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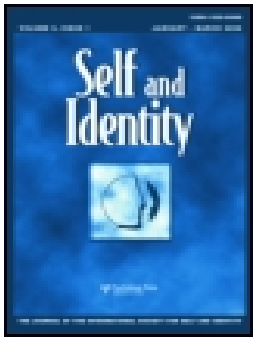
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## Narcissism and respect in romantic relationships

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research was to investigate the connections that narcissistic admiration (i.e., assertive self-enhancement) and narcissistic rivalry (i.e., antagonistic self-protection) had with respect in romantic relationships. The results of Study 1 ( $N = 432$ ) revealed that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner, whereas narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner. In addition, individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration reported low levels of romantic relationship functioning when they perceived low levels of respect from their current partner. The results of Study 2 ( $N = 334$  [167 romantic dyads]) revealed that the narcissistic admiration of women was positively associated with their perceptions of respect from their male partners as well as the actual levels of respect they received. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with the actual levels of respect that men and women received from their partners as well as the levels of respect their partners perceived from them. Discussion focuses on the implications that respect may have for the romantic relationships of narcissistic individuals.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### KEYWORDS

Narcissism; perceived respect; romantic relationship functioning

Respect refers to an attitude that is characterized by feelings of esteem for another individual that is demonstrated by valuing the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of that person along with a willingness to be influenced by that person (e.g., Jackson, Esses, & Burris, 2001). Respect has been shown to play an important role in interpersonal dynamics across various life domains (e.g., employment contexts, friendships) and to have consequences for personal well-being (e.g., Frei & Shaver, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). The importance of respect extends to romantic relationships because it has been found to be associated with marital quality (Noller, Freeney, & Ward, 1997), relationship satisfaction (Frei & Shaver, 2002), commitment to the relationship (e.g., Owen, Quirk, & Manthos, 2012), love styles employed in a relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006), and prosocial behaviors directed toward one's romantic partner (Gowen, Catania, Dolcini, & Harper, 2014). Despite the importance of respect for romantic relationships, previous research has neglected the role that respect may play in the romantic relationships of narcissistic individuals.

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 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed [here](#).

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Narcissism refers to a set of personality traits and processes that involve self-views that are grandiose (see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, for a review). Narcissistic individuals are far more concerned with being respected and admired by others rather than they are with being liked (e.g., Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). This intense desire for respect and admiration seems to shape much of the social lives of narcissistic individuals and may explain their strong preference for *agentic* qualities (e.g., competence, ambition) over *communal* qualities (e.g., warmth, nurturance) in both themselves and their interaction partners (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2007). In the context of romantic relationships, narcissistic individuals tend to use their partners to make themselves feel respected and admired (Campbell, 1999). This can manifest in various ways such as narcissistic individuals pursuing highly desirable romantic partners (e.g., successful, beautiful, famous) to serve as something akin to “trophies” that highlight their own value as mating partners. Another common avenue of expression is that narcissistic individuals are often drawn to those who provide them with attention and flattery because this may directly satisfy their craving for respect and admiration. The tendency for narcissistic individuals to use romantic relationships to satisfy their desire to be respected and admired rather than emphasizing the development of intimacy may help explain many of the long-term difficulties that narcissistic individuals often experience in their romantic relationships including their lack of commitment to these relationships (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Previous research has provided insights into the connections that narcissism has with romantic relationship functioning but many of these studies have failed to distinguish between the different strategies that individuals employ to maintain their grandiose self-views. As a result, the overarching goal of the present research was to gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of the role that respect may play in the romantic relationships of narcissistic individuals by employing the recently developed Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) model (Back et al., 2013). The NARC model suggests that narcissistic individuals can maintain their grandiose self-views by using two different strategies: *narcissistic admiration* (i.e., assertive self-enhancement) and *narcissistic rivalry* (i.e., antagonistic self-protection). Past research regarding the NARC model has found that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry have divergent connections with romantic outcomes such that narcissistic admiration is often associated with short-term mating appeal, positive perceptions of romantic partners, and greater relationship satisfaction, whereas narcissistic rivalry is associated with long-term relationships problems (Wurst et al., 2017), negative perceptions of partners (Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018), and less relationship satisfaction (Vrabel, Zeigler-Hill, Lehtman & Hernandez, *in press*). The present research is important because it will extend past research findings by examining the implications that perceived respect has for the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry have with romantic relationship functioning as well as considering whether narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry are associated with giving respect to and perceiving respect from romantic partners.

## Overview and predictions

The purpose of the present studies was to examine the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with respect in romantic relationships. More

specifically, we examined whether narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry were associated with both perceived respect from the partner and respect toward the partner. We predicted that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry would have divergent associations with the perceived respect from romantic partners as well as the respect that was given to those partners. We expected that the agentic aspects of narcissism that are captured by narcissistic admiration would be positively associated with the respect perceived from romantic partners as well as the respect given to those partners, whereas we expected the insecure and antagonistic aspects of narcissism that are captured by narcissistic rivalry to be negatively associated with the respect perceived from romantic partners as well as the respect given to those partners.

We were also interested in the possibility that perceived respect would moderate the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning. We used the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) to conceptualize relationship functioning in both of the present studies. The Investment Model is grounded in interdependence theory (e.g., Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and it argues that romantic commitment (i.e., the intention to continue in the relationship) is intimately linked with three relationship maintenance mechanisms: (1) relationship satisfaction, (2) investment in the current relationship, and (3) the quality of alternative partners that are available to the individual outside of the current relationship. Previous research has shown that individuals are more likely to report relatively high levels of relationship commitment when they report higher levels of satisfaction, higher levels of investment, and lower levels of quality alternative partners (e.g., Rusbult, 1980). Past research has also shown that narcissism is associated with romantic relationship functioning such that individuals with high levels of narcissism tend to report less commitment to their current relationships and believe that there are highly attractive alternative romantic partners in their social environments (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002; Zeigler-Hill et al., *in press*). We expected that the associations' narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning would be moderated by the level of perceived respect from their romantic partners. More specifically, we predicted that both narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry would be associated with relatively poor romantic relationship functioning when individuals perceived lower levels of respect from their partners.

## Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with perceived respect from romantic partners and respect toward romantic partners. We expected narcissistic admiration to be positively associated with perceptions of respect from romantic partners. The rationale for this prediction was based on past research showing that narcissistic admiration is associated with positive self-views such as perceiving oneself to have relatively high levels of status (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). As a result, it seemed reasonable to anticipate that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic admiration would perceive relatively high levels of respect from their romantic partners. We also expected that narcissistic admiration may be positively associated with *giving* respect to romantic partners but we were less certain about this prediction. The rationale for this prediction is based on previous

research that has found that narcissistic admiration tends to be linked with short-term mating appeal and positive perceptions of a partner's mate value (Wurst et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018). As a result, individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration may be more likely to give respect to their romantic partners as a means to self-enhance. In contrast, we expected narcissistic rivalry to be negatively associated with both perceiving respect from romantic partners and giving respect to romantic partners. The rationale for this prediction is based on previous research that has found narcissistic rivalry to be associated with negative self-views such as lower levels of perceived status (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019) which led us to expect that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry would report having relatively low levels of perceived respect in their romantic relationships. In addition, narcissistic rivalry tends to be linked with long-term relationship issues and negative perceptions of a partner's mate value (Wurst et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018). As a result, individuals with high levels of narcissistic rivalry may be less likely to give respect to their romantic partners.

We expected narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry to have divergent associations with romantic relationship functioning based on previous research showing that narcissistic admiration is associated with many short-term benefits in romantic relationships, whereas narcissistic rivalry is associated with many long-term problems in these relationships (Wurst et al., 2017). However, we expected the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning would be moderated by perceived respect from their romantic partner. More specifically, we expected that both forms of narcissism would be negatively associated with romantic relationship functioning when individuals perceived low levels of respect from their romantic partners. The rationale for this prediction was that both narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry are associated with the motivation to attain status (see Zeigler-Hill, McCabe, Vrabel, Raby, & Cronin, 2018, for a review) and that individuals who possess both forms of narcissism have been found to be reactive to events that may threaten their status (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). We believed that the important role that status plays in how narcissistic individuals perceive themselves and their social environments would lead individuals with high levels of narcissism to report relatively negative perceptions of their romantic relationships when they perceived relatively low levels of respect from their romantic partners because these relationships would be failing to meet their desire for respect and admiration.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

Participants were 495 community adults from the United States who were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). All participants were involved in a committed heterosexual relationship for at least 6 months. Participants were asked to complete measures concerning their narcissism, perceived respect from their romantic partner, respect toward their romantic partner, and current romantic relationship functioning – along with other measures that are not relevant to the present study (e.g., pathological personality traits) – via a secure website. Data were excluded for 63 participants who

failed to successfully complete two or more of the directed response items that were included in the instruments to identify inattentive responding (e.g., “Answer this item with ‘Strongly Disagree’”). The final sample consisted of 432 participants (217 men, 215 women). The mean age of participants was 33.27 years ( $SD = 11.19$ ) and their racial/ethnic composition was 75% White, 8% Black, 8% Asian, 7% Hispanic, and 2% other. The mean relationship length of participants was 7.66 years ( $SD = 8.76$  years) and the relationship status of the participants was 43% married, 34% dating, 21% cohabitating, and 2% engaged. This study was not preregistered but the data file and syntax file for the analyses are available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) at <https://osf.io/6bjfk>. The data for this study have not been used in previous publications.

## Measures

### Narcissism

Narcissism was assessed using the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013). The NARQ includes 18 items that capture two basic dimensions of narcissism: *narcissistic admiration* (9 items; e.g., “I am great” [ $\alpha = .91$ ]) and *narcissistic rivalry* (9 items; e.g., “I take pleasure in the failure of my rivals” [ $\alpha = .90$ ]). Participants were asked to rate how well each statement described them using scales that ranged from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 6 (*agree completely*). This measure has been shown to possess adequate psychometric properties in previous studies (e.g., Back et al., 2013).

### Perceived respect from partner

Perceived respect from partner was assessed using a modified version of the Respect Toward Partner Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). This instrument includes six items that were modified to capture perceived respect from partner (e.g., “My partner respects me”) rather than respect toward partner (e.g., “I respect my partner”). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using scales that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency for this instrument was  $\alpha = .93$ .

### Respect toward partner

Respect toward partner was assessed using the Respect Toward Partner Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006) which includes six items (e.g., “I respect my partner” [ $\alpha = .93$ ]). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using scales that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

### Romantic relationship functioning

Romantic relationship functioning was measured using the Investment Model Scale (IMS; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). The IMS includes 22 items measuring four dimensions of relationship functioning: *relationship satisfaction* (5 items; e.g., “My relationship is much better than others’ relationships”), *investment* (5 items; e.g., “I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end”), *quality of alternative partners* (5 items; e.g., “The people other than my partner with whom I might become involved are very appealing”), and *commitment* (7 items; e.g., “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner”). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each item on scales ranging from 0 (*do not agree at all*) to 8

(agree completely). We created a composite score for romantic relationship functioning by averaging all of the IMS items after reverse-scoring the items concerning the quality of alternatives. The internal consistency for this romantic relationship functioning composite was  $\alpha = .92$ .

