The Superior Me!
An Empirical Examination of the Dominance-Self of Narcissism

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To address the question of why a narcissistic individual thinks and behaves the way he or she does, it is important to take an intrapersonal approach to dissect the psychological motives. The aim of this study is to further develop the concept of the narcissistic self. To specify the content and structure of the narcissistic self-concept, which we label as the dominance self-concept, we draw from the interpersonal circumplex framework of personality theories and identity motive perspective in self-system literature. Furthermore, we develop a causal-chain process model to depict the motivated process of narcissism manifestations. We contend that narcissism personality is translated into narcissistic displays through two steps of motivated links, motivated self-construal, and self-concept motivated self-regulation. In addition, we empirically test part of the process model and hypothesize a mediating role of dominance self-concept in the link between narcissism and two cognitive strategies of self-enhancement (perceived fit for leader roles, personal sense of power).

INTRODUCTION

Narcissism is a consequential personality trait and has continuously drawn research interest among management scholars (Back et al., 2013; Zhu and Chen, 2015). Accumulated research has advanced understanding of the complex characteristics of the narcissism trait and an array of narcissistic displays and effects on individual and organizational outcomes (for overviews, see Braun, 2017; Cragun et al., 2020;

Grijalva and Zhang, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2015). Despite these insights, current conversations primarily focus on the direct relationship between narcissism personality and organizational outcomes. Much less attention is given to investigating the underlying mechanisms and why narcissistic individuals think and behave as they do (Back et al., 2013; Cragun et al., 2020). For instance, narcissistic individuals are known to be exploitative and antagonistic toward others. Yet, these are the very people they rely on for the "narcissistic supply" (Kernberg, 1975) they constantly crave (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995). Narcissistic contradiction is also prevalent in organizational leadership contexts. Narcissists are quick to emerge as leaders (Braun 2017; Grijalva and Zhang, 2016) but not so much in delivering actual effectiveness (e.g., Petrenko et al., 2016). The field seems to settle on a bright-and-dark-side-of-narcissism focus or the short-versus-long-term-effects-of-narcissism explanation, leaving the important question of '*why"* unanswered. Such broad-brush approaches are limited in providing coherent explanations of diverse behaviors. We see a need to theorize about *why and how* the narcissism trait becomes manifest from an intrapersonal motivation perspective (Brunell et al., 2008; Cragun et al., 2019; Hartel et al., 2021).

There have been advances in theorizing about the motivational processes that underlie narcissism, such as the extended agency model (Campbell et al., 2006) and the dynamic self-regulatory model (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Scholars contend that insight regarding how one defines oneself as distinct person is the key to understand one's behavior (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This line of research suggests that the *narcissistic self* provides the essential motive underlying the link between narcissism and its cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations. However, the extant literature mostly considers the *narcissistic-self* argument as an underlying assumption but has yet to conceptually and empirically distinguish the *narcissistic self* from other components of the narcissistic process (Vignoles et al., 2006). As a result, it presents a challenge to separate the personality trait from its psychological and behavioral correlates and outcomes.

To address these under-researched motivational issues in the narcissism literature, this study further develops the concept of the *narcissistic self.* To specify the content and structure of the narcissistic self-concept, which we label as the *dominance self-concept,* we draw from the interpersonal circumplex framework of personality theories and identity motive perspective in the self-system literature. Furthermore, we develop a causal-chain process model to depict the motivated process of narcissism manifestations. In other words, we contend that narcissism personality is translated into narcissistic displays through two steps of motivated links: a) motivated self-construal, and b) self-concept motivated self-regulation (Figure 1). In addition, we empirically test part of the process model and hypothesize a mediating role of dominance self-concept in the link between narcissism and two cognitive strategies of self-enhancement (perceived fit for leader roles, personal sense of power).

FIGURE 1
DYNAMIC SELF-FUNCTIONING PROCESS
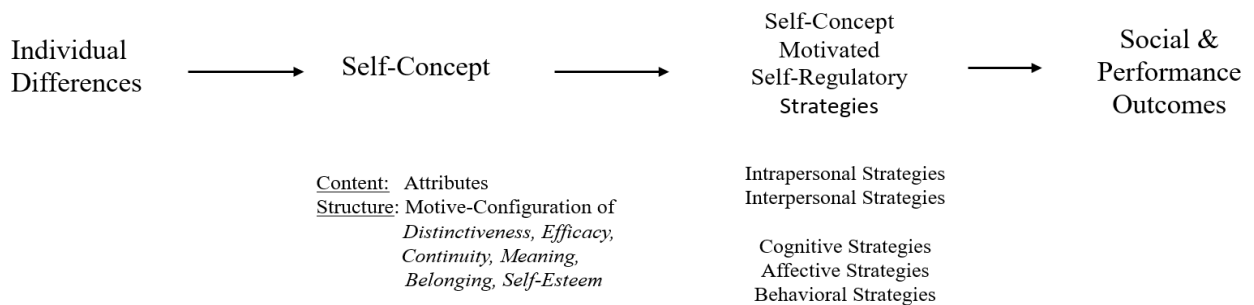
The specification of the dominance self-concept helps improve the conceptual and empirical clarity of the narcissistic processes. Thus, we make contributions to the conversations regarding narcissism in the following two ways.

