

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE MESSAGE CHARACTERISTICS  
ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH AND LOW  
NARCISSISTIC PERSUADERS**

By

DONNA LEE WALD

Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma


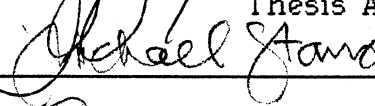
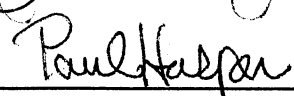
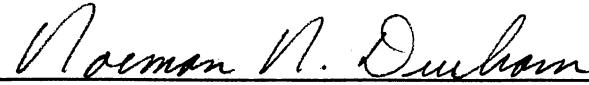
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Thesis Approved:

  
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Thesis Adviser  
  
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Dean of the Graduate College

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall . . . who's the fairest of them all?" While this familiar question was originally posed in a novel intended for children, the pattern of thought referenced in this passage seems prevalent in our society today. Upon examination of today's society, one begins to notice a striking similarity between the witch's mirror-gazing obsession and current societal trends. Many theorists label this self-absorbed preoccupation, "Narcissism" (Gottschalk, 1988; Lasch, 1979; Restak, 1982; Scodari, 1987).

The term "narcissism" can be traced back to a mythological character, Narcissus, who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water. The concept has continued to interest scholars since the early 1900's when Freud originally addressed the issue of self-love. Freud defined the disorder as "the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (Freud, 1914/1948, p. 31). The following behavioral traits characterize the narcissistic personality:

[A] a set of attitudes a person has toward oneself, including self-love, self-admiration, and self-aggrandizement; [B] several kinds of fears or vulnerabilities related to a person's self-esteem that include fear of loss of love and the fear of failure; [C] a general defensive orientation that includes megalomania, idealization, denial, projection, and splitting; [D] motivation in terms of the need to be loved, as well as strivings for self-sufficiency and for

perfection; and [E] a constellation of attitudes that may characterize a person's relationships with others. (Raskin & Terry, 1988, in press)

From the time of Freud's works until the 1970's, the study of narcissism was almost forgotten. When narcissism once again became popular, the phenomenon seemed to take the country by storm. Popular journals such as Newsweek, Time, Psychology Today, and Cosmopolitan warned readers of the pitfalls of being narcissistic. As one writer put it, "the cult of the 'I' has taken hold with the strength and impetus of a new religion" (Halsey, 1978, p. 25). Both sociologists and psychologists once again turned their attention to the long forgotten and controversial issue. While old and new scholarly groups agreed on the dysfunctional aspects of narcissism, both added that functional or positive aspects of the concept do exist.

Psychologists included in their description of maladaptive or unhealthy narcissism the corollary that narcissism, to a certain degree, is considered healthy (Bursten, 1982; Kernberg, 1975). Lasch (1979) wrote, "narcissism appears realistically to represent the best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and the prevailing social conditions therefore tend to bring out narcissistic traits that are present, in varying degrees, in everyone" (p. 50).

The concept of narcissism is evident in all facets of society; yet, it is most commonly associated with the "macro" level of society. Contemporary cultural narcissism has been characterized by "mechanization, dehumanization, the devaluation of emotion, and the intense need for acceptance and approval" (Scodari, 1987, p. 114).

Narcissism has been blamed for the deterioration of the family unit and for apathetic attitudes toward government (Lasch, 1977). Lasch and others blame narcissism for the deterioration of human values and morals in today's society (Kiley, 1984; Lasch, 1979; Lowen, 1985; Restak, 1982). As commentary increases, society has internalized the concept of narcissism to such a degree that we think of ourselves almost exclusively. Lasch (1979) writes, "to live for the moment is the prevailing passion--to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity" (p. 130). The effects of the phenomenon are widespread and can be observed in almost every aspect of our everyday lives.

Many human behavior specialists contend that narcissism is a cultural phenomenon "growing out of two seemingly competing features of the 1960's and 1970's, rising personal affluence and deepening individual powerlessness" (Simon, 1976, p. 63). The origins of narcissism can be traced to the earliest stages of development (Gottschalk, 1988). As the individual develops, narcissistic tendencies manifest themselves as personality traits (Raskin & Hall, 1979). These narcissistic characteristics become realized in portrayals of self-image and use of language in human interaction (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1976; Vangelesti, Knapp, & Daly, 1989). Due to the reciprocal nature of communication, specifically persuasive communication, one's degree of personal absorption will inevitably affect the outcome of communication episodes (Catt, 1986).

In a society that focuses such a great deal on the characteristics of the individual and the interactive effect of these characteristics on society as a whole, today's researcher must be

prepared to consider new and innovative approaches to old issues. Personality traits commonly found in the lores of psychology are oftentimes used to explain human communication. Some of the same personality traits common to the narcissistic individual may help explain persuasive communication.

Persuasion is one aspect of human behavior that has received a great deal of research attention to date. It is believed that psychological characteristics inherent in an individual influence not only the individual's personality, but his/her communication behavior as well. Thus, the personality trait of narcissism may have an affect on the quality of an individual's messages. While an extensive amount of research that has examined the impact of personality traits on persuasion, limited research addresses narcissistic personality characteristics in persuasive messages.

A crucial deficit exists in research examining narcissism. Attempts have been made to label the physical, or observable, personality traits associated with the narcissist using sophisticated testing measures such as Raskin and Hall's Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Comparisons of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) offered more personality trait associations with the narcissistic personality (Raskin & Novacek, 1989). Little work exists, however, which examines the manifestation of these traits in tangible, verbal or written, messages. Vangelesti, Knapp, and Daly (1989) briefly examined conversational qualities of the narcissist, but they did not focus on language variables. Raskin (1988) studied the narcissistic use of personal pronouns in

conversation, but he did not focus on the other forms of language typically used by a narcissist. A small amount of literature seems to indicate that a relationship exists between persuasion and one's narcissistic tendencies (Wald, 1989). Further, these studies imply that messages constructed by a low narcissist should be preferred over those of the high narcissist because of several message variables: level of empathy, level of personal need for achievement as displayed in an argument, and level of self-esteem. The effect of narcissism in persuasive communication is an issue that has not been addressed sufficiently.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RATIONALE**

#### **Personality Traits and Persuasion**

Current literature suggests that an individual's personality characteristics reveal themselves in the messages one uses to communicate (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987; Cohen, 1959; Cronkhite & Liska, 1980; Janis & Hovland, 1959). "Personality theories" provide an explanation of effective and ineffective persuasion based on personality traits. By examining particular personality characteristics, researchers have attempted to better understand the process of persuasion.

In studies of persuasion, many personality variables have been investigated. This section will examine the relationship between personality traits and persuasion while linking relevant personality traits to narcissism. The specific personality traits to be examined are empathy, need for achievement, self-esteem, and machiavellianism. This review of research will highlight critical issues and examine limitations in existing studies; thus, the need for further examination of the relationship between narcissism and persuasive communication is justified.

## Empathy

Empathy is one personality characteristic that researchers have linked to persuasion. However, problems exist with empathy studies. These problems center around the lack of a standardized definition of empathy. Earlier studies by Janis, Hovland, and Kelley (1953) defined empathic behavior as the ability to respond with "vivid imagery and intense emotions" (p. 56). While other studies define empathy as an individual's emotional arousal elicited by the expression of emotion in another (Aronfreed, 1968; Berger, 1962; Stotland, 1969). A recent study by Shelton and Rogers (1982) added that empathy implies an "active process, an effort to perceive the situation as it is perceived by the other" (p. 376). An empathic persuader is imaginative to the point of anticipating another's feelings and perceiving a situation as it is perceived by another. The empathic persuader accomplishes this task through the use of intense emotions including sensitivity, compassion, and understanding.

With these qualities of the empathic persuader in mind, it is logical to assume that empathic persuaders are both preferred and are successful. Janis, Hovland, and Kelley (1953) found that empathic receivers "tended to be relatively more persuasible than others" (p. 56). Their findings suggest that empathy in a source might enhance persuasion (Janis, Hovland, & Kelley, 1953). Studies support the notion that empathic individuals are preferred over unempathic individuals in persuasive situations (Delia & Clark, 1977; Delia, Kline, & Furlson, 1979; Hale & Delia, 1976; Howie-Day, 1977;

McQuillen, 1986; O'Keefe & Delia, 1980; O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981).

Further, Cronkhite and Liska (1980) suggest that receivers look for empathy from a persuader.

Studies correlating narcissistic traits with empathy have found that high narcissistic subjects scored lower on scales measuring empathy (Biscardi & Schill, 1985; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). These findings support the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III criteria describing the narcissistic lack of empathy (DSM, 1987). Because of their "calculating seductiveness," narcissists are frequently viewed as being exploitative and unempathic (Lasch, 1979, p. 113). Thus, in a persuasive situation, the narcissistic individual is not expected to be creative or imaginative; rather, we might expect the high narcissist to appear manipulative and exploitative. To an audience, the narcissist may appear insensitive and non-adaptive.

### **Need for Achievement**

We belong to a society that encourages achievement. Of course, there are varying degrees of desire for personal achievement. Some individuals are happy working as a clerk at the local market, while others will settle for nothing less than a position in a Fortune 500 corporation. McClelland and his associates have done a great deal of research focusing on the personal need for achievement, or "n-achievement," as it is referred to throughout his published works (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953; McClelland, 1961).



While the relationship between n-achievement and persuasion has not been extensively examined, a small body of literature linking the two does exist. This literature is mostly focused in the area of "message topic." Message topics that "promise" us a way to advance our social standing are more likely to be persuasive than messages that promise the reader nothing, yet encourage the reader to "give up something." Most researchers agree that a high n-achiever will be more persuaded if the content of the message is aimed at increasing personal wealth, popularity, or wisdom. It could be posited then, that in a persuasive situation, the high n-achievement persuader would behave in the same manner as the high n-achievement receiver. The high n-achiever could be expected to stress the tangible, explicit benefits in accordance with compliance (e.g., monetary reward, career advancement), while the low n-achiever may stress the affective, implicit benefits of compliance (e.g., emotional rewards).

The narcissistic personality is characterized as seeking power and achievement. A 1987 study examining the need for power among students in Business Administration found a significantly positive relationship between the need for power and narcissism (Carroll, 1987). We might expect the high narcissist to behave much like the high n-achiever in a persuasive situation by clearly stating the benefits to be gained when complying with the message. It is likely the high narcissist would suggest goal- and success-oriented benefits for the receiver to increase compliance. When comparing these "extrinsic" benefits to other types of benefits, the high n-achiever/high narcissist would stress personal gain, where the

low n-achiever/low narcissist would stress intrinsic benefits relating to the "nature of the situation."

### **Self-Esteem**

The relationship between self-esteem and persuasion has been studied extensively (Cohen, 1959; Katz, 1960; Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969). Self-esteem as defined by Cohen (1959), is the "degree of correspondence between an individual's ideal and actual concepts of himself" (p. 103). A large portion of persuasion research centers on the self-esteem of the receiver and it examines the relationship between susceptibility to the persuasive argument and the degree of the receiver's self-esteem. In recent years however, an attempt has been made to examine self-esteem and persuasion from the point of view of the sender.

Despite the scarcity of research in this area, research suggests that an increase in self-esteem will usually result in increased attempts at persuasion (Cohen, 1959). These findings suggest that individuals with high self-esteem devote more attention to the persuasive act. These findings further suggest that the high self-esteem individual offers the receiver more reasons to comply. Based on these findings, it can be proposed that the high self-esteem individual will construct persuasive arguments offering benefits to be awarded if one complies.

If these assumptions are accurate, the reverse can be expected from the low self-esteem individual. The individual with low self-esteem would devote less time to attempts at persuading others.

The low self-esteem persuader will offer fewer reasons to comply and will offer fewer benefits enticing one to comply.

Narcissism has in the past been used to describe and explain psychological processes such as poor self-esteem and self-image (Freud, 1914/1957; Stolorow, 1975; Val, 1982). Narcissists are characterized as having a grandiose self-image that serves as a "front" for low self-esteem. Narcissistic research supports the point of view that an individual scoring high on the NPI would be expected to score low on measures of self-esteem (Bursten, 1982; Catt, 1986; Kohut, 1976, Kernberg, 1975; Svrakic, 1985). Because of their low self-esteem, narcissists artificially inflate their egos. Lowen (1985) notes: "By identifying with a grandiose image, one can ignore the painfulness of one's inner reality" (p. 74).

Given that the relationship between the high narcissist and the low self-esteem individual exists, it is proposed that in a persuasive situation a high narcissist will behave as an individual with low self-esteem. The high narcissist will devote less attention to the persuasive situation when compared to a low narcissist. As is the case of an individual with low self-esteem, we might expect the high narcissist's argument to be less lengthy when compared to a low narcissist's message. Further, we might also expect the high narcissist to offer fewer reasons to comply and fewer benefits for complying--just as an individual with low self-esteem.

### **Machiavellianism**

The machiavellian (mach) personality describes a personality much like the Florentine statesman of the 1400's. Niccolo

Machiavelli's political principles of craftiness and deceit have been examined primarily in the area of nonverbal communication. Due to the manipulative nature of the mach personality, this personality type is often studied in association with persuasive communication (Christie & Geis, 1970). Christie and Geis (1970), developers of the Machiavellianism V Scale, found those scoring high on the scale to be manipulative and pragmatic. In a related study, Hunter, Gerbing, and Boster (1982) identified negativism as a subcomponent of machiavellianism. The results of Hunter and his colleagues indicated that those subjects that were highly negative tended to be more verbally aggressive, which suggests that the high mach would show more aggression in a persuasive argument.

Related studies examining the use of lies in persuasive situations found the high mach persuaders to be highly skilled at the art of deceit in persuasion (Exline, Thibaut, Hickey, & Gumpert, 1970). Where the high mach is manipulative and deceitful, the low mach believes that people can always be trusted and that lying is inexcusable (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987).

Certain similarities exist between the machiavellian personality and the narcissistic personality. Using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory to describe the narcissistic personality, Raskin and Novacek (1989) characterized the narcissist as being manipulative and deceitful. The narcissistic manipulator tries to find the weak spot in his victim by using charm and buoyancy (Restak, 1982).

Biscardi and Schill (1985) found a significant positive correlation between narcissism and machiavellianism when

assessing interpersonal exploitativeness. Similarly, research by Raskin and Hall (1981) suggested the saliency of the characteristic of exploitativeness and social manipulation to the narcissistic personality. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III (1987) includes the concept of interpersonal exploitativeness in its criteria for the diagnosis of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Based on this interpretation, it can be argued that traits associated with narcissistic exploitativeness can be perceived by an audience during persuasive attempts. Once the traits are realized in the message, the audience then views the speaker as being insincere and dishonest. In addition, the high narcissist might be perceived as deceptive, crafty, and manipulative based on traits contained in the message. We might expect an audience to see the high narcissist as aggressive because of his/her use of intense language. In sum, we expect the high narcissist to be perceived as manipulative and to use guilt to encourage compliance.

### **Theoretic Link to Message Variables**

According to the personality theories that have been examined thus far, a relationship appears to exist between certain personality traits and the personality trait of narcissism. These personality theories have shown that psychological traits will influence communication behavior. It is logical to assume that messages produced by individuals with differing levels of narcissism will demonstrate differences in message quality that will affect message preference. In a pilot study examining narcissism and persuasion, Wald's findings suggest that the highly narcissistic individual is not

as persuasive as the low narcissist individual (Wald, 1989). In addition, Wald (1989) found that subjects exhibited a significant preference for persuasive messages generated by low narcissistic individuals in comparison to those persuasive messages generated by high narcissists (Wald, 1989). These results appear consistent with current literature that suggests the narcissist is exploitative and manipulative (Bursten, 1982; Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1976; Freud, 1914/1948; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Emmons, 1987; Goldstein, 1985).

As an addition to trait theory, Wald (1989) reviewed previous research that examined the relationship between sex stereotypes and degree of narcissism (Akhtar & Thompson, 1982; Watson, Taylor, & Morris, 1987). Results suggest a subject's gender will affect his/her level of narcissism. Research suggests that the characteristics of low narcissists, such as empathy and sensitivity, are more stereotypical feminine qualities (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Consistent with these findings, Raskin and Novacek (1988) suggest that women that score high on select masculine narcissistic dimensions (e.g., self-sufficiency, entitlement), often reject the traditional female roles in favor of more masculine interests. Further research examining sex stereotypes and narcissism suggest that males are more prone to pathological narcissism. Scholars argue that this propensity is based on the stereotypical masculine traits of selfishness, exploitiveness, and self-aggrandizement (Akhtar & Thompson, 1982; Haaken, 1983; Lasch, 1984). Previous research indicates that an association exists between the degree of narcissistic traits and sex stereotypes. It is therefore logical to

assume that a relationship between the two variables may exist in the current study.

Based on the results of the pilot study, Wald (1989) argued that the differential persuadability is attributed to the type of language used to construct a message and the content of the message. In a persuasive situation, these qualities are realized in the form of language variables. Wald interprets these results as being the function of self-absorption, lack of empathy, and grandiose sense of self, the different structural elements of narcissism.

### **Persuasive Message Variables**

The assumption underlying personality theories of persuasion is that individual personality traits influence the persuasive situation. These traits are manifest in the language used in a persuasive situation. They can be examined by focusing on specific structural units of language known as message variables. The use of message variables such as types of appeals and strategy of argumentation depend to a large degree on the personality traits of the persuader. No message variable is exclusive to any one personality trait; however, some personality traits determine the degree or likelihood that a message variable will be utilized. This section will focus on degrees of narcissism as they are manifest in types of appeals and strategy of argumentation in persuasive messages.

#### **Types of Appeals**

Aristotle's Rhetoric discusses three components of persuasive

messages: ethos, pathos, and logos (Aristotle, 1903). Ethos refers to the credibility of the speaker, pathos refers to the use of emotional appeals, and logos refers to the use of logical appeals in a persuasive message. Neither source credibility nor logical appeals will be addressed in this study. Rather, the emphasis is on the relationship of emotional appeals (pathos) and personality types. Studies of emotional appeals are divided into two areas: positive appeals and negative appeals.

Emotional or affective appeals, which are designed to rely on the senses rather than on one's logic, can be considered either positive or negative. The bulk of recent research examining self-esteem and appeals focuses on the use of positive appeals. Studies examining the effects of positive appeals in advertising have found that commercials focusing on love, pride, affection, and comfort result in positive attitudes toward the product. In many cases, these "warmth" commercials increase the intent to purchase (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987, p. 157). Further studies examining "warmth" commercials suggest that these advertisements are effective because receivers identify with the scenes portrayed; they "like to relive a situation or they would like the event to happen to them" (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987, p. 157). "Warmth," or emotional appeal, is not limited to advertising. The use of language laden with emotion often triggers emotional associations that over-rule rational evaluations.

Studies addressing the use of emotional appeals have found a positive relation between personality type and reliance on emotional appeals (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987; Christie & Geis, 1970). Studies



examining machiavellianism, self-esteem, empathy, and need achievement yield consistent results when focusing on the use of emotional appeals in persuasive communication. Based on the established association between machiavellianism, self-esteem, and the narcissistic personality, it is argued that in persuasive situations the high narcissist's behavior would be similar to the high mach persuader and the persuader with low self-esteem. A similar relationship holds when examining the empathic personality as well as the need achiever. These relationships will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Research suggests that in persuasive situations, the high mach will typically rely on manipulative behavior (Christie & Geis, 1970), be "persuaded less, but persuade more," and actively resort to the use of negative emotion-based tactics such as ingratiation, deceit, and certain forms of assertiveness (Christie & Geis, 1970; Pandey & Rastogi, 1979; Roloff & Barnicott, 1978; Ruffner & Burgoon, 1981, p. 130). In contrast, the low mach is easily manipulated, "highly susceptible to emotional arguments," guided by emotions, and tends to employ positive emotional appeals in his/her messages (Ruffner & Burgoon, 1981, p. 130).

Similarly, studies examining self-esteem and types of appeals have found that the individual with low self-esteem is more easily persuaded (DiVesta & Merwin, 1960; Janis, 1954). The individual with high self-esteem is more likely to be persuaded when the type of appeal helps maintain that high self-esteem (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987). This individual is not commonly motivated by negative fear

appeals, but is more susceptible to appeals calling for immediate response (Leventhal, 1970).

While the high narcissist appears to have high self-esteem, this seemingly confident air truly masks the individual's low self-esteem (DSM III, 1987). Consistent with this argument, the high narcissist will use appeals similar to those used by an individual with low self-esteem. The high narcissist will use appeals that imply some type of threat (e.g., negative emotion-based tactics) and call for immediate action. The low narcissist will use positive or "warm" emotional appeals. The high narcissist with low self-esteem will likely employ negative appeals since this individual lacks sensitivity. In contrast, the low narcissist tends to have high self-esteem and is sensitive. The low narcissist would likely employ sincere emotional appeals.

Further studies examining the use of emotional appeals focus on self-esteem and the need achiever. First, the high need achiever is commonly persuaded by appeals that challenge the individual to action. Appeals that offer the possibility of personal gain are found to be successful with the high need achiever (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987). Similar to the self-esteem studies, the high need achiever is likely to be persuaded when feeling threatened by loss of position.

Numerous studies have addressed the importance of empathy and the use of emotional appeals to persuasion. As Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) concluded from their study of persuasibility and empathy, persons with the ability to anticipate rewards and punishments were more persuasible than were those who had difficulty doing so. Due to their ability to imagine the outcomes of

persuasive encounters, these individuals were labeled as emotionally empathic. Empathic individuals are persuaded by intense emotional appeals and vivid use of language (Janis & Field, 1958; Shelton & Rogers, 1981). Imagining oneself in the place of another has been found to arouse empathic responses (Shelton & Rogers, 1981; Stotland, 1969). When examining the types of appeals used by the empathic personality, we might then expect intense emotional appeals that stress perspective-taking and role-taking.

At this point, an important distinction must be made. While studies have shown it is not uncommon for the empathic personality to employ fear appeals in order to persuade (Shelton & Rogers, 1981), the empathic personality does not use fear in a coercive manner. The empathic personality uses fear in a motivational sense to protect oneself or others (Rogers & Mewborn, 1976). The empathic personality is not manipulative in a persuasive situation; rather, this personality is sincere.

While research examining the advantages of using emotional appeals is in abundance, there seems to be an angle that has not been explored with as much vitality. Just as the bulk of research on persuasion adopts a receiver-oriented focus, so do the majority of studies examining the use of positive and negative appeals. Few studies examine the use of positive and negative appeals based on the personality type of the source/speaker. Although a scant amount of research is available, some general assumptions can be made regarding the use of appeals in reference to the narcissistic personality. As is known from past research, the high narcissist is manipulative and lacks sincerity (Levin, 1987; Raskin & Novacek,

1988). Based on these findings, a high narcissist would not be expected to use positive emotional appeals in a persuasive situation. The high narcissist would be expected to use negative appeals when given the task to persuade. In contrast, the low narcissist would be expected to use appeals characterized by "warmth" and goodness, rather than appeals characterized by fear.

### **Strategies of Argumentation**

In the examination of persuasive message variables, initial emphasis was placed on the type of appeal that may be preferred for use by the high or low narcissist. Personality traits play a major role in the type of appeal the speaker chooses. The type of appeal chosen then directs the strategy the persuader uses. Uses of a negative appeal constrain the category of strategies a speaker can use to achieve his/her desired intent.

Studies have devoted much effort to discover how people vary in their use of strategies in various persuasive situations. In any persuasive situation, different strategies can be used to accomplish the same persuasive goal. Multiple factors are believed to affect the choice of strategy. Studies by Cody and McLaughlin (1980) and Dillard and Burgoon (1985) have determined several conditions thought to influence strategy choice. A common assumption across research on persuasion suggests that one's choice of strategy is based upon the personality characteristics of the persuader. Consistent with this assumption, it is believed that high narcissists will use negative emotional appeals. It would follow then, that the strategy used in the argument should grow from this negative

appeal. The following section focuses on those persuasive strategies that are likely to be used by a high narcissist. This review will attempt to clarify the implicit relationship between specific persuasive strategies and the narcissistic individual.

Scholars have devised a taxonomy of persuasive strategies. The strategies are referred to as compliance-gaining strategies. Marwell and Schmitt (1967) identified 16 general persuasive message strategies:

(1) promise, (2) threat, (3) expertise (positive), (4) expertise (negative), (5) liking, (6) pre-giving, (7) aversive stimulation, (8) debt, (9) moral appeal, (10) self-feeling (positive), (11) self-feeling (negative), (12) altercasting (positive), (13) altercasting (negative), (14) altruism, (15) esteem (positive), and (16) esteem (negative).  
(pp. 357-358)

By asking subjects to indicate how they would use strategies in various situations, five primary factors emerged: rewarding activity, punishing activity, activation of impersonal commitments, activation of personal commitments, and expertise (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). Trenholm (1989) further grouped these factors into four major categories: (1) threats and promises, (2) exchange and reciprocity, (3) value and identity appeals, and (4) altruism (p. 312).

While various strategies of argumentation are likely to be found in any situation, some strategies predispose themselves to certain types of persuasive arguments and certain persuader types. The strategies of argumentation that will be covered in the following review form a deductively-derived taxonomy. The theoretic rationale for this model comes from research on narcissism conducted by Wald (1989) and research on strategy

construction by Marwell and Schmitt (1967). The model consists of two axis which create four quadrants.

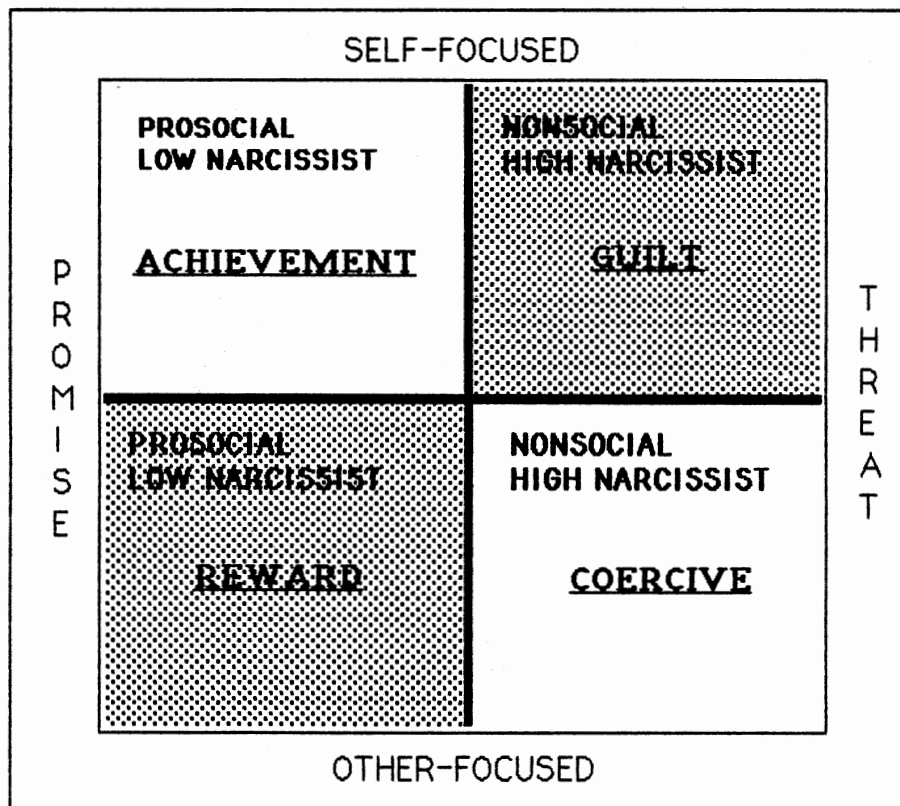


Figure 1. Narcissistic Strategy Model

The first continuum for the model runs from promise to threat on one axis. The second continuum, self-focused and other-focused strategies, form the second axis. Self-focused strategies are those in which the recipient of the benefit or cost referenced in the appeal is the persuader. Other-focused strategies are those

strategies which focus the benefit or cost to others. Based on research by Wald (1989), it is believed that strategies employed by the narcissistic persuader can be placed into two major categories: prosocial and nonsocial. The low narcissist is expected to utilize prosocial strategies where the high narcissist is expected to utilize nonsocial strategies. These strategies stem from the positive and negative emotional appeals that were discussed in the previous section. Using the two-axis model as a foundation, the following review will discuss the various strategical techniques that fall into the categories of prosocial and nonsocial strategies.

### **Prosocial Strategies**

Prosocial strategies emphasize the welfare of others as a means to gain compliance (Langer, 1978). The altruistic strategies rely on the "prosocial," or caring nature of the human being toward fellow human beings. Prosocial strategies reflect attempts to obtain compliance using techniques that are socially acceptable. In persuasive situations, people may often employ socially appropriate strategies that rely on reward, promise, sincerity, or honesty for compliance rather than rely on less acceptable methods of compliance such as coercion, threat, and manipulation.

Throughout the compliance-gaining literature, the strategy (promises) used has received much attention. Sometimes labeled "rewards" (Raven & Kruglanski, 1970), this type of strategy involves the agent controlling the rewards the target receives. Promises are believed to be positive and they grow from positive emotional appeals. Research indicates that agents who utilize rewards often

promote positive interactions between the target and agent (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987). The persuader, using positive emotional appeals, will appear to the audience as sincere, honest, and trustworthy. This persuader will offer rewards to the audience in exchange for compliance. "If you'll pick me up at the airport, I'll buy your dinner," is an example of a reward strategy.

Reward-oriented strategies are thought to be other-focused because a direct relationship exists between compliance and receipt of the offer. Research examining preference in persuasive arguments suggests that reward-oriented strategies are preferred over punishment strategies (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). In all cases, however, effectiveness of the message clearly appears to depend on the credibility or believability of the promise (Miller, 1980). If a receiver feels relatively certain that the reward is possible, the receiver is more likely to comply. For a promise to be effective, there must exist a strong likelihood of occurrence. The receiver must trust and believe in the fact that the sender, who controls the distribution of reward, is sincere in his/her ability and intent to give the reward. Strategies that hinge on promises and incentives are prosocial strategies. These strategies are often addressed in literature examining Social Exchange Theory as they involve the norm of reciprocity. The underlying theory is that cooperation and exchange are prosocial as they attempt to see to the needs of both participants, not just the agent (Rolloff & Miller, 1987).

The ability to influence others is dependent on an individual's ability to adapt to the needs of others. Recent compliance-resistance studies have examined the "adaptation" principle between sender



and receivers (Hale & Delia, 1976; Howie-Day, 1977; McQuillen, 1986; O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981). By maintaining a high degree of sensitivity to the receiver's needs and views, a source increases the likelihood of compliance (McQuillen, 1986). Further findings suggest that the choice of persuasive message strategies involves high levels of perspective-taking or role-playing (Delia & Clark, 1977; Delia, Kline, & Burleson, 1979; O'Keefe & Delia, 1980). Adaptation then becomes a persuasive strategy on its own.

Given the characteristics of a high narcissist, it is not likely he/she will choose prosocial persuasive strategies. In contrast, the low narcissist can be expected to employ the more favorable prosocial strategic forms. The low narcissist will use positive emotional appeals to gain compliance. In a persuasive situation, the low narcissist will show a preference for offering promises over threats. The low narcissist's strategies will be more other-focused than self-focused and stress positive self-esteem to convince an audience to comply. This persuader does not employ manipulation to gain compliance. Therefore, the low narcissist will be observed as trustworthy, sincere, and honest. In contrast to the high narcissist, the low narcissist is not expected to utilize forms of ingratiation or the power of authority to gain compliance.

### **Nonsocial Strategies**

Just as prosocial strategies have been studied with much intensity, nonsocial strategies have been equally addressed. Antisocial strategies "represent people's attempts to obtain relational rewards by imposing their position on another through force or

deception" (Rolloff & Miller, 1987, p. 181). Nonsocial strategies are often thought of as coercion (Raven & Kruglanski, 1970). These strategies involve manipulating punishments or threats. These strategies are often delivered in the form of fear appeals. Just as a persuader using positive appeals is expected to use promise or reward, a persuader using negative emotional appeals will likely use threats in the form of coercion, guilt, or deceit. An example of a coercive threat might be, "If you won't give me a raise, I'll quit the job." The individual employing threat strategies will likely create a sense of guilt and levels of fear in the receiver to assure compliance. In most cases, coercion and threats are seen as self-focused since the result is more like a "negative promise" that does not occur immediately. In addition, this "negative promise" maximizes the benefit to the self at the cost to some other.

Based on previous research, we expect the high narcissist to employ negative emotional appeals. Therefore, we can conclude that the high narcissist will most likely use negative strategies such as threats to an individual's set of values that challenge the individual's self-worth, will rely on his/her personal authority to gain compliance, and will exhibit more antisocial attitudes than prosocial attitudes.

With all that is known about the tendencies of the high narcissist, it is expected that the high narcissist will use the extreme and manipulative form of exchange. The high narcissist is known for his/her manipulative style and deceitful style (Bursten, 1982; Freud, 1914/1948; Goldstein, 1985; Kernberg, 1976; Kohut, 1976; Lasch, 1979; Raskin & Hall, 1979). Therefore, we might expect the

high narcissist to display these characteristics in a persuasive situation. This persuader might rely on such tactics as deceit (lying) and various other forms of manipulation. Because of the use of manipulation and deceit, the narcissistic persuader is not expected to be seen as trustworthy, sincere, or honest. However, the narcissistic persuader may seem highly persuasive due to his/her manipulative tendencies.

The high narcissist is expected to instill a sense of guilt in the audience to gain compliance by reminding the audience that he/she somehow "owes" the source. The high narcissist may also use certain forms of ingratiation to create a sense of "likability" on his/her part.

Where the low narcissist is thought to be other-focused, the high narcissist is self-focused. We therefore would not expect this individual to "go out of his way" to help others; rather, we would expect this individual to see to his/her own needs before seeing to the needs of others. Where the low narcissist will encourage compliance and stress other-motivated rewards, the high narcissist will stress self-focused rewards if rewards are stressed at all.

In summary, the chosen message strategy depends on the type of emotional appeal used to construct the message. The type of emotional appeal depends on the personality type of the individual constructing the message. As a result, differences are expected to appear when comparing the persuasive argument of a high and low narcissist. These differences are believed to stem from the prosocial and nonsocial nature of the individual. As the high narcissist is observed as being self-absorbed, self-serving, and manipulative, we

would expect this individual to exhibit nonsocial behavior. In contrast, we expect the low narcissist to behave in a prosocial manner.

While the majority of literature examining compliance-gaining in persuasion focuses on the use of strategies from a developmental view point, these studies make the case that persuasive strategy use is individualistic and highly selective. Taking this view one step farther, it can be concluded that strategy selection is dependent on the personality characteristics of the source, thereby justifying the need for further examination into the communicative behavior of the narcissistic individual.