## Results

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 1. Narcissistic admiration was positively correlated with narcissistic rivalry and negatively correlated with romantic relationship functioning but it was not correlated with perceived respect from partner or respect toward partner. Narcissistic rivalry was negatively correlated with perceived respect from partner, respect toward partner, and romantic relationship functioning. Preliminary analyses included sex as a potential moderator because previous studies have found sex differences for narcissism (see Grijalva et al., 2015, for a review) as well as romantic relationship functioning (e.g., Branje, Frijns, Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2007). However, sex did not emerge as a significant moderator in those analyses nor were the reported results significantly changed by the inclusion of sex in the analysis. Consequently, we did not include sex in the final analyses in the interest of parsimony.

### Perceived respect

We conducted a multiple regression analysis in order to examine the unique associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with perceived respect from partner. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for this analysis were less than 1.34 which suggests that multicollinearity was not an issue (Darlington & Hayes, 2017). The results revealed that narcissistic admiration had a unique positive association with perceived respect from partner ( $B = 0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = 4.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.10, 0.24]), whereas narcissistic rivalry had a unique negative association with perceived respect from partner ( $B = -0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = -6.42$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.33, -0.18]).

### Respect toward partner

We conducted a multiple regression analysis in order to examine the unique associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with respect toward romantic partner. The results revealed that narcissistic admiration had a positive association with respect toward

**Table 1.** Study 1: Intercorrelations and descriptive statistics.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Narcissistic Admiration	–				
2. Narcissistic Rivalry	.50**	–			
3. Perceived Respect from Partner	.08	–.21**	–		
4. Respect Toward Partner	–.02	–.27**	.77**	–	
5. Romantic Relationship Functioning	–.13*	–.38**	.67**	.75**	–
Mean	3.11	2.31	4.35	4.51	6.36
Standard Deviation	1.19	1.10	0.81	0.62	1.42

\* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .



romantic partner ( $B = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 3.04$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95%CI [0.03, 0.14]), whereas narcissistic rivalry had a negative association with respect toward romantic partner ( $B = -0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = -6.66$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.26, -0.14]).

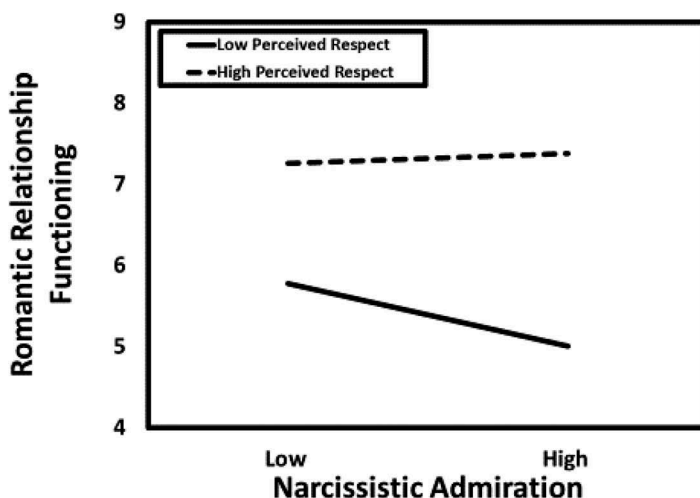
### *Romantic relationship functioning*

We conducted a hierarchical-moderated multiple regression analysis in order to examine whether perceived respect from partner moderated the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning. Narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and perceived respect from partner were entered in Step 1 and the interactions that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with perceived respect from partner were entered in Step 2. The continuous predictor variables were centered for the purpose of testing interactions (Aiken & West, 1991). These regression analyses were followed by the simple slopes tests recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to describe the interaction of continuous variables. Simple slopes tests were conducted using values one standard deviation above and below their respective means (e.g., a relatively high level of narcissistic admiration was represented by a value that was one standard deviation above the mean for narcissistic admiration, whereas a relatively low level of narcissistic admiration was represented by a value that was one standard deviation below the mean for narcissistic admiration). The VIF values for this analysis were less than 3.20 which suggests that multicollinearity was not an issue (Darlington & Hayes, 2017).

The results revealed that narcissistic rivalry had a unique negative association with romantic relationship functioning ( $B = -0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = -5.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.38, -0.17]). Further, perceived respect had a positive association with romantic relationship functioning ( $B = 1.11$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 17.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.99, 1.23]), but this association was qualified by the interaction of narcissistic admiration  $\times$  perceived respect ( $B = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t = 3.57$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.10, 0.36]). The predicted values for the narcissistic admiration  $\times$  perceived respect interaction are depicted in Figure 1. Simple slopes tests showed that the negative association between narcissistic admiration and romantic relationship functioning was significant for individuals who reported lower levels of perceived respect ( $B = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t = -3.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.48, -0.16]), but it was not significant for individuals who reported higher levels of perceived respect ( $B = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 0.87$ ,  $p = .39$ , 95%CI [-0.07, 0.17]).<sup>1,2</sup>

### **Discussion**

The results of Study 1 were partially consistent with our predictions. Narcissistic admiration was positively associated with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner in the multiple regression analyses despite the lack of a zero-order correlation with either indicator of respect. These differences in the associations between narcissistic admiration and indicators of respect may be due to issues surrounding the “perils of partialling” that arise when correlated predictor variables are included in a single regression model (see Lynam, Hoyle, & Newman, 2006, for a review). That is, the positive associations that narcissistic admiration had with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner in the multiple regression analyses may have emerged because the residualized form of narcissistic admiration in those analyses may represent an



**Figure 1.** Study 1: Predicted values for romantic relationship functioning illustrating the interaction of narcissistic admiration and perceived respect from one's romantic partner at values that are one standard deviation above and below their respective means.

especially positive expression of narcissism after its overlap with narcissistic rivalry has been statistically removed. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry had the expected negative associations with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner regardless of whether we controlled for its overlap with narcissistic admiration.

