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Internal Dialogue: Are You Listening to Me? Positive Internal Dialogue and Narcissism

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This Honors thesis entitled

**Internal Dialogue: Are You Listening to Me?
Positive Internal Dialogue and Narcissism**

written by

Corey M.E. Wallis

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requirements for completion of the
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meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers

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Internal Dialogue: Are You Listening to Me?

Positive Internal Dialogue and Narcissism

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Abstract

Utilizing the experience sampling method, the present study investigated the relationship between a participant's self esteem, self consciousness, and narcissism and the level of positive thought. The present study also explored the relations between positive thought and satisfaction with Ouachita Baptist University, their roommate, their social involvement, and their GPA. Results showed that narcissism is negatively related to positivity of thought. Additionally, there is a significant correlation between participant's involvement with campus organizations and the level of satisfaction with their school. Furthermore, there was a connection between organizational involvement and positivity of thoughts. Additionally, participants' GPA's were positively correlated with narcissism. No significant findings were found regarding participants' self esteem and self consciousness.

Internal Dialogue: Are You Listening to Me?

Internal dialogue is an essential component of the everyday lives of human beings. People, regardless of their environment, are routinely in communication with themselves in the conscious realm. Numerous studies have investigated the effects of self talk on a person's psychological experience. This project is designed to use the experience sampling method to thoroughly investigate the correlation relationship between positive self talk and psychological phenomena such as self esteem, narcissism, and self-consciousness.

The experience sampling method is an investigative technique using technology to attain information over an extended period of time. Snir and Zohar (2008) have used the method extensively in their investigations of "workaholism" and the psychological states associated with the work place. In one study they utilized the experience sampling method by randomly having employees complete a form four times a day for one week.

By using such methods, the researcher was able to ascertain the inner speech as it occurs in the participant's lives as opposed to an after thought cultivated by a singular questionnaire. This helps determine the effect of inner speech on everyday life. Researchers assert that inner dialogue is a cognitive tool that the self uses in attaining and processing information about itself (Everett & Morin, 1990). The present study seeks to investigate the effect of that self motivated cognitive tool on college students.

Self esteem, one's view of oneself, has a strong positive relation to a person's self talk. Studies have demonstrated the more positive self talk an individual has the higher self esteem they will possess. Burnett and McCrindle's (1999) study involving the effects of both positive and negative self talk revealed that positive self talk is positively correlated with high self esteem. Additional studies have found that positive self talk is not only positively related to self

esteem, but it is also negatively related to depression and irrational beliefs (Burnett, 1994).

Researchers have also found a connection between the suppression of negative thoughts on self

esteem (Borton, Markowitz, & Deitrick, 2005).

Narcissism is a popular topic of interest among the psychological community. It is

believed to have a large influence on self esteem and delinquency (Adler, Berry, Grafman, &

Pickler, 2007). Narcissism is also significantly linked to aggression (Martinez, Miller, Reider, &

Zeicher, 2008). There is not yet a research literature pertaining to whether such behavior is also

linked aggression towards the self or negative internal dialogue.

Noting the importance of internal dialogue in everyday life, the present study is designed

to investigate its effects on the self esteem, narcissism, and self-consciousness of the American

college student. It is designed to uncover the relations between self talk and the general

satisfaction and success a student feels in their academic pursuits. With the limited amount of

research yet to exist connecting these topics, I hope to cultivate a new road of investigation that

will enable the examination of the positivity of thought patterns and the human experience as it

occurs in daily life.

I believe that positive internal dialogue will be positively correlated to self consciousness

and self esteem and negatively correlated to narcissism. I also believe that the more positive self

talk a person possesses, the more satisfied the person will be with Ouachita Baptist University,

their roommate, their grades, and their social involvement. Additionally, I hypothesize that the

more positive the internal dialogue, the higher the person grade point average and the more

activities the student will be involved in.

Method

Participants

Sixty six students were voluntarily recruited from a lower division introduction to psychology course at Ouachita Baptist University. All participants were required to be able to receive text messages via a cellular phone device. Volunteers were paid ten dollars for their participation in the study to compensate for the expenses accumulated from receiving text messages. All sixty six students participated in the first section of the study, fifty four in the second section, and thirty four in the final section. Men and women participated, and their ages ranged from first year to fourth year students. The students were primarily Caucasian and identified with Protestantism.

