

Collective narcissism and tribal reactions to exclusion and inequality

Collective narcissism and tribal attitudes towards equality

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Abstract

At high levels of collective narcissism, group members are overly preoccupied by exclusion of their ingroup, but they are not bothered by exclusion of other groups by the ingroup. This is regardless of whether the ingroup is chronically marginalized and excluded in public life or has traditionally enjoyed a privileged access to power and resources. Collective narcissism predicts parochial bias in attitudes towards equality depending on whether greater equality aligns or goes against the goal of the ingroup being better off than the outgroup. In advantaged groups (e.g. men, Whites), collective narcissism predicts anti-egalitarianism, endorsement of beliefs justifying inequality and support for actions to advance existing privilege, including support for the state's repression of social movements towards equality. National collective predicts the same attitudes towards equality as collective narcissism in advantaged groups suggesting that at high level of collective narcissism, members of advantaged groups engage in *ethnocentric projection*, claiming national prototypicality to frame the ingroup's goals as national interests. This process is successful as members of disadvantaged groups who endorse national narcissism support beliefs legitimizing their disadvantage. However, collective narcissism with reference to disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, Blacks) predicts egalitarianism, rejection of beliefs legitimizing inequality and engagement in collective action to pursue equality.

"Prejudice needs power to be effective" Reni Eddo-Lodge

"Your silence will not protect you" Audre Lorde

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Exclusion, the experience of being separated from others against one's own will (Riva & Eck, 2016) is a universally distressful (Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Williams, 2009) and painful experience (Eisenberger, 2015; Ratner et al., 2018; Sturgeon & Zautra, 2016). It undermines basic human needs: the need of positive self-evaluation, control, belonging and meaningful existence (Hartgerink et al., 2015). Discrimination, unequal treatment of people because of their group membership, is a form of social exclusion (Major & O'Brien, 2005). It produces stress and negative health outcomes in disadvantaged, chronically excluded groups (Major et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2008). Women, for example, experience distress of gender discrimination (Bilodeau et al., 2020; Matheson et al., 2019), even when they witness exclusion of other women without experiencing personal exclusion (McCarty et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2014). When excluded themselves, women experience distress more strongly when they attribute the reasons for exclusion to their group membership (Schaafsma & Williams, 2012; Schmitt et al., 2014; Wirth & Williams, 2009).

Given that pain of exclusion is vicariously shared with others (Wesselman, et al., 2013), why men do not seem to be universally distressed by discrimination and exclusion of women? Why White people do not universally suffer because of discrimination and exclusion of Black people? Why citizens of rich countries do not oppose social and physical exclusion of immigrants and refugees? It seems to be because reactions to exclusion of groups are tribal. People empathize - understand and tune in to the emotions of others - more with the distress of members of the ingroup than the outgroup, a phenomenon labeled parochial empathy (Bruneau et al., 2017; Cikara et al., 2011). Collective narcissism research suggests that pain of exclusion is shared exclusively with the ingroup members' only at high levels of collective narcissism, a belief that the ingroup's exaggerated greatness is not sufficiently recognized by others (Golec de Zavala, 2011; 2022; 2023; Hase et al., 2021). Moreover, collective narcissism predicts double standards when group members evaluate discrimination

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depending on whether the ingroup is a perpetrator or a target (Cichocka et al., 2022; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; West et al., 2022). Collective narcissism also predicts opposite attitudes towards equality and inclusion among advantaged and disadvantaged groups, whose interests often clash as far as pursuit of equality is concerned. Pursuit of equality requires members of disadvantaged groups to challenge the privileges of advantaged groups but challenges members of advantaged to give up their privileges (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023; Marinthe et al., 2022).

It is important to understand how collective narcissists perceive and react to the ingroup's exclusion because exclusion is a threat to the ingroup image (Branscombe et al., 1999). Collective narcissists are hypersensitive to such threats. They are likely to perceive exclusion as the ingroup's humiliation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016), which may push them to radicalize toward political violence (Kruglanski et al., 2013; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2017; Schaafsma & Williams, 2012). Indeed, collective narcissism is associated with support for terrorist violence among radicalized members of disadvantaged groups (Jasko et al., 2020; Yustisia et al., 2020), and support for alt-right, extremist organizations among radicalized members of advantaged groups (Keenan & Golec de Zavala., 2023; Marinthe et al., 2022). Our research indicates that to understand how collective narcissism is implicated in attitudes towards group-based exclusion and inequality, it is important to differentiate levels on which collective narcissism operates: national (superordinate) and subgroup (comprising hierarchically organized groups within the nation). While in advantaged groups (e.g. Whites, men) the predictions of national and subgroup collective narcissism are likely to align, in disadvantaged groups (e.g. racial minorities, women) they are likely to clash.