As expected, narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with romantic relationship functioning. However, the association between narcissistic rivalry and romantic relationship functioning was not moderated by perceived respect from the romantic partner when narcissistic admiration was included in the regression model. In contrast, perceived respect did moderate the association between narcissistic admiration and romantic relationship functioning such that the negative association between narcissistic admiration and romantic relationship functioning only emerged when individuals perceived low levels of respect from their romantic partner.

## Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 by examining the connections between narcissism, respect, and relationship functioning in romantic dyads. Our use of both members of these romantic dyads also allowed us to explore whether narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry were associated with the respect that individuals actually received from their romantic partners and the respect that partners perceived from them along with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner from Study 1. We expected that the agentic and charming qualities that characterize narcissistic admiration would lead to this form of narcissism being associated with receiving more respect from romantic partners as well as partners perceiving more respect. In contrast, we expected that the antagonistic qualities that characterize narcissistic rivalry would lead to this form of narcissism being associated with receiving less respect from romantic partners as well as partners perceiving less respect.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

Participants were 334 community members (i.e., 167 romantic couples) from the United States recruited through MTurk. All participants were involved in a committed heterosexual relationship for a minimum of 6 months. Participants were asked to complete measures concerning their own narcissism, the respect they perceived from their partners, the respect they had for their romantic partners, and their romantic relationship functioning – along with other measures that are not relevant to the present study (e.g., pathological personality traits) – via a secure website. Participants were instructed to provide this information separately (i.e., one partner was not supposed to be aware of the specific responses provided by his or her partner). The mean age of participants was 34.56 years ( $SD = 10.16$ ) and their racial/ethnic composition was 77% White, 9% Black, 7% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 2% other. The mean relationship length of participants was 6.57 years ( $SD = 7.37$  years) and the relationship status of the participants was 46% married, 28% dating, 24% cohabitating, and 2% engaged. This study was not preregistered but the data file and syntax file for the analyses are available on OSF at <https://osf.io/6bjfk>. The data for this study have not been used in previous publications.

### *Measures*

#### *Narcissism*

Narcissistic admiration [ $\alpha_{Men} = .91$ ,  $\alpha_{Women} = .90$ ] and narcissistic rivalry [ $\alpha_{Men} = .92$ ,  $\alpha_{Women} = .91$ ] was assessed using the NARQ as in Study 1.

#### *Perceived respect from partner*

Perceived respect from partner was assessed using the modified version of the Respect Toward Partner Scale as in Study 1 ( $\alpha_{Men} = .93$ ,  $\alpha_{Women} = .93$ ).

#### *Respect toward partner*

Respect toward partner was assessed using the Respect Toward Partner Scale as in Study 1 ( $\alpha_{Men} = .88$ ,  $\alpha_{Women} = .90$ ).

#### *Romantic relationship functioning*

Romantic relationship functioning was assessed using the IMS as in Study 1 ( $\alpha_{Men} = .93$ ,  $\alpha_{Women} = .95$ ).

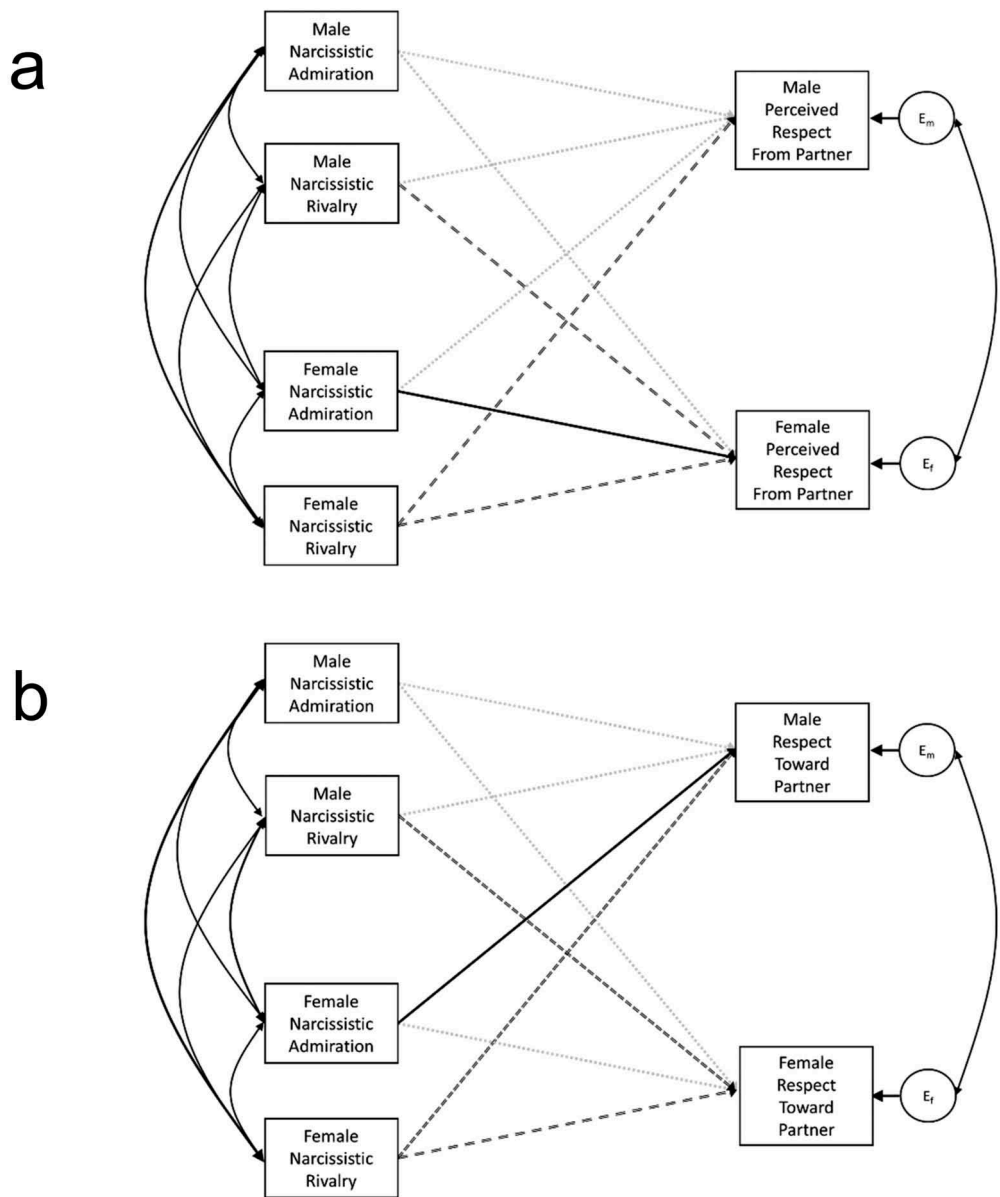
## Results

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 2. We examined the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). The APIM is a model for dyadic data analysis that accounts for the reciprocal qualities of naturally occurring relationships by measuring the associations between scores provided by partners. For

Table 2. Study 2: Intercorrelations and descriptive statistics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Narcissistic Admiration <i>Male</i>	—									
2. Narcissistic Rivalry <i>Male</i>	.53***	—								
3. Perceived Respect From Partner <i>Male</i>	.08	−.18*	—							
4. Respect Toward Partner <i>Male</i>	.07	−.23**	.74***	—						
5. Romantic Relationship Functioning <i>Male</i>	.11	−.34***	.58***	.72***	—					
6. Narcissistic Admiration <i>Female</i>	.55***	.27***	.03	.07	−.10	—				
7. Narcissistic Rivalry <i>Female</i>	.23**	.53***	−.32***	−.36***	−.47***	.47***	—			
8. Perceived Respect From Partner <i>Female</i>	.08	−.24**	.55***	.63***	.54***	.11	−.26**	—		
9. Respect Toward Partner <i>Female</i>	.07	−.26***	.64***	.64***	.53***	.01	.35***	.81***	—	
10. Romantic Relationship Functioning <i>Female</i>	−.03	−.40***	.50***	.55***	.64***	−.17*	−.52***	.75***	.76***	—
Mean	3.28	2.47	4.36	4.48	6.35	3.25	2.33	4.38	4.40	6.40
Standard Deviation	1.21	1.22	0.76	0.57	1.30	1.18	1.14	0.79	0.68	1.50

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 2.** Study 2: APIM model of the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with the level of perceived respect from one's romantic partner (Panel A) and respect toward one's romantic partner (Panel B). *Note:* Rectangles indicate measured variables and circles indicate disturbance terms. The significant positive associations are indicated by solid black arrows. The significant negative associations are indicated by dashed black arrows. The dotted grey lines represent nonsignificant associations. The correlations are included for the relationships between the predictors (i.e., narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry) as well as among the outcome variables (e.g., respect toward partner) and are indicated by curved bidirectional arrows.

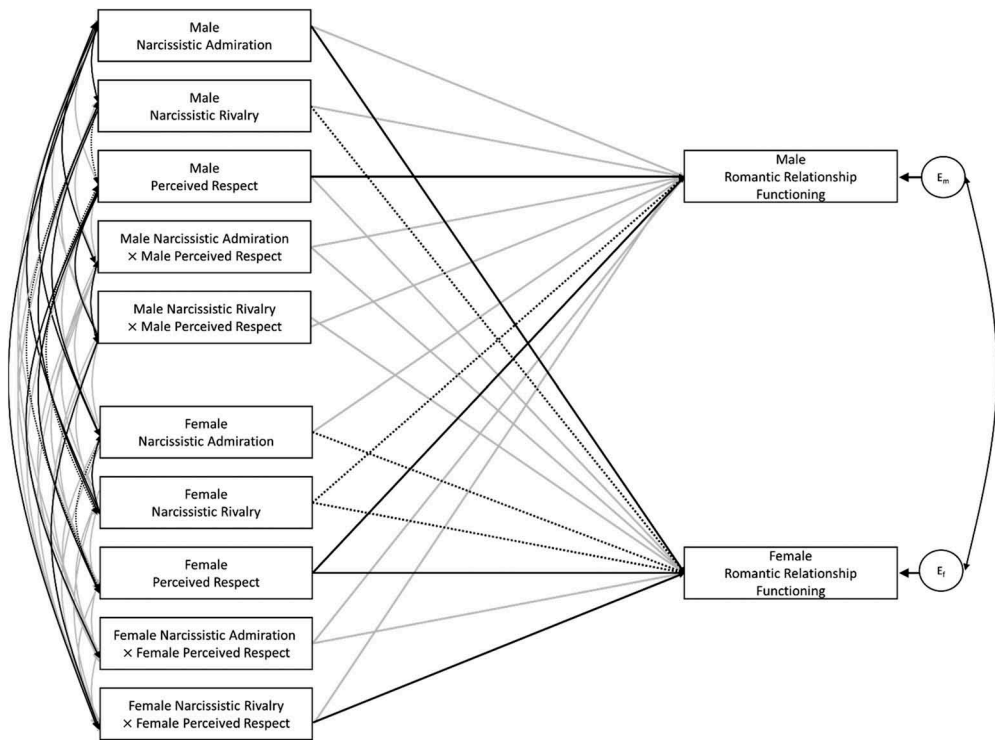
example, a man's level of narcissistic rivalry may be associated with the respect that he perceives from his female partner (actor effect) as well as the respect that she perceives from him (partner effect). Perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner were modeled separately. An additional APIM model examined whether perceived respect from partner moderated the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with one's own perceptions of the romantic relationship (actor effect) as well as his or her partner's perceptions of the romantic relationship (partner effect).