### **Proposal**

Despite extensive research on personality traits and persuasion, some limitations exist. The critical limitation is that narcissism, a construct that has a potentially powerful impact on communication, has been overlooked. The construct of narcissism is composed of a large group of personality traits. Many of these traits have been used independently to explain persuasive communication; however, collectively these traits can be subsumed under the "umbrella-label" of narcissism. The communication researcher could unify and clarify research efforts by considering these individual personality traits as components of one personality construct. This construct-view could provide a clearer picture of the inter-relationship of this concept and make interpretations of results clearer.

Communication involves a great deal of reciprocity. Communication is seen to be transactional and not "one-way." Unfortunately, most persuasion research fails to acknowledge the interdependent nature of communication. While a great deal of effort has been spent examining the personality traits of the audience, or the receiver, very little research exists that focuses on the characteristics of the sender. This leaves the studies of persuasion "lop-sided." Very little effort has been spent examining the personality characteristics of the sender and the effects of "sender traits" on an audience.

The behavioral aspects of persuasion have received a great deal of research attention in the past. Kiesler, Collins, and Miller (1969), Janis and Hovland (1959), and others have used personality variables to explain theories of persuasion. However, given the extensive amounts of research on the impact of personality traits on persuasion, theorists have excluded the narcissistic personality variable.

The personality variable "narcissism" may indeed provide vital clues to the study of communication. Theoretically, this is sufficient justification to support the examination of narcissism as a valuable tool providing further understanding of the intricacies of persuasive communication. The relationship between narcissism and persuasion has received little or no attention. Therefore, a need exists to address this potentially fruitful area.

In the past, the empirical study of narcissism has been hampered due to the lack of appropriate methods of measurement. Attempts have been made to construct a device to measure the

individual differences of narcissism, yet these attempts have failed to take into account the emotional and interpersonal processes underlying narcissistic behaviors (Masterson, 1981). Taking these limitations into account, the current study intends to address the following:

1. What are the differences between ratings of persuasive messages generated by high and low narcissists?
2. Will the sex of the receiver have an affect on the observed differences between ratings of persuasive messages?
3. What observable message differences exist in persuasive arguments generated by high and low narcissists?

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

This section outlines the methods and procedures that were employed to collect and analyze the data for this study. The study was conducted in three phases: (1) Experimental Treatment Development, (2) Questionnaire Validation, and (3) Experimental Manipulation. These phases will be addressed in order. In each of the phases, attention focuses on the following: (1) selection of subjects, (2) explication of the research instruments, and (3) presentation of procedures. In the final phase, description and explanation of variables and explication of data analysis will also be addressed.

#### **Experimental Treatment Development**

The experimental treatment development stage of the study was conducted in three separate, yet related phases. The first phase was Topic Generation, the second phase was Message Generation, and the third and final phase involved Message Preference/Argument Characteristics.

#### **Subjects**

The subjects for the pre-study consisted of 42 undergraduate women enrolled in the introductory speech course at Oklahoma

State University. These women were offered incentive points for their participation. The women ranged in age from 18 to 41 years. At the onset of the study, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) was administered to all subjects.<sup>1</sup> From the 42-member sample, four women were asked to participate in phase one of the study. The second phase involved 20 of the remaining subjects from the original sample.

For the final phase, the subjects consisted of 10 speech communication graduate students and five speech communication faculty and administrative staff. This sample consisted of six males and nine females. Ages ranged from 22 to 56.

### **Materials**

Measures for the study included the NPI (Narcissistic Personality Inventory), two persuasive arguments on two topics originating from the initial stages of the study, and a Likert-style attitudinal measure.

### **Procedures**

#### **Topic Generation**

The topic generation phase of the study consisted of a pre-study that required administering the NPI to the introductory speech students. After all tests had been scored, the lowest 10% of scores and the highest 10% of scores were selected from the sample. The NPI scores ranged from four to 28 (the highest possible score was 40). The lowest 12 scores ranged from four to 12 and the



highest twelve scores ranged from 21 to 28.<sup>2</sup> From these scores, two low scorers and two high scorers were randomly chosen to participate in the first part of the study. These four subjects were asked to generate a list of 10 topics which they felt to be important enough to warrant persuasive efforts regarding the topic.

After the lists had been generated, the same subjects were asked to rank the overall importance of each topic. Upon examination of the topics listed, an overlap of topics generated by both high and low narcissists existed. After studying the overlap, the lists of topics were narrowed to one topic per group (high and low narcissist). Based on a 10-point rating scale, the topic scoring the highest for the high narcissists was "abortion." The topic with the highest score for the low narcissists was "volunteer work." The mean ratings for topic were abortion ( $\bar{X} = 7.5$ ), volunteer work ( $\bar{X} = 9.5$ ).

### **Message Generation**

As a second step in the message generation phase of the study, the experimenter contacted the remaining 20 subjects and set up individual interviews with each subject. Based on their NPI scores, the 20 subjects not used in Phase I were assigned to two groups: high narcissist and low narcissist. Each sub-group was further divided into "abortion" or "volunteer work" persuasive topic groups. This step was designed so that half of the high narcissists (n=5) wrote persuasive speeches on abortion, and half of the low narcissists (n=5) wrote persuasive speeches on abortion. The process was repeated for the volunteer work topic. The remaining

half of the high narcissists (n=5) wrote persuasive speeches on volunteer work, and the remaining half of the low narcissists (n=5) wrote persuasive speeches on volunteer work. Each subject was given identical instructions and each subject had 30 minutes to produce their argument.

Once the arguments had been generated, the experimenter and an expert rater examined all arguments. Of the 10 arguments that had been generated, the pool was reduced to four arguments by a rating procedure conducted by the experimenter and the expert rater. The ratings were averaged and the two highest scores from each group were chosen for the next portion of the study. Based on criteria from the NPI, the language characteristics evident in the arguments on the topic of "volunteer work" represented the most appropriate comparison between high and low narcissistic speakers. The "abortion" topic was eliminated and the experimental focus was placed on the "volunteer work" topic for the remainder of the study.

### **Message Preference/Argument Characteristics**

The message preference/argument characteristics phase of the study involved several speech communication graduate students (n=10), faculty (n=3), and administrative staff (n=2). These subjects were asked to read two persuasive arguments on the "volunteer work" topic and note which message was preferred (for a complete example of the persuasive messages, see Appendix A). The result was a 2 x 2 factorial design. The two independent variables were the subject's level of narcissism (High Narc/Low Narc) and the level

of narcissism contained in the persuasive message (High Narc/Low Narc). The dependent variable was the message preferred. After noting their preference, the subjects were asked to complete a Likert-type attitude scale. The scale was derived from several key components central to the narcissistic personality. The attitudinal scale was used to determine if traits of narcissism were observable in the messages.

Using the persuasive scenarios generated by the high and low narcissists in the experimental treatment development phase of the study, the experimenter was able to proceed to the second major phase of the study, the Questionnaire Validation.

### **Questionnaire Validation**

Based on a review of literature related to personality traits and persuasion, a list of characteristics for the high and low narcissist were deduced. From this list of characteristics, a 127-item instrument was developed. Each item made an assertion about the speaker. These assertions were to be rated on a 5-level Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Subjects were asked to rate each statement in response to one of the two pre-generated scenarios.

### **Subjects**

The subjects for the validation phase were 54 undergraduate students enrolled in two speech courses at Oklahoma State University. Subjects were offered incentive points counting toward their final grade for their participation.

## **Materials**

The stimulus materials for this study consisted of test booklets. These booklets contained a persuasive argument and the 127-item Narcissistic Language Variable Inventory (NLVI) (for an example of the instrument, see Appendix B). Half of the subjects received a high narcissist's persuasive argument and half received a low narcissist's argument.

## **Procedures**

The cover of each questionnaire booklet contained instructions, a sample question, and an introductory message thanking the participant for his/her time. The instructions were as follows:

You have been asked to participate in an on-going research project, the results of which will help improve the curriculum of the basic Speech course at Oklahoma State University. Please follow all instructions carefully. Do not put your name or I.D. number on the questionnaire. Your answers will be kept confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

You are asked to carefully read a short speech. The speech represents a speaker's attempt to present information on volunteering. After reading the speech, answer the set of questions related to the speaker's message. Do not read the speaker's message again, just answer the questions based on your impressions of the message. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. Answer the questions by circling the number/response that best describes your feelings. See the sample question for clarification. Again, thank-you for your participation.

Test administrators were asked not to answer any questions that might arise during the testing period.

To avoid the threats of ordering to the validity of the overall questionnaire, the items were randomly arranged for each

individual booklet. Neither individual item numbers nor page numbers were given for this same reason. Both the high and low narcissist's messages were randomly divided among the sample. Subjects were given 20 minutes to complete the 127-item questionnaire. When the subjects completed the questionnaire, the questionnaires were collected for future analysis.

### **Validation Results**

The results of the validation narrowed the 127-item questionnaire to 45-items. The valid items were determined using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Each individual item was compared to the overall test score. The criteria for selection was a correlation level of .66 or above and probability level of less than .001. All of the final 45 items met the critical values set by the Pearson Correlation acceptance criteria (for a copy of the 45-item instrument, see Appendix C).

## **Experimental Manipulation**

### **Subjects**

Subjects for the third and final phase of the study, experimental manipulation, consisted of 143 undergraduate men and women enrolled in the introductory speech course at Oklahoma State University. Subjects were offered incentive points for their participation. The sample consisted of 73 males and 70 females. Ages ranged from 18 to 30 years old and the average age was approximately 20 years. The following table diagrams the sample.

**TABLE I**  
**FREQUENCY OF SEX BY CONDITION**

Sex	Condition 1	Condition 2	Row Total
Male	33	40	73
Female	37	33	70
Column	70	73	143

### **Procedure**

The sample was divided and randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: high narcissist's persuasive message and low narcissist's persuasive message. Three instructors were randomly chosen from the graduate teaching assistant pool to participate in the study. One instructor had 30 students, another instructor had 60 students, and the last instructor had 53 students. Each instructor was given specific instructions pertaining to administration of the experimental instrument.

Testing procedures for this final phase were adapted from an earlier phase. The procedures followed the same pattern as used in the Questionnaire Validation phase.

## **Design**

Variables considered in the final analysis were the subject's experimental condition (i.e., subject's exposure to high narcissistic or low narcissistic message) and Likert scores on 45-item NLVI.

### **Independent Variable**

**Message Condition.** The message condition variable consists of messages constructed by high and low narcissists. These message conditions were generated in phase one of the current study. The message conditions consist of scenarios dealing with the issue of volunteering.

### **Dependent Variables**

**Strategies of Argumentation.** Scores on the 45 items of the NLVI served as the dependent measure. Each item was designed to match one of the language qualities characteristic of either a high or low narcissist's message. These characteristics were deductively generated from a review of literature related to psychological traits and persuasion based on Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) typology of compliance strategies. These major categories were further divided into two subclasses believed to encompass behavior typical of the high and low narcissist. Category I represents characteristics believed to be evident in the argument generated by the low narcissist. Category II represents characteristics believed to be evident in the argument generated by the high narcissist.

I. Prosocial

1. warm emotional appeal
2. altruism
3. adapted argument/empathy
4. stress positive self-esteem
5. sincere argument
6. trustworthy persuader
7. stress personal rewards
8. persuader is seen as likeable

II. Nonsocial

1. negative emotional appeal
2. lack of adaptation/empathy
3. stress negative self-esteem
4. use of manipulation and guilt as strategy
5. insincere argument
6. deceitful persuader
7. use of threats and coercion
8. persuader stresses knowledge and authority
9. persuader is not seen as likeable

To test the possible effects that the independent variables have on the quality of messages associated with the communicative behavior of the narcissistic individual, a series of statistical procedures were employed. The results of these tests were used to examine the manifestation of narcissism in persuasive communication.

