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The Implications of Sexual Narcissism for Sexual and Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract

There is theoretical reason to believe narcissism is associated with a number of sexual behaviors and outcomes that affect both sexual and relationship satisfaction. Nevertheless, research on the association between personality and behavior demonstrates that personality traits, such as narcissism, only predict behavior in domains that activate the components of the personality system. Given that global assessments of narcissism do not capture the extent to which the components of narcissism are activated in the sexual domain, we examined the extent to which the facets of a domain-specific measure of *sexual narcissism* accounted for the trajectories of own and partner sexual and marital satisfaction over the first five years of 120 new marriages. Three of the four facets of sexual narcissism (sexual exploitation, sexual entitlement, and low sexual empathy) were negatively associated with both trajectories. The fourth facet (sexual skill) was positively associated with both trajectories. Notably, sexual satisfaction mediated the effect of every facet of sexual narcissism on marital satisfaction. A global assessment of narcissism was not associated with either trajectory of satisfaction. These findings highlight (1) the importance of narcissistic tendencies for sexual processes, (2) the benefits of using domain-specific measures of personality in research on sexual behavior, and (3) the importance of examining the implications of the specific facets of personality constructs.

Keywords

Sexual narcissism; narcissism; sexual satisfaction; personality; marital satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Having a quality sexual relationship is an integral part of having a quality romantic relationship. Not only is sexual satisfaction positively associated with relationship satisfaction in cross-sectional research (for review, see Sprecher & Cate, 2004), sexual satisfaction is also positively associated with changes in relationship satisfaction in longitudinal research (Byers, 2005; Yeh, Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger, & Elder, 2006). Further, several recent studies indicate that a quality sexual relationship can buffer relationship satisfaction against the negative implications of two robust predictors of relationship distress--neuroticism (Russell & McNulty, 2011) and attachment insecurity

(Little, McNulty, & Russell, 2010). Accordingly, understanding what factors contribute to sexual satisfaction may have important implications for understanding and treating sexual and relationship distress.

One way to understand the factors that contribute to sexual and relationship outcomes is to examine the role of personality traits in predicting sexual behaviors. Indeed, existing empirical research demonstrates that each of the Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1997) plays a role in predicting various sexual behaviors and outcomes (for review, see McNulty, in press). For example, Fisher and McNulty (2008) demonstrated that sexual satisfaction mediates the negative association between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction. Nevertheless, research has paid little attention to another personality factor likely to predict sexuality and relationship outcomes--narcissism. Narcissism is an individual difference variable characterized by several psychological processes likely to be associated with sexual satisfaction, such as a sense of entitlement, a tendency toward exploiting others, a general lack of empathy for others, and a pervasive confidence in one's abilities (see Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002; Raskin & Terry, 1988).¹

The goal of the current research was to examine the implications of narcissism for sexual and relationship satisfaction. To this end, the remainder of this introduction is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the theoretical reasons to expect own and/or partner narcissism to predict sexual satisfaction. The second section reviews the theoretical reasons to expect own and/or partner narcissism to predict relationship satisfaction. The third section argues why a domain-specific measure of sexual narcissism may demonstrate more consistent associations with sexual and relationship satisfaction than may a global measure of narcissism. Finally, the fourth section provides a brief overview of the current research that used two longitudinal studies to examine the implications of global narcissism and sexual narcissism for the trajectories of sexual and marital satisfaction in early marriage.

Narcissism and Sexual Satisfaction

According to Lawrence and Byers' (1995) interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction, sexual satisfaction is determined, in part, by the level of rewards relative to the level of costs individuals experience in their sexual relationships. Specifically, all other factors being equal, the more sexual rewards individuals experience relative to sexual costs, the more satisfied they should be with their sexual relationship.

There are several reasons to expect own and partner narcissism to be associated with decreased sexual rewards and/or increased sexual costs and thus lower levels of sexual satisfaction. First, as noted earlier, people high in narcissism demonstrate low levels of empathy (Watson & Morris, 1991), a psychological process that is associated with having more rewarding sexual experiences (Larson, Anderson, Holman, & Niemann, 1998; Song, Bergan, & Schumm, 1995). Second, whereas open, other-focused communication is associated with more rewarding sexual experiences for both partners (e.g., Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997; Larson et al., 1998), people high in narcissism tend to focus their communications on themselves and their needs, rather than the needs of their partners (Vangelisti, Knapp, & Daly, 1990). Third, whereas respect and intimacy are positively associated with sexual satisfaction (Rubin & Campbell, 2012; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011), people high in narcissism demonstrate tendencies to disrespect and exploit others (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Finally, narcissism has

¹This article is based on the social-personality conceptualization of narcissism, rather than the clinical conceptualization of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Although there are similarities between these two conceptualizations, there are also important distinctions between them. Most notably, whereas NPD is a clinical disorder that manifests in a small minority of people, narcissism is an individual difference variable that manifests on a continuum in the general population (see Miller & Campbell, 2008).

been directly linked to two sexual behaviors likely to be associated with decreased sexual satisfaction for partners--sexual aggression (Kosson, Kelly, & White, 1997) and infidelity (Atkins, Baucom, & Christensen, 2005).

Nevertheless, there are also reasons to expect own and/or partner narcissism to be associated with increased sexual rewards and thus higher levels of sexual satisfaction. For example, people high in narcissism tend to be positively oriented toward sex (Hurlbert, Apt, Gasar, Wilson, & Murphy, 1994; Wryobeck & Wiederman, 1999), an orientation that is associated with more frequent and/or satisfying sexual experiences (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997). Further, people high in narcissism have a high level of confidence in their skills and abilities (Campbell, Bosson, Goheen, Lakey, & Kernis, 2007), and research demonstrates that a sense of interpersonal skill and self-efficacy leads to more rewarding interpersonal experiences (McNulty & Karney, 2002) and higher levels of interpersonal satisfaction (Baker & McNulty, 2010; Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008). Finally, people high in narcissism tend to be more assertive (Watson, McKinney, Hawkins, & Morris, 1988), and assertiveness is associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997).

The fact that narcissism may be associated with increased costs *and* increased rewards suggests that it may be difficult to identify any average association between total narcissism scores and sexual satisfaction--the sexual costs and rewards associated with narcissism may balance out to provide no overall increase or decrease in sexual satisfaction. Indeed, we are aware of no studies demonstrating an association between narcissism and sexual satisfaction. However, research may be able to demonstrate the implications of narcissism for sexual satisfaction despite this issue by examining the implications of the various *facets* of narcissism for sexual satisfaction. The aspects of narcissism that may be associated with increased sexual costs are different from the aspects of narcissism that may be associated with increased sexual rewards, and these different aspects are captured by the different facets of narcissism that are assessed by some measures of narcissism. For example, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) (Raskin & Terry, 1988) assesses facets such as Exploitativeness, Entitlement, and Superiority. Although Exploitativeness and Entitlement may be associated with costs that are negatively associated with sexual satisfaction, the confidence that accompanies a sense of superiority may lead to sexual rewards that are positively associated with sexual satisfaction. Accordingly, although individuals' own and/or their partners' total score on a measure of narcissism may demonstrate few and weak associations with sexual satisfaction, their scores on the facets of narcissism may demonstrate strong and sometimes opposing associations with sexual satisfaction.

Narcissism and Relationship Satisfaction

If narcissism does have implications for sexual satisfaction, it may also indirectly affect people's satisfaction with their relationship as a whole. Indeed, as noted earlier, several longitudinal studies indicate that sexual satisfaction positively predicts changes in relationship satisfaction (Byers, 2005; Yeh et al., 2006). For example, Yeh et al. assessed sexual and marital satisfaction five times over the course of approximately 12 years and demonstrated that initially higher levels of sexual satisfaction predicted subsequently higher levels of marital satisfaction. Thus, to the extent that narcissism or its facets negatively predict sexual satisfaction, they should negatively predict relationship satisfaction through such associations; to the extent that narcissism or its facets positively predict sexual satisfaction, they should positively predict relationship satisfaction through such associations.

Nevertheless, like research on the association between narcissism and sexual satisfaction, research on the association between narcissism and relationship satisfaction is rather scant. Campbell and Foster (2002) reported that narcissism is negatively associated with

relationship commitment, which tends to be strongly positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Further, Campbell et al. (2002) reported that narcissism was associated with a game-playing love style, which tends to be negatively associated with own and partner relationship satisfaction (Morrow, Clark, & Brock, 1995).

Although none of this existing research suggests narcissism should be positively associated with relationship satisfaction on average, some of its facets may be. For example, given that a sense of skill may be positively associated with sexual satisfaction because confidence in one's abilities can predict more positive experiences (Baker & McNulty, 2010; McNulty & Karney, 2002), a sense of skill may also predict better relationship satisfaction though its influence on sexual satisfaction.

The Potential Usefulness of a Domain-Specific Measurement of Sexual Narcissism

Despite theoretical reasons to expect a connection between the facets of narcissism and both sexual and relationship satisfaction, detecting such associations is likely to be difficult. Extant research on the extent to which personality predicts behavior demonstrates that such associations are often elusive and inconsistent; although some studies identify associations between personality and a particular behavior, other studies do not (for reviews, see Bem & Allen, 1974; Epstein, 1979; Mischel & Peake, 1982). Although such inconsistencies were initially puzzling, Mischel and Shoda (1995) reconciled them by noting that (1) personality only predicts behaviors in situations that activate the personality system and (2) not all situations activate the personality system in a particular person. Someone who is conscientious at work, for example, may not be conscientious at home because the components of the conscientious personality system may tend to get activated at work but not at home. The same may be true regarding the extent to which narcissism predicts sexual behavior and thus sexual satisfaction. Although sexual situations may activate the narcissistic components of the personality system in some people who have narcissistic tendencies, they may not activate those components in all people who have narcissistic tendencies. Nevertheless, the global assessments of narcissism that are typically used in research, such as the NPI, capture the extent to which narcissistic tendencies are activated across situations on average, not the extent to which they are specifically activated in sexual situations. Thus, even people who score high on global measures of narcissism may not exhibit narcissistic behaviors in sexual situations and thus even the facets of such global measures may demonstrate weak or inconsistent associations with sexual satisfaction.