### *Perceived respect from partner*

The APIM model for perceived respect from partner is presented in Panel A of [Figure 2](#). Narcissistic admiration had a positive actor effect for women ( $B = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 2.32$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95%CI [0.03, 0.43]) such that women with higher levels of narcissistic admiration perceived more respect from their male partners. There was also a negative actor effect of narcissistic rivalry for women ( $B = -.28$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -2.91$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95%CI [-0.48, -0.08]) such that women with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry perceived less respect from their male partners. There were no actor effects for narcissistic admiration ( $B = .13$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.27$ ,  $p = .21$ , 95%CI [-0.07, 0.33]) or narcissistic rivalry ( $B = -.09$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -0.88$ ,  $p = .38$ , 95%CI [-0.29, 0.11]) for men. There were no partner effects of narcissistic admiration for men ( $B = 0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.32$ ,  $p = .19$ , 95%CI [-0.07, 0.33]) or women ( $B = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.64$ ,  $p = .10$ , 95%CI [-0.04, 0.36]). Narcissistic rivalry had negative partner effects for both men ( $B = -0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ , 95%CI [-0.42, -0.02]) and women ( $B = -0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -3.90$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.58, -0.18]) such that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry had partners who perceived less respect from them.

### *Respect toward partner*

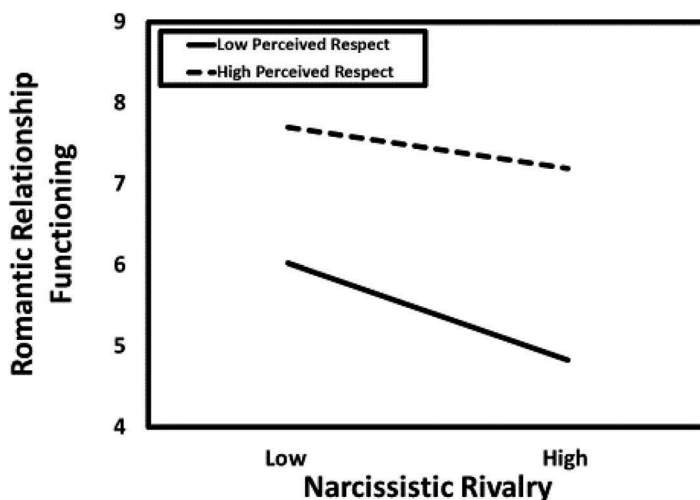
The APIM model for respect toward partner is presented in Panel B of [Figure 2](#). There were no actor effects for narcissistic admiration for men ( $B = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 0.89$ ,  $p = .37$ , 95%CI [-0.11, 0.29]) or women ( $B = 0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.38$ ,  $p = .17$ , 95%CI [-0.07, 0.33]). Narcissistic rivalry had a negative actor effect for women ( $B = -0.35$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t = -3.67$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.53, -0.17]) such that women with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry reported lower levels of respect for their partners. The actor effect for narcissistic rivalry was not significant for men ( $B = -0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -1.21$ ,  $p = .23$ , 95%CI [-0.32, 0.08]). Narcissistic admiration had a positive partner effect for women ( $B = 0.27$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 2.80$ ,  $p = .005$ , 95%CI [0.07, 0.47]) such that women with higher levels of narcissistic admiration received higher levels of respect from their male partners. The partner effect for narcissistic admiration was not significant for men ( $B = 0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = 1.89$ ,  $p = .06$ , 95%CI [-0.01, 0.39]). Narcissistic rivalry had negative partner effects for both men ( $B = -0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -2.18$ ,  $p = .03$ , 95%CI [-0.41, -0.01]) and women ( $B = -0.44$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t = -4.73$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.62, -0.26]) such that individuals with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry received less respect from their romantic partners.



**Figure 3.** Study 2: APIM model of the associations that narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and perceived respect had with romantic relationship functioning. *Note:* Rectangles indicate measured variables and circles indicate disturbance terms. The significant associations are indicated by solid black arrows. The dashed grey lines represent nonsignificant associations. The correlations are included for the relationships between the predictors (e.g., perceived respect for women and men) as well as among the outcome variables (i.e., romantic relationship functioning for women and men) and are indicated by curved bidirectional arrows.

### ***Perceived respect as a moderator of the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning***

The APIM model for whether perceived respect moderated the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning is presented in [Figure 3](#). Narcissistic admiration had a negative actor effect for women ( $B = -0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = -3.00$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95%CI  $[-0.29, -0.05]$ ) such that women with high levels of narcissistic admiration had low levels of romantic relationship functioning. In addition, narcissistic rivalry had a negative actor effect for women ( $B = -0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = -3.62$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI  $[-0.33, -0.09]$ ) such that women with high levels of narcissistic rivalry reported low levels of romantic relationship functioning. Perceived respect from partner had a positive actor effect for women ( $B = 0.62$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 11.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI  $[0.52, 0.72]$ ) and men ( $B = 0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t = 4.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI  $[0.17, 0.49]$ ) such that individuals who perceived high levels of respect from their partners had higher levels of romantic relationship functioning. Finally, perceived respect moderated the actor effect for narcissistic rivalry for women ( $B = 0.94$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 2.08$ ,  $p = .04$ ,



**Figure 4.** Study 2: Predicted values for romantic relationship functioning illustrating the interaction of narcissistic rivalry and perceived respect from one's romantic partner at values that are one standard deviation above and below their respective means.

95%CI [0.84, 1.04]). Simple slopes analyses revealed that the negative association between narcissistic rivalry and romantic relationship functioning was significant for women who perceived high levels of respect from their male partners ( $B = -0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t = -2.30$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95%CI [-0.43, -0.03]) but it was particularly strong for women who perceived low levels of respect from their male partners ( $B = -0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $t = -4.93$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.74, -0.31]). The predicted values for the narcissistic rivalry  $\times$  perceived respect interaction are depicted in Figure 4.

A variety of partner effects also emerged from this analysis. Narcissistic admiration had a positive partner effect for men ( $B = 0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 2.44$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95%CI [0.03, 0.27]) such that men with higher levels of narcissistic admiration had partners who had higher levels of romantic relationship functioning. Narcissistic rivalry had negative partner effects for both men ( $B = -0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = -3.00$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95%CI [-0.30, -0.06]) and women ( $B = -0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t = -3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.44, -0.12]) such that individuals with high levels of narcissistic rivalry had partners who reported lower levels of romantic relationship functioning. Finally, perceived respect from one's partner had a positive partner effect for women ( $B = 0.27$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t = 3.77$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.13, 0.40]) such that women who perceived high levels of respect from their male partners had partners who reported higher levels of romantic relationship functioning.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 partially supported our hypotheses such that women with higher levels of narcissistic admiration perceived more respect from their partners and actually received more respect from their partners. However, it is important to emphasize that this was only true for women and not for men. This shows that women with higher



levels of narcissistic admiration tended to be respected by their romantic partners and were aware of the respect their partners had for them. A very different pattern emerged for narcissistic rivalry such that it was negatively associated with the actual levels of respect that men and women received from their partners and the levels of respect their partners perceived from them. Further, women with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry perceived relatively little respect from their male partners and had relatively low levels of respect for their male partners as well. Overall, the pattern for narcissistic rivalry suggests that it is intimately connected with a lack of respect in romantic relationships which may be explained by individuals with high levels of narcissistic rivalry engaging in antagonistic behaviors toward their partners that may lead their partners to have little respect for them and to perceive relatively little respect from them. This lack of respect may provide at least a partial explanation for the connections that narcissistic rivalry has with various difficulties in long-term relationships (e.g., Wurst et al., 2017).

The associations that narcissistic admiration, narcissistic rivalry, and perceived respect had with romantic relationship functioning were only partially consistent with the results of Study 1. Perceived respect had a positive association with romantic relationship functioning for both men and women which is consistent with the results of Study 1. However, narcissistic admiration had a positive association with romantic relationship functioning for women but not men, whereas in Study 1 narcissistic admiration was not associated with romantic relationship functioning in either men or women. In addition, narcissistic rivalry had a negative association with romantic relationship functioning for women, whereas it was negatively associated with romantic relationship functioning for both men and women in Study 1. Finally, perceived respect moderated the association that narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning for women but not men in the present study such that this association was particularly strong when women perceived relatively low levels of respect from their romantic partners. In contrast, the results of Study 1 revealed a negative association between narcissistic admiration (rather than narcissistic rivalry) and romantic relationship functioning when individuals (not just women) perceived low levels of respect from their romantic partners.

## General discussion

The primary goal of the present studies was to examine the connections that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with respect in romantic relationships. More specifically, we examined (1) whether narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry were associated with perceived respect from romantic partners and the respect given to those partners and (2) whether perceived respect from partner moderated the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with relationship functioning. The results of the studies were partially consistent with our predictions. Perceived respect moderated the association that narcissistic admiration had with romantic relationship functioning but it did not moderate the association that narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning in Study 1. However, perceived respect moderated the association that narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning for women (but not men) in Study 2. These results show that perceiving relatively low levels of respect from romantic partners may be at least somewhat costly for the romantic relationships of narcissistic individuals but the inconsistency of the

results across studies suggest that additional research is needed to gain a clearer understanding of when perceptions of disrespect are particularly problematic for individuals with high levels of narcissistic admiration or narcissistic rivalry.

The results of Study 2 revealed that narcissistic admiration was positively associated with the actual level of respect that women received from their male partners as well as their perceptions of respect from their partners. This suggests that the agentic self-promotion that characterizes narcissistic admiration may contribute to gaining the respect of their romantic partners. This is consistent with the findings of previous research showing narcissistic admiration to be positively associated with perceptions of power (Vrabel et al., [in press](#)) and status (Zeigler-Hill et al., [2019](#)) for both men and women. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry was negatively associated with the respect individuals actually received from their romantic partners as well as the respect their partners perceived from them. This suggests that the antagonistic behaviors that characterize narcissistic rivalry may contribute to a lack of respect between romantic partners. In sum, these results revealed that women with high levels of narcissistic admiration received relatively high levels of respect from their romantic partners and were aware of the respect their partners had for them, whereas narcissistic rivalry was linked with a lack of respect in romantic relationships for both men and women. These results suggest that the agentic aspects of narcissism that are captured by narcissistic admiration appear to have some benefits for respect in romantic relationships, whereas the insecure and antagonistic aspects of narcissism that are captured by narcissistic rivalry appear to have substantial costs for respect in romantic relationships. These results provide additional support for the importance of distinguishing between narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry because doing so allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the connections between narcissism and respect in romantic relationships that would not have been possible if the multidimensional nature of narcissism had not been taken into account.

