The Importance of Status: Social Consequences of Narcissism in Early Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

The Importance of Status: Social Consequences of Narcissism in Early Adolescence

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Six hypotheses regarding the association between narcissism (i.e., a personality trait characterized by a grandiose sense of self and a pervasive need for this supposed superiority be validated and recognized by other people) and children's experiences with peers were studied in a multiwave longitudinal study conducted with 333 early adolescent girls and boys. Findings showed that (a) Children high in narcissism were continually attracted to high-status friends; (b) Narcissism was a negative predictor of friendship reciprocity and that this association was moderated by child acceptance and status in different ways; (c) Children high in narcissism demonstrated less friendship stability as compared to their peers; (d) For children high in narcissism at baseline, social status (not acceptance) served to maintain continued narcissism over time; and (e) The instability of friendship choices for children high in narcissism was not related to the status of the peers selected as friends. The results of our analyses demonstrate that status had a stronger significance for children who were rated as high on a measure of narcissism than for those who were not. Compared to its effect on other children, status had a stronger effect on the friendship selections of children who were high in narcissism and, further, status was observed to moderate the stability of narcissism.

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The Importance of Status: Social Consequences of Narcissism in Early Adolescence

Narcissism is a personality trait characterized by a grandiose sense of self and a pervasive need for this supposed superiority be validated and recognized by other people (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a form of psychopathology that can be seen as an extreme manifestation of narcissism. NPD is characterized by an inflated self-concept expressed through demands for admiration, feelings of entitlement, recognition for one's "special" status, lack of empathy, and interpersonal exploitation of others for one's individual gain (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In spite of the negative effects that narcissistic individuals have on those around them, it is believed that narcissism is supported by social interaction (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011). An important repercussion of the claim that narcissism exists at the intersection between the individual and his/her social context is that its development and maintenance need to be understood and studied according to the characteristics of the peer environment. For this reason, narcissism as a personality difference has been a topic of study for social (e.g., Raskin & Terry, 1988) and developmental psychologists (e.g., Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof, 2008).

Typically, research on narcissism has been conducted with community samples (e.g., Raskin & Terry, 1988; Miller & Campbell, 2010). In these studies, narcissism has been conceptualized as a dimensional rather than categorical construct, where individuals vary in the degree to which they show this trait (Miller & Campbell, 2010). Measures of normal narcissism have been found to bear important relations to clinical measures of NPD, providing support for the value of research on normal narcissism in the literature (e.g., Miller & Campbell, 2010).

Throughout this thesis, the terms narcissism and narcissistic should be understood as referring to normal narcissism and to the personality trait on a continuum, as opposed to the disorder.

Currently, the most influential conceptual model of narcissism is the dynamic self-regulatory processing model (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011). A key feature of this model is its identification of the apparent paradoxes of narcissistic behaviour. For example, although individuals high in narcissism have an intense need to be validated in the social sphere, they nevertheless feel superior to the peers from whom they seek this validation (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Because individuals high in narcissism are characteristically insensitive or even exploitative to those around them, short-term attempts to bolster their self-concept through external validation may come at the expense of these interpersonal relationships in the long term (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Ultimately, such continued attempts for self-affirmation are Sisyphean since the inflated "self" for which a narcissistic individual seeks validation is impossibly ideal (Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011). The dynamic self-regulatory processing model explains narcissism as a personality process that plays out socially, driven by the goal of constructing and maintaining one's *desired* self (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011, emphasis added). In this model, the "self" is seen as a dynamic rather than static entity—it is in constant flux as the individual interacts with the social world and uses self-regulatory processes and strategies to uphold a grandiose self-concept. These self-regulatory processes can occur intrapersonally, via processes such as the cognitive reframing of events to protect one's inflated self-concept, as well as interpersonally, such as associating with high-status peers whose presence may reinforce and project one's grandiose self-view to the world (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011).

This conceptualization of narcissism is based on research with adults. As an extension of

this work, there has been growing interest in narcissism from a developmental perspective (e.g., Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, & Olthof, 2008; see also Barry & Ansel, 2011). Although a comprehensive theoretical model of narcissism in youth has yet to be formulated, the adult literature provides a useful starting point for research on how narcissism manifests in childhood and adolescence (e.g., for review see Barry & Ansel, 2011). Already there have been several studies on narcissism in childhood and early adolescence (e.g., Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009; Thomaes, Brummelman, Reijntjes, & Bushman, 2013; Barry & Malkin, 2010). A premise of research on narcissism in early adolescence is that its core features are the same as those in adulthood; specifically, pervasive grandiosity and a need for validation (e.g., Barry & Ansel, 2011; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). Given that narcissism involves social comparative processes, it can have negative consequences to both narcissistic individuals and those around these individuals. Accordingly, narcissism needs to be understood with respect to the individual and the individual's experience within a social context. For this reason, understanding the social consequences of narcissism has been of obvious interest to researchers who hope to mitigate negative outcomes.

The social consequence of narcissism that has likely garnered the most attention in the literature is aggression (e.g., Thomaes & Bushman, 2011). Several studies with adult samples have linked narcissism and aggressive behaviour (e.g., Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000), where the individual is thought to lash out at others due to a perceived threat to his/her (inflated) ego (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). More recently, this association between aggression and narcissism has been found to be present in children and adolescents (e.g., Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, &

Olthof, 2008). Specifically, as in adult samples, feelings of shame have been shown to provoke anger, or "humiliated fury," in children high in narcissism (Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, & Nezlek, 2011, p.768).

Other interpersonal consequences of narcissism have also received attention, though largely with adult samples. For example, it is conceivable that others might grow to find aggressive, reactive, or other exploitative interpersonal behaviour aversive and this could result in interpersonal difficulties (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). One seminal paper found that while adult self-enhancers initially made a good impression in a group setting (i.e., were seen as agreeable, well-adjusted and competent), after a seven-week period, these same individuals were rated negatively by their peers (i.e., were seen as arrogant, hostile, defensive; Paulhus, 1998). This suggests that the impressions that others have of narcissistic individuals may deteriorate over time (Paulhus, 1998), which could also partially explain the unstable and tumultuous relationships often reported by narcissists themselves (e.g., see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Another study, however, suggests that relationship instability may derive from the goals of the narcissistic individual. Specifically, narcissistic adults have been found to display a "game playing" romantic style, demonstrating less commitment to their intimate relationships, which is driven by a need to feel powerful and independent (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). Taken together, these studies point towards a relation between narcissism and interpersonal instability in adults—which may be attributed to the goals of the individual (e.g., for power/status) and/or because others come to find narcissistic behavior unappealing over time. To our knowledge, the association between narcissism and relationship stability has yet to be studied in youth.

According to the dynamic self-regulatory processing model, the apparent paradox—that an individual who feels an intense need for social affirmation would then behave in an off-putting

manner—can be understood in the context of the individual's social goals. Of particular interest to this thesis is recent research that concerns the social goals of individuals high in narcissism, particularly in relation to status. Individuals high in narcissism have been found to have agentic, as opposed to communal, orientations (e.g., Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). This is important because if the goals for those high in narcissism are focused on status and power, attempts to achieve these agentic goals may carry social and interpersonal costs. According to research with adults, individuals high in narcissism demonstrated an agentic orientation, rating themselves as having higher than average intelligence and extraversion (agentic traits), but not agreeableness or morality (communal traits); and that narcissistic individuals also perceived themselves as superior to their romantic partners (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). In contrast, individuals high in self-esteem and not narcissism perceived themselves as being particularly high in communal traits (e.g., as nice, considerate, conscientious, well-adjusted, moral), but also held positive views of their partners (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). This highlights an important difference between high self-esteem and narcissism: while individuals high in both traits may think of themselves in positive terms, those high in narcissism tend to think of themselves as *more* positive (i.e., superior) than others (Brown & Zeigler-Hill, 2004; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof & Denissen, 2008). Such an agentic orientation has been found to have social costs, where in a social-dilemma task, narcissism was associated with acting for individual benefit to the detriment of other people and the common good (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). To explain this finding, Campbell and Campbell (2009) have recently proposed a contextual reinforcement model of narcissism as an adjunct to the dynamic self-regulatory processing theory. In this model, individuals high in narcissism strive for benefits in the "emerging zone" (i.e., in the short term, with acquaintances), but pay the price in the

"enduring zone" (i.e., in the long-term, with long-standing relationships; Campbell & Campbell, 2009).