One way researchers may demonstrate consistent links between the facets of narcissism and sexual satisfaction is by using a measure that assesses the extent to which narcissistic personality characteristics are activated in the sexual domain. Recent empirical research provides evidence of the clarity such a measure can provide. Widman and McNulty (2010) developed and used a domain-specific measure of *sexual* narcissism, the Sexual Narcissism Scale (SNS), to resolve inconsistencies observed in the link between narcissism and sexual aggression. The SNS captures the extent to which four components of narcissism likely to be associated with sexual behavior are activated in sexual domains--entitlement, exploitation, low empathy, and an inflated sense of skill. Whereas the NPI was inconsistently associated with the various measures of sexual aggression in their studies, the SNS and several of its facets were consistently associated with those measures.

Overview of the Current Study

We drew on data from two longitudinal studies of newly married couples to examine the implications of own sexual narcissism and partner sexual narcissism for both sexual and relationship satisfaction. In both studies, couples completed measures of global narcissism and sexual narcissism once and completed measures of sexual satisfaction and marital

satisfaction up to eight times over the first five years of marriage in Study 1 and the first four years of marriage in Study 2. Given that both studies used nearly identical methods, the data from both are described and analyzed simultaneously.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in Study 1 were 37 newlywed couples drawn from a larger longitudinal study of 72 newlywed couples in northern Ohio; participants in Study 2 were 83 newlywed couples drawn from a larger study of 135 newlywed couples in eastern Tennessee. These subsets were used because these couples were the only ones who completed the phases of measurement that included the relevant measure of sexual narcissism. Couples in both studies were recruited from the community through letters sent to marriage license applicants and advertisements.

At baseline, husbands were, on average, 25.4 years old ($SD = 4.19$) and had completed 15.7 years of education ($SD = 2.65$); wives were, on average, 24.1 years old ($SD = 4.19$) and had completed 17.8 years of education ($SD = 2.82$). The median income, combined across spouses, was between \$40K and \$50K. The majority of participants (> 90%) were Caucasian; 4 husbands (3.3%) and 7 wives (5.8%) identified as African American, 3 husbands (2.5%) and 1 wife (0.8%) identified as Asian, and 4 husbands (3.3%) identified as “other.”

Procedure

At baseline, participants were mailed a packet of questionnaires to complete at home and bring with them to a laboratory session where they completed a consent form approved by the local human subjects review board and participated in a variety of tasks beyond the scope of the current analyses. The packet contained self-report measures of sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, as well as a letter instructing couples to complete their questionnaires independently of one another. In Study 1, this initial packet also contained a global measure of narcissism. Every 6–8 months subsequent to the initial assessment (with the exception that there were 12 months between the 4th and 5th assessments in Study 1), participants were again mailed a packet of questionnaires that contained the same measures of sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. At the 7th assessment in Study 1 (approximately 4 years into the marriage) and the 3rd assessment in Study 2 (approximately 1 year into the marriage), the packet contained the measure of sexual narcissism. In Study 2, this packet also contained the same global measure of narcissism used at baseline in Study 1. Sexual narcissism was first included at these assessments because they were the first assessments in each study that occurred after the scale was developed. Participants were paid \$60 (Study 1) or \$80 (Study 2) for participating in the baseline phase of data collection and \$50 (in both studies) for participating in subsequent phases. Analyses are based on up to eight waves of data in both studies.

Measures

Sexual Narcissism—Sexual narcissism was assessed with a marital version of the Sexual Narcissism Scale (SNS) (see Widman & McNulty, 2010). Whereas the original SNS assesses narcissistic thoughts and behaviors with reference to sexual partners in general, this version of the SNS was modified to assess those thoughts and behaviors with reference to the marital partner, where necessary (e.g., “I really know how to please a partner sexually” was changed to “I really know how to please my spouse sexually”). The complete marital version of the SNS appears in Table 1. The SNS assesses four facets of narcissism that may be active in the sexual domain and affect sexual processes: (1) sexual exploitation, (2)

sexual entitlement, (3) low sexual empathy, and (4) grandiose sense of sexual skill. Items on the sexual exploitation subscale assess the ability and willingness to manipulate the spouse to gain sexual access. Items on the sexual entitlement subscale assess the belief that the fulfillment of one's sexual desires is a personal right. Items on the low sexual empathy subscale assess a general lack of empathy and devaluation of the spouse in sexual situations. Items of the sexual skill subscale assess a tendency to hold a grandiose sense of sexual skill or an exaggerated sense of sexual success in the marriage. Participants responded to all items on a 5-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). After reversing appropriate items, all items were averaged to form the total scale score and each subscale score, such that higher scores indicate higher levels of sexual narcissism. A confirmatory factor analysis indicated the four-factor model provided an adequate fit to the data: for husbands, MFF $\chi^2(164) = 280.18, p < .001, \chi^2/df$ ratio = 1.24, CFI = .91, SRMR = .076, RMSEA = .074; for wives, MFF $\chi^2(164) = 203.77, p = .019, \chi^2/df$ ratio = 1.71, CFI = .94, SRMR = .080, RMSEA = .044, and internal consistency of the total scale and subscales was generally acceptable (for husbands, α was .82 for the total scale, .72 for sexual exploitation, .81 for sexual entitlement, .75 for low sexual empathy, and .75 for sexual skill; for wives, α was .75 for the total scale, .63 for sexual exploitation, .75 for sexual entitlement, .67 for low sexual empathy, and .73 for sexual skill).