First, by teasing out the *narcissistic self* (as a self-concept) from narcissism as a personality trait and self-regulatory strategies (as the enactment of narcissism), this paper provides a process framework to investigate diverse cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations of narcissism.

Second, by zooming in on the role of the *dominance self-concept* in producing overarching self-goals, we shed light on the cohering mechanisms underlying seemingly diverse or even paradoxical narcissistic displays. Specially, this framework indicates that the ultimate motive of a narcissistic individual (i.e., behavioral intent) is to verify, sustain, enhance, and protect the *dominance self-concept*. Although it may seem contradictory from an observer's viewpoint, it is highly coherent and purposeful from the perspective of serving the dominance self. In essence, diverse narcissistic displays are nothing but instrumental attempts to maintain self-consistency and validate and confirm their narcissistic self-concept.

In the following sections, we elaborate on the self-concept construction for narcissism and its motivational functions in predicting two narcissistic self-evaluation strategies (perceived fit for leader role and personal sense of power).

SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-PROCESS

The self-concept is a cognitive structure comprised of one's beliefs about the self. It includes self-relevant information such as one's attributes, goals, and social roles (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Markus & Wurf, 1987). It reflects how one defines and perceives oneself at a fundamental level ("who am I?") and plays a central role in self-functioning (Cooper and Thatcher, 2010; Vignoles et al., 2008). There are several terminologies that are frequently used in the literature, such as identity, self, self-system, and self-construal. For the purpose of this study, we consider the self-concept and these other terms to be interchangeable.

The central premise of self-theories is that the self is dynamic, and the self-concept serves as a mediating mechanism (Figure 1). It is important to elaborate on three key assumptions in extant theories of the self-system that are relevant for the development of the self-concept of narcissism. First, the *self-concept* is descriptive (Hoyle et al., 1999; Markus & Wurf, 1987). This self-descriptive function reflects the fact that a self-concept has content; that is, it serves as a "mental repository of autobiographical information, reflected appraisals, self-ascribed traits and competencies, and self-schema including possible selves, self-with-others, and desired selves" (Rhodewalt & Morf, 2005, p. 130). Thus, the self-concept contains a list of trait or quality descriptors (e.g., I am a *strong and confident* person). It is also worth noting that these self-defining attributes and competencies ascribed to oneself are subjectively constructed and not necessarily actually possessed by an individual (Vignoles et al., 2008).

The second key assumption is that the self-concept is an individual difference construct. Different people develop different self-definitions (descriptors) driven by varying self-construal motives, which are psychological pressures that push individuals "toward particular ways of seeing oneself" (Vignoles, 2011, p. 309), such as favoring or avoiding certain types of self-conceptualizations (Vignoles et al., 2006). These psychological motives are theorized to be the underlying principles that help explain *why* an individual prefers to see him or herself as a particular type of person (Vignoles et al., 2002). Specifically, there are six principal motives that guide the self-construction process (Vignoles et al., 2002; Vignoles, 2011). People are motivated not only to "see themselves in a positive light (the *self-esteem motive*) but also to believe that they are different from other people (the *distinctiveness motive*), that their identities are continuous over time despite significant life changes (*the continuity motive*), that they are included and accepted within their social circles (*the belonging motive*), that they are competent and capable of influencing their environments (the *efficacy motive*), and that their lives are ultimately meaningful (the *meaning motive*)" (Vignoles et al., 2008, p.1166). Empirical evidence also suggests that the six motives do not carry the same weight for everyone (Vignoles et al., 2008). For instance, a person who is mostly driven by a belonging motive will likely define him- or herself with communal-related descriptors in which case other motives will play a lesser role. Thus, the self-concept's content is individually unique due to different self-construal-motive configurations (i.e., structure).

The third assumption has to do with the motivational function of the self-concept (Hoyle e t al., 1999; Markus & Wurf, 1987). This is about the influence of the self-concept on self-regulation strategies

(Oyserman et al., 2006). Maintaining self-consistency is a fundamental functioning of human beings. The self-concept prescribes meanings for self-goals and specifies behavioral standards, thus producing cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies to pursue these self-goals (Gregg et al., 2011). In essence, the self-concept prescribes self-regulation motives, and self-regulatory strategies are executed to serve self-goals (Hu et al., 2022; Gregg et al., 2011).

DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT OF NARCISSISM

Viewed from a self-process lens, we can understand how narcissistic displays function to serve high-order self-goals. Thus, the self-concept of narcissism is not only a motivational mechanism that translates the personality of narcissism into diverse self-regulatory strategies, but also a unifying system that "integrates disparate roles, goals, needs, fears, live, love, and work" (McAdam, 2009, p.18) into a coherent act of self-representation. By dissecting the self-concept that a narcissistic individual is likely to construct, we can highlight the narcissistic self-goals and the motivated intrapersonal processes (i.e., the why and how questions about narcissism). In the following section, we describe the self-construal motive-configuration and the content of a narcissistic self-concept, and two resulting self-evaluation regulatory strategies.

Content of Narcissistic Self-Concept

As discussed earlier, one develops a self-concept to define oneself as a distinct person relative to others. Thus, a self-concept has a descriptive function that comprises a set of desired traits and qualities that one ascribes to oneself. The first essential question about the self-concept of narcissism is: what are the main characteristics that narcissistic individuals most value and are likely to prescribe as self-defining? This is one domain in the narcissism literature that has high consensus along with accumulated empirical evidence. The "positive traits" valued by narcissists have been organized within the interpersonal circumplex framework. It is evident that the positive self-views of narcissism are limited to agency characteristics (e.g., intelligent, assertive) and not communal characteristics (e.g., warmth, empathy), despite their socially desirable nature (Campbell et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2002; for reviews, see Grijalva and Zhang, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2015). Basically, the ideal traits claimed by narcissistic individuals as being self-defining locate primarily within the dominance quadrant of the Interpersonal Circumplex (Carlson et al., 2011). Thus, the content of a narcissistic self-concept is intrinsically interpersonal and dominance laden (some scholars use the term agentic to describe this space on the interpersonal circumplex).

### Structure of the Narcissistic Self-Concept: Self-Construal Motive Configuration

Given that self-construction (i.e., self-conceptualization, self-construal) is a motived process (Vignoles et al., 2002), it is telling that narcissism-favored traits are perfectly captured on the interpersonal circumplex for a number of reasons. First, the interpersonal circumplex represents interpersonal dispositions with implications for interpersonal modes of conduct and outcomes (Locke, 2015). This indicates that narcissistic individuals are highly motivated to see themselves as different from others (the distinctiveness motive). In other words, one's uniqueness and distinctiveness as an individual is actually derived from one's relative status with others. Second, one's relative interpersonal status is further defined by one's sense of power over the others. As stated by Wiggins (1991), this agency or dominance quadrant within the interpersonal circumplex depicts "the condition of being a differentiated individual, and it is manifest in strivings for mastery and power, which enhance and protect that differentiation" (p. 89). Thus, narcissistic self-defining traits need to align with superiority over others (i.e., dominance), particularly by the qualities of competence and efficacy (the efficacy motive). Third, the ambivalence toward communal traits that characterizes narcissism (unmitigated agency, Helgeson & Fritz, 1999) indicates a strong deficit in the belonging motive within self-construals. Personality scholars also describe this structural characteristic as coinciding with a low level of self-complexity ("the extend to which aspects of one's self-concept are differentiated"; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998, p.673).

Taken together, we can stipulate that a narcissistic individual has an unbalanced self-construal motive configuration, which is dominated by distinctiveness, efficacy, and continuity motives with high deficits in

the belonging motive (i.e., very low needs for affiliation). As a result, narcissists tend to construct self-concepts by ascribing to a list of dominance and competence related traits and qualities, as supported by empirical evidence in the literature (Back et al., 2013; Higgs, 2009). A dominance self-concept is defined by positive traits, but only those related to interpersonal dominance. Thus, the narcissistic self is defined not by "I am good," but rather, "I am superior to you." We name this particular type of self-concept described above as the dominance self-concept (Figure 2) and advance:

H1. Narcissism is positively related to the dominance self-concept.

FIGURE 2
A DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT MODEL OF THE NARCISSISTIC PROCESS
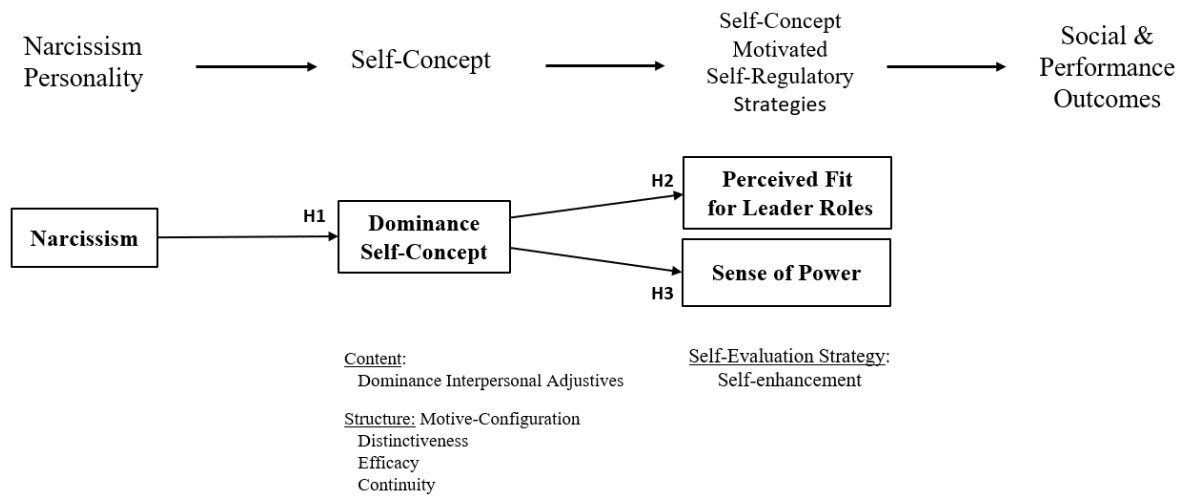
DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT MOTIVATED SELF-REGULATORY STRATEGIES

Self-regulation is a "fundamental activity of the self-system and the organized, dynamic, and causal constellation of thoughts, feelings, and motives that constitutes people's experience of themselves" (Hoyle & Sherill, 2006, p. 1673). Previous process models of narcissism have long established the idea that diverse cognitive, affective, and behavioral displays of narcissism are in fact self-goal motivated self-regulatory strategies adopted to pursue the narcissistic self-goals (Campbell et al., 2011; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The general assumption is that the self-concept acts "as a source of behavioral standards" (Hoyle & Sherill, 2006, p. 1673) because it prescribes content-specific self-goals and produces the needs and desires to self-verify, self-sustain, and self-enhance. Thus, the self-concept is also an "action-oriented self-representations" (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 213). Research has identified a wide range of narcissistic self-regulatory strategies and associated outcomes. However, current writing has not explicitly hypothesized a particular type of self-concept as a predictor of narcissistic self-regulatory strategies.

To address this research gap, we suggest that narcissistic self-regulatory strategies are motivated by a dominance self-concept. Thus, as shown in the process model (Figure 2), narcissism personality is manifested in a sequence of self-goal pursuing processes. Distinctiveness and efficacy-dominated self-construal motives translate narcissism into a dominance self-concept, which in turn, produces dominance-oriented self-regulatory strategies to sustain and enhance the narcissistic dominance self-concept. This study will focus on a couple of cognitive self-regulatory strategies, both of which are intrapersonal self-enhancement strategies that have been empirically linked with narcissism. We will empirically test the mediating role of dominance self-concept in the relationship between narcissism and perceived fit for leader roles, and the relationship between narcissism and sense of power.

Dominance Self-Concept as a Mediator

Personality and leadership scholars have provided abundant empirical evidence on the relationship between narcissism and self-reported leader-like qualities and sense of power. In this paper we advance a process link and hypothesize that a dominance self-concept explains why narcissistic individuals are likely to see themselves as fit for leadership roles and report a high sense of power.

According to the motivational function of the dominance self-concept, narcissistic individuals tend to see themselves as superior to others in agentic qualities and competencies. More importantly, such individuals strive to continuously verify, sustain, and enhance dominance self-views via self-regulation strategies. One self-evaluation strategy is to align with leader-like qualities and perceive oneself as fit for leadership roles. Leadership roles appeal to narcissists because they help them achieve self-enhancement goals for three reasons. First, the leadership role is a social role that signals dominating status along the hierarchies of social structure. It is superior by definition and comes with prestige and respect. Second, a dominance self-concept is an interpersonal construct that produces desires to have one's superiority confirmed by others or via social comparison ("I am not just good, more importantly, I am better than you and the others, and please tell me that again and again"). Leadership roles come with a stage, audience, and entitlement to acquire social referents. Lastly, it is presumed that only people who are qualified can take on a leadership role. A dominance self-concept is construed with an efficacy motive, which reflects one's needs to see oneself as skillful and capable in agentic domains.

In summary, narcissism predicts a dominance self-concept (dominant status motive), which in turn motivates individuals to seek out situations that afford opportunities for reaffirmation (Grapsas et al, 2020). We propose that:

H2. A dominance self-concept mediates the relationship between narcissism and perceived fit for leader roles.

The second self-evaluation strategy of narcissism we investigate is the personal sense of power, a form of cognitive self-regulation specifically concerning the interpersonal domain. Power is a capacity to influence others (Anderson et al., 2012). Theorists consider power to be a social-structural concept, which is anchored in an individual's relational experiences (Anderson and Galinsky, 2008; Emerson, 1962). In line with this thinking, we define an individual's sense of power as "the perception of one's ability to influence another person or other people" (Anderson et al. 2012, p.316). Such a belief involves a subjective representation of a social relationship (Emerson, 1962). Considering that a dominance self-concept has a deficiency in communion and pro-social concerns, it is likely that the ideal power dynamic with others needs to be structured as a power asymmetry. Such a power gap permits the dominant self an asymmetry advantage over the control of the interactions and outcomes in one's favor (Magee and Galinsky, 2008; Maner and Mead, 2010). Furthermore, to sustain and further enhance the dominance self, an individual will be motivated to maintain a power gap and protect the relational privilege by prioritizing self-interests (Keltner et al., 2003). Ultimately, the dominance-self-motivated sense of power will always prioritize to serve the self. Power is not the goal; rather, the only utility of power is serving the self. As Johnson et al. (2012) stated, the pursuit of power then "becomes an integral part of self-concept and serves as a template to guide thoughts, emotions, and the selection of behavioral strategies related to the goal of power" (p. 693).

In summary, we hypothesize that narcissistic individuals' sense of power serves dominance self-goals, and thus:

H3. A dominance self-concept mediates the relationship between narcissism and sense of power.

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

The sample consisted of 299 students (47.16% female, 52.84% male) recruited from a university located in south-west United States. In exchange for participation, students earned extra course credit. Data

was collected in one sitting using an online survey distributed through a recruitment link emailed to students. The age distribution is summarized as following: 18 to 20 years old: 33.11%; 21 to 23 years old: 57.53%; 24 to 26 years old: 6.02%; over 26 years old: 3.34%.

Measures

The scales we used for the study are listed as below.

Narcissism Personality

The Narcissism Personality Inventory-16 (NPI-16, Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) was used to assess trait narcissism. NPI-16 is a 16-item unidimensional measure and a shortened version of the 40-item NPI (Emmons, 1987; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Since its publication, NPI-16 has been widely used to measure narcissism traits in many social science fields (e.g., Moskowitz et al., 2009).

Dominance Self-Concept

This measure was adopted from an instrument developed by Markus (1977) and Markus et al. (1982), which is widely used within the self-schema paradigm (Markus, 1977). It was used to capture the self-importance of personal and social self-concepts (e.g., Altabe, 1996; Markus et al., 1982, 1985). Participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale the extent to which each of eight interpersonal adjectives reflecting dominance describes themselves, with "1" being extremely inaccurate and "7" being extremely accurate. The prompt statement says "Please indicate on a 7-point scale the extend to which each of the following eight adjectives describes you.". The eight adjectives are "Self-assured, Self-confident, Assertive, Persistent, Firm, Dominant, Forceful, Domineering." The Cronbach alpha was 0.85.

Perceived Fit for Leader Roles

This measure includes a single item that captures self-perception of a match with ideal leader prototype (van Quaquebeke et al., 2011). Participants were asked to indicate on a diagram to what degree they considered themselves as being representative of an image of an ideal leader, using the 7-point scales: 1 = not at all represent; 7 = highly representative.

Sense of Power

The short version of the sense of power scale (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006) was adopted to capture the participant's sense of power. This measure has eight items rated on a scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree", with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of power. In the current study, Cronbach alpha was 0.82.

Control Variable

We included gender as a control variable in our analysis. Studies have found men to be more narcissistic than women in general (Arpaci et al., 2018; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Grijalva et al., 2015; Gupta & Kim, 2007). Gender differences are also being spotted in self-evaluations of leadership qualities. Comparing with females, males are more likely to perceive themselves as having leadership traits and qualities (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). Finally, females tend to report a lower sense of power (Carli, 2001; Goodwin et al., 2020; Steele, 1997; Wood & Rhodes, 1992).-To reduce potential spurious results, gender (1=male; 0=female) was included as control variable. In addition, age has also been found to be a predictor of narcissism. Members of younger generations tend to score higher on narcissism compared with persons from older generations and narcissism has been found to generally decrease across the life span (Foster et al., 2003; Twenge, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). However, given that majority of the participants in this study were from the same generation (18 – 23 years old), we excluded age from the control variable list.

Data Analysis

To explore the relationship between narcissism and dominance self-concept (hypothesis 1), a Pearson correlation test was used. To test the indirect effect of narcissism personality on perceived leader-like

quality and sense of power through dominance self-concept (hypothesis 2 and 3), we used a mediation test with a bootstrap algorithm (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Nonparametric bootstrapping was used in order to get rid of the stringent assumption related to sample mean distribution (Dust et al., 2014). Hence, it does not require the assumption of multivariate normality, which is required for Barron and Kenny's mediation test (He et al., 2014; Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2004). To conduct a simple mediation test, we adopted two analysis packages in R: the mediation package (Tingley et al., 2014) and psych package (Revelle, 2021), with a 5000-iteration bootstrap sample. We calculated the confidence intervals that are constructed around the coefficient of the mediated effect, with a 95% confidence interval, and claimed a mediating effect when it excluded zero. We tested the mediation for both hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3. Next, we constructed the path analysis using the Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) so that both outcome variables (perceived fit for leader roles and sense of power) could be simultaneously presented (refer to Figure 5). Path modelling is a specific case of structural equation modeling (SEM) where the model focuses on developing the structural relationship among multiple variables, without considering variable latency. We used SEM because compared to traditional regression analysis, SEM provides a comprehensive model that involves more than one outcome variable (Iacobucci et al., 2007). All analyses mentioned above were conducted using R software (Version 1.3.1056).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 1. As indicated in row 4, there is a strong correlation between narcissism and dominance self-concept, $r(297)=.50$, $p<.001$. Therefore, our hypothesis about the positive relationship between narcissism and dominance self-concept (hypothesis 1a) is supported.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND INTERCORRELATIONS

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	0.53	0.50					
2. Narcissism Personality	4.38	0.71	.26**	(0.81)			
3. Dominance Self-concept	4.79	0.92	.23**	.50**	(0.85)		
4. Perceived Fit for Leader Roles	4.67	0.99	.15*	.35**	.34**		
5. Sense of Power	4.94	0.76	.13*	.60**	.43**	.34**	(0.82)

Note. N=299. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.
Coefficient alphas appear on the diagonal in parenthesis.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2
## STANDARDIZED INDIRECT AND DIRECT EFFECTS OF DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT

Standardized indirect effects from narcissism to perceived fit for leader roles				
The effect via Dominance Self-Concept	**Effect**	**p-value**	**BootLLCI (95%)**	**BootULCI (95%)**
ACME	.112	.002 **	.045	.190
ADE	.335	<.001 ***	.170	.510

Standardized indirect effects from narcissism to sense of power				
The effect via Dominance Self-Concept	**Effect**	**p-value**	**BootLLCI (95%)**	**BootULCI (95%)**
ACME	.085	.002 **	.035	.160
ADE	.578	<.001 ***	.463	.690

Note:
BootLLCI: Bootstrap lower-level confidence interval
BootULCI: Bootstrap upper-level confidence interval
ACME: Average causal mediation effects
ADE: Average direct effect
*: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$, ***: $p < .001$.

To test the mediating role of dominance self-concept in the relationship between narcissism and perceived fit for leader roles (hypothesis 2), we controlled for gender differences. We first examined the relationship between dominance self-concept and perceived fit for leader roles. Then we tested the total effect of narcissism on perceived fit for leader roles and compared such effects with the situation where dominance self-concept was statistically controlled. The indirect effect through dominance self-concept was further explored using the bootstrap technique. As Figure 1 illustrates, the relationship between narcissism and perceived fit for leader roles was mediated by dominance self-concept. The standardized regression coefficient between narcissism and dominance self-concept was statistically significant (b= .50, SE=.05, t=9.93, $p<.001$), as was the standardized regression coefficient between dominance self-concept and perceived fit for leader roles (b= .22, SE=.06, t=3.59, $p<.001$). The total effect (Figure 3, path c) of narcissism on perceived fit for leader roles is 0.35 (SE=.05, t=6.48, $p<.001$). The direct effect (Figure 3, path c') of narcissism on perceived fit for leader roles controlling for dominance self-concept is 0.24 (SE=.06, t=3.94, $p<.001$). The standardized indirect effect was (.5) (.22) = .11. As indicated by Table 3, to test the significance of such indirect effect, we used non-parametric bootstrapping technique with 5,000 bootstrapped samples. Additionally, a 95% confidence interval was computed to determine the significance of indirect effects. The average causal mediation effect (ACME) was .11 (p=.002) and the 95% confidence interval ranged from .045, .190 (table 2, row 3). Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis about narcissism's positive indirect effect on perceived fit for leader roles through dominance self-concept (hypothesis 2) is supported.

FIGURE 3
SIMPLE MEDIATION TEST:
PERCEIVED LEADER-LIKE QUALITY AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE
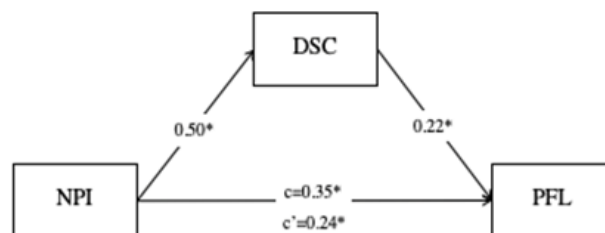
Notes:
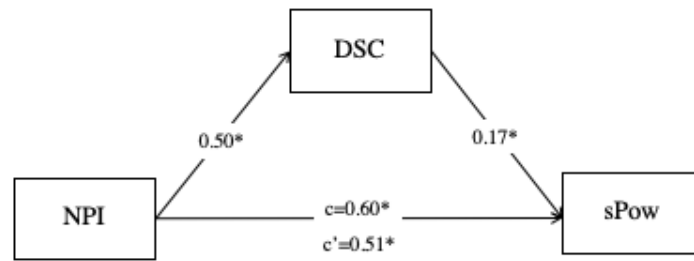1. NPI: Narcissism; DSC: Dominance Self-Concept; PFL: Perceived Fit for Leader Roles.
2. *p* <.05.

TABLE 3
MEDIATING ROLE OF DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT IN NARCISSISM-FIT FOR LEADER ROLES RELATIONSHIP

	coeff	SE	t	p	Model R2
Dominance Self-concept as dependent variable					
Gender	.175	.096	1.827	.069	
Narcissism	.50	.05	9.93	<.001***	.255
Perceived Fit for Leader Roles as dependent variable					
Gender	.071	.112	.636	.525	
Narcissism	.333	.088	3.77	<.001***	
Dominance Self-Concept	.232	.067	3.44	<.001***	.151
Indirect effects	**effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**		**BOOT ULCI**
Dominance Self-concept on Perceived Fit for Leader Roles	.112	<.001	.045		.190
*Note: *: p < .05, **: p< .01, ***: p< .001*					

To test the mediating role of dominance self-concept in the relationship between narcissism and sense of power (hypothesis 3), we conducted the simple mediation test. The test involves an exploration of the relationship between dominance self-concept and sense of power, followed by a test related to the total effect of narcissism on sense of power. Next, we investigated the direct as well as indirect effect of narcissism on sense of power. The unstandardized indirect effect of such association was calculated following a 5,000 bootstrapped sample. As Figure 4 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficient between narcissism and dominance self-concept was statistically significant (b= .50, SE=.05, t=9.93, p<.001), as was the standardized regression coefficient between dominance self-concept and sense of power (b= .17, SE=.05, t=3.27, p=.001). The total effect (Figure 4, path c) of narcissism on sense of power is 0.6 (SE=.05, t=12.94, p<.001). The direct effect (figure 2, path c') of narcissism on sense of power controlling for dominance self-concept is 0.51 (SE=.05, t=9.77, p<.001). The standardized indirect effect was (.5) (.17) = .085. As indicated by Table 4, using 5,000 bootstrapped samples, the unstandardized indirect effects were computed with a 95% confidence interval. The average causal mediation effects (ACME) is .085 (p=.002), and the 95% confidence interval ranged from .035, .16 (Table 2, row 8). Thus, we can conclude that dominance self-concept positively mediates the relationship between narcissism and sense of power (hypothesis 3).

FIGURE 4
SIMPLE MEDIATION TEST: SENSE OF POWER AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Notes:
1.   NPI: Narcissism; DSC: Dominance Self-Concept; SPow: Sense of Power.
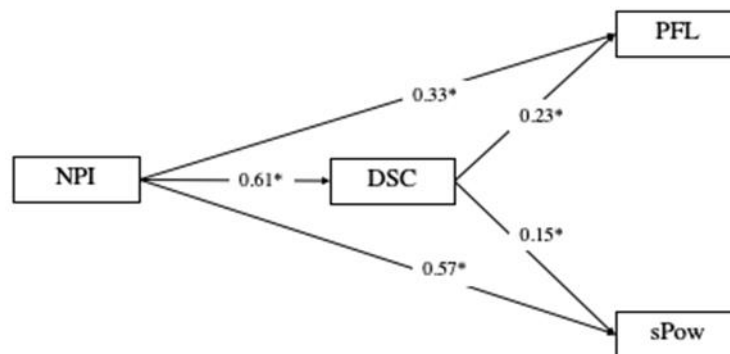2.   *p* <.05.

TABLE 4
MEDIATING ROLE OF DOMINANCE SELF-CONCEPT IN NARCISSISM-SENSE-OF-POWER RELATIONSHIP

Direct effect	coeff	SE	t	p	Model R2
Dominance Self-Concept as dependent variable					
Gender	.175	.096	1.827	.069	
Narcissism	.618	.067	9.192	<.001***	.255
Sense of power as dependent variable					
Gender	-.09	.07	-1.31	.193	
Narcissism	.58	.058	10.01	<.001***	
Dominance Self-Concept	.143	.044	3.243	.001**	.385
Indirect effects	**effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**		**BOOT ULCI**
Dominance Self-Concept on Sense of power	.085	.15	.035		.160

*Note: *: p < .05, **: p< .01, ***: p< .001*

Lastly, we adopted the SEM technique to build the full model. Using path analysis, the final model that we retained (CFI=1, TLI=1, RMSEA=0, SRMR=0) includes narcissism as an independent variable, dominance self-concept as a mediator, and perceived leader-like qualities and sense of power as dependent variables. Both the direct and the indirect effect of narcissism on dependent variables have been assessed. The structural model with coefficient labeled on each path could be found in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5
SEM: PATH COEFFICIENTS FOR HYPOTHESIZED MODEL

Notes:
1.   NPI: Narcissism; DSC: Dominance Self-Concept; PFL: Perceived fit for leader roles; sPow: Sense of Power.
2.   *p <.05.
3.   The model has statistically controlled for gender.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The goal of this study was to investigate the intrapersonal process of narcissism personality and address the question of why narcissists think and behave in the ways that they do. We distinguish the narcissistic self-definition (the narcissistic self) from the personality trait to tease out the dynamic motivational mechanism. Scholars have long suggested that the *narcissistic self* is the underpinning motivator and serves as the ultimate goal for narcissistic behaviors, but have not explicitly conceptualized the narcissistic self-concept as an independent construct. Built upon self-system and identity theories, the conceptualization of the dominance self-concept constitutes a preliminary effort to specify the content and structure of the narcissistic self. With a high-order self-goal lens, we were able to coherently organize diverse self-regulatory strategies into a self-motivated process model.

Narcissism has been known for its complexity and theorized to be a multifaceted construct. However, theorists have also argued that narcissism is a coherent unitary personality construct (Emmons, 1987; Judge et al., 2006; Raskin & Terry, 1988). To date, the extant literature seems to fall short of providing a framework to articulate how narcissism is cohered into one global self. The self-concept motivated model we propose can provide a holistic yet parsimonious approach to articulate narcissistic complexity: despite the multifaceted characteristics, narcissism is a coherent whole that serves the dominance self. Furthermore, by integrating the self-construal motive theories, we were able to specify the unique motive-configuration of the dominance self-concept, which is laden in dominance preferences (distinctiveness and efficacy motives), while discriminating communal attributes (i.e., a deficit in the belonging motive). This framing is very much in line with the "unmitigated agency" concept of personality theories (Helgeson & Fritz, 1999).

More importantly, we highlight how an "unmitigated" dominance self-concept carried significant motivational implications for narcissistic reasoning and behaviors. Current writings on narcissism and its implications have long struggled to reconcile the seemingly "paradoxical" behaviors and effects. However, as we have shown by the positive relationships between the dominance self-concept and narcissistic self-enhancement strategies, the narcissistic self-goals provided a coherent explanation. Taking a high-order self-goal perspective, it is evident that although self-regulatory strategies may vary, and the impacts on others may differ, the underlying intent remains consistent and coherent for narcissistic individuals: that is, to serve the dominance self. This point is particularly relevant for understanding narcissism in leadership contexts. Based on our dominance self-concept process model, we can predict that a narcissistic leader's

self-goals will overshadow any other organizational concerns. And a narcissistic leader will always prioritize self-interest over those of others because that is what a self-goal does, self-enhance. From a bystander's perspective, a narcissistic individual might seem to be self-interested (self-serving) to pursue power and status. In essence, he or she is simply using his or her power to serve the "superior: self (Tamborski et al., 2012; Williams, 2014).

There are also limitations with this study. Although we theorized the process model under the assumptions of a causal link, our research design was cross-sectional, which limited our ability to interpret the causal effects of dominance self-concept on self-enhancing strategies. More research with experimental designs is needed to flesh out the causal effects. In addition, we only tested part of the full model. Future research can expand the scope and empirically test the full model. For instance, it would also be fruitful to investigate the motivated effects of the dominance self-concept on affective and behavioral self-regulatory strategies, and the social and organizational outcomes.

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