A 2 x 2 factorial design was used to examine differences between condition and sex of subject within condition. A one-way analysis of variance statistical technique and an a posteriori contrast test were used to examine the effects of sex and condition on the rating of message characteristics. The first variable was experimental condition and it had two levels (high narcissist/low narcissist). The second variable was sex of subject which had two levels (male/female). The final statistical procedure performed was a discriminate analysis to determine those items (strategies) that



most effectively predicted the high/low narcissistic speaker's message. The dependent measure for this analysis was the subject's mean score on the NLVI.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

#### Hypothesized Findings

Three major research questions were posed as the basis of this study. First, do subject's ratings of persuasive messages generated by high and low narcissists differ? Second, will the sex of the receiver have an affect on the observed differences between ratings of persuasive messages? Third, what observable differences exist in persuasive arguments generated by high and low narcissists? In this section, results of the data analysis will be reviewed. Results will be presented as follows: (1) a description of subject's responses to the NLVI, (2) t-tests of statistically significant differences between subject's ratings of high and low narcissist's messages, (3) the effects of sex on the statistical difference between ratings of high and low narcissist's messages, and (4) a multidiscriminate analysis of those items which strongly predict characteristics associated with high and low narcissist's messages.

#### Description of Responses

To perform the necessary analysis for questions one and two, a composite test score was computed for each subject's responses on the NLVI. The NLVI consisted of 45 items. Each item had a range of 1 to 5. The possible scores on the NLVI ranged from a low of 45 to a

high of 225. In response to the high narcissist's (narc) message, male and female total scores were sufficiently identical. Male scores ranged from 114 to 174 and female scores ranged from 115 to 177. Males rating the low narc message recorded a high score of 182 and a low score of 122. The female subjects' high score when rating the low narc message was 207 and their low score was 100. Upon examining this data, it is evident that across both sexes the scores recorded for the low narc condition (male  $\bar{X}$  = 156/female  $\bar{X}$  = 167) are consistently higher than total scores for the high narc condition (male  $\bar{X}$  = 144/female  $\bar{X}$  = 146) across sexes. This clearly indicates a distinction between the high and low narcissist's messages. Table II presents these results.

**TABLE II**  
**TOTAL SCORE ON NLVI FOR MESSAGE CONDITION**  
**AND SEX OF SUBJECT**

Message Condition	Sex	MIN	MAX	$\bar{X}$	Total $\bar{X}$
High Narc	M	114	174	144	145
	F	115	177	146	
Low Narc	M	122	182	156	161
	F	100	207	167	

A cross comparison of the total scores between the sex of subject and the message condition produced some interesting trends. First, the total scores of females indicated a higher rating for the low narc speaker than their rating for the high narc speaker. Second, the highest score of females was higher than the highest total score for males. Third, and most unexpected, the highest score of females in response to the low narc condition was higher than their lowest score for the high narc condition.

These findings illustrate that both males and females rate the low narc message higher than they rate the high narc message. These findings further illustrate that females respond with more extreme ratings than males to a high narc persuasive message. Thus, the female sample rated the low narc message more positively and more negatively than males.

### **Differences Between Ratings**

To examine the different ratings of persuasive messages of high and low narcissist's, an independent sample t-test procedure was performed which compared subjects' NLVI scores in the high narc condition to those scores in the low narc condition. A significant difference between ratings for high and low narcissist's messages ( $t(141) = 5.96, p < .0001$ ) was found. The mean score for subjects rating the high narc message was 3.22 and the mean score for subjects rating the low narc message was 3.60. These results offer statistical support for a more positive response to the message produced by the low narcissist's message. Table III illustrates these scores.

**TABLE III**  
**t-TEST ON DIFFERENCE IN RATING FOR**  
**HIGH AND LOW NARC PERSUASIVE MESSAGES**

Message Condition	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	DF	P
Low	70	3.6047	.408	5.96	141	.000
High	73	3.2226	.351			

#### **Effects of Sex on Ratings**

In an elaboration analysis of the significant difference between subjects' ratings of high and low narcissist's messages, a first level control variable, sex of subject, was added to the analysis. The results of an ANOVA on persuasive condition and sex of subject on subjects' ratings of the NLVI revealed a significant main effect for message condition ( $F(1,139) = 34.70, p < .05$ ) and a significant difference for sex of subject ( $F(1,139) = 4.62, p < .05$ ). However, the two-way interaction of sex and condition did not achieve statistical support to reject the null hypothesis ( $F(1,139) = 2.549, p > .05$ ). These results indicated that sex and condition independently affected ratings, but the interaction of the two had no significant impact on the results of the standard rating. The interactive effects are presented in Table IV.

**TABLE IV**  
**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON RATING ON NLVI**  
**BY MESSAGE CONDITION AND SEX OF SUBJECT**

Source of Variance	SS	DF	MS	F	P
Main Effects	5.870	2	2.935	20.752	.000
Condition	4.908	1	4.908	34.700	.000
Sex	0.654	1	0.654	4.623	.033
2-Way Interactions					
Condition by Sex	0.360	1	0.360	2.549	.113
Explained	6.230	3	2.077	14.684	.000
Residual	19.659	139	0.141		
TOTAL	25.889	142	0.182		

Based on the inspection of cell means, the following relations were observed. First, male subjects rated the low narc condition significantly higher than they rated the high narc message ( $t(71) = 3.49, p < .001$ ). Second, females rated the low narc message significantly higher than the high narc message ( $t(68) = 4.75, p < .001$ ). Finally, female subjects consistently achieved higher mean ratings of conditions (condition 1  $\bar{X} = 3.717$ /condition 2  $\bar{X} = 3.243$ ) than male subjects (condition 1  $\bar{X} = 3.479$ /condition 2  $\bar{X} = 3.206$ ). Tables V, VI, and VII present these results.

**TABLE V**  
**MEAN RATING ON NLVI FOR MESSAGE CONDITION**  
**AND SEX OF SUBJECT**

Message Condition	Sex	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	MIN	MAX
High Narc	M	40	3.2060	0.3347	2.5333	3.8667
	F	33	3.2428	0.3864	2.5556	3.9333
Low Narc	M	33	3.4788	0.3293	2.7111	4.0444
	F	37	3.7170	0.4423	2.2222	4.6000

**TABLE VI**  
**t-TEST ON MALE RATING OF NLVI**  
**BY MESSAGE CONDITION**

Message Condition	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	t	P
Low	33	3.4788	0.329	71	3.49	.001
High	40	3.2060	0.335			

**TABLE VII**  
**t-TEST ON FEMALE RATING OF NLVI**  
**BY MESSAGE CONDITION**

Message Condition	$n$	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	t	P
Low	37	3.7170	0.442	68	4.75	.000
High	33	3.2428	0.386			

These analyses support the notion that both males and females react more favorably to messages generated by low narcissists. Further, these results indicate that females react to both the high and low narcissist's persuasive messages with greater intensity.

Results of both testing procedures supported the hypothesis that messages generated by low narcissists are preferred more than the same messages constructed by high narcissists. From the 143 subjects, 88% preferred the message generated by the low narcissist. This preference is thought to be attributed to the different message variables used by high narcs and low narcs when composing persuasive messages.

### **Multidiscriminate Analysis**

A discriminate analysis and a correlational analysis were employed to discover those message characteristics that differentiate between persuasive messages composed by a high narcissist and a



low narcissist. Scores from the 45 items on the NLVI were entered into the discriminate analysis. Each item on the NLVI corresponded to one type of persuasive strategy or appeal. These strategic characteristics were chosen based on their theorized relationship to the narcissist personality. This distribution of message characteristics was partitioned into two groups, each with 69 members. Group 1 consisted of 70 subjects responding to the persuasive message generated by the low narcissist (low narc). Group 2 was made up of 73 subjects responding to the persuasive message generated by the high narcissist (high narc).

The univariate analysis revealed that nine of the 45 items discriminated between the two styles of persuasive speech. The Wilk's Stepwise procedure was used to generate the set of characteristics that maximized the separation between persuasive speakers. An F value equal to one or greater, and the stipulation that the change in lambda must exceed .01 was established as the criteria for entry into the model. A one-function model consisting of nine variables was produced. For this function, lambda was .39 ( $X^2(19) = 118.65, p < .0000$ ) with a Canonical Correlation of .78. The eigen value for this function was 1.55 and the model explained 60% of the variance. The standardized function coefficients for the nine characteristics that remained in the stepwise analysis are displayed in Table VIII.

The use of warm emotional appeals was found to predict the low narc response. In addition, reward qualities, empathy, and psychological attraction were dimensions which characterized the low narc speaker. In contrast, forced compliance, and the use of

negative identity management were message elements that predicted the high narc.

**TABLE VIII**  
**DISCRIMINATE FACTOR COEFFICIENTS FOR THE NINE**  
**VARIABLES MEETING WILKS' CRITERIA**  
**FOR THE FINAL ANALYSIS**

Item	Topic	Standardized Coefficients	Wilks' Lambda	F	Probability
16	Warm	0.38	0.722	52.37	.0000
34	Happy	0.28	0.750	45.26	.0000
30	Others' Feelings	0.40	0.755	44.11	.0000
5	Friendly	0.19	0.807	32.37	.0000
40	Feel Good	0.21	0.869	20.51	.0000
13	Compassionate	0.20	0.877	18.94	.0000
1	Force	0.22	0.905	14.33	.0002
14	Force	0.22	0.912	13.19	.0004
6	Personal Benefits	0.17	0.921	11.70	.0008

Though the present analysis offers two distinct dimensions (a high narc dimension and a low narc dimension), these results may be more of an artifact of the statistical procedure employed. The discriminate analysis produced only one function. This function is

the result of analysis of items that are bi-polar. If item two, "The speaker is telling the truth," receives a high positive rating, the assumption is that the speaker is honest; however, if the question receives a low rating, by implication the speaker is dishonest. Therefore, if rating an item positively suggests possession of the quality, by implication, a negative rating indicates the lack of the quality.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings reported in the previous chapter. Three major areas are considered: (1) a summary of the findings and their relation to previous research, (2) the limitations in the study, and (3) the implications for future research.

#### **Summary of Findings**

This study is an initial step in describing how the narcissistic personality trait influences communication. Taken together, the results of the present investigation offer strong support for the interdependent nature of narcissism and communicative behavior. A distinction must be made regarding the focus of the current study. This study does not examine the persuasibility of the narcissistic individual. Rather, this study examines the posed relationship between the level of narcissism of a speaker and the contents of the persuasive message generated by that speaker. This study examines the specific message variables used by the low narcissistic persuader compared to those used by the high narcissistic persuader in persuasive situations. Further, based on audience ratings, the study examines the strength of association of

these specific message variables with high and low narc persuasive messages rated by a target audience.

The findings of this investigation in part suggest that the quality and content of a message is the result of the personality type of the speaker. In addition, differences in the content and quality of the messages were recognizable to the sample audience. Specifically, differences existed in the overall ratings of persuasive arguments generated by high and low narcissists. Second, the sex of the target audience affected the level of acceptance of the persuasive arguments. Third, differences were observed in the form of strategies and related message factors between the high and low persuasive arguments. Each of these trends will be discussed in greater detail below.

### **Differences in Ratings**

Analysis of data relevant to the first hypothesis revealed that messages produced by low narc persuaders were perceived by receivers as being significantly different from those produced by high narc persuaders. A low narc persuasive message was rated more positively than a high narc persuasive message.

These results suggest that those with narcissistic personality traits develop persuasive messages with recognizable characteristics. It is important to note that these characteristics were recognized by the "untrained" eye. These differences are subtle, yet they have an impact. An explanation for this difference may become clear by briefly examining the characteristics of the narcissistic personality as defined by Kernberg (1975) and Kohut

(1976). The high narcissist requires constant attention and admiration, they tend to take advantage of others, they are often manipulative, and they lack empathy (Kernburg, 1975; Kohut, 1976).