Narcissism—Global narcissism was assessed with a version of the 40-item NPI, which demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$) and construct validity (according to both observational and self-report data) in instrument development (Raskin & Terry, 1988). This forced-choice current version of the NPI asked participants to agree or disagree with items such as “If I ruled the world, it would be a much better place,” and “I find it easy to manipulate people” using a yes-no response format. A total score was calculated for each participant, with higher scores indicating higher levels of narcissism. Internal consistency was adequate (for husbands, $\alpha = .87$; for wives, $\alpha = .84$).

Sexual Satisfaction—Sexual satisfaction was assessed at every wave of measurement using the Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS), which demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$) and an adequate validity coefficient (.76) in instrument development (see Hudson, 1998). The ISS measures individuals' satisfaction with their sexual relationships by asking them to indicate the extent to which 25 statements describe their current sexual relations with their partner (e.g., “I think that our sex is wonderful,” “Our sex is monotonous”) on a scale of 1 (*None of the time*) to 7 (*All of the time*). Responses to these items were reversed when appropriate and summed to form an index of sexual satisfaction that ranged from 25 to 175, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Internal consistency of this measure was adequate across phases ($\alpha = .88$ for both husbands and wives).

Marital satisfaction—Marital satisfaction was assessed at every wave of measurement using a semantic differential (SMD) (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) of the marriage, which demonstrated strong internal consistency (α averaged .97 across 8 waves of measurement) and validity (r s with other satisfaction measures ranged from .33 to .78) in previous research (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). This version of the SMD asks spouses to rate their perceptions of their relationship on 7-point scales between 15 pairs of opposing adjectives (e.g., bad-good, dissatisfied-satisfied, unpleasant-pleasant) and thus yields scores from 15 to 105, with higher scores reflecting more positive satisfaction with the relationship. Internal consistency was adequate across all phases ($\alpha = .85$ for both husbands and wives).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of the independent variables are presented in Table 2 and correlations among them are presented in Table 3. A few of these results are worth highlighting. First, paired-sample t-tests indicate that husbands reported higher levels of sexual narcissism according to the total scale, sexual exploitation, low sexual empathy, sexual skill, and globally-assessed narcissism than did wives. Second, consistent with prior research (Widman & McNulty, 2010), the sexual narcissism subscales tended to be positively correlated with one another among both husbands and wives, with a few exceptions. For example, also consistent with prior research (Widman & McNulty, 2010), low sexual empathy and sexual skill were negatively correlated among husbands. Third, husbands and wives' reports on all variables were positively correlated with one another.

Describing the Trajectory of Sexual and Marital Satisfaction

The two primary dependent variables were the trajectory of sexual satisfaction and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. Each trajectory was estimated using three-level growth curve modeling (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1987) with the HLM 6.08 computer program and the following first level equation:

$$Y_{ij}(\text{Satisfaction}) = \pi_{0j} + \pi_{1j}(\text{Time}) + e_{ij} \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

where i represents individuals, j represents couples, Time was coded as Time 1 = 0, Time 2 = 1, etc.; thus, π_0 estimates initial satisfaction, π_1 estimates changes in satisfaction, and e is the variance in individuals' reports of satisfaction that deviate from their average level of satisfaction and are not due to Time. The autocorrelation due to repeated assessments within individuals was controlled in the second level of the model that allowed the intercept and slope terms to vary across individuals, and the non-independence of husbands and wives' data was controlled in the third level of the model that allowed those terms to vary across couples. One analysis estimated the trajectory of sexual satisfaction and a separate analysis estimated the trajectory of marital satisfaction.

The parameter estimates of both growth curves appear in Table 2. As can be seen, spouses reported relatively high levels of initial sexual and marital satisfaction that decreased over time, on average. Neither of these estimates differed across husbands and wives.

Is Sexual Narcissism Associated with Sexual Satisfaction?

The first set of primary analyses examined the implications of narcissism and sexual narcissism for the trajectory of sexual satisfaction. First, we entered own and partner reports of global narcissism and total scores of own and partner sexual narcissism into the second level of the growth curve model that accounted for the intercepts and slopes of sexual satisfaction estimated by Equation 1.

The results of this analysis are reported in Table 4. As can be seen, own total scores on the SNS were negatively associated with the slope of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported higher levels of sexual narcissism experienced steeper declines in sexual satisfaction over time. Subsequent analyses demonstrated that this effect did not differ across husbands and wives. Partners' total score on the SNS was not associated with changes in sexual satisfaction, neither own nor partner reports on the total SNS scale were associated with initial sexual satisfaction, and neither own nor partner reports on the NPI were associated with either component of the trajectory of sexual satisfaction.

Next, we examined the association between the facets of sexual narcissism and the trajectory of sexual satisfaction. Specifically, we conducted four additional analyses in which we

separately substituted own and partner reports of each subscale of sexual narcissism into the second level of the same growth curve model, again controlling for own and partner reports on the NPI in each analysis.

The results of these analyses are reported in Table 5. As can be seen, each facet was associated with at least one component of the trajectory of sexual satisfaction. Own sexual exploitation was marginally negatively associated with the intercept, but not the slope, of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who scored higher on sexual exploitation tended to report lower levels of initial sexual satisfaction that persisted over time. Own and partner sexual entitlement were each uniquely negatively associated with the slope, but not intercept, of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who were higher in sexual entitlement or had partners who were higher in sexual entitlement tended to experience steeper declines in sexual satisfaction over time. Own and partner reports of low sexual empathy were each uniquely negatively associated with the intercept of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported less sexual empathy or who had partners who reported less sexual empathy reported lower levels of sexual satisfaction initially. Own reports of low sexual empathy were also negatively associated with the slope of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported less sexual empathy also experienced steeper declines in sexual satisfaction over time. Finally, own and partner reports of sense of sexual skill were each uniquely *positively* associated with the intercept, but not slope, of sexual satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported a greater sense of sexual skill or who had partners who reported a greater sense of sexual skill tended to report higher levels of initial sexual satisfaction that persisted over the course of the study. None of these effects differed across husbands and wives.

Is Sexual Narcissism Associated with Marital Satisfaction?

The second set of analyses examined the implications of narcissism and sexual narcissism for the trajectory of marital satisfaction. First, we entered own and partner reports of global narcissism and total scores of own and partner sexual narcissism into the second level of the growth curve model that accounted for the intercepts and slopes of marital satisfaction estimated by Equation 1.

The results of this analysis are reported in Table 6. As can be seen, own and partner total scores on the SNS were negatively associated with changes in marital satisfaction, indicating that spouses with higher levels of sexual narcissism or who had partners with higher levels of sexual narcissism experienced steeper declines in marital satisfaction over time. Neither effect differed across husbands and wives. In contrast, neither own nor partner total scores on the SNS were associated with the intercept of marital satisfaction and neither own nor partner reports on the NPI were associated with either component of the trajectory of marital satisfaction.

Next, we examined the association between the facets of sexual narcissism and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. Specifically, we conducted four additional analyses in which we separately substituted own and partner reports of each facet of sexual narcissism into the second level of the same growth curve model, again controlling for own and partner reports of global narcissism in each analysis.

The results of these analyses are reported in Table 7. As can be seen, the results were virtually identical to those found for sexual satisfaction. Own sexual exploitation was marginally negatively associated with the intercept, but not slope, of marital satisfaction, indicating that spouses who scored higher on sexual exploitation tended to report lower levels of initial marital satisfaction that persisted over time. Own and partner sexual entitlement were each uniquely negatively associated with the slope, but not intercept, of

marital satisfaction, indicating that spouses who scored higher in sexual entitlement or had partners who scored higher in sexual entitlement tended to experience steeper declines in marital satisfaction over time. Own and partner reports of low sexual empathy were each uniquely negatively associated with the intercept, but not slope, of marital satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported low levels of sexual empathy or had partners who reported low levels of sexual empathy tended to report lower levels of marital satisfaction initially that persisted over time. Finally, own and partner reports of sense of sexual skill were each uniquely *positively* associated with the intercept, but not the slope, of marital satisfaction, indicating that spouses who reported a greater sense of sexual skill or had partners who reported a greater sense of sexual skill tended to report higher levels of marital satisfaction that persisted over time. None of these effects differed across husbands and wives.

Does Sexual Satisfaction Mediate the Associations between the Facets of Sexual Narcissism and Marital Satisfaction?

Finally, we examined whether sexual satisfaction mediated the associations that emerged between the facets of sexual narcissism and marital satisfaction. According to MacKinnon, Fritz, Williams, and Lockwood (2007), establishing mediation requires demonstrating two associations: (1) one between the independent variable and the mediator and (2) a second between the mediator and the dependent variable, controlling for the independent variable. The analyses summarized in Table 5 provide evidence for the first criterion--each component of sexual narcissism was associated with the trajectory of sexual satisfaction. We have reproduced the significant betas that emerged in those analyses in the first column of Table 8. Next, we conducted the second set of analyses necessary to establish mediation by examining whether sexual satisfaction predicted marital satisfaction, controlling for each facet of sexual narcissism. Specifically, we conducted four separate analyses in which we entered sexual satisfaction as a time-varying predictor of marital satisfaction in Equation 1, and separately controlled for own and partner reports on each facet of sexual satisfaction, as well as own and partner reports of global narcissism, at Level 2. The results of these analyses are presented in the second column of Table 8. As can be seen, sexual satisfaction was significantly positively associated with marital satisfaction, controlling for each component of sexual narcissism. Next, we estimated each indirect effect by forming the product of each direct effect--the beta of the direct effect of each facet of sexual narcissism on sexual satisfaction (first column of Table 8) and the beta of the direct effect of sexual satisfaction on marital satisfaction, controlling that facet of sexual narcissism (second column of Table 8). These indirect effects are presented in the third column of Table 8. Finally, we used the Prodclin program created by MacKinnon et al. (2007) to estimate asymmetric confidence intervals of each of these indirect effects, which are presented in the final column of Table 8. As can be seen, none of these confidence intervals contain zero, indicating that each indirect effect is significant. Further, consistent with the idea that sexual satisfaction mediated the effects of the facets of sexual narcissism on marital satisfaction, rather than vice versa, none of the effects of the facets of sexual narcissism on marital satisfaction remained significant after controlling for sexual satisfaction, except partner sexual skill, which remained significantly positively predictive of initial marital satisfaction, $B = 1.60$, $SE = 0.59$, $t(235) = 2.73$, $p = .007$, and own sexual exploitation and own low sexual empathy, which remained marginally negatively predictive of initial marital satisfaction (for exploitation, $B = -1.21$, $SE = 0.71$, $t(235) = -1.69$, $p = .091$; for low sexual empathy, $B = -1.97$, $SE = 1.07$, $t(235) = -1.85$, $p = .065$). In other words, sexual satisfaction fully mediated the effects of every facet of sexual narcissism on the trajectory of marital satisfaction, with the exception that it only partially mediated the effects of partners' sense of sexual skill and own sexual exploitation and low sexual empathy.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

