Narcissism is a personality disorder where there is a high level of egotism and an over-inflated sense of self-importance, self-love and selfishness. Narcissists desperately need admiration and approval and they tend to be unable to empathize with others’ plights. While it is true that a certain level of self-esteem is good, narcissists take it to an unhealthy level. I am researching the different types of narcissism and, more specifically, different types of parenting related to the disorder. What different parenting tactics cause what different types of narcissism? How young can narcissism be diagnosed? What measures in parenting can be taken to prevent it? I am also more specifically interested in the differences between narcissism in men and women.

Different types of narcissism are caused by varying parenting styles. There are different negative tactics used by parents that are associated with the development of different types of narcissism. There are also some interesting differences in the determinants of narcissism in men and women (Horton, Bleau and Dweecks 365). Negative parenting tactics produce different outcomes with the different genders.

Thomaes, Bushman, De Castro, and Stegge (1233-1247) made the point that very little is definitively known about the etiology and development of narcissism. They focused on the symptoms, how people interact socially, and how narcissism affects behaviors. One interesting thing was the claim that narcissism cannot be diagnosed until at least age 8. I want to look further into that assertion. Is that the general consensus among experts? Does anyone disagree? If so, why, and what do they propose?

Timimi (6-8) looked more at narcissism in the grand scheme of things. He examined how societal conditions are capable of helping to produce narcissism. Being self-serving and “looking out for number one” is not good for society or the world in the long run and the researcher explored that theme. The authors explored the long term ramifications on society of children with low self-esteem.

The more specific questions that I will investigate:
(1) How young can narcissism really be identified? Since there are many different types of parenting that can lead to narcissism, what measures can be taken to prevent it?
(2) What other factors contribute? The media parents allow the child to come into contact with, who they let watch their children, the environment set up for the child, etc.?
(3) What specifically in parenting can cause which types of narcissism?

I have surveyed the research literature on my topic. I am formulating my research questions and ideas from what I have read. I plan to move toward identifying a specific research project with my mentor for my final thesis. I plan to use observational data of parent/child interactions in my thesis.

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Narcissism and Parenting: A Study of Narcissism and its Causes
Emily O’Sullivan: Department of Music Education, College of Music and Honors College
Faculty Mentor: Angela Nievar, Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education

Abstract

Narcissism is a personality disorder where there is a high level of egotism and an over-inflated sense of self-importance, self-love and selfishness. Narcissists desperately need admiration and approval and they tend to be unable to empathize with others’ plights. While it is true that a certain level of self-esteem is good, narcissists take it to an unhealthy level. I am researching the different types of narcissism and, more specifically, different types of parenting related to the disorder. What different parenting tactics cause what different types of narcissism? How young can narcissism be diagnosed? What measures in parenting can be taken to prevent it? I am also more specifically interested in the differences between narcissism in men and women.

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