Materials

An informed consent form, created by the researcher, was used (Appendix A). In addition, the researcher conducted the initial phase of the experiment with three questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted of a self consciousness scale (Appendix B). The scale consisted of twenty three questions pertaining to the participant's level of self consciousness. The second scale was a narcissism scale (Appendix C). It contained sixteen individual questions. The final scale investigated the participant's level of self esteem (Appendix D). Ten questions were presented in regards to the psychological phenomenon. In addition to the two scales, an additional demographic sheet was distributed (Appendix E). It requested the participant's classification, gender, religion, and cellular phone number.

The second phase of the experiment consisted of the experience sampling method. The researcher created the internal dialogue sheet that the participant's completed (Appendix F). This

sheet contained a scale that asked the participant to rate how positive their last thought on a scale of one to nine, one being very negative and nine being very positive. After the scale, the researcher gave two lines for the participant to briefly describe their thought. Each scale and line segment were repeated thirty times and presented to the participant in a manila folder. They then filled twenty five of the segments out as they received their text messages from the researcher.

The third portion of the study consisted of a brief questionnaire (Appendix G) designed by the researcher. It presented a scale from one to five, one being very satisfied and five being very unsatisfied, and asked the participants to rate their satisfaction with Ouachita Baptist University, their first semester with their roommate, their level of social involvement, and their grades. It also requested an estimated grade point average for the Fall 2007 semester, if they were in Tiger Tunes, if they were involved in any campus activities, and an estimate of the number of activities in which they participated.

Design and Procedure

Before the experiment began, the participants read and signed an informed consent form. Testing occurred in three stages. The first stage consisted of the three questionnaires pertaining to the participant's narcissism, self consciousness, and self esteem. Additionally, during this portion of the study they were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about their basic demographics. During this portion, the researcher obtained each volunteer's phone number and coded them to ensure anonymity and protection from potential abuse.

The second phase of the investigation involved the experience sampling method. This method was designed to accumulate information on student's everyday life. In this method, participants are instructed to describe the ebb-and-flow of their lives as they are experienced *in*

situ. It is particularly beneficial because it allows the researcher to receive data from participants as they occur in their typical life as opposed to how they remember it from memory.

Students were given a folder consisting of a packet of sheets to record the times in which they received their text messages and the degree of the positivity or negativity of their last thought. Along with the packet, they received a sample sheet to serve as a guide to how to fill out the sections during the week.

Once all of the participants received the initial packet, the text message portion of the study began. They were carefully instructed to fill out one brief question about the perceived level of positivity regarding the thought that occurred directly before the text message was received. In addition, they were asked to provide a brief, one sentence synopsis of their last thought. This was to occur every time they received a text. No texts were to be sent to the researcher.

Participants were arbitrarily split into two groups. Each group received their text messages at different times of the day (ranging from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.) and each time was randomly selected by the researcher. Each participant received a minimum of five texts per day for a period of five days. Once the week was completed, students returned their folder to the researcher in exchange for a five dollar stipend to reimburse them for the money spent on the receipt of the text messages.

The third phase of the study consisted of the participants meeting a final time to complete a brief questionnaire investigating their level of satisfaction with their overall life and satisfaction with Ouachita Baptist University. After completing these tasks they received an additional five dollars to further compensate their expenses.

Results

The researcher used the correlational analysis to obtain her results. It was discovered that narcissism is negatively correlated to positivity of thought ($r = -.350$). It was also found, though the results were not significant, that the more organizations a participants was in, the more negative their thought pattern ($r = -.330$) and the more satisfied they were with Ouachita Baptist University ($r = -.587$). People with higher grade point averages had a higher demonstrated level of narcissism($r = .618$).

Discussion

My hypothesis regarding narcissism was confirmed. In addition to the initial hypothesis, it was discovered that men are significantly more narcissistic than women and students that possess a higher grade point average tend to have higher narcissism. No additional significant correlations were discovered.

However, what it potentially the most interesting finding was not significant. A trend in the data suggested that the more organizations a person was in, the more negative their thought pattern. If more students attended the final segment of the study then this statistic likely would have been significant. As it was, there were not enough participants to adequately demonstrate the statistical significance of this trend.

Further research is needed to demonstrate the relationship between student's level of involvement and their level of positive thoughts. If future attempts at investigating this phenomenon are successful then it would have many practical impacts on the world of higher education. If being in multiple organizations is connected to the mental health of the student, what actions need to be taken by the university to assist their student populations? Should there

be a limit to the extracurricular activities performed by each student? If so, how would the university monitor such activities?