The current research drew on two longitudinal studies of a total of 120 newlywed couples to examine the associations between both narcissism and sexual narcissism and the trajectory of both sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Although total scores on the sexual narcissism measure were rather weakly and inconsistently associated with the trajectory of both sexual and marital satisfaction, the facets of sexual narcissism (i.e., sexual exploitation, sexual entitlement, low sexual empathy, and sexual skill) provided a more consistent picture of the associations between both own and partner sexual narcissism and both types of satisfaction.

Three of the four facets were negatively associated with sexual satisfaction. Own sexual exploitation was associated with lower levels of initial sexual satisfaction that persisted over time; own and partner low sexual empathy were associated with lower levels of initial sexual satisfaction that persisted over time; and own and partner sexual entitlement were associated with steeper declines in sexual satisfaction over time. In other words, consistent with the idea that satisfying sexual exchanges are those that involve mutual care, respect, and empathy, people who are less likely to demonstrate these processes are less sexually satisfied and have partners who are less sexually satisfied.

These same three facets were also negatively associated with the trajectory of marital satisfaction. Own sexual exploitation was marginally associated with lower levels of initial marital satisfaction that persisted over time; own and partner low sexual empathy were associated with lower levels of initial marital satisfaction that persisted over time; and own and partner sexual entitlement were associated with steeper declines in marital satisfaction over time. Further, consistent with the idea that sexual narcissism may indirectly influence relationship satisfaction through its effects on sexual satisfaction, sexual satisfaction mediated every association that emerged between the facets of sexual narcissism and marital satisfaction. That is, at least part of the reason these facets of sexual narcissism were negatively associated with the trajectory of marital satisfaction is that they were negatively associated with the trajectory of sexual satisfaction.

The effects of sexual narcissism were not universally negative, however. Consistent with data showing that confidence can breed positive interpersonal experiences (Baker & McNulty, 2010; McNulty & Karney, 2002), own and partner sense of sexual skill were associated with *higher* levels of initial sexual satisfaction that persisted over time. Further, own and partner sense of sexual skill were also associated with higher levels of initial marital satisfaction, and those associations were also mediated by initial sexual satisfaction. Of course, having confidence in one's abilities is not unique to narcissism. Having high confidence that is accompanied by high sexual empathy and low levels of sexual exploitation and sexual entitlement may produce the highest levels of sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Notably, consistent with the idea that assessing the extent to which the components of narcissism are activated in the sexual domain may provide a more precise measure of the extent to which such components predict sexual behaviors, global assessments of own and partner narcissism were unassociated with the trajectory of sexual satisfaction once own and partner sexual narcissism were controlled. Interestingly, global assessments of own and partner narcissism were also unassociated with the trajectory of marital satisfaction once own and partner sexual satisfaction were controlled for, suggesting non-sexual manifestations of narcissism may be unassociated with relationship satisfaction.

Theoretical Implications

These findings have important implications for research on sexual behaviors and outcomes. First, they extend research on personality traits associated with sexual satisfaction. Although numerous studies have examined associations between the Big Five and sexual behaviors and outcomes (for review, see McNulty, in press), the current research is the first empirical work of which we are aware that provides insights into the link between any form of narcissism and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, consistent with the idea that the components of own and partner narcissism should be associated with increased rewards and increased sexual costs when they are activated in the sexual domain, and consistent with Lawrence and Byers' (1995) interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction, each facet of sexual narcissism was associated with the trajectory of sexual satisfaction. These associations highlight the importance of several psychological processes to sexual behaviors and outcomes—entitlement, exploitation, empathy, and confidence in one's skills.

However, these findings also highlight the importance of examining the implications of the various facets of personality constructs. Although each facet of sexual narcissism was associated with the trajectory of sexual and marital satisfaction, they were sometimes associated with different components of the trajectory of satisfaction, intercepts versus slopes, and sometimes associated with the trajectory in different directions, negatively versus positively. The weak associations between the total scores on the SNS and the trajectory of both sexual and marital satisfaction masked these important associations, indicating that future research may provide the most complete picture of the association between personality traits and sexual processes to the extent that it examines the specific facets of those traits. Indeed, each of the Big Five is comprised of six facets and we are aware of no research that has examined the implications of these specific facets for sexual behaviors and outcomes.

Finally, the current findings highlight the importance of assessing the extent to which the cognitive components of personality are activated in the sexual domain. Whereas globally assessed narcissism was unrelated to either component of the trajectory of sexual satisfaction, sexual narcissism was associated with both components of the trajectory. Future research may benefit by using domain-specific measures of other personality traits. For example, although each of the Big Five has been associated with sexual processes, most of these associations, with the exception of those involving neuroticism, have been inconsistent. For example, whereas Donnellan, Conger, and Bryant (2004) reported that husbands and wives' agreeableness was positively associated with both partners' sexual satisfaction, Heaven, Fitzpatrick, Craig, Kelly, and Sebar (2000) found no significant associations between agreeableness and several sexual attitudes, including sexual satisfaction.

Study Strengths and Limitations

Several aspects of this research enhance our confidence in the findings reported here. First, the effects were obtained in samples of newlywed couples, allowing us to examine the unique implications of own and partner sexual narcissism. Second, the effects emerged using up to eight reports of sexual and marital satisfaction over the first several years of marriage, which provided more valid estimates of change in those variables than traditional pre-post designs (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1987). Third, none of the effects varied across husbands and wives, providing confidence that they were not due to differences in sexuality known to exist across men and women (Baumeister, 2000).

Despite these strengths, several factors nevertheless limit interpretation and generalizability of these results until they can be extended. First, although the effects emerged using couples

from two different regions of the U.S., the majority of couples in both samples were young and White, and all couples were newlyweds. Although we are not aware of any reason to expect the association between sexual narcissism and sexual satisfaction to vary across people of different ages, races, and types of relationships, future research may benefit by ensuring that these effects generalize to other populations. Second, like all research on personality, these findings are correlational. And, although both studies were longitudinal, some of the data used to form indices of sexual and relationship satisfaction were obtained before reports of sexual narcissism were obtained. Although personality tends to be quite stable, there is some evidence that it can change over extended periods of time (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006). Future research may benefit by attempting to more rigorously demonstrate the causal effects of sexual narcissism and its facets. For example, research could prime people with the cognitions associated with high versus low levels of sexual narcissism and examine the implications of such primes for sexual motivations and/or behaviors (see Fazio, 2001). Finally, the SNS assesses the extent to which the components of the social-personality conceptualization of narcissism are activated in the sexual domain, leaving the sexual implications of more covert forms of narcissism unknown (see Rose, 2002; Wright, Lukowitsky, Pincus, & Conroy, 2010). Future research may benefit from addressing the implications of the extent to which more-covert forms of narcissism are activated in the sexual domain.

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Table 1

Sexual Narcissism Scale for Marriage

Item	Subscale
If I ruled the world for one day, I would have sex with anyone I choose	Sexual Exploitation
One way to get my spouse in bed with me is to tell him/her what he/she wants to hear	Sexual Exploitation
When I want to have sex, I will do whatever it takes	Sexual Exploitation
I could easily convince my spouse to have sex with me if he or she was unwilling	Sexual Exploitation
I would be willing to trick my spouse to get him/her to have sex with me	Sexual Exploitation
I feel I deserve sexual activity when I am in the mood for it	Sexual Entitlement
I am entitled to sex on a regular basis	Sexual Entitlement
I should be permitted to have sex whenever I want it	Sexual Entitlement
I would be irritated if my spouse said no to sex	Sexual Entitlement
I expect sexual activity if my spouse and I go out on an expensive date	Sexual Entitlement
When I sleep with my spouse, I rarely know what he/she is thinking or feeling	Low Sexual Empathy
It is important for me to know what my spouse is feeling when we make love ^a	Low Sexual Empathy
I enjoy sex more when I feel I really know my spouse ^a	Low Sexual Empathy
The feelings of my spouse during sex don't usually concern me	Low Sexual Empathy
I do not usually care how my sexual partner feels after sex	Low Sexual Empathy
I am an exceptional sexual partner	Sexual Skill
My spouse thinks I am fantastic in bed	Sexual Skill
I really know how to please my spouse sexually	Sexual Skill
I have been very successful in all my sexual relationships	Sexual Skill
Others have told me I am very sexually skilled	Sexual Skill

Note. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

^aReverse scored item

Table 2

Correlations among Independent Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
(1) Sexual Narcissism Scale	.57 **	.74**	.74**	.50**	.44**	.29**	2.37 _b	0.39
(2) Sexual Exploitation	.83**	.41 **	.41	.29**	.14	.25**	1.95 _b	0.62
(3) Sexual Entitlement	.82**	.61**	.39 **	.26**	.03	.17 [†]	2.57 _a	0.75
(4) Low Sexual Empathy	.50**	.47**	.23*	.34 **	-.15	.05	1.66 _b	0.50
(5) Sense of Sexual Skill	.42*	.07	.17 [†]	-.21*	.43 **	.22*	3.30 _b	0.67
(6) Narcissism	.37*	.25**	.35**	.18 [†]	.16 [†]	.17 [†]	17.20 _b	6.37
<i>M</i>	2.52 _a	2.15 _a	2.65 _a	1.82 _a	3.47 _a	19.18 _a		
<i>SD</i>	0.47	0.74	0.84	0.55	0.73	7.06		

Note. Husbands' correlations appear below the diagonal, wives' correlations appear above the diagonal, and correlations between husbands and wives appear on the diagonal in bold. Gender differences at *p* < .05 are denoted with different subscripts (a, b).