Indeed, for individuals high in narcissism, it has been found that it is more important to be admired than to be liked or approved of by others (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). Recently, researchers have specifically investigated agentic social goals in relation to narcissism (e.g., Findley & Ojanen, 2013; Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012). Of interest to the present research are studies that examine this relation in young people. One study with 5th and 6th grade students investigated how children perceive themselves and their peers in relation to their social goals and three social outcomes of proactive aggression, prosocial behaviour, and withdrawal (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). Agentic social goals were defined as strivings for power, status, influence, and respect, whereas communal goals were defined as those involving friendliness, warmth, and love (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). Children who held negative views of their peers and positive views of themselves were labelled as belonging to an "I am OK, but you are not" relational group, and were especially likely to report high agentic and low communal goals. In addition, these children were found to be the most aggressive in the sample (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). In fact, social goals were found to fully mediate the relation between self/other perceptions and social behaviour (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). Childhood narcissism, as measured by the Childhood Narcissism Scale (CNS), has been found to be positively related to agentic interpersonal goals (e.g., "When with your age-mates, how important is it for you that the others respect and admire you?"; Ojanen, Grönroos, & Salmivalli, 2005) and negatively related to communal goals (Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008). More recently, narcissism has also been found to be positively related to social dominance goals in adolescents, and further, the relation between

narcissism and aggression was explained through these social goals (Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012).

These findings suggest that even at a young age, social goals for status and power are present in individuals high in narcissism. To our knowledge, what have yet to be studied from a developmental perspective are the specific interpersonal strategies children high in narcissism employ to achieve these goals. Particularly, one hallmark of NPD outlined in The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5) is the belief that one should affiliate with high-status individuals who warrant affiliating with due to their "special" and unique qualities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Within the dynamic self-regulatory processing model, high-status others are valuable to narcissistic individuals in that their admiration and validation is presumably worth more (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In Freud's early psychodynamic musings on narcissism, he posited that a narcissist would be drawn to "what he himself would like to be" (Freud, 1914/1957, p. 90, taken from Campbell, 1999). A series of studies with adults has found some evidence that individuals high in narcissism are indeed more attracted to "perfect" (e.g., ambitious, confident, good-looking) romantic partners, and less so those who demonstrate caring qualities; furthermore, this attraction to highly-valued or idealized others was linked to narcissistic individuals' strategies to enhance and maintain self-esteem (Campbell, 1999).

To our knowledge, no studies have looked at affiliation with high-status others in children or adolescents high in narcissism. One relevant experiment, however, studied the effect of peer approval/disapproval on the state self-esteem of 10-year-old children, in relation to child narcissism and the peer evaluators' popularity (Thomaes, Reijntjes, Orobio de Castro, Bushman, Poorthuis, & Telch, 2010). Because children high in narcissism are presumably more concerned with being valued or admired than others (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), it was hypothesized

that these children would demonstrate greater volatility in state self-esteem in reaction to appraisals from peer judges (Thomaes et al., 2010). Indeed, children high in narcissism who received disapproval from a jury of peers displayed greater decreases in state self-esteem as compared to other children (Thomaes et al., 2010). Furthermore, for children highly impacted by negative feedback from peers, their self-esteem recovery was contingent on the time they later spent viewing positive feedback from *popular* peers specifically (Thomaes et al., 2010). The perceived popularity or status of peers is a salient feature for most children (e.g., LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002; Bukowski, 2011), however, this recent experiment suggests that it would be interesting to investigate whether the popularity of peers carries more weight for children high in narcissism in a naturalistic setting in particular.

In summary, narcissism is characterized by both a grandiose self-concept and an intense need for this perceived superiority to be validated by others (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissism is an individual difference that has been studied in adults and, more recently, in youth by both social and personality psychologists. This research is clearly warranted given the host of negative behaviours associated with narcissism, including aggression, impulsivity, increased risk-taking, exploitation, and antagonism of others (e.g., see Thomaes, Bushman, Orobio de Castro, & Stegge, 2009). In addition, as narcissism plays out in the social realm and may have a negative impact on others, perhaps unsurprisingly it may also be associated with an inability to maintain interpersonal relationships (e.g., Paulhus, 1998; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). To understand the apparent paradoxes of narcissism (e.g., an intense need for approval by others coexisting with feelings of superiority), it is important to consider the individual's social goals. Of particular interest to the current research are recent studies investigating the relationship between narcissism and agentic goals for status and power. Within

the current leading conceptualization of narcissism, these agentic social goals are related to the ultimate goal of maintaining, buffering, and bolstering the desired self (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The current research hopes to fill a gap in the literature by looking at this question from a developmental perspective. Theory suggests that in terms of validation, narcissism is associated with the desire to be admired rather than to be liked (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). To our knowledge, however, this topic has yet to be studied in youth within the context of their peer relations.

Whereas a flurry of recent studies indicates that agentic goals are related to narcissism, there remain unanswered questions regarding particular strategies that individuals might employ to reach these goals—especially in children and adolescents. Interestingly, while affiliation with high-status others is outlined as a facet of NPD in the DSM-5, apart from one influential paper concerning romantic partners, very little empirical research on this subject exists.

Summary and Research Goals. Based on the current literature, the purpose of the present study is to examine friendship patterns and how validation functions in relation to child narcissism in early adolescence, during the transition from primary school to middle school. Specifically, the current thesis will look at peer-rated child narcissism in relation to: the status of these children's friends, friendship reciprocity, friendship stability, as well as how acceptance by others or social status might serve to maintain a child's narcissistic traits. While interpersonal patterns (e.g., instability) and strategies to garner external validation (e.g., attraction to high-status others) are often cited as hallmarks of narcissism, only a handful of empirical investigations have actually been conducted, and these have been with adult samples (e.g., Paulhus, 1998; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Campbell, 1999). To our knowledge, the relation between narcissism and corresponding interpersonal outcomes (e.g., friendships) has yet

to be investigated in youth. We consider early adolescence in particular to be a crucial age in which to study narcissism, as while in early childhood an excessive positive self-view is normative, by the age of seven or eight years children typically have developed a more balanced self-view as they become cognitively capable of digesting appraisals from others (Harter, 1999; 2006; 2012). Narcissism as an individual difference has been found to be present and able to be assessed by this age (e.g., Thomaes et al., 2008; also see Barry & Wallace, 2010). In addition, in early adolescence social goals begin to reorient toward status and dominance (e.g., LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002). Given the finding that narcissism and agentic goals for status and power have been found to be related in youth, the strategies employed to achieve these goals now warrant attention. It is of particular interest that the present sample follows children as they transition from elementary to middle school, as it could be expected that children with agentic goals would attempt to profit during a time of change and climb higher on the social hierarchy.

The goal of the present study is to add to the growing body of literature on narcissism in early adolescence, both to inform the developmental conceptualization of narcissism and to better understand its social consequences. Six hypotheses have been formulated based on the literature: 1.) That children rated by their peers as high in narcissism will be more attracted to (i.e., name) high-status peers as friends across time points; 2.) That children high in narcissism will have fewer reciprocal friendships than other children, assessing for how friendship mutuality is influenced by acceptance by others and the child's social status; 3.) That children rated by their peers to be high in narcissism will exhibit less stability in their friendships during the transition from elementary school to middle school; 4.) That the relation between a child's baseline narcissism in elementary school and his/her continued narcissism in middle school will be moderated by his or her social status, and more specifically, that being perceived as high in status

will serve to validate and therefore to maintain narcissism. In contrast, based on theory, continued narcissism is not expected to depend on a child's acceptance by others (e.g., liking); 5.) That children high in narcissism will be more likely to retain friends who are high in status after they transition to the middle school; 6.) And lastly, that after the transition to middle school, children high in narcissism will be attracted to new friends who are high in status as compared to their retained friends from elementary school.

Method

Participants

Participants were 333 children (174 boys and 159 girls) attending the 5th grade to 6th grade in a community of lower-middle and upper-middle class families. The mean age of the participants was approximately 11 years at the onset of the study. Participants were met at three times over a one-year period that spanned the children's transition from five separate elementary schools to one single middle school. This sample was taken from a larger set of archival data that included six time points and was originally collected to investigate the stability of sociometric status and friendship choice from a longitudinal perspective (Bukowski & Newcomb, 1984). At each measurement time point, more than ninety percent of all potential participating students in the community took part in the study (Bukowski et al., 2009). The original five elementary schools (comprising of sixteen classrooms total) were the only primary schools in the community. While random attrition is to be expected in the transition to middle school (e.g., some students moving out of the community, etc.), this data set is unique as it essentially captures the full school-age population in the area during this time.

Procedure

Time One (T1) and Time Two (T2) data collections took place at five elementary schools in the springtime when the participants were completing the 5th grade. Specifically, T1 occurred eight weeks prior to the end of the school year, and T2 four weeks prior to the end of the school year. The Time 3 (T3) data collection took place during the fall of the following school year in October, when all the participants were attending the 6th grade at the same middle school. These three time points were chosen from the original six waves of data collected because this period captures the students' transition to single new school, a period relevant to the interests of the current study.

At each time point, participants were asked to complete a positive sociometric questionnaire to assess friendship choice, where children named three same-sex schoolmates who they currently considered their best friends. They were also asked to complete a peer-assessment measure developed by Bukowski and Newcomb (1984). All questionnaires were completed at the students' desks during class time using paper and pencil. Parental permission, as well as informed consent from the child, was obtained before participation.

Measures

Peer assessments (see Bukowski, Cillessen, & Velasquez, 2012). Children were provided with an alphabetized list of their participating classmates. They were also given fourteen "roles" in a hypothetical class play and were asked to nominate one participating same-sex peer per role who they felt best fit the description. Of interest to the present study were six of these fourteen roles, intended to describe two personality factors: narcissism and status (i.e., the child's observable prominence). Each participant received a score based on how often he or she had been chosen for each role.

Two roles referred to narcissistic qualities: "Stuck up and thinks they are better than others," and "Selfish and too concerned with him/herself." A measure of baseline narcissism (T1/T2) was found to have an acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach alpha of .72. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the two-item latent trait of narcissism within this sample over time (Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009). Specifically, correlations for narcissism scores found between two later time points, when the children in the sample were in grade 6 and then one year later, when the children were in grade 7, were extremely strong (r =.89 and r = .98; Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009). Although these correlations do not directly refer to the test-retest reliability for T1/T2/T3, they are relevant in that they indicate that normal narcissism appears to have been a stable and enduring trait within the original sample. It was also noted by the original authors that the coefficient for the item "Stuck up" was consistently stronger than the "Selfish" item across the time points, perhaps representing a more core component of the construct (Bukowski, Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009).

Status was measured using four items, "Someone who is liked by everyone", "Someone who is good at sports," "Someone who acts as team captain", "Someone who is very good looking." These items intended to measure a child's observable prominence—his/her social status and reputation from the perspective of his/her peers. These measures correspond to the concept of perceived popularity (e.g., LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002). The Cronbach alpha for this measure was found to be .74 at T1, .78 at Time 2 and .82 at Time 3.

Class play paradigms are widely used in developmental research for peer assessment, including for perceived personality constructs, and have been found to be valid and reliable tools (see Bukowski, Cillessen, & Velasquez, 2012). It is noted that having just two items for the

narcissism measure at each time point is a limitation in reliably measuring this construct and that further items should be implemented in future studies. Further, a self-report measure of childhood narcissism (e.g., CNS; Thomaes et al., 2008) would be an interesting adjunct to peer-assessed narcissism in future studies. Finally, construct validity for peer-assessed normal narcissism in school-age children still needs to be established over several empirical studies.

Sociometric Assessment. Participants were provided with an alphabetical list of their classmates and asked to name their current three same-sex best friends at each of the three time points. From this data, a variable of friendship stability was created for each child from T1/T2 to T3, a period which spanned the participants' transition from grade 5 to grade 6. To do this, it was assessed if a friend named at T1 was also named at T3, as well as if this friend choice was named at T2 was named at T3. For both measures, 0 would indicate no friends were kept from T1 or T2 to T3, 1 indicates 1 friend remained stable, 2 indicates 2 friends remained stable and 3 indicates 3 friends remained stable. An overall measure of number of stable friends was created using the average of these two measures. How many times a child was named as a friend by his/her same-sex peers was used as a measure of the child's acceptance.

Results

Preliminary Analyses.

Data Cleaning. All 333 children were present at T1 and T2, however there was some attrition at T3 ($n = 36$). Previous analyses have found this attrition was not systematic in nature—that is, the children who left the study did not differ from their peers on sociometric measures (Newcomb & Bukowski, 1984).

When dealing with peer assessment and sociometric nominations within groups (e.g., classrooms), it is important to account and correct for any possible biases due to classroom size

differences (Velásquez, Bukowski, & Saldarriaga, 2013). Specifically, differences in group size can affect the variability of scores in various ways. For example, in larger classrooms theoretically a given child has an increased chance of being nominated by more peers (Velásquez, Bukowski, & Saldarriaga, 2013). Preliminary analyses revealed that there were no differences across classrooms, therefore no adjustments were necessary.

The variables used in the study were assessed for outliers. Standardized z scores were assessed for the presence of extreme scores for peer-assessed narcissism and status. In detecting outliers, one technique is to use a cutoff score (e.g., a z score cutoff of 4; Cousineau & Chartier, 2010). Regarding child status scores, 4 outliers were found at T1 (range 4.15 to 5.81), 4 outliers at T2 (range 4.30 to 5.71) and 3 outliers at T3 (range 4.67 to 6.79). Regarding child narcissism scores, 2 outliers were identified at T1 (4.67, 6.75), 2 at T2 (both 5.70) and 3 at T3 (range 5.01 to 6.24). Given the nature of these variables, these outliers do not appear to be dubious, as it was predicted that a small number of children would be rated very highly by their classmates for these traits while most would not. In addition, because these high yet plausible scores were of interest to the analyses, outliers were intentionally not modified or removed.

Descriptive Statistics. Means and standard deviations for the variables used in this study are displayed in Table 1. It is noted that the large standard deviations may be partially attributed to the above-mentioned outliers. Friendship stability ($SD = .82$) is a measure of a child's average number of stable friends from T1/T2 to T3. Given the nature of this variable, it is more informative to look at its frequency distribution (see Table 2).

The skewness and kurtosis values (see Table 1) indicate the shape of the distribution for narcissism and status. As mentioned, a symmetrical normal curve was not predicted for the narcissism variable, as only a few children would be expected to score in the very high range.

Skewness and kurtosis values for narcissism are shown in Table 1. These descriptive statistics indicate that the distribution of narcissism scores across the three times is not severely non-normal (e.g., only the T3 narcissism kurtosis value slightly exceeds the guidelines set out by Kline (2009) of a maximum skew value of 3 or kurtosis value of 10). Histogram graphs at each time confirmed a positive skew for narcissism, with most scores falling around and below the mean, and a peaked, leptokurtic shape to the distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values for child status are also shown in Table 1. Again, these descriptive statistics indicate that the distribution of status scores is not severely non-normal at T1 and T2, however the T3 kurtosis value does exceed the guidelines set out by Kline (2009). Histograms for each time indicate a positive skew for status, with most scores falling around and below the mean, and a peaked, leptokurtic shape of distribution. Given that a symmetrical, normal distribution was not expected for these variables, it was deemed best that no transformations be applied so as not to lose important characteristics of the data.

Bivariate Correlations between Variables.

Table 3 presents bivariate correlations for child status, narcissism, and acceptance across the three waves. In Table 4, bivariate correlations are presented for the variables of interest to this study. As mentioned, a score for baseline child narcissism was created from T1/T2. For the purposes of this correlation table, a composite score was also created for child status both at baseline (T1/T2) and across all times.

Data Analyses.

The data analyses were organized around six questions; they were:

1. Child narcissism and friend status. The first analysis examined whether a child rated by their peers as high in narcissism would be more attracted than other children would to high-status

peers as friends. It was hypothesized that as compared to their peers, children high in narcissism would name children who were high in status as their friends. A mixed 2 (sex) x 3 (narcissism group) x 3 (time) x 3 (friend order) subjects ANOVA was conducted; specifically, we assessed the between-subjects factors of sex (boy, girl) and narcissism group (low, middle, high), and the within-subjects factors of Time (T1, T2, T3) and friend order (i.e., if the child named the friend as a first, second or third best friend) on friend status. Narcissism groups were computed using frequency distributions of narcissism scores across the three times (low = bottom 40% scores, middle = middle 40% scores, high = top 20% of scores).

Some of the assumptions of ANOVA (e.g., normal distribution on the dependent variable; homogeneity of variance; homogeneity of intercorrelations) were violated in this analysis. The skew and kurtosis of the status variable indicates that the assumption of normality of the dependent variable may be violated. Homogeneity of variance, assessed by Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance, was also found to be violated. Additionally, in consulting the Box's M statistic, the assumption of homogeneity of intercorrelations appears to be violated, indicating that in our sample, the pattern of intercorrelations appears to differ among the levels of the within-subject variable at each level of the between-subjects variables. For these reasons, the multivariate results of this ANOVA should be interpreted with caution.

Regarding these multivariate test results, a significant interaction was found between friend order, time, and narcissism group on friend status, Wilks' Lambda = .92, $F(8, 406) = 2.17$, $p = .029$, $\eta_p^2 = .041$. Because a three-way interaction was present (friend order by time by narcissism group), simple main effect analyses were conducted. Specifically, mixed ANOVAS were conducted at each time to assess the effect of friend order (the within-subjects factor) as well as sex and narcissism group (the between-subject factors) on friend status. No significant

multivariate interactions were identified between friend order and narcissism group (T1: Wilks'

Lambda = .97, $F(4, 558) = 2.12$, $p = .077$; T2: Wilks' Lambda = .10, $F(4, 588) = 0.41$, $p = .810$;

T3: Wilks' Lambda = .97, $F(4, 480) = 1.72$, $p = .144$). A significant within-subjects contrast was

found for friend order by narcissism group at T1 only, $F(2,280) = 4.04$, $p = .019$. To assess where

the within-subject difference might lie, three one-way within subject ANOVAS were run for each

narcissism group (low, middle, high) separately, with friend order as the independent variable

and friend status as the dependent variable. The assumption of sphericity was not violated in

these three analyses. An effect of friend order on friend status was not found for the low

narcissism group, $F(2, 238) = .63$, $p = .536$, or the middle narcissism group, $F(2, 218) = .49$, $p =$

.616; however, a significant within-subjects effect was found for friend order for the high

narcissism group, $F(2,110) = 3.64$, $p = .029$ at T1. Bonferroni post hoc analyses with a corrected

alpha revealed that for the high narcissism group at T1, the status scores of the friend they ranked

as their first best friend were marginally significantly higher than the friend they named as their

third best friend ($p = .061$).

In addition, a significant within-subjects contrast was also found for the three-way

interaction of friend order by sex by narcissism group at T3, $F(2, 241) = 4.18$, $p = .016$. Simple

effects analyses were run, which involved three mixed ANOVAs for each narcissism group with

T3 friends' status as the dependent variable, friend order as the within-subjects factor and sex as

the between-subjects factor. No significant interactions were found between friend order and sex

for the low narcissism group, $F(2, 206) = .90$, $p = .409$, or for the middle narcissism group, $F(2,$

$186) = .38$, $p = .682$. However for the high narcissism group, a significant interaction was found

between friend order by sex on friend status, $F(2, 90) = 3.13$, $p = .049$. Therefore, simple effect

analyses were run for both sexes to assess the effect of friend order on friend status in the high

narcissism group. A one-way within-subjects ANOVA revealed no main effect of friend order on friend status for girls, $F(2,52) = .58$, $p = .561$. Simple effect analyses were then run to assess the effect of friend order on friend status for boys in the high narcissism group. While the main effect was not significant, a significant linear within-subject contrast was found, $F(1,19) = 4.37$, $p = .05$. Bonferroni post hoc analyses (with corrected alpha) did not reveal significant pairwise comparisons between the first, second and third friends' status for boys in the high narcissism group. The assumption of sphercity was not violated in either analysis.

The between-subject effects are of particular interest to this hypothesis (see Figure 1). Specifically, a significant interaction was found between sex and narcissism group regarding friend status, $F(2, 206) = 3.93$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Simple effects analyses revealed a significant main effect for narcissism group membership on named friend status at T1, $F(2, 283) = 4.85$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$, a significant main effect at T2, $F(2, 298) = 9.568$, $p < .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, and a significant main effect at T3, $F(2, 244) = 5.89$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Follow up comparisons using the Bonferroni corrected alpha procedure indicated that at T1 the high narcissism group named significantly higher status friends than the low narcissism group ($p = .007$). At T2, the high narcissism group named significantly higher status friends than both the low ($p < .000$) and the middle narcissism groups ($p = .027$), and the middle narcissism group named marginally significant higher status friends than the low narcissism group ($p = .098$). At T3, the high narcissism group named significantly higher status friends than the low narcissism group ($p = .005$), and the middle narcissism group named significantly higher status friends than the low narcissism group ($p = .046$), though no significant difference was found between the middle and high narcissism group.

A significant interaction between sex and narcissism group on friends' status was only found at T3, $F(2, 241) = 4.16$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$. Further simple effects analyses run for boys and girls separately revealed that for girls, there was no main effect of narcissism group on friends' status at T3, $F(2, 125) = .87$, $p = .422$, $\eta_p^2 = .014$. For boys, a significant main effect of narcissism group on friends' status was found at T3, $F(2, 116) = 7.21$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .111$. Post hoc follow up comparisons using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha procedure revealed that the mean difference between the low and the high narcissism group was significant ($p = .001$), and the mean difference between the middle and the high narcissism was marginally significant ($p =.086$), with the high narcissism group naming friends with higher status on average than the other two groups.

Taken together, these results suggest that across the three times, youth high in narcissism tended to name higher status friends. The fact that this effect was found across all three times indicates that attraction to high-status peers appears to be continual for youth high in narcissism. A significant interaction of narcissism group by sex on friend status was found only at T3, indicating that boys in the high narcissism group named higher status friends than the other two narcissism groups, while for girls there was no effect of narcissism group membership on friend status at T3. A within-subjects effect for friend order was found at T1 for the high narcissism group only, indicating that children who were high in narcissism named especially high-status first best friends. In addition, while at T3 a significant within-subject contrast was found for the high narcissism group for boys only, pairwise comparisons did not reveal significant differences between the status of the boys' first, second or third best friends.

2. Child narcissism and friendship reciprocity. The second question intended to assess the association between narcissism and friendship reciprocity, and how this might interact with a

child's social status as well as acceptance. Based on theory, acceptance was thought to be a

positive predictor of friendship reciprocity. It was hypothesized that children high in narcissism

would have fewer mutual friends as compared to their peers, regardless of their acceptance by

peers. The exact nature of how status might predict friendship reciprocity was not hypothesized,

however it was predicted that children high in narcissism would demonstrate fewer reciprocal

friendships than other children, regardless of their status. A five-step Hierarchical Regression

Analysis (HRA) was used to test the hypothesis that children high in narcissism would not have

as many reciprocal friendships as other children, controlling for other predictors of friendship

mutuality. In the first block, the child's acceptance and the number of friends the child chose in

the friendship nominations were entered into the model. In the second step, the child's status was

entered into the model, followed by child narcissism in the third step. In the fourth step, the

interaction between acceptance and narcissism was entered, and finally, in the fifth step the

interaction between narcissism and status was included. Measures from T1/T2 predictors were

used in these analyses. The complete model with all predictors was found to account for 58.7% of

the variance in friendship reciprocity, and all blocks of this model were found to be significant

(see Table 5).

      In step three, after controlling for number of friends chosen, acceptance, and status,

narcissism was found to negatively predict friendship mutuality, $b = -.11$, $\beta = -.083$, $SE = .03$, $p =$

.006, indicating the higher a child's narcissism score, the fewer reciprocal friendships he/she had.

However, the effect of narcissism became non-significant when the interaction term for

narcissism by acceptance was added to the model in block four. In block five, both the interaction

between narcissism and acceptance, $b = -.32$, $\beta = -.06$, $SE = .02$, $p = .001$, and narcissism and

status were found to be significant, $b = .25$, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .02$, $p = .008$. See Table 6 for statistics from the final block.

Given that there was a significant interaction, the interaction term was then investigated at high and low levels of both predictors (narcissism and acceptance). A visual inspection of simple slopes indicates how the relationship between friendship mutuality and acceptance depends on child narcissism. Figure 2 illustrates the number of reciprocal friendships for children low in acceptance (-1 SD) and high in acceptance (+1 SD) as a function of being high (+1 SD) or low in narcissism (-1 SD). While children high in acceptance have more reciprocal friendships than do children low in acceptance in general, this effect interacts with narcissism. Children high in narcissism and high in acceptance were found to have notably fewer reciprocal friendships than children low in narcissism and high in acceptance. Children low in acceptance have fewer reciprocal friendships in general, whether low or high in narcissism.

Figure 3 reveals how the relationship between mutuality and status also depends on child narcissism. As illustrated, children higher in status (+1 SD) have fewer reciprocal friends than do children low in status in general; however, this effect depends on a child's narcissism score. High-status children who were high in narcissism exhibit more reciprocal friendships than do children low in narcissism. Taken together these two analyses indicate that for friendship reciprocity, acceptance and status work in very different ways as a function of a child's narcissism.

3. Child narcissism and friendship stability. The third question concerned the relation between a child's narcissism and the stability of his or her friendships. It is hypothesized that children high in narcissism would demonstrate less stable friendships as compared to other children during the transition from elementary school to middle school. A 4-step HRA was used to test the

hypothesis that children rated by their peers to be high in narcissism would exhibit less stability in their friendships during the transition from elementary school to middle school (from T1/T2 to T3); further, it was predicted that this instability would be associated with child narcissism above and beyond any association with the number of friends chosen at each time, friendship mutuality and sex. Sex was entered in the first step. In the second step, the number of friends chosen at each time was entered. Next, as theory suggests that one of the best predictors of friendship stability is friendship mutuality, friendship reciprocity was added to this model. In the final step, baseline narcissism was entered into the regression equation.

Overall, the regression model including all predictors was found to explain 23.9% of the variance in friendship stability. Steps 2 to 4 in the analysis were shown to significantly improve the prediction of friendship stability. In the final step, youth narcissism negatively predicted the number of friends retained from T1/T2 to T3 ($b = -.11$, $\beta = -.08$, $SE = .04$, $p = .027$). Because the predictors (stability and mutuality; narcissism and mutuality) are known to be correlated, the change statistics are of most interest. The effect of youth narcissism on friendship stability was found to be significant above and beyond the effect of number of friends chosen at each time, friendship mutuality, and sex, $\Delta R^2 = .011$, $F(1, 327) = 4.93$, $p = .027$, indicating that by adding narcissism to our model 2.7%, more variance in friendship stability was accounted for, thereby improving our prediction.

In conducting the HRA, a measure of individual child narcissism was used. In order to assess differences between narcissism groups on friendship stability, a between-subjects ANOVA was also run with number of stable friends as the dependent variable, narcissism group membership and sex as the independent variables, as well as number of friends chosen at T1/T2 and T3, and friendship mutuality as covariates. This ANOVA revealed that a child's number of

stable friends depended on the youth's narcissism group, $F(2, 324) = 2.97$, $p = .053$, $\eta_p^2 = .018$. Follow up comparisons using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha revealed that the high narcissism group had significantly less friendship stability than the low narcissism group ($p = .049$). In summary, these results indicate that children high in narcissism exhibit less friendship stability than their peers, even when accounting for important predictors of friendship stability such as friendship mutuality, the number of friends nominated and friend status (see Figure 4).

4. Acceptance and status in relation to continued narcissism. The forth question focused on how a child's social context (e.g., his perceived social status and acceptance by others) might serve to maintain narcissism over time. It was predicted that for children high in narcissism at baseline (T1/T2), status and not acceptance would promote the continuation of narcissism after the transition to middle school (T3). A five-step HRA was conducted to assess the effect of acceptance by others and the child's perceived social status at T1/T2 as predictors of continued narcissism at T3. T1/T2 acceptance was added in the first step; T1/T2 child status was added in the second step; T1/T2 child narcissism was added in the third step; the interaction between T1/T2 acceptance and narcissism were added in the fourth step, and finally, the interaction between T1/T2 status and narcissism was added in the final step. A summary of the model is presented in Table 7. Overall, 41.5% of the variance in T3 narcissism is accounted for by all the predictors in the final model.

While a significant interaction was found in block 4 between acceptance and narcissism at T1/T2 on continued narcissism at T3, $b = .28$, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .021$, $p = .001$, in the fifth and final step, this interaction was no longer significant after the interaction between T1/T2 narcissism and status was added to the model. As presented in Table 8, child narcissism at T1/T2 remained the strongest predictor of his/her T3 narcissism in the final block of the model, $b = .41$, $\beta = .45$, *SE*

=.075, $p < .001$. The interaction between T1/T2 narcissism and status was found to significantly improve the prediction model, $b = .26$, $\beta = .09$, $SE = .042$, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1, 290) = 4.55$, $p = .034$. Figure 5 provides a visual display of the simple slopes for children low in status (-1 SD) and high in status (+1 SD) as a function of being high (+1 SD) or low in narcissism at baseline (-1 SD). As the figure indicates, the effect of T1/T2 narcissism scores on continued narcissism at T3 depends on status. Being perceived as high status by peers is associated with higher scores in narcissism at T3 for children originally high in narcissism at baseline, whereas children low in narcissism and high in status at baseline demonstrate low scores in narcissism at T3. Children low in status and high in narcissism exhibit lower narcissism scores at T3 as compared to children high in narcissism. This indicates that status (e.g., perceived popularity) may be a particularly important factor for children high in narcissism that may promote its continuity.

5. Child narcissism and the status of retained friends at T3. The fifth question investigated the friendship choices children high in narcissism would make during the transition to middle school. Specifically, it was hypothesized that children high in narcissism would retain high-status first best friends in particular during this transition, as compared to other children. To investigate this question, the dependent variable was defined as whether the friend named as a first best friend in grade 5 was also named in grade 6 (e.g., stable or not). This analysis accounted for children who were not present at T3, and therefore could not be stable choices. As the dependent variable had a binary outcome (1 = unstable, 2 = stable), a logistic regression analysis was conducted with mutuality, the status of the friend and the child's narcissism as predictors. This analysis was conducted in three blocks, with friendship reciprocity entered in block 1, friend status entered in block 2, and child narcissism in block 3.

The results from Block 0, ignoring all predictors, indicate that 56.3% of the sample did not have a stable first best friend from grade 5 to grade 6. In Block 1, friendship reciprocity was added to the model as it is known to be a strong predictor of stability. This model was found to correctly predict 57.7% of the stability in first best friends (48.4% of unstable, and 69.6% of stable friendships). Friendship reciprocity was found to increase the predictive power of the analyses above base rate ($X^2 = 9.631$, $p = .002$), with the estimated proportion of variance accounted for in our outcome ranging from 3.3% to 4.4 % for this model. Next in block 2, friend status was added to the model, though this did not add to the predictive power of our model ($X^2 = .895$, $p = .344$). Finally, in Block 3, child narcissism was added to the model, which significantly improved the predictive power of the model ($X^2 = 10.28$ $p = .001$). For this model, the estimated proportion of variance accounted for in our outcome ranged from 7% to 9.4 %. This final model was found to correctly predict the stability of the first best friend at a rate of 62.2% (68.3% accuracy for unstable, 54.4% of stable friends).

Table 9 provides information about the relative contribution of each predictor. Adjusted Log Odds are directly interpretable effect sizes and can be converted to predicted probabilities in order to assess the likelihood of a particular outcome (i.e., stability of first best friend) based on a particular predictor. In our sample, the odds of having a stable first best friend decreased by a factor of .47 for being non-reciprocal as compared to being reciprocal friends, while controlling for intercorrelations among predictors. Contrary to what was hypothesized, friend status was not a significant predictor of first best friend stability. Narcissism was found to be the strongest predictor in our model. In this data set, for every 1-unit increase in child narcissism, the odds of a having a stable first best friend were only 64.5% as high as compared to not having that 1-unit

increase, controlling for intercorrelations among predictors. This can be taken to mean that the relative odds of having a stable first best friend decrease with increased narcissism.

6. Child narcissism and the status of new friends at T3. The final question also concerned friendship choices made during the transition to middle school. It was predicted that children high in narcissism would more attracted than their peers to new friends who were high in status. Specifically, this final analysis assessed differences between the status scores of the new friends a child chose at T3 compared with the status scores of the peers chosen at T1 and/or T2 and at T3 (i.e., retained friends). It was expected that the difference between these scores would be larger for the children perceived to be narcissistic by their peers. To investigate this question, the peers chosen at T3 were designated as either new (not present at T1/T2) or retained (present at T1/T2). Means were computed for the status of each child's new friends, as well as for the status of each child's friends retained from T1 and/or T2. A mixed 3 (narcissism group) x 2 (sex) x (2 new versus retained) ANOVA was conducted. The dependent variable for this analysis was the mean status scores of the child's friends. No main effect was found between the new and retained friends' status scores, $F(1, 169) = 1.15$, $p = .285$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$, and no interactions were found between the new-old friend status scores and narcissism group membership, $F(2, 169) = .93$, $p = .398$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$ or between the new-old friend status score, narcissism group membership and sex, $F(2, 169) = .94$, $p = .392$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$. A between-subjects main effect was found for narcissism group, $F(2, 169) = 5.07$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .057$, and for sex $F(2, 169) = 1.15$, $p = .318$, $\eta_p^2 = .013$, on friend status. This indicates that our final hypothesis was not supported. The status of new friends as compared to retained friends was not found to be significantly different as a function of narcissism group or sex. However, as is consistent with prior analyses, at Time 3 children high in narcissism do name higher status friends in general. In addition, boys were found

to name higher status friends than were girls.

Discussion

The current study intended to inform the developmental conceptualization of narcissism, specifically in terms of social validation for children high in narcissism, as well as these children's friendship patterns. Specifically, this thesis investigated peer-assessed narcissism in relation to the qualities of a child's friends (e.g., their status), the qualities of these friendships (e.g., reciprocity, stability), as well as how the nature of a child's relationships with others (e.g., being liked by others versus being considered high in status) might serve to maintain narcissistic traits overtime. The study was organized around six questions. For each question, our study provides direct answers. These answers show clearly that status has a stronger significance for children who are high on a measure of narcissism than for those who are not. Compared to its effect on other children, status has a stronger effect on the friendship selections of children who are high in narcissism and, further, status was observed to moderate the stability of narcissism.

The first question concerned the hypothesized tendency for individuals high in narcissism to be attracted to prominent affiliates (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Campbell, 1999). Based on theory and empirical evidence with adults, it was hypothesized that children rated by their peers as being high in narcissism would name high-status peers as friends. At each assessment time, support was found for our hypothesis, indicating that as compared to other children, youth high in narcissism are continually attracted to (i.e., name) high-status friends. At Time 1, children high in narcissism were especially likely to name high-status peers as their first best friends. In addition, it was found that after the transition to middle school, boys high in narcissism named higher status friends than their peers lower in narcissism, while for girls there was no effect of narcissism group on friend status.

Together, these results suggest that attraction to prominent/popular peers is characteristic of children high in narcissism both before and after the transition to middle school. A desire to affiliate with high-status others is often cited as a hallmark of narcissistic behavior, however apart from a handful of studies (e.g., with adult romantic relationships; Campbell, 1999), little empirical investigation has been conducted on this matter. Within the leading conceptualization of narcissism, attraction to high-status others would serve as a self-regulatory strategy to uphold a grandiose self-concept (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011). Within this framework, associating with high-status individuals can be seen to both serve intrapersonal processes (e.g., to reinforce and validate one's own inflated self-image) and interpersonal processes (e.g., to project this inflated self-image to the world; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Morf, Tochetti, & Schurch, 2011). As the first report of this tendency in youth, this finding is valuable as it adds to the literature on narcissism in general regarding this hallmark behavior, and because it extends the understanding of how narcissism might function in youth. It is noted that this particular analysis does not concern whether or not the friendship nomination was mutual as this hypothesis concerned the child's *attraction* to high-status others (i.e., their wish to affiliate with these prominent peers).

The second question directly addressed the association between child narcissism and friendship mutuality. This analysis assessed the interaction between acceptance and narcissism, as well as social status and narcissism, on friendship reciprocity. Based on theory in the literature, it was predicted that children high in narcissism would have fewer mutual friendships as compared with their peers (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). It was also predicted that children high in narcissism would have fewer mutual friends as compared to their peers, regardless of how they were accepted by peers. As might be expected, children who were low in acceptance

exhibited less friendship reciprocity than children high in acceptance. In addition, high narcissism

scores were found to negatively predict friendship reciprocity, providing support for our

hypothesis. Our analysis revealed an interaction, where the relation between narcissism and

friendship mutuality depended on a child's acceptance. A clarification of the interaction showed

that children who are high in acceptance and high in narcissism were found to have notably fewer

reciprocal friendships as compared to children high in acceptance and low in narcissism. What

this finding suggests is that even when highly liked (e.g., named more often as a friend), children

high in narcissism exhibited less friendship reciprocity as compared with their peers. This

supports the idea that the friendship dyad may mean less to children high in narcissism, which is

in line with previous literature, where youth high in narcissism have been found to exhibit a

lower communal orientation to others (e.g., friendliness, warmth, love) and more agentic

interpersonal goals (e.g., Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, &

Denissen, 2009). In addition, an interaction was also found between narcissism and a child's

social status (e.g., perceived popularity) and his/her number of reciprocal friends. The exact

nature of how status might predict friendship reciprocity was not predicted; however, it was

thought that children high in narcissism would demonstrate fewer reciprocal friendships than

other children, regardless of their perceived status. High-status children were found to have fewer

reciprocal friendships in general as compared to low-status children. This may be explained by

popular children being nominated by classmates with whom they did not reciprocate the

friendship nomination. In addition, high-status children who were high in narcissism were found

to exhibit more reciprocal friendships than did high-status children low in narcissism. It is

possible that high-status children who were low on narcissistic traits might be more desirable

mates and thus were nominated by more children with whom they did not reciprocate friendship

nominations. However, it is also noted that the reciprocal friendships on Figure 3 are all predicted in the negative values; this is because this interaction already controls for the interaction between acceptance and narcissism on friendship reciprocity.

The third question investigated the relation between child narcissism and friendship instability. As tumultuous or short-term relationships are assumed to be characteristic of narcissistic individuals (e.g., Paulhus, 1998; Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), it was hypothesized that children rated as high in narcissism by their peers would exhibit lower stability in their friendships during the transition from elementary school to middle school. This hypothesis was supported in our findings, which indicated that children high in narcissism have fewer stable friendships from T1/T2 to T3, while accounting for other important predictors of friendship stability such as friendship mutuality, how many friends a child nominated and the status of the child's friends. There are at least two potential explanations of this effect. Based on what current theory suggests, youth high in narcissism tend to have more agentic social goals (e.g., toward status; Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2009); therefore, it is conceivable that children high in narcissism might "trade in" friends more often in order to befriend higher status children and climb the social ladder. This hypothesis was investigated in subsequent analyses that looked at how status might affect the friendship choices of children high in narcissism during the transition to middle school (e.g., which friends to retain, which to relinquish, and which peers to gain as new friends). However, it is also possible that children high in narcissism exhibit less friendship stability due to aversive or self-aggrandizing behaviours that become tiresome to their friends. Narcissism is known to be associated with aggressive, reactive, and other exploitative interpersonal behaviour (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, & Nezlek; Bukowski,

Schwartzman, Santo, Bagwell, & Adams, 2009) that may be aversive to peers. In addition, while narcissists have been found to make positive first impressions (e.g., come across as competent and agreeable), over time others come to consider these individuals as arrogant, hostile and defensive—in other words, undesirable mates (Paulhus, 1998).

Regardless of the mechanisms behind this instability, this finding is valuable as to our knowledge it is the first time that the relation between relationship stability and narcissism has been assessed in youth. This finding adds to the conceptual framework of narcissism in youth, and suggests that narcissism might manifest in children in similar ways to adults (e.g., through fewer stable relationships). Interpersonal stability is an important social consequence of narcissism, especially from a developmental perspective. Friendship has been theorized to offer security and to be related to a child's wellbeing (e.g., Sullivan, 1953), and positive peer relations in youth have been associated with positive developmental trajectories (see Bukowski, Buhrmester, & Underwood, 2011 and Bukowski, Motzio, & Meyer, 2009 for review).

The fourth question concerned how a child's social context might serve to maintain his or her narcissistic traits over time. Specifically, this analysis looked at acceptance by others as well as a child's perceived social status as supporting continued narcissism over time. Given the association in the literature between agentic goals and narcissism, it was hypothesized that for children high in narcissism, social status, but not acceptance, would serve to maintain narcissistic traits. This hypothesis was supported, as the relationship between baseline narcissism (T1/T2) and continued narcissism (T3) was found to depend on a child's status as perceived by his/her peers. Children high in narcissism at baseline demonstrated higher narcissism scores after the transition to middle school as a function of being perceived as high in observable prominence (e.g., status). The status measure used in the current study is akin to the construct of perceived

popularity (e.g., LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002), whereas acceptance can be considered a measure of being liked as a friend by one's peers. What this suggests is that for children high in narcissism, status—presumed to be a power-based experience—validates an inflated self-image and therefore maintains narcissistic qualities over time; acceptance, on the other hand, is a form of interpersonal affection, and does not support the continuity of narcissism. To our knowledge, this type of analysis has never been conducted. A benefit of the current study is that it assesses continued narcissism within the context of a child's naturalistic peer group. This finding is in line with previous research that has found that narcissism is associated with agentic social goals (e.g., Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2009). In summary, this finding adds to the conceptualization of youth narcissism, and may shed light on what serves to validate and maintain an individual's inflated self-concept. This finding is consistent with the literature on adults that indicates that validation for narcissistic individuals is associated with the ultimate goal of being admired rather than being liked (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991).

The fifth question concerned whether children high in narcissism would retain their high-status friends from elementary school across the transition to middle school. It was hypothesized that during this time of transition, children high in narcissism would be more likely to hold on to their prominent first best friends and lose their less prominent first best friends. Given that children high in narcissism have been found in prior analyses to demonstrate lower friendship stability, it was thought that first best friends who were retained would be popular/high-status individuals. This hypothesis was based on the theory that the social goals of children high in narcissism revolve around strivings for validation, and that validation from popular friends would presumably be worth more (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This hypothesis is also in line with

previous findings in the literature that youth narcissism is associated with agentic social goals for status and power (e.g., Ojanen, Findley, & Fuller, 2012; Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2009). This hypothesis was not supported. The status of the first best friend was not found to predict friendship stability over time. However, as our other analyses have indicated, narcissism was found to negatively predict friendship stability in general, where the higher the child's narcissism the fewer friends the child retained over time. Further interpretation for this fifth analysis is provided below with the discussion regarding the sixth hypothesis.

The sixth question concerned the differences between the status scores of a child's new friends at T3 compared with the status scores of retained friends (i.e., friends chosen at T1 and/or T2 as well as at T3). It was hypothesized that the difference between these scores would be larger for children high in narcissism as compared to other children. This hypothesis was not supported. The status of new friends as compared to retained friends does not appear to differ as a function of narcissism group or sex. However, as found in our prior analyses, children high in narcissism do name higher status friends in general at T3.

Question five and six both concern the time of transition between elementary and middle school, when it was expected that the agentic goals of children high in narcissism would be especially prominent. It was predicted that during this time of social flux, children high in narcissism would make agentic friendship choices (e.g., regarding which friends to retain, which friends to relinquish, which peers to gain as friends). Specifically, it was thought that for children high in narcissism, high-status friend choices would serve to bolster a child's own status, and therefore validate his/her inflated self-concept. While these hypotheses were not supported, this can be best understood in light of the previous findings in this study. For example, children high in narcissism were found to be attracted to high-status friends across all time points, and were

also found to demonstrate less friendship stability. Put together, this paints a picture of the social interactions that children high in narcissism have overtime: while there is more rotation of friends, these friends tend to be high in status in general. The fact that the attraction to high-status peers appears to be continual for children high in narcissism may explain why no differences were found for the status of new friends/retained friends after the transition to middle school. Specifically, perhaps naming high-status children as friends is characteristic of children high in narcissism.

Strengths and Limitations

We consider this study valuable in several ways. Firstly, the six findings from this thesis offer a substantial contribution to the empirical literature on youth narcissism, which we believe can also help inform the developmental conceptualization of narcissism. Specifically, this thesis finds support for under-studied hallmark behaviours of narcissism in adulthood being present in youth during early adolescence. In addition, to our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate youth narcissism in relation to friendship outcomes and the social factors that promote narcissism's continuity.

Secondly, the particular sample in this study is unique in that it captures the full school-age population of a community as it traversed five separate elementary schools to a single middle school. This sample allowed us to look at relationship stability, quality, and sociometric data over a time of transition. These characteristics of the data are particularly interesting when studying narcissism, which is believed to manifest as dynamic self-regulatory processes that exist where the individual and his/her social world intersect (e.g., Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In studies with adults, it can be very difficult to obtain a sample with a closed social group in which to study the social consequences of narcissism in a naturalistic setting. Therefore, the current sample offers a

unique window into how narcissism functions in terms of peer relations in early adolescence. In summary, previous studies have shown that narcissism can be reliably assessed in youth (e.g., Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008; also see Barry & Ansel, 2011 for review); the present study emphasizes the importance of studying narcissism within the social context of the individual.

Finally, we believe that a better understanding of narcissism in youth can help inform interventions for children who hold unwarranted or overly positive self-views. For example, while initiatives in schools to boost self-esteem are prevalent, these may not be appropriate for all children (e.g., Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005). Recently, the assumption that high (as compared to low) self-esteem is paramount has been called into question; rather, it has been suggested that what is important is the *appropriateness* of a person's level of self-esteem (e.g., Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpää, & Peets, 2005, emphasis added). Understanding how a grandiose self-concept affects social functioning in youth is important in mitigating the short- and long-term negative consequences for the individual and his/her peers.

The present study is not without its limitations. As previously mentioned, a two-item measure of peer-assessed narcissism was used in this study, and more items would make for a more reliable measure. In addition, future studies could benefit from the insights of a multi-informant perspective of narcissism. Adding self-report measures of narcissism (e.g., Thomaes, Stegge, Bushman, Olthof, & Denissen, 2008) would allow for comparisons between the child's self-perceptions and how others perceive this child. Given that those high in narcissism by definition hold unrealistic self-views, we believe that both of these perspectives are important and provide interesting insights.

Conclusions

The goal of the present study was to contribute to the growing body of research on narcissism in youth, with a specific focus on the social consequences of this personality trait. We consider the findings to inform the developmental conceptualization of narcissism, and to add empirical support for what have been considered hallmark traits of narcissism in adults. Specifically, it was found that: 1.) Youth high in narcissism were continually attracted to high-status friends; 2.) Narcissism negatively predicted friendship reciprocity, with this association being moderated by child acceptance and status in different ways; 3.) Children high in narcissism demonstrated less friendship stability as compared to their peers; 4.) For children high in narcissism at baseline, social status (not acceptance) served to maintain continued narcissism over time 5.) and 6.) Differences were not found for friends who were newly befriended or retained by children high in narcissism during the transition to middle school—rather, it was found that narcissism predicted attraction to high-status peers in general.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Status and Narcissism Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Time 1 Status	.90	1.35	2.70	8.77
Time 1 Narcissism	.91	1.20	2.26	7.91
Time 2 Status	.92	1.41	2.72	9.07
Time 2 Narcissism	.94	1.24	2.26	7.00
Time 3 Status	.92	1.41	3.04	12.27
Time 3 Narcissism	.87	1.22	2.78	10.51

Table 2

Frequency Distribution for Average Number of Stable Friends from Time 1/2 to Time 3

Average No. Stable Friends	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	127	38.10	38.10
0.50	37	11.10	49.20
1.00	85	25.50	74.80
1.50	24	7.20	82.00
2.00	45	13.50	95.50
2.50	7	2.10	97.60
3.00	8	2.40	100.00
Total	**333**	**100**	

Table 3

Bivariate Pearson Correlations Among Status, Narcissism, and Acceptance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Time 1 Status	1	.909**	.761**	.190**	.210**	.239**	.642**	.622**	.529**
2. Time 2 Status		1	.802**	.223**	.211**	.298**	.657**	.656**	.543**
3. Time 3 Status			1	.301**	.252**	.360**	.547**	.587**	.613**
4. Time 1 Narcissism				1	.695**	.555**	-.014	-.054	.129*
5. Time 2 Narcissism					1	.555**	-.021	-.049	.068
6. Time 3 Narcissism						1	.096	.084	.213**
7. Time 1 Acceptance							1	.792**	.619**
8. Time 2 Acceptance								1	.622**
9. Time 3 Acceptance									1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4

Bivariate Pearson Correlations Among Predictors

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sex	1	.083	.001	-.011	-.013	-.166**	.015	.057	-.006	-.018
2. No. of Same Sex Mutual Friends		1	.733**	.363**	.405**	.121*	.149**	.107	-.174**	.298**
3. T1/T2 Acceptance			1	.681**	.697**	.099	.111*	.149**	-.040	.165**
4. T1/T2/T3 Status				1	.952**	.013	.006	.107	.266**	.032
5. T1/T2 Status					1	.006	.011	.099	.232**	.043
6. Number of Friends Chosen T1						1	.333**	.026	-.019	.120*
7. Number of Friends Chosen T2							1	.002	-.030	.104
8. Number of Friends Chosen T1								1	-.060	.388**
9. T1/T2 Narcissism									1	-.173**
10. No. Stable Friends T1/T2 to T3										1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5

Model Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (HRA) Predicting Number of Reciprocal Friends

Model	R^2	R^2 change	F change	df1	df2	p for F change
1	.543	.543	130.348	3	329	.000
2	.563	.020	14.874	1	328	.000
3	.573	.010	7.529	1	327	.006
4	.578	.005	4.065	1	326	.045
5	.587	.009	7.177	1	325	.008

Table 6

Summary of Coefficients for Final Model in HRA Predicting Number of Reciprocal Friends

Predictors	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	-.377	.428		-.881	.379
T1/T2 Acceptance	.397	.028	.971	14.094	.000
Number of Friends Chosen T1	.179	.126	.054	1.419	.157
Number of Friends Chosen T2	.078	.122	.024	0.642	.522
Child Status T1/T2	-.166	.049	-.256	-3.402	.001
Child Narcissism T1/T2	-.019	.042	-.024	-0.443	.658
Child Acceptance X Narcissism T1/T2	-.059	.018	-.316	-3.348	.001
Child Status X Narcissism T1/T2	.065	.024	.254	2.679	.008

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error.

Table 7

Model Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (HRA) Predicting Continued Narcissism at T3

Model	R^2	R^2 change	F change	df1	df2	p for F change
1	.009	.009	2.700	1	294	.101
2	.095	.086	27.671	1	293	.000
3	.382	.287	135.637	1	292	.000
4	.406	.024	11.846	1	291	.001
5	.415	.009	4.549	1	290	.034

Table 8

Summary of Coefficients for Final Model in HRA Predicting Continued Narcissism at T3

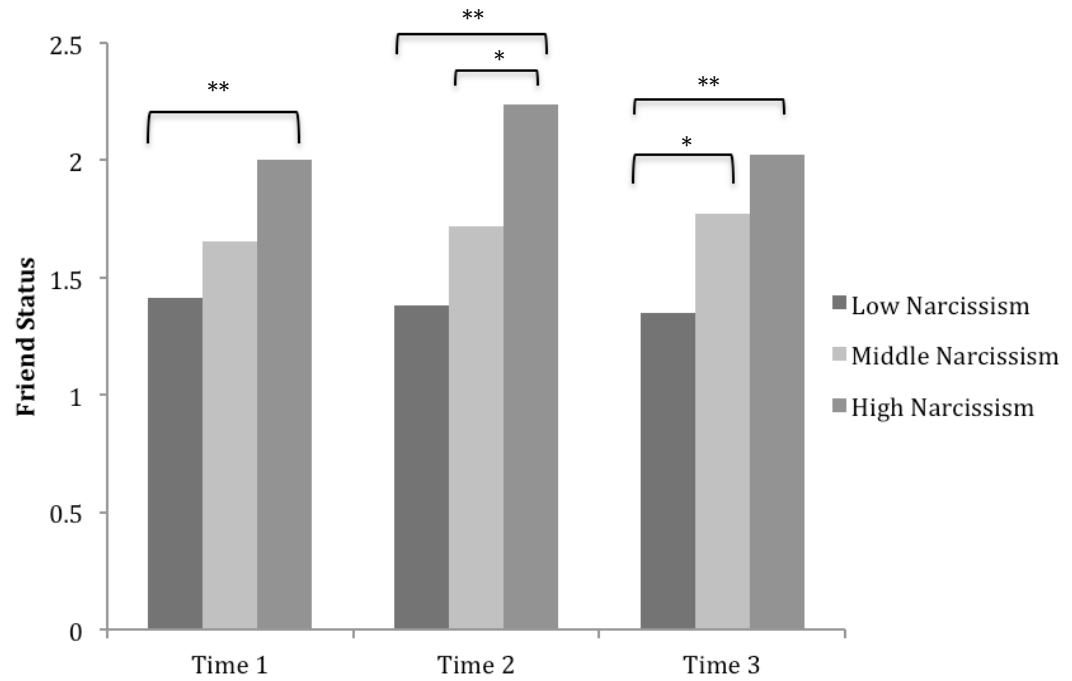| Predictors	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	.323	.127		2.541	.012
T1/T2 Acceptance	.013	.048	.023	0.266	.790
T1/T2 Status	-.077	.083	-.086	-.924	.356
T1/T2 Narcissism	.454	.075	.414	6.052	.000
T1/T2 Narcissism X Acceptance	.023	.031	.090	0.735	.463
T1/T2 Narcissism X Status	.090	.042	.259	2.133	.034