In the current study, differences in the communicative styles may be attributed to the personality differences of the high and low narcissist. These personality differences are translated into behaviors that in turn result in message differences which reflect those psychological traits.

In an earlier study, Vangelesti et al. (1989) found that high narcissists behave differently in conversations. These differences were attributed to the personality traits of the narcissist. Similarly, Raskin (1988) found high and low narcissists use personal pronouns differently. Raskin attributed the differences in part to the characteristics of the narcissistic individual. In the current study then, it was not surprising to find that differences existed in the persuasive styles of the high and low narcissists.

### **Sex Effects**

Results relating to the second hypothesis revealed an unexpected sex effect. The overall findings seems to support Akhtar and Thompson's (1982) and Haaken's (1983) hypothesized association between sex and narcissism. These authors point to the parallels that exist between the narcissistic personality and male stereotypes by suggesting that males are more prone to pathological narcissism. Based on this research, one would expect males to react more favorably to messages generated by the high narcissist since the

high narcissist personality is more stereotypic of males (Carroll, 1987).

In the present investigation, sex differences were discovered in the rating of the high and low narcissist's arguments. Unlike previous findings, both male and female subjects in the present experiment reacted more positively to the message generated by the low narcissist. A possible explanation for these results is that while men are stereotypically seen as narcissistic, they use narcissism as a mask to hide their emotional selves. Therefore, they find positive emotional messages more acceptable. It was not surprising to find that the female sample rated the low narcissist's message higher than the high narc message since the characteristics of the low narcissist are more stereotypic of females (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972).

Though both males and females consistently rated the low narc messages more positively than the high narc message, the intensity of their ratings differed significantly. Females tended to give more extreme ratings to the low narc speaker. The more intense reactions of females may be due to heightened sensitivity (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Women in our culture are typically perceived as sensitive and empathetic. Therefore, one would expect the female subjects to employ more extreme scores for the low narc message than they would for the high narc message.

The findings of the current experiment clearly suggest that both males and females react more favorably to messages generated by low narcissists. One explanation for this may be that both sexes find empathic and "warm" persuasive arguments more pleasing.

### **Language Trends**

The final analysis examined the behavioral characteristics of high and low narc persuasive messages. Nine items survived the discriminate analysis. These results provide a list of characteristics that consistently differentiate between the high and low narcissist.

These nine items were factored into five dimensions that support the notion that communicative behavior is a function of the degree of narcissism of the speaker. Differences in communicative behavior are observed as language trends and the trends will be discussed in two overall dimension structures. In examining the high and low narc dimension structures, explanations for each of the significant variables will be provided.

The language variable displaying the highest factor loading addressed the existence of "warmth" in the message. The variable of warm emotional appeals can be best defined as messages to increase compliance which stem from a positive emotional appeal where the source focuses on love, pride, affection, and comfort (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987). According to Bettinghaus and Cody (1987), "warm" appeals permit receivers to relive positive past experiences or fulfill a wish that this event might happen to them (p. 157). In a persuasive situation, it is expected that a low narcissist would use warm appeals over negative appeals. This difference may be partially explained by examining the characteristics of the low and high narcissist (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1976). Since the low narcissist is believed to be more empathic and sensitive, one would expect to see these traits evidenced in the low narc's persuasive



message. That this strategy, stereotypic of the low narcissist, was rated more positively by the sample is not surprising.

The high self-esteem of the low narcissist also would lead one to expect this individual to be more inclined to use warm appeals to persuade. An example of the use of a warm appeal is evidenced in the text of the persuasive message generated by the low narcissist when the speaker is describing a scene regarding a volunteer for the Special Olympics. The passage reads, "She said that it gave her such a warm feeling every time an athlete would come up and give her a hug." Also, she said, "it was a feeling she would never forget." These examples seem to characterize the type of warm emotional appeals used by the low narcissist. These rewards stress durable positive feelings about one's self. Analyzing the strategies used by the low narc, it appears that the persuasive motivation implies emotional rewards for participation in volunteer work. In the current investigation, the use of warm appeals was shown to distinguish the low narcissist from the high narcissist.

The second dimension found to be predictive of the low narcissist was reward qualities. This strategy involves the speaker gaining compliance using rewards rather than threats. The dimension of reward qualities is characterized by the other-focused nature of rewards. Complying to make another happy is characteristic of this type of strategy. Thus, reward strategies are derived from positive emotional appeals and are perceived as sincere and honest. Items 6 and 12 on the NLVI deal with the topic of personal benefits. These items significantly characterized the low narcissist as they posit rewards upon compliance.

Based on personality characteristics of the low narcissist (e.g., high self-esteem, sensitivity, empathy), one would expect the low narc to employ other-focused rewards in a persuasive situation. This is to say, the low narcissist is expected to offer rewards to others as a means of gaining compliance. An example of this is demonstrated in the low narcissist's argument where the speaker writes:

For the person doing the volunteer work, it allows him/her to get a feeling of love and care for those he/she is helping. For those who are being helped by a volunteer program, it allows them to see that someone does care and wants to spend their time with them. It will give you such a great feeling and you will be making so many people happy.

These excerpts demonstrate the low narc's apparent reliance on intangible types of rewards. The sensitive nature of the low narcissist leads this persuader towards rewards that are based on feelings and emotions rather than materialistic rewards. In the excerpt above, the low narcissist speaks of the feelings of "love and care" that can be achieved through volunteer work. The low narc persuader adds that by volunteering, "you will make so many other people happy." This is a clear example of the other-focused nature of the low narcissist. These characteristics of other-focused reward qualities are another dimension that differentiates the low and high narcissist persuader.

The third dimension found to be predictive of the low narcissist message is that of empathy. As suggested by Delia and Clark (1977), Hale and Delia (1976), Delia, Kline, and Burleson (1979), and McQuillen (1986), the need for empathy in persuasion is crucial. Consistent with the review of literature were the subjects' high

ratings of the item addressing empathy. Empathy can be viewed as a kind of adaptation that involves creating and maintaining a necessary degree of sensitivity to the other's point of view to increase the probability of compliance. Empathy has also been defined as the ability to anticipate another's feelings in a communicative situation.

The existence of empathy in the individual is dependent somewhat on his/her personality type. Consistent with the works of Biscardi and Schill (1985), the high narcissist is lacking in empathy while the low narcissist is not deficient in this trait. Just as expected, the canonical analysis revealed the low narcissist's argument to be empathic. Item 30, which asks if the speaker considers other people's feelings, was designed to test for empathy. The low narcissistic personality type is characterized as being empathetic. Therefore, one would expect this individual to demonstrate empathy in a persuasive situation. In the current investigation, the low narcissist persuader uses empathy throughout the message. One example of this behavior reads: "For the person doing the volunteer work, it allows him/her to get a feeling of love and care for those he/she is helping." While these statements are not as powerful when taken out of the context of the entire scenario, they still represent a speaker's attempts to persuade using empathy. In addition to this example, throughout the low narcissist message, the speaker uses first and third person pronouns. The speaker avoids presenting an accusatory or demanding climate by employing first and third person pronouns rather than employing the more direct second person pronoun. The use of first and third

person pronouns do not directly address the audience. These pronouns focus their energy on either the speaker or on a general audience. For example, in the low narcissist argument, the speaker states "I believe", rather than "you should believe." In contrast, the high narcissist argument focuses on second person pronouns as illustrated in the example, "you should believe." In this example, second person pronouns are used to directly accuse the specific members of the audience. By using second person pronouns, the high narcissist speaker stresses the responsibility of the audience as if to say, "You did it." Thus, the audience may feel the responsibility for solving the problems of society by volunteering. The issue of responsibility will be further discussed in another section of the discussion.

Through reliance on vivid language in the low narcissist scenario, the speaker uses the needs of the volunteer recipient to persuade the audience. Throughout this persuasive argument, intense imagery and visualization techniques exist which illustrate the empathetic qualities of the low narcissist.

Another example of empathy is that the low narc speaker empathizes with the audience rather than the individual portrayed in the persuasive message. In this instance, the speaker is quoted as saying: "For the person doing the volunteer work, it allows him/her to get a feeling of love and care for those he/she is helping." This is a clear illustration of the low narcissist assuring the audience that their feelings are understood.

The author defined the final dimension characterizing the low narcissist as psychological attraction. Psychological attraction is

conceptually defined as a set of emotions evoked by the speaker and felt by the receiver that result in the positive perception of the speaker based on his/her presentation. Such things as liking, friendliness, honesty, and relating to positive aspects of the receiver's self-esteem are included in this dimension. The multi-dimensional analysis found this dimension to be statistically indicative of the low narcissist. Four items (5, 13, 34, 40) of the nine final items which survived discriminate analysis dealt with this dimension.

It is argued that when a speaker communicates a psychologically attractive message, this message motivates the audience to see the speaker as likeable, honest, and friendly. However, a speaker delivering a psychologically unattractive message, may be perceived as deceitful and manipulative. Based on the personality characteristics of the high narcissist (e.g., exploitative, lack of empathy), the high narcissist is believed to be self-focused, and thus categorized as "nonsocial." In contrast to the qualities characteristic of the high narcissist, the opposite typifies the low narcissist. The low narcissist is seen as authentic and empathetic. This individual is other-focused and is categorized as "prosocial." By the prosocial nature, the low narcissist is expected to employ language techniques that mirror prosocial qualities (e.g., honesty, concern, etc.). Further, the audience who witnesses these prosocial techniques is expected to attribute positive qualities to the speaker (e.g., the speaker is well-liked, personable, trustworthy, etc.).

In the persuasive scenario generated by the low narcissist, the overall theme illustrates the caring, concerned attitude of the persuader. This use of psychological attraction enhances the positive characteristics of the low narc persuader. To appear trustworthy and concerned, the low narc speaker uses techniques such as emotion-laden jargon and pleas that stress the value of intangible rewards. In attempts to influence the audience, the low narcissist uses the less direct strategy of third or first person pronouns. This approach does not use accusatory language or rely on eliciting feelings of guilt. The low narcissist speaker shares the responsibility of the volunteer issue. An example of this joint problem-solving orientation involves the use of a more general motivational question: "It means sharing with someone your love and care, so I ask you . . . won't you please share yours?" In the context of this specific argument, terms such as "share" and "please" show the concern of the speaker and add to the speaker's sincerity and trustworthiness.

Another example of psychological attraction is illustrated in the statement: "I believe it would be worth it hearing someone say 'Thank you for your time.'" Taken in the context of the scenario, this example provides a clear example of the value system of the low narcissist. By an examination of the entire persuasive message, the low narcissist appears to adopt a more "people-focused," prosocial orientation to persuasion.

As mentioned earlier, the persuasive message variables were separated into two final dimensions. The preceding discussion addressed the message components found in the low narc dimension.

The following explanation will discuss the variables that were found in the high narc dimension.

The current examination found several traits predicting the low narcissist; similarly, traits were discovered that predict the high narcissist. Based on the multi-discriminate analysis, the single trait found to significantly predict the high narcissist was that of forced compliance. For the purpose of the present research, forced compliance can be defined as a negative emotion-based tactic designed to gain compliance through the use of coercive, punishing, or guilt methods. These strategies stress the necessity of immediate action on the part of the receiver. These strategies can also rely on fear appeals, coercion, and manipulation to gain compliance. Research related to the narcissistic individual provides support for the tendency of the high narcissist to use force as a strategic method for gaining compliance.

