Communal narcissism and agentic narcissism are not the same things: Evidence from a twin study

With the support by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Grant No. 31070919) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Grant Nos. KSCX2-EW-J-8, Y1CX153003, and Y1CX273005), Prof. Cai Huajian's laboratory at the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, conducted a twin study to distinguish communal narcissism from agentic narcissism. The results were published in *Journal of Research in Personality* (2014, 49: 52—58).

The past few decades has witnessed an increase of narcissism around the world. Narcissism may be manifested in two forms: agentic narcissism and communal narcissism. People with high agentic narcissism often think that they possess super ability, authority and leadership, and believe that the world would be better under their governance. In short, they are superheroes in their own eyes. In contrast, people with high communal narcissism think themselves as saints, with great mercifulness and benevolence, and they could rescue the world from hunger and poverty. Do agentic and communal narcissism differ from each other fundamentally?

To address this issue, we conducted a twin study. A total of 304 twin pairs from Beijing (152 monozygotic, 152 dizygotic) were investigated. Results showed that the genetic factor, shared environment and unique environment each explained 47%, 0% and 53% of the variation in agentic narcissism, but 25%, 15% and 61% of the individual difference in communal narcissism. Moreover, by applying bivariate genetic modeling, the study showed that agentic and communal narcissism shared only 32% of their genetic factors and 6% of their environmental factors. In other words, the genetic and environmental bases for agentic and communal narcissism are largely independent, with modest overlap. This research, for the first time, revealed the heritability of communal narcissism. It also identified the distinct genetic and environmental foundations for agentic and communal narcissism, which have been proved to be distinct personality traits.

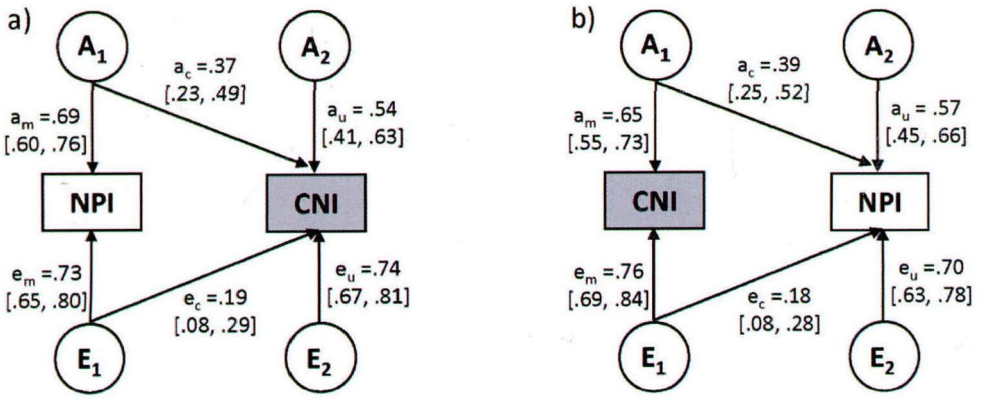

Figure The best-fitting bivariate genetic models of agentic (NPI) and communal (CNI) narcissism. a) The best-fitting model for the NPI-CNI model. b) The best-fitting model for the CNI-NPI model. Measured variables are depicted in rectangles. Latent factors A (additive genetic factor) and E (non-shared environmental factor) are presented in circles. a_m, a_c, a_u, e_m, e_c, and e_u are standardized path estimates (95% confidence intervals).