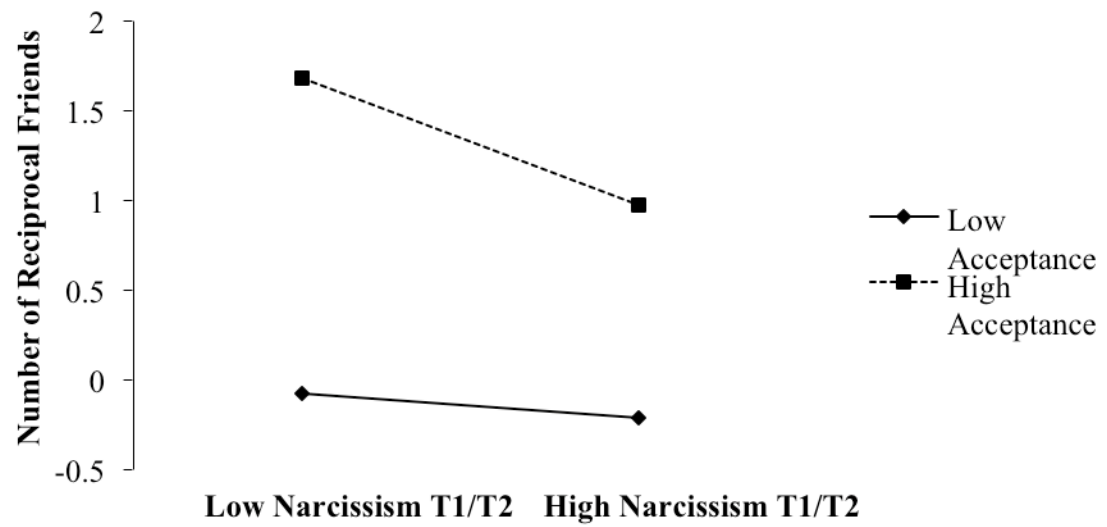*Note. B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error.

Table 9

Logistic Regression: Statistical Tests and Effect Sizes for Predictor Variables for Retention of First Best Friend

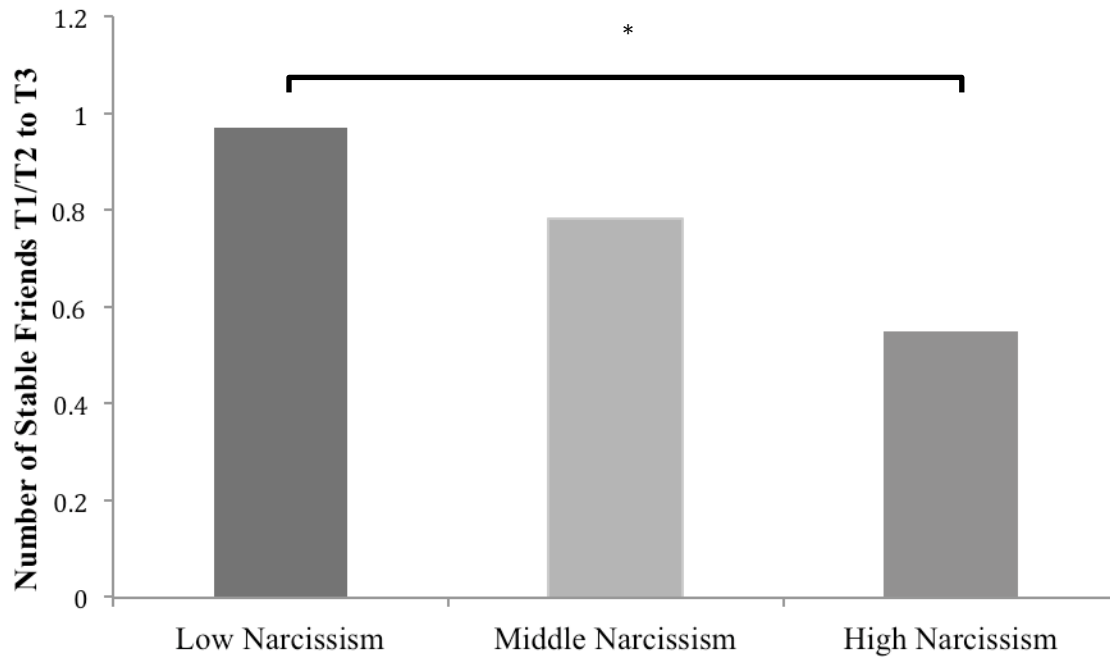| Predictor	*B*	S.E.	Wald Test	*p* value	Adjusted Odds Ratio
Mutuality of Friend 1	-.757	.258	8.635	.003	0.469
Status of Friend 1	.107	.068	2.458	.117	1.113
Child Narcissism T1/T2/T3	-.439	.152	8.381	.004	0.645
Constant	.230	.240	1.273	.259	1.258

Notes. S.E. = Standard Error

Figure 1. Friend status by narcissism group across three times. * Indicates a statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level; ** Indicates a statistically significant difference at the .01 level.
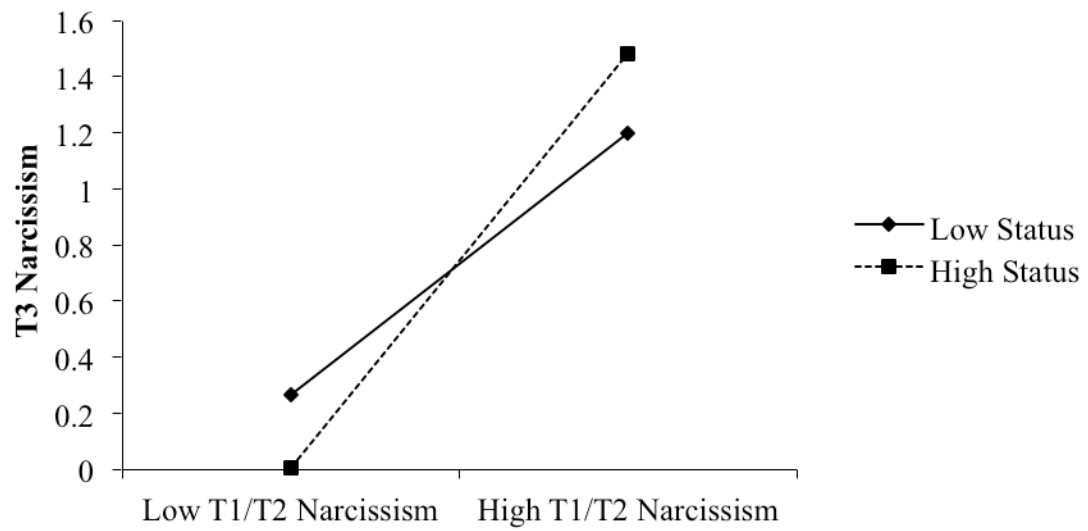
Figure 2. The interaction between narcissism and acceptance on friendship reciprocity. Associations shown are between children low (-1 *SD*) and high in narcissism (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) and high in acceptance (+1 *SD*) on the child's number of reciprocal friends.

Figure 3. The interaction between narcissism and status on friendship reciprocity. Associations shown are between children low (-1 *SD*) and high in narcissism (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) and high in status (+1 *SD*) on the child's number of reciprocal friends.

Figure 4. Number of stable friends from T1/T2 to T3 by narcissism group. * Indicates a statistically significant difference between groups at the .05 level

Figure 5. The interaction between baseline narcissism (T1/T2) and status on continued narcissism at T3. Associations shown are between children low (-1 *SD*) and high in narcissism (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) and high in status (+1 *SD*) on the child's T3 narcissism score.