Collective narcissism and tribal distress of exclusion

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Sharing the pain of exclusion only with the ingroup members means that group members at high levels of collective narcissism are more likely to be indifferent (if not rejoice in, Golec de Zavala et al., 2016) pain of exclusion of other groups. In one study conducted in Poland, men and women watched a video-recording of a session of the Polish Parliament recorded on October, 22nd, 2020. The recording showed the female MP (Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus) silenced by the male Chairman of the Parliament (Ryszard Terlecki) while she was commenting on nationwide protests that took place after the near-total ban on abortion was introduced in Poland in October 2020. Men and women reported distress when watching the blatant exclusion of the female MP. However, at high levels of gender collective narcissism the reactions of men and women were different. Gender collective narcissism among women predicted distress when women witnessed exclusion of the woman MP. However, gender collective narcissism among men did not predict distress when men witnessed exclusion of the woman MP (Golec de Zavala, 2022).

In other studies, participants observed an online ball-tossing game played by a team of men or women. We used an adapted experimental paradigm to study ostracism known as the Cyberball. Typically, in this paradigm, participants are led to believe that they play the game with two other people represented by avatars. The ball is tossed by clicking on the avatar to which we want to pass the ball. In reality, only participants actually play the game, the other two players are computer animated preprogrammed to include or exclude participants (Williams & Jarvis, 2006). Participants report distress when they are excluded in the game. This happens even when they are made aware they play the game with the computer rather than other human participants (Zadro et al., 2004).

In our studies, men and women observed either a game, in which an equal number of ball throws was exchanged between the avatars representing men and women or a game, in which the team of avatars representing men (blue colored, signed with male names) excluded

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the team of women (pink colored signed with female names), but also a game, in which the team of women excluded the team of men. The exclusion was only temporary and did not happen to participants personally. The relationship between gender collective narcissism and distress was positive and significant when women witnessed the exclusion of other women, but not when they witnessed exclusion of men. The association was also positive, significant and of nearly the same size when men witnessed the exclusion of other men by women, but it was negative when they witnessed exclusion of women by men (Golec de Zavala, 2022).

Those results may explain why collective narcissists among men do not support women in their collective action against gender discrimination. In Poland, they rejected the All Poland's Women Strike actions to protest the infringement of women's rights to reproductive health (Górska et al., 2020). The All Poland's Women Strike is a civic organization spearheading social movement for women's rights established in September 2016 in response to Polish government's tightening of the already strict anti-abortion law. The organization has since co-ordinated multiple nationwide protests against violation of women's rights. Street protests intensified in October 2020 when the controversial Constitutional Tribunal introduced a near-total abortion ban. The protests met with violent repression from the state. Collective narcissists among Polish men supported those repressions, rejected egalitarian worldview and endorsed beliefs legitimizing gender inequality (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023).

Parochial experience of pain of exclusion may also explain why White collective narcissists oppose laws protecting Latinx immigrants in the United States or laws protecting Black Americans from state violence (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023; Keenan & Golec de Zavala, 2023). It may explain why White collective narcissists endorse anti-egalitarian worldview, beliefs legitimizing racial inequality and symbolic racism. Symbolic racism is a coherent belief system that comprises the conviction that Black people in United States no

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longer face prejudice or discrimination and their failure to progress is a consequence of their unwillingness to work hard enough (Sears & Henry, 2003). The Black Lives Matter is political and social movement in response to police brutality against Black people that advocates policy changes to reduce racial inequality. White collective narcissism limits the ability to sympathize with the plea of disadvantaged racial groups to be recognized and treated as equal. This plea directly challenges the most important function the ingroup serves collective narcissists: Its privileged status that provides basis and justification to their need to feel recognized as better than others.

Collective narcissism and tribal perception of discrimination

Collective narcissism research indicates that instead of sympathizing with distress of exclusion of disadvantaged groups, collective narcissists in advantaged groups are overly preoccupied with exclusion of their own ingroup, even when this exclusion is only imagined. In one study, we asked participants to engage in a role-playing game. They read about an imaginary world inhabited by three nations. They were given a bogus personality survey to test their character-match with those nations and they were invited to become citizens in the country inhabited by the nation they best fit in (in fact they were all allocated to the same nation). They were given information about the land the nation inhabited and given a tour around its capital. Next, they reported identification with this nation and collective narcissism with reference to it. As the game unfolded, participants were led to believe their nation was excluded from (or included in) an economic deal with other two countries: its immediate neighbour and an overseas country. We found that distress of exclusion was the function of participants' bogus nation's collective narcissism but not their identification with this nation or their individual narcissism. It was also associated with rejoicing in the pandemic that later befallen in the excluding nation (Golec de Zavala, 2023).

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Moreover, Polish collective narcissists felt distressed when their national team was excluded in the intergroup Cