followed by agreeableness and emotional stability (step 2) and present fatalism (step 3) in predicting vulnerable narcissism. The regression analysis revealed that present fatalism was not related with vulnerable narcissism when this TP was analyzed jointly with personality traits.

In the next model, demographic variables were added in step 1, extraversion was added in step 2, while present hedonism in step 3, and vulnerable narcissism was a dependent variable. Both variables stayed significant in explaining vulnerable narcissism.

In subsequent regression model, sex and age were entered in step 1, extraversion was added in step 2 and present hedonism in step 3, but this time grandiose narcissism was the dependent variable. In the final model both variables significantly predicted grandiose narcissism.

Since grandiose and vulnerable narcissism as well as present hedonism were positively intercorrelated, in the last regression model we examined to what extent each narcissism predicted a unique variance in hedonistic TP. Both forms of narcissism were entered as predictors of hedonism jointly in one model. We found that only grandiose narcissism ($\beta = .21, p = .002$) was significantly related with present hedonism, while vulnerable narcissism did not reveal a significant relationship with this TP ($\beta = .10, p = .123$).

4. Discussion

The study revealed that the two types of narcissism are associated with different TP profiles. Specifically, grandiose narcissists were present hedonistic, while vulnerable narcissists exhibited higher level of past negative and present fatalistic TPs. The former finding replicates and extends the previously obtained result (*Birkás & Csathó, 2015*), by showing that grandiose narcissism is related with hedonism, even after controlling for personality correlate of both constructs, extraversion. Narcissists' elevated hedonism corresponds with their novelty seeking, claim for immediate reward, overconfidence, unrealistic optimism, an illusion of control, so all of factors believed to drive narcissistic individuals to take risks without consideration of future consequences

Table 1
Correlation matrix of narcissism, time perspective and personality.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Vulnerable narcissism	–												
2 Grandiose narcissism	.21**	–											
3 Past negative	.39**	.02	–										
4 Past positive	.11	–.02	.22**	–									
5 Present fatalism	.20**	–.07	.42**	.46**	–								
6 Present hedonism	.14*	.23**	.21**	.37**	.51**	–							
7 Future	–.02	.07	.06	–.01	–.13	–.15*	–						
8 Balanced time perspective	.15*	–.04	.53**	–.29**	.42**	–.07	–.10	–					
9 Extraversion	–.32**	.40**	–.27**	.03	–.09	.18**	.10	–.23**	–				
10 Agreeableness	–.27**	.05	–.06	–.05	–.13*	.10	.19**	–.16*	.37**	–			
11 Conscientiousness	–.10	.05	–.05	–.08	–.24**	–.33**	.62**	–.07	.12	.16*	–		
12 Emotional stability	–.50**	.06	–.51**	–.06	–.19**	–.07	–.10	–.24**	.21**	.08	.05	–	
13 Intellect/imagination	–.02	.35**	–.08	–.12	–.24**	–.01	.08	–.10	.25**	.35**	.04	.01	–
α	.70	.92	.84	.43	.78	.81	.60	–	.88	.81	.84	.87	.75
M	30.06	101.64	2.92	3.16	2.43	3.31	3.42	2.47	32.48	36.43	34.61	28.61	38.32
SD	5.94	19.65	.78	.49	.69	.58	.48	.52	8.15	5.55	7.51	7.69	5.58

* $p < .05$ two tailed.

** $p < .01$ two tailed.

Table 2

Regression analyses with vulnerable narcissism (models 1–3) and grandiose narcissism (model 4) as dependent variables and demographic variables, personality traits and time perspectives as predictors.

	Vulnerable narcissism				Grandiose narcissism			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.04*		.04*		.04*		.02	
Sex		.00	Sex	.00	Sex	.00	Sex	-.13
Age		-.19*	Age	-.19*	Age	-.19*	Age	-.08
Step 2	.27**		.28**		.09**		.19**	
Sex		-.06	Sex	-.04	Sex	.05	Sex	-.20**
Age		-.09	Age	-.13*	Age	-.15*	Age	-.14*
Extraversion		-.21**	Agreeableness	-.23**	Extraversion	-.31**	Extraversion	.45**
Emotional stability		-.45**	Emotional stability	-.46**				
Step 3	.01*		.01		.03**		.02*	
Sex		-.04	Sex	-.04	Sex	.05	Sex	-.20**
Age		-.08	Age	-.13*	Age	-.11	Age	-.11
Extraversion		-.19*	Agreeableness	-.22**	Extraversion	-.34**	Extraversion	.42**
Emotional stability		-.38**	Emotional stability	-.45**	Present hedonism	.18*	Present hedonism	.15*
Past negative		.13*	Present fatalism	.09				

Note Sex coded 0 – men, 1 – women.

* $p < 0.05$ two tailed.

** $p < 0.001$ two tailed.

(Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004). Furthermore, there might be more similarities between grandiose narcissism and hedonistic TP, because it has been suggested that both constructs have two shades: an adaptive side, and psychologically maladjusted one. Empirical evidence indicates that besides non-adaptive outcomes (e.g. impulsiveness or aggression; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Krizan & Johar, 2015), present hedonism and grandiose narcissism predict socially desirable variables such as high satisfaction with life (Zhang & Howell, 2011; Sedikides et al., 2004) and positive affect (Hickman, Watson, & Morris, 1996; Stolarski et al., 2014). Additionally, researchers studying both present hedonism and grandiose narcissism emphasize that certain level of pleasure-orientation (hedonism) and self-enhancement (narcissism) might be necessary for psychological adjustment (Sedikides et al., 2004; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Thus, it is possible that there might be an optimal level (e.g. moderate) of self-focus on one's own pleasure that leads to increased well-being. Our study revealed that vulnerable narcissism was also associated with present hedonistic TP, but the relationship was not significant after controlling for grandiose narcissism. This is in agreement with other studies and considerations indicating that the two types of narcissism share some core characteristics, such as self-concentration, sense of entitlement, and disregard of others (Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Wink, 1991). However, it seems that these aspects are more important for present hedonistic TP when they are joined with grandiosity.

In the current study vulnerable narcissism was uniquely associated with past negative and present fatalistic TP. These results are consistent with our hypothesis based on the fact that both TPs are strongly linked to negative emotionality and low self-esteem which are also the main characteristics of vulnerable narcissism. However, the relation with each TP may reveal different aspects of vulnerable narcissism. We found that especially pronounced was the relationship with past negative orientation, since it remained significant even after controlling for personality traits (extraversion and emotional stability). Thus, vulnerable narcissists have a tendency to view the past in a negative and aversive way. According to Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), this attitude can come from either actual unpleasant and traumatic experiences in one's past, of a negative reconstruction of past, or of a mixture of both. Interestingly, among the five TPs, past negative is the strongest predictor of low self-esteem (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). The level of the latter variable is also one of the key factors differentiating vulnerable narcissism from grandiose (Miller et al., 2011). Basing on our results, one may wonder whether a negative view of the past is also a source of

the vulnerable narcissists' low self-worth. It has been shown already, that individuals with high past negative exhibit a negative bias in mood recollection and mood anticipation (Stolarski et al., 2014). Perhaps, this negative tendency shapes also self-image of vulnerable narcissists.

Vulnerable narcissism was also associated with present fatalistic TP, however this relationship had been attenuated when emotional stability was added to the regression model. A fatalistic attitude might be a manifestation of neurotic emotionality and low self-esteem of vulnerable narcissists, since present fatalism has been described by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) as an orientation of hopelessness and helplessness, the feeling of little influence on one's life and its unpredictability and instability. A negative evaluation of oneself may lead narcissistic individual to perceived lack of control over events and a belief that the present must be borne with resignation.

It is worth noting, that both TPs correlated with vulnerable narcissism have been linked to some aspects of aggression (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). More specifically, Stolarski, Zajenkowski and Zajenkovska (in press) reported that past negative and present fatalistic TP predicted hostility. This seems to be congruent with a recent finding reported by Krizan and Johar (2015) who found that people high on vulnerable narcissism scale, but not grandiose, have a disposition toward narcissistic rage, a mix of anger, hostility and shame, which leads to distrust and might trigger aggressive behavior. It would be interesting to see in future studies, to what extent specific time orientations account for this rage experienced by vulnerable narcissists.

Finally, our study indicates that vulnerable narcissists show less adaptive psychological profile than grandiose narcissists (Miller et al., 2011), since only the former individuals manifested high deviation from balanced TP. Balanced TP is regarded as highly adaptive psychological characteristic which enables attentional flexibility and effective switching between TPs (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004), and its predictive validity has been demonstrated in a number of studies (Stolarski et al., 2011; Stolarski, Vowinckel, et al., in press; Stolarski, Zajenkowski, et al., in press; Zhang et al., 2013). The current investigation is in agreement with previous findings showing that individuals high on vulnerable narcissism report a wide array of psychological problems indicative of significant distress, such as depression, anxiety, hostility, paranoia, and interpersonal sensitivity (Miller et al., 2011). Moreover, Miller and Campbell (2010) suggested that the correlates of vulnerable narcissism and borderline personality disorder are so highly overlapping that one could question whether they

represent distinct constructs. In contrast, it is possible that grandiose narcissists' maladaptive behavior (e.g. aggression, disagreeableness; Miller et al., 2011), is counter balanced by their general tendency toward positive emotionality (Sedikides et al., 2004), which in turn may result in lower deviation from balanced TP in comparison to vulnerable narcissists.

The present research has several limitations. First, only student sample was tested, and thus further studies are necessary to replicate our results on different populations. Second, because the current research was correlational, it does not allow for causal interpretation. For instance, it would be interesting to examine whether the negative view of the past shapes core aspects of vulnerable narcissism, such as low self-esteem and negative emotionality. Third, to fully understand the relationship between TP and the two types of narcissism, other variables should be controlled in future investigations, e.g. the level of self-esteem, or the sense of entitlement. Finally, one of the scales, past positive TP, had very low internal consistency. However, this scale did not correlate with narcissism and thus was not crucial for our results.

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