Although the present studies had numerous strengths (e.g., large sample sizes), the studies had a number of potential limitations that should be addressed. The first potential limitation of the present studies is that they relied exclusively on self-report measures of narcissism, respect, and romantic relationship functioning. Consequently, the findings may have been impacted by socially desirable response tendencies (e.g., individuals may have denied narcissistic tendencies that they actually possessed). Future research should attempt to employ strategies that avoid relying exclusively on self-report measures (e.g., observer reports of narcissistic tendencies provided by peers). The second limitation concerns the difficulties that are inherent with analytic approaches that attempt to identify the unique associations that correlated predictor variables have with the same outcome variable (see Lynam et al., [2006](#) or Sleep, Lynam, Hyatt, & Miller, [2017](#), for extended discussions of this “perils of partialling” issue). For example, narcissistic admiration only had positive associations with perceived respect from partner and respect toward partner in Study 1 when the overlapping variance it shares with narcissistic rivalry was removed. It can certainly be beneficial to statistically control for the overlap between different forms of narcissism but there are important concerns associated with data analytic approaches that use residualized variables (e.g., how should the residualized version of narcissistic admiration be interpreted after removing the overlapping variance it shares with narcissistic rivalry?). This issue deserves additional consideration in future research.

The third limitation is that present studies relied exclusively on romantic relationships that were longer than 6 months in duration. As a result, additional research is needed to determine whether similar associations would emerge in the beginning stages of romantic relationships as past research has shown that narcissistic individuals tend to be satisfied with their romantic relationships in the beginning stages, but tend to be less satisfied with their romantic relationships after these initial stages (Lavner, Lamkin, Miller, Campbell, & Karney, 2016). The fourth limitation is that the present studies relied on a single point in time which prevents us from considering changes in these constructs over time. Future research should investigate whether perceived respect changes over time because recent studies have shown that narcissism (Giacomin & Jordan, 2016) and romantic relationship functioning (e.g., commitment; Arriaga, Reed, Goodfriend, & Agnew, 2006) are dynamic qualities that tend to shift over time. The fifth limitation is that the present results relied on a single indicator of romantic relationship functioning. Future research should investigate the connections that perceived respect may have with a broader array of outcomes concerning romantic relationships such as liking or affection for one's partner. Despite these limitations, the results of the present studies expand our knowledge concerning the links between narcissism and respect in ongoing romantic relationships.

## Notes

1. Due to our concerns about the overlap between narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry, we examined whether perceived respect from partner would moderate their associations with romantic relationship functioning in separate analyses. The results of the analysis involving narcissistic admiration revealed a narcissistic admiration  $\times$  perceived respect from partner interaction ( $B = 0.31$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 5.86$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.21, 0.41]) that was similar to the interaction already described in the text. However, the results of the analysis involving narcissistic rivalry revealed the expected narcissistic rivalry  $\times$  perceived respect from partner interaction ( $B = 0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.54$ ,  $t = 3.62$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.09, 0.30]) that did not emerge in the primary analysis. Further, simple slopes tests showed that the negative association between narcissistic rivalry and romantic relationship functioning was significant for individuals who reported higher levels of perceived respect ( $B = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = -6.95$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.41, -0.23]) but it was especially strong for individuals who reported lower levels of perceived respect ( $B = -0.48$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = -7.82$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.61, -0.36]).
2. Although we framed the perceived respect from partner as a moderator of the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning, we also examined the possibility that perceived respect from partner may mediate – rather than moderate – these associations for exploratory purposes using model four of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2018). Narcissistic admiration had a positive indirect association with romantic relationship functioning through perceived respect ( $B = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $z = 4.61$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.01, 0.23]), whereas narcissistic rivalry had a negative indirect association with romantic relationship functioning through perceived respect ( $B = -0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $z = -6.04$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.30, -0.15]). These results suggest that perceived respect from partner may mediate the associations that these forms of narcissism have with romantic relationship functioning. However, it is important to note that there are important limitations involved with cross-sectional mediation (see Maxwell & Cole, 2007, for a review).
3. Due to our concerns about the overlap between narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry, we also conducted separate APIM analyses for these forms of narcissism. The results of those analyses were similar to those presented in the text with only minor differences

(e.g., the partner effects for male narcissistic rivalry were weaker when narcissistic admiration was not included in the model).

4. As in Study 1, we also examined the possibility that perceived respect from partner may mediate the associations that narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry had with romantic relationship functioning for exploratory purposes. Narcissistic admiration had a positive indirect association with romantic relationship functioning through perceived respect for men ( $B = 0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $z = 2.61$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95%CI [0.04, 0.24]) and women ( $B = 0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $z = 3.49$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.10, 0.32]), whereas narcissistic rivalry had a negative indirect association with romantic relationship functioning through perceived respect for men ( $B = -0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $z = -3.18$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95%CI [-0.27, -0.07]) and women ( $B = -0.27$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $z = -4.59$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.39, -0.16]). These results suggest that perceived respect from partner may mediate the associations that these forms of narcissism have with romantic relationship functioning but there are important limitations involved with cross-sectional mediation (e.g., Maxwell & Cole, 2007).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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