

## Toward Circumplex Model of Narcissism

What have in common Saruman, Boromir, Gollum and his alter ego Smeagol? These characters come from a popular novel entitled “The Lord of the Rings” by J.R.R. Tolkien—we believe that all of them combine one of the most famous syndrome ever described in psychology—narcissism. At the first glance, we encounter less or more unpleasant heroes—beginning from Saruman, who pursuit to gain a rule over the World, through ready for sacrifice Boromir, finishing with Gollum/Smeagol—a character suffering for some kind of the personality-split: on the one hand with the Gollum’s face, full of misogyny and focus on “his precious”, while on the other with the Smeagol’s face, overly servantlike and suspiciously ready for convincing others about his friendliness.

Narcissism seems to be overspread in the Western (and not only) culture, and the studies on this phenomenon became so popular, that one could doubt whether the further studies in this field are necessary. However, along with increasing body of research, it becomes apparent that this complex picture requires serious arrangement, both theoretically and empirically. Our research project is based on proposal adopting distinction between agency, i.e., focus on efficacy of own actions, and communion, i.e., focus on good functioning in the social relationships—which both are matching the description not only of grandiose, but vulnerable narcissism as well.

Grandiose narcissism is regard as a trait which is not fully maladaptive and is useful to some extent; however, vulnerable narcissism is associated to individual’s suffering and inadequate feelings. The common part of these two forms of narcissism is a focus on self—in case of grandiose narcissism it is based on experiencing own exceptionality, while in case of vulnerable narcissism it is related to the defense of fragile self. Both forms of narcissism could fulfill their needs by agentic or communal means. In terms of grandiosity agentic-grandiose narcissist is convinced about being exceptionally gifted and intelligent, albeit communal-grandiose narcissist builds his overly positive self-image on being exceptionally helpful and socialized. By contrast in terms of vulnerability, agentic-vulnerable narcissist does not want to be perceived by others as ungifted, while communal-vulnerable narcissist does not want to be perceived by others as unsocial person.

In the proposed research project, we undertake an attempt to explain social functioning of narcissists by postulating strategies specific for each one of four narcissism forms. Planned research is based not only on self-report data, but also on observed and objective data, such as analysis of functioning in social networks or romantic relationships. It is crucial for studying narcissists, due to particular bias associated to their overly positive self-presentation motivated by maintaining their conviction about own greatness (grandiose narcissist), or defense against being unmasked and harmed (vulnerable narcissist). The whole research will be supplemented by cross-cultural study aimed at verifying existence of four narcissism forms in various cultural contexts, as well as at searching for cultural determinants of vulnerable narcissism—analogical to the cultural map of grandiose narcissism (agentic and communal) created on the basis of recently finalized „The Self-enhancement Cross-Cultural Project” in 53 countries under the leadership of the head of currently planned project.