[†] *p* < .10.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01

Table 3

Trajectories of Sexual and Marital Satisfaction

	Intercepts: Initial Satisfaction		Slopes: Change in Satisfaction	
	π_0	SE	π_1	SE
Sexual Satisfaction	145.04	1.75	-1.43***	0.26
Marital Satisfaction	95.24	0.74	-0.83***	0.15

Table 4
Associations between Sexual Narcissism and the Trajectory of Sexual Satisfaction

	Intercepts: Initial Satisfaction		Slopes: Change in Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>r</i>
Narcissism					
Own	-0.19	0.20	.06	0.03	.14
Partner	0.10	0.20	.03	-0.00	.06
Sexual Narcissism (Total Scale)					
Own	3.87	3.75	.07	-1.72**	.14
Partner	-0.59	3.52	.01	-0.07	.06

Note. *df* = 235

**
p < .01

Table 5
Associations between Sexual Narcissism Subscales and the Trajectory of Sexual Satisfaction

	Intercepts: Initial Satisfaction			Slopes: Change in Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Effect Size r</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Effect Size r</i>
Sexual Exploitation						
Own	-3.35 [†]	2.00	.11	-0.36	0.29	.08
Partner	-1.48	2.00	.05	-0.02	0.32	.00
Sexual Entitlement						
Own	1.94	1.87	.07	-0.73 [*]	0.30	.15
Partner	-0.85	1.79	.03	-0.64 [*]	0.28	.15
Low Sexual Empathy						
Own	-10.95 ^{***}	2.23	.31	-0.87 [*]	0.41	.14
Partner	-7.34 ^{**}	2.16	.22	-0.47	0.36	.08
Sense of Sexual Skill						
Own	11.75 ^{***}	1.65	.42	-0.57	0.37	.10
Partner	5.41 ^{**}	1.74	.20	0.08	0.33	.02

Note. *df* = 235

[†] $p < .10$

^{*} $p < .05$,

^{**} $p < .01$,

^{***} $p < .001$

Table 6
Associations between Sexual Narcissism and the Trajectory of Marital Satisfaction

	Intercepts: Initial Satisfaction		Slopes: Change in Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>r</i>
Narcissism					
Own	0.10	0.09	0.02	0.02	.07
Partner	-0.06	0.08	-0.00	0.16	.01
Sexual Narcissism (Total Scale)					
Own	-2.88	1.82	-0.57*	0.28	.13
Partner	-0.22	1.61	-0.45 [†]	0.26	.11

Note. *df* = 235

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$

Table 7
Associations between Sexual Narcissism Subscales and the Trajectory of Marital Satisfaction

		Intercepts: Initial Satisfaction		Slopes: Change in Satisfaction	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Sexual Exploitation					
Own	-1.83 [†]	1.00	.12	-0.21	0.15
Partner	-1.43	0.98	.10	-0.06	0.16
Sexual Entitlement					
Own	-1.15	0.84	.09	-0.36*	0.15
Partner	-0.76	0.76	.07	-0.37**	0.14
Low Sexual Empathy					
Own	-5.20**	1.52	.22	-0.37	0.25
Partner	-2.76*	1.28	.14	-0.18	0.17
Sense of Sexual Skill					
Own	2.16**	0.65	.21	-0.01	0.19
Partner	2.77**	0.76	.23	-0.12	0.16

Note. *df* = 235

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$

Table 8
Sexual Satisfaction Mediating Effects of Sexual Narcissism Facets on the Trajectory of Marital Satisfaction

	Step 1: Sexual narcissism predicting trajectory of sexual satisfaction (reproduced from Table 5)	Step 2: Sexual satisfaction predicting marital satisfaction, controlling facet of sexual narcissism	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval
Sexual Exploitation				
Own	-3.35 [†] (intercept)	0.25 ^{***}	-0.84	[-1.68; -0.01] ^{90%}
Sexual Entitlement				
Own	-0.73 [*] (slope)	0.25 ^{***}	-0.18	[-0.33; -0.04] ^{95%}
Partner	-0.64 [*] (slope)	0.25 ^{***}	-0.16	[-0.30; -0.02] ^{95%}
Low Sexual Empathy				
Own	-10.95 ^{***} (intercept)	0.25 ^{***}	-2.74	[-3.96; -1.60] ^{95%}
Partner	-7.34 ^{**} (intercept)	0.25 ^{***}	-1.84	[-2.97; -0.76] ^{95%}
Sense of Sexual Skill				
Own	11.75 ^{***} (intercept)	0.25 ^{***}	2.94	[2.05; 3.91] ^{95%}
Partner	5.41 ^{**} (intercept)	0.25 ^{***}	1.35	[0.49; 2.26] ^{95%}

Note. *df* = 235

[†] $p < .10$

^{*} $p < .05$,

^{**} $p < .01$,

^{***} $p < .001$