SUMMARY OF RESULTS — STUDY 1

Thank you for completing our research survey. We are not able to send you the results of the current research survey until we have finished recruiting (early 2016), however, here are the results of our first research survey.

From October to December, 2014, research was conducted to explore how Australian adults think about themselves. Specifically, we wanted to look at the relationship between sense of self (specifically, self-esteem and narcissism) and psychological well-being, psychological traits and social relationships. A total of 298 adults aged 18 to 70 participated, most of whom were female (59%) and most of whom were from Western Australia (66%). Here is a summary of the results:

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem reflects an individual’s self-evaluation of their sense of worth. Self-esteem is usually very stable; it does not change or fluctuate and it is consistent with reality.

The self-esteem of adults in this study is comparable to recent studies of self-esteem in Australia. The average participant had high self-esteem.

Self-esteem levels were similar for:

- Males and females: Some past studies have found that women have lower self-esteem than men. Men and women in our study had similar levels of self-esteem. This could be due to a cultural shift in gender patterns of self-esteem. Additional research will help determine if this is the case.
- Social and economic resources: Self-esteem did not differ based on participant’s income.
- Culture or Ethnicity: Participants with different ethnicities had similar levels of self-esteem.

Self-esteem differed based on:

- Rural vs. Urban Living: Participants from urban or semi-urban areas had somewhat higher self-esteem than those living in remote or rural areas. This is consistent with research in Australia that has found that, although rural adults may have greater resilience and less stress, they generally have lower emotional and mental health than adults living in metropolitan areas.
- Younger and older participants: In this study, older participants had somewhat higher levels of self-esteem compared to younger participants. This is consistent with past studies that have found that self-esteem increases steadily with age. As we get older our sense of control and ability to master skills also increases, which can lead greater self-esteem.

Self-esteem and psychological traits

Participants with higher self-esteem were more likely to have greater psychological well-being and positive emotions, and were more agreeable and extraverted.

Participants with higher self-esteem were less likely to need the approval of others, and reported lower levels of anger and aggression.

Narcissism

Narcissism is an inflated sense of self, which means that a person’s self-view is more positive than what might be expected in reality. Individuals with high levels of narcissism have a sense of feeling superior to and deserving more than others. A source of frustration for individuals high in narcissism is unmet expectations from others.

In this research, we consider narcissism to be a normal personality trait that is present to greater or lesser extents in most individuals. We found that:

- Narcissism was normally distributed across the individuals in this study, which means a minority had high narcissism, a minority had low narcissism and most individuals fell somewhere in between. This is consistent with seeing narcissism as a normally occurring personality trait, as a moderate level of narcissism is found in most adults.
- We found evidence for two different types of narcissism in adults: one that was related to high self-esteem and extraversion, and the other that was associated with low self-esteem and introversion. This is consistent with what previous literature on narcissism has found in adults.

Sincerely,

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