In the current research, the high narcissist persuader used the following phrase as an attempt to gain compliance: "The question I pose to you is why don't you do something about it [problems in society]?" In this example, the persuader uses force in an accusatory fashion. The high narcissist focuses the responsibility for solving the problems in society on the audience. This emphasis of responsibility is accomplished by using second person pronouns to directly involve the audience in the problem. The target audience becomes the guilty party as they are made to feel at fault. The intention of the persuader is to gain compliance by encouraging the target's feelings of guilt. This use of

manipulation is characteristic of the high narc persuader (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1976; Lasch, 1979; Raskin & Hall, 1979).

This manipulative and accusatory method of compliance was echoed at another point in the message when the persuader wrote, "So the next time you start to turn on that TV, ask yourself how is this helping me? Better yet, ask yourself how watching TV will help your dwindling society." In this example, the high narc persuader uses coercion to attempt to gain compliance. The persuader insinuates that the audience has control over the "dwindling society," and by choosing to watch television instead of volunteering, the target must accept the responsibility for society as a whole. At other points in the message, the high narc speaker attempts to persuade in a coercive fashion. Item one tested this dimension and was found to be characteristic of the high narcissist.

Finally, a sub-dimension of forced compliance was found to predict the high narcissist's message. This component is labeled negative identity management. This strategy involves several concepts that focus on the negative tactics of persuasion. Similar to coercion, negative identity management goes one step farther by making the receiver doubt his/her inherent goodness as a means of gaining compliance. One way the high narcissist uses negative identity management is through the use of the second person pronoun. As mentioned earlier, the persuader stresses the sole responsibility of the target audience for the problems of society. The audience is at fault and the problems are the audience's problems.



These methods, characteristic of the high narcissist, stem from this individual's low self-esteem. Because of his/her low self-esteem, the high narc persuader works to "strip away" the self-esteem of the receiver. Thus, by making the audience feel "badly" about themselves, the high narc persuader attempts to persuade. Item 40 (the speaker made me feel good about myself), if answered negatively, might imply attempts at negative identity management.

The use of negative identity management is demonstrated throughout the high narc argument by phrases suggesting that the receiver is inherently "bad." Phrases such as, "what about that couple of hours every afternoon when you watch TV, take a nap, or lay out to get a tan?" insinuate that the receiver is lazy and should think of others rather than be self-centered. These examples take the "accusatory fashion" of the high narc further as the target's values and beliefs are attacked. The high narc persuader not only wants the target to feel badly for not complying, the persuader wants to convince the target that the target is a "bad" person overall. This "negative-ingratiation" makes the high narcissist feel superior to the target, thus boosting the high narc's own self worth. Negative identity management is one final dimension that is predictive of the high narcissist's message.

From the nine items to survive the discriminate analysis, four dimensions were found to predict the low narcissist and one dimension composed of two components predicted the high narcissist. The use of warm emotional appeals was found to predict the low narc response. In addition, reward qualities, empathy, and psychological attraction best characterized the low narc speaker. In

contrast, forced compliance and the use of negative identity were message elements that predicted the high narc message.

### **Limitations**

This study was designed to examine the relationship of personality traits to communicative style and to examine the manifestation of these traits in persuasive messages. Due to the exploratory nature of this experiment, the previous discussion maintains a conservative image. This "first-time" attempt to examine the tendencies of narcissism as they are manifest in persuasive arguments requires a cautious explanation.

Although the majority of the findings of this study were consistent with the proposed rationale, there are some limitations which must be kept in mind. First, the validity of the NLVI may be questioned. During the initial construction of the dimensions of the NLVI, the dimensional structure that constituted narcissism was uncertain. Therefore, generating items that directly related to critical traits of narcissism lacked precision. In several instances, characteristics of speech topics were not mutually exclusive. This is to say that the item boundaries were, in several instances, not "clear-cut." Another issue for consideration focuses on the sample size used to validate the 127-item NLVI. The small 54-subject sample may have affected the validation for the final instrument.

The second methodological consideration is the artificial nature of the experimental condition. The fact that written scenarios were used in the experimental manipulation rather than a "live" speaker may have affected the final results. By using written messages,

important paralinguistic cues were lost. In a "real life" situation, the presence of paralanguage affects the impression formed by the target. Also, the absence of facial expressions, eye contact, and body gestures may have affected the responses of the subjects. These missing nonverbal signals may have detracted from the "manipulative" style of the high narcissist, thus making the high narc message appear less threatening. Similarly, the missing nonverbal communication may have detracted from the "concerned" and "sensitive" impression of the low narc message and reduced the impact of this argument. One final note regarding the use of written versus live or videotaped scenarios is the neutrality of the gender of the speaker. Based on the persuasive message, the audience has no evidence as to the gender of the persuader. While this item was not considered in the experiment, it may have affected the impressions formed of the speaker. It may be that the preconceived notions an audience attributes to a speaker based on sex may have affected the ratings of the persuasive arguments.

Third, the topic may have been a contributory factor to the positive ratings. The nature of the volunteer work topic may have produced a "prosocial" effect in that volunteer work is seen as socially positive. As a result, the negative qualities of the high narc may have decreased and the positive qualities of the low narc may have increased. That subjects were offered incentive points in exchange for their participation may have affected the subject's ratings. The subjects may have responded in a more positive manner because they felt indebted to the instructor.

One final consideration involves the sample itself. A convenience sample was used. All members of the sample were currently enrolled in the introductory speech course. All subjects had previously interacted and were familiar with the persuasive campaign process. Thus, the initial similarities of the sample may have affected the ratings of the messages.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Keeping in mind the limitations outlined above, several suggestions for research in the area of narcissism in communication are offered. First, this study should be replicated with a greater emphasis placed on the validation of the NLVI. By using a larger sample size and items that more clearly reflect the dimensions of the narcissistic personality, the final message inventory can more comfortably measure narcissistic communication tendencies.

Second, rather than giving subjects one message to examine, subjects could be given both a high and low narc message. Instead of examining the message variables, message preference could be examined. Which is preferred, a high or low narc message? Further, this study could determine message preference by the high or low narc audience. Who prefers which message? In an earlier study by Wald (1989), the issue of preference was addressed, but not fully. This question could provide greater insight into the narcissistic tendencies of the general public.

Third, the topic of the message could be changed. A topic that addresses a more salient or costly issue may alter the results of the study. Giving subjects a nonsocial topic such as "abortion" may

have an impact on the ratings of the message if in fact the audience reacts more to the topic of the message than to the strategies used to gain compliance.

Fourth, this study could be replicated using real speakers or videotaped speakers. As mentioned in the previous section, the absence of vital nonverbal cues might alter the results.

Finally, nonstudents should be studied. A sample more representative of the general population might produce different results regarding the impact of narcissism in persuasive communication.

## ENDNOTES

### **<sup>1</sup>The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)**

Since Freud's study of the narcissistic personality (1948), others have attempted to define the personality characteristics inherent in the narcissistic individual. Due to the "ideological struggle," the term "narcissism" has been interpreted to suggest a variety of behaviors (Levin, 1987, p. 11).

The popularity of the concept stems from the extensive writings by Kernberg (1975) and Kohut (1976). Despite their in-depth research, both scholars do little to clear the confusion that exists concerning the characteristics of the narcissistic personality. Based on the works of Kernberg (1975) and Kohut (1976), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III clearly outlines a specific criteria for diagnosis of the narcissistic personality:

- A. Grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness, e.g., exaggeration of achievements and talents, focus on the special nature of one's problem.
- B. Preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
- C. Exhibitionism: The person requires constant attention and admiration.
- D. Cool indifference or marked feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, or humiliation, or emptiness in response to criticism indifference of others, or defeat.

In addition:

- E. At least two of the following are characteristic of disturbances in interpersonal relationships:

1. Entitlement: Expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities; e.g., surprise and anger that people will not do what is wanted;
2. Interpersonal exploitativeness: Taking advantage of others to indulge own desires or for self-aggrandizement; disregard for the personal integrity and rights of others;
3. Relationships that characteristically alternate between the extremes of overidealization and devaluation;
4. Lack of empathy: Inability to recognize how others feel; e.g., unable to appreciate the distress of someone who is seriously ill. (DSM III, 1987, p. 351)

As has been the case in the past, narcissism is measured by the existence of the personality traits listed above. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) suggests that human behavioral traits characterize an individual's personality. These traits are displayed in the form of behavioral patterns (Raskin & Hall, 1979).

Prior to the development of the NPI, there were several attempts to develop an instrument that could measure the existence of narcissism (Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979; Millon, 1982; Solomon, 1982). These instruments represent attempts to assess pathological narcissism. However, as Emmons (1984) pointed out, the validation of these scales is misleading as subjects consisted of college students too young to be diagnosed with a pathological disorder.

Raskin and Hall (1979) developed the 54-item NPI as an objective self-report inventory of narcissism as a normal personality trait. Prior to narrowing the 54-item NPI to the final 40-item NPI, Raskin and his associates examined studies by Emmons (1984, 1987). After factor analyzing the 54-item NPI, Emmons' analyses resulted in four components central to the NPI: (1)

Authority/Leadership, (2) Self-Absorption/Self-Admiration, (3) Exploitativeness/Entitlement, and (4) Superiority/Arrogance.

Further improving the psychometric properties of the inventory, Raskin and Terry (1988) performed their own principal-components analysis by narrowing the number of test items to 40 and enlarging the component pool to seven first-order components. Raskin and Terry identified seven components believed to be central to the narcissistic personality: (1) Authority, (2) Exhibitionism, (3) Exploitativeness, (4) Entitlement, (5) Self-Sufficiency, (6) Vanity, and (7) Superiority. This study resulted in correlations between each of the components and other personality variables. The 40-item NPI uses a forced-choice format designed to be sensitive to the traits outlined in the DSM III. The validity of the overall instrument as well as the seven key component variables has been verified (Auerbach, 1984; Biscardi & Schill, 1985; Emmons, 1981; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984). The 40-item questionnaire is widely recognized as a valid tool to measure degree of narcissism (Auerbach, 1984; Emmons, 1984; Phares & Erskine, 1984; Prifitera & Ryan, 1984; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Solomon, 1982; Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Bidderman, 1984).

The personality traits found to accompany the NPI first-order dimensions begin with the dimension of authority. Those traits found to accompany NPI Authority are dominance, assertiveness, leadership, criticality, and self-confidence. NPI Exhibitionism characterized such traits as sensation seeking, extraversion, exhibitionism, and lack of impulse control. NPI Exploitativeness was associated with rebelliousness, nonconformity, hostility, and a lack



of consideration and tolerance for others. Ambitiousness, need for power, dominance, hostility, toughness, and lack of tolerance/consideration for others were associated with NPI Entitlement. NPI Self-Sufficiency was found to be related to assertiveness, independence, self-confidence, and need for achievement. NPI Vanity was characterized by a regard for oneself as being physically attractive as well as being viewed by others as being attractive. Finally, NPI Superiority correlated with such personality traits as capacity for status, capacity for social presence, self-confidence, and narcissistic ego inflation (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

The NPI personality traits have been compared to the personality traits in the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Hathaway & McKinley, 1943). Research suggests that the seven NPI components reflect different levels of psychological maladjustment, with narcissistic Entitlement and Exploitativeness reflecting the greatest maladjustment (Raskin & Novacek, 1988). The characteristics of the narcissistic personality were consistent across all levels of MMPI descriptions which suggest that narcissistic individuals are highly energetic, active, and extraverted persons who enjoy assuming leadership roles (Raskin & Novacek, 1988). On the more dysfunctional side, these individuals tend to be exhibitionistic, aggressive, bossy, boastful, hostile, self-indulgent, manipulative, and deceitful. They have grandiose aspirations, they form insincere and superficial relationships, and they exaggerate their own self-worth and importance. These individuals tend to be self-centered and infantile in their expectations of other people, they demand a great deal of attention, and they often become resentful if

their demands are not met (Raskin & Novacek, 1988). The narcissistic personality is characterized most easily by obvious physical traits.

<sup>2</sup>The rationale for labeling the high narcissists is based on Raskin and Hall's (1979) findings. Their research indicates that individuals with high scores on the NPI are thought to be pathologically narcissistic. By labeling the high narcissist as one scoring between 20 and 30, the study would examine the high, yet socially acceptable narcissist.

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**APPENDIXES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**PERSUASIVE MESSAGES**

### **LOW NARCISSIST PERSUASIVE MESSAGE**

Volunteer work is something that can do a lot of good for everyone involved. For the person doing the volunteer work, it allows him/her to get a feeling of love and care for those he/she is helping. For those who are being helped by a volunteer program, it allows them to see that someone does care and wants to spend their time with them. I once heard a girl speaking on helping with the Special Olympics. She said that it gave her such a warm feeling every time an athlete would come up and give her a hug. She also said that it was a feeling she would never forget. Many people need to see that someone cares and that is what volunteer work is all about. It means volunteering your own personal time to help someone else. It means sharing with someone your love and care, so I ask you . . . won't you please share yours? Do it for that sick child in the hospital. Do it for the elderly man who sits outside of the nursing home. But most of all do it for yourself. It will give you such a great feeling and you will be making so many other people happy. I believe it would be worth it hearing someone say, "Thank you for your time."

### **HIGH NARCISSIST PERSUASIVE MESSAGE**

Today's society has many problems which affect all of us, and we are all disgusted with society at one time or another. The question I pose to you is why don't you do something about it? I know you are probably saying how can I help? The answer is very simple. Become a volunteer to help the troubled people of our society because by your help we can make this world a better place to live and work in. There are literally hundreds of organizations which are needing volunteers all of the time and there is usually no experience necessary. However, if there are any special qualifications many times the organization will train you! All you have to do is volunteer your time. As college students, you are probably thinking, "I have no time to volunteer," but what about that couple of hours every afternoon when you watch TV, take a nap or lay out to get a tan? These are hours which could be spent volunteering at a local shelter, nursing home, or day care center. By volunteering, you can help yourself as well as help others. You can learn new skills, meet new friends and perhaps open job opportunities. So the next time you start to turn on that TV, ask yourself how is this helping me? Better yet, ask yourself how watching TV will help your dwindling society.

**APPENDIX B****127-ITEM NLVI****(NARCISSISTIC LANGUAGE VARIABLE INVENTORY)**

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/ Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
The speaker adjusted the message to my point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker was trying to force me to see things his/her way.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker offered me personal rewards to accept the message.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker was telling less than the truth.	5	4	3	2	1
The message appeared creative.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker stressed how I would benefit if I complied.	5	4	3	2	1
The message promises rewards to do what was requested.	5	4	3	2	1
The sender was friendly.	5	4	3	2	1
The way the speaker presented the message made me feel important.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker suggested that I would feel badly about myself if I did not comply.	5	4	3	2	1
Not following the speaker's instructions will make me feel guilty.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker emphasized how I would benefit.	5	4	3	2	1
If I had a chance to meet the speaker, I would like this person.	5	4	3	2	1
I felt forced to do as the speaker instructed.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker stressed that I had a moral obligation to comply.	5	4	3	2	1
The message suggested negative results if I did not comply.	5	4	3	2	1
I will feel good about myself if I do as the speaker wishes.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker appeared trustworthy.	5	4	3	2	1



## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/ Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
I feel the speaker was sensitive to my point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
The argument was memorable.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker considered other people's feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
The message stressed personal benefits of the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is compassionate.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel that the message was playing with my emotions.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel this speaker was trying to make me do things his/her way.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker aroused an emotional response in me.	5	4	3	2	1
After hearing this message, I would volunteer.	5	4	3	2	1
The message offered options if I did not want to do as the speaker wanted.	5	4	3	2	1
I think this speaker is an expert source.	5	4	3	2	1
The message suggested that I will be well-liked if I comply.	5	4	3	2	1
This message stressed how I would benefit from volunteer work.	5	4	3	2	1
This message suggested negative results as a means to get me to comply.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker made me feel that I had to agree with the message.	5	4	3	2	1
If I do not do what the speaker wants, I will be a bad person.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is lying.	5	4	3	2	1
I think that this made me feel like I should volunteer because I owe society.	5	4	3	2	1

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/ Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
The speaker makes the message memorable.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker seems to be telling the truth.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is trying to take advantage of me.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is genuinely concerned.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker knows what he/she is talking about.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is talking from personal experience.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker tried to force me to accept the message.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel good for volunteering.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker gave me options so that I would comply.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker has ulterior motives.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker used coercion so that I would do as he/she wished.	5	4	3	2	1
The message stresses promises if I comply.	5	4	3	2	1
The scene in the message is lifelike.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker makes me feel that volunteering is my moral obligation.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker made me feel that if I volunteer, I will get nothing in return.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is imaginative.	5	4	3	2	1
The message stresses ways that I will benefit.	5	4	3	2	1
The message was creative.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker considers other people's feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is a pleasant person.	5	4	3	2	1

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
This message stresses my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
If I do not comply with the speaker, bad things will happen to me.	5	4	3	2	1
This message is factual.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is trustworthy.	5	4	3	2	1
While I read the message, I can picture what the speaker is saying.	5	4	3	2	1
The message focuses on the speaker's needs.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker makes me feel that if I do what he/she wants, I will be a good person.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel sorry for the people that volunteer help after reading this message.	5	4	3	2	1
The message makes me feel bad that I am not a volunteer.	5	4	3	2	1
The person who wrote the message is sincere.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker tries to control my feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is intelligent.	5	4	3	2	1
I think this speaker is a volunteer.	5	4	3	2	1
If I do not comply, I will disappoint my friends and family.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is thinking about him/herself.	5	4	3	2	1
If I comply, the speaker will benefit.	5	4	3	2	1
I can imagine the scene that the speaker is talking about.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker makes me feel guilty for not volunteering.	5	4	3	2	1
I think the speaker is smart.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker will be angry with me if I do not comply.	5	4	3	2	1

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
This message encouraged me to comply because of personal rewards.	5	4	3	2	1
The persuasive argument was clear.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is imaginative.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is crafty.	5	4	3	2	1
After reading the message, I felt good about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
The words used in the message made you feel "warm".	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is highly persuasive.	5	4	3	2	1
This message gives me a choice whether or not I want to comply.	5	4	3	2	1
As I read the message, the wishes of the speaker are clear to me.	5	4	3	2	1
I will benefit if I do as the speaker suggests.	5	4	3	2	1
If I comply, I will be better liked by my peers.	5	4	3	2	1
If I comply with the speaker, I will get something.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker shows aggression in the message.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker convinced me to comply.	5	4	3	2	1
I think this speaker is trying to deceive me.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker considered my feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
I think this speaker cares about me.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker used strong language so that I would comply.	5	4	3	2	1
This message made me feel uncomfortable.	5	4	3	2	1
I find this message personally appealing.	5	4	3	2	1

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
This speaker uses strong words to get people to comply.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is on the "up and up".	5	4	3	2	1
This message is adapted to meet my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is trying to take advantage of me.	5	4	3	2	1
This message makes me feel positive things about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
This message contains emotional statements.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is happy.	5	4	3	2	1
The emotional content of the message is positive.	5	4	3	2	1
The person sending the message is someone I might like.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker suggested that if I follow instructions, I will be a good person.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker appeared sure of the content of the argument.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker praised me as an audience member.	5	4	3	2	1
If I comply, everyone will like me more.	5	4	3	2	1
This message was convincing.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker is an aggressive person.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker adjusted the message to my point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker appeared confident.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is credible.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker tried to scare me into complying.	5	4	3	2	1
This speaker wanted me to feel good about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker considered my needs.	5	4	3	2	1

## 127-ITEM NLVI

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
After hearing the message, I will become a volunteer.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is an authority on the topic of volunteering.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is an interesting person.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker used his/her position of authority to persuade.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel that I am not a good person since I do not volunteer.	5	4	3	2	1
I like the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is smart.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker is honest.	5	4	3	2	1
I do not like the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
The speaker talked to the audience as if we were not smart.	5	4	3	2	1

**APPENDIX C****45-ITEM NLVI****(NARCISSISTIC LANGUAGE VARIABLE INVENTORY)**

**NARCISSISTIC LANGUAGE VARIABLE INVENTORY**

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
1 The speaker was trying to force me to see things his/her way.	5	4	3	2	1
2 The speaker was telling less than the truth.	5	4	3	2	1
3 The speaker stressed how I would benefit if I complied.	5	4	3	2	1
4 The message promises rewards to do what was requested.	5	4	3	2	1
5 The sender was friendly.	5	4	3	2	1
6 The speaker emphasized how I would benefit.	5	4	3	2	1
7 If I had a chance to meet the speaker, I would like this person.	5	4	3	2	1
8 I felt forced to do as the speaker instructed.	5	4	3	2	1
9 The message suggested negative results if I did not comply.	5	4	3	2	1
10 The speaker appeared trustworthy.	5	4	3	2	1
11 I feel the speaker was sensitive to my point of view.	5	4	3	2	1
12 The message stressed personal benefits of the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
13 The speaker was compassionate.	5	4	3	2	1
14 This speaker made me feel that I had to agree with the message.	5	4	3	2	1
15 This speaker is lying.	5	4	3	2	1
16 The words used in the message made me feel "warm".	5	4	3	2	1
17 This speaker is highly persuasive.	5	4	3	2	1
18 I will benefit if I do as the speaker suggests.	5	4	3	2	1
19 I think this speaker is trying to deceive me.	5	4	3	2	1



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	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
20 This speaker considered my feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
21 I find this message personally appealing.	5	4	3	2	1
22 If I don't comply with the speaker, bad things will happen to me.	5	4	3	2	1
23 The message focuses on the speaker's needs.	5	4	3	2	1
24 The person who wrote the message is sincere.	5	4	3	2	1
25 This speaker is intelligent.	5	4	3	2	1
26 The speaker seems to be telling the truth.	5	4	3	2	1
27 The speaker is genuinely concerned.	5	4	3	2	1
28 The speaker has ulterior motives.	5	4	3	2	1
29 The message stresses ways that I will benefit.	5	4	3	2	1
30 This speaker considers other people's feelings.	5	4	3	2	1
31 This speaker is on the "up and up".	5	4	3	2	1
32 This message is adapted to meet my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
33 This message makes me feel positive things about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
34 This speaker is happy.	5	4	3	2	1
35 The emotional content of the message is positive.	5	4	3	2	1
36 The person sending the message is someone I might like.	5	4	3	2	1
37 This message was convincing.	5	4	3	2	1
38 The speaker appeared confident.	5	4	3	2	1
39 The speaker is credible.	5	4	3	2	1

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	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Undecided/</u> <u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>
40 This speaker wanted me to feel good about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
41 The speaker considered my needs.	5	4	3	2	1
42 I like the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
43 The speaker is honest.	5	4	3	2	1
44 I do not like the speaker.	5	4	3	2	1
45 The speaker talked to the audience as if we were not smart.	5	4	3	2	1

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**VITA**

Donna L. Wald

Candidate for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Thesis: AN EXAMINATION OF THE MESSAGE CHARACTERISTICS  
ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH AND LOW NARCISSISTIC  
PERSUADERS

Major Field: Speech

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Decatur, Texas, October 26, 1960, the  
daughter of Peter L. and Donna J. Wald.

Education: Graduated from C. E. Donart High School,  
Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1978; received Bachelor of  
Science Degree in Speech Communication from Oklahoma  
State University in 1982; completed requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree at Oklahoma State University in  
May, 1990.

Professional Experience: Teaching Assistant, Department of  
Speech Communication, Oklahoma State University,  
August, 1988 to December, 1989. Concierge, January, 1985,  
to July, 1988.