It is widely assumed that the more activities in which a person is involved, the more well adjusted and stable they will become. Membership is seen as a positive attribute to a person's life and human experience. Students are rewarded based on how many activities that they participated in or how "well rounded" they appear. However, if a correlation was demonstrated between the two it would create an awareness of the relationship between a person's activity level and their overall mental well being. Upon writing this article, the researcher interviewed a fellow Honors Program participant that was involved in a myriad of campus activities along with the academic rigor of writing a senior thesis. In response to the results he exclaimed "That is so true. I hate myself." Such responses should be investigated by the psychological community.

There was also a trend in the data that suggested that the more organizations one was a part of, the more satisfied they were with Ouachita Baptist University. Further research should investigate the link between involvement and satisfaction. Why might being involved in multiple organizations correlate with negative thought patterns yet suggest satisfaction with a larger institution?

An additional portion of this study to be noted is that though students were offered five dollars to participate in the last section of the study, only half of them completed it. The other half neglected to appear for the final analysis session and therefore excluded from many of the analyses. This is particularly interesting because it potentially impacts further studies at the university.

If students are unwilling to complete a study, even with monetary incentives, then what will encourage them to complete additional psychological experiments? What motivates

privately educated college students to participate if money is not an effective motivator? Is it due to the intensive activity they completed for the first five dollars or are they simply in no need of money? However, this might be beneficial in future attempts at the experience sampling method. If students are unmotivated by money, perhaps there are non-monetary incentives that can be introduced. This would enable further studies using this innovative and popular method.

Conversely, if money is a motivator, how much money must be offered to a student to ensure their participation? Can small, liberal arts campuses afford to participate in such studies if their implementation requires a large sum of money? Moreover, is this a phenomena of a private institution or would this problem be identifiable at larger institutions?

This study possessed many limitations. It is exceptionally difficult to monitor the honesty of student's responses when utilizing the experience sampling method. It would have been far more difficult for them to actively complete each section as the received the texts than to fill them out directly before they handed the packet back to the researcher at the conclusion of the week. The requested sentence after each thought was an attempt to hinder this activity, but it surely did not deter some of the students from falsifying their data.

Another limitation is that this study consisted of three separate sections. Each section had its own time and space commitment. Instead of attending one meeting, as is generally required of research participants, they were asked to attend two and to reserve a week to receive a massive number of text messages. Not only is this asking excessively more of the participants, it was also strenuous on the researcher.

Due to the participants' need to own a cellular phone with text messaging capabilities, the number of participants was limited. For a majority of students that had such abilities, they had to receive parental approval for such an activity due to its financial implications. This further

limited the number of participants. The five dollar stipend was given in an attempt to limit this issue for participants.

Limited demographics is an important limitation in testing at a small, liberal arts college. Participants were primarily Caucasian, protestant, middle income students. A majority of those who participated were women. Further research must be conducted on the male and minority populations. It would be of particular interest to see how self talk correlated to specific religious beliefs. If a larger variety of students were assessed, then there might have been a significant finding in the self esteem and self consciousness scales. Unfortunately, due to the limited participants, no correlation was found.

This study possessed a variety of strengths. It was the first effort at experience sampling method to be attempted on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University. As an experimental technique that is quite popular in current psychological experiments, this study enables the school and its students to cultivate further notoriety in the discipline as well as encourage future researchers in their attempts to create innovative studies.

As a semi-longitudinal investigation, it establishes that studies that take a longer period of time are feasible on a small, liberal arts campus. Though not all of the participants were involved in every section, a large portion completed a majority of the project. This is beneficial because it opens the possibility for similar further research.

In future research, studies should be designed to investigate the origins and type of negative self talk expressed by students. There are a myriad of reasons a student would report negative inner dialogue. Stress, especially during the middle of the semester, is an important aspect of a student's communication patterns. This would be extremely important when determining how and why students in multiple organizations harbor more negative self talk.

Perhaps the stress that occurs with a busy schedule combined with the complexities of college living produced the negativity in the inner dialogue.

Further research should also be done on older adults. Does involvement in projects or committees in the workplace and at home result in negative inner dialogue? Furthermore, does such activity correlate with satisfaction with the workplace?

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Appendix A

Internal Dialogue Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if and how internal dialogue affects student life.

In this study you will be asked to answer a series of personal questions regarding your inner personal dialogue over the course of six days. At random intervals throughout the six day period, you will be sent a text message asking you to complete a portion of the questionnaire provided during the first day. This protion of the experiment is designed to not interfere with your normal, daily activities. Once completed, you will return your packet to the researcher.

At the first meeting you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires to assess your current psychological state. At the end of the semester, you will be asked to meet once more to complete an additional set of questionnaires

Your participation in this experiment should take approximately one week.

The information you provide in the study will be kept completely confidential. There will be no link between the answers you provide in the questionnaire, and the personally-identifiable information you provide on this consent form; thus, nobody will be able to link your answers to you, so please answer honestly.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

All participants will be provided $5.00 reimbursement for text messaging expenses at the completion of the week. Another $5.00 will be given to those who show up to the follow up meeting on December 3rd, 2007.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Principal Researcher:
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You may also contact the following person regarding your rights in this study:

Institutional Review Board Chair
Tim Hayes
Box# 3631
Phone: (870) 245-5215

I have read and understand this document, and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered. I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

e-mail: _____ OBU Box#: _____

(Your e-mail address will only be used for a one-time email to notify you of the results of this study, and if you are the recipient of one of the gift cards. If you would prefer not to receive this email, please initial here: _____.)

Appendix B

Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. (1975). Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37, 75-86.

Answer the following questions as honestly and accurately as possible on a scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = extremely uncharacteristic (not at all like me) 2 = somewhat uncharacteristic 3 = neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic 4 = somewhat characteristic 5 = extremely characteristic (very much like me)

1. I'm always trying to figure myself out.
2. I'm concerned about my style of doing things.
3. Generally, I'm not very aware of myself. [REVERSE SCORED]
4. It takes me time to overcome my shyness in new situations.
5. I reflect about myself a lot.
6. I'm concerned about the way I present myself.
7. I'm often the subject of my own fantasies.
8. I have trouble working when someone is watching me.
9. I never scrutinize myself. [REVERSE SCORED]
10. I get embarrassed very easily.
11. I'm self-conscious about the way I look.
12. I don't find it hard to talk to strangers. [REVERSE SCORED]
13. I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings.
14. I usually worry about making a good impression.
15. I'm constantly examining my motives.
16. I feel anxious when I speak in front of a group.
17. One of the last things I do before I leave my house is look in the mirror.
18. I sometimes have the feeling that I'm off somewhere watching myself.
19. I'm concerned about what other people think of me.
20. I'm alert to changes in my mood.
21. I'm usually aware of my appearances.
22. I'm aware of the way my mind works when I work through a problem.
23. Large groups make me nervous.

Private self-consciousness subscale: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22
Public self-consciousness subscale: 2, 6, 11, 14, 17, 19, 21
Social anxiety subscale: 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 23

Appendix C

Rate the following items using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Agree				Disagree

____1. I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.

____2. I like to be the center of attention.

____3. I think I am a special person.

____4. I like having authority over people.

____5. I find it easy to manipulate people.

____6. I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.

____7. I am apt to show off if I get the chance.

____8. I always know what I am doing.

____9. I tell good stories .

____10. I expect a great deal from other people.

____11. I really like to be the center of attention.

____12. People always seem to recognize my authority.

____13. I am going to be a great person.

____14. I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.

____15. I am more capable than other people.

____16. I am an extraordinary person.

Appendix D

Please rate the following items using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

____ 1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

____ 2. At times I think I am no good at all.

____ 3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

____ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

____ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

____ 6. I certainly feel useless at times.

____ 7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

____ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

____ 9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

____ 10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix E

Name:_____

Please Circle One:

Classification: Fr   So   Jr   Sr

Gender: M   F

Please Indicate the Following:

Religion:_____

Major/Minor:_____

Appendix F

Date: 9/   /07   Time:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negative				Neutral				Very Positive

Rate your last thought on a scale of 1 to 9: _____

Describe Your Thought In Two Sentences Or Less:

_____

_____

Date: 9/   /07   Time:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negative				Neutral				Very Positive

Rate your last thought on a scale of 1 to 9: _____

Describe Your Thought In Two Sentences Or Less:

_____

_____

Date: 9/   /07   Time:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Negative				Neutral				Very Positive

Rate your last thought on a scale of 1 to 9: _____

Describe Your Thought In Two Sentences Or Less:

_____

_____

Appendix G

Rate the following items using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5

Very

                                                        Very

Satisfied

Unsatisfied

____ 1. My first semester at Ouachita Baptist

____ 2. My first semester with my roommate

____ 3. My level of social involvement during the semester

____ 4. My grades.

What is your estimated grade point average for the Fall 2007 semester? _____

Did you get involved with Tiger Tunes? Y   N

       Did you get involved with any organizations on campus? Y   N

       If so, how many?   1   2   3   4   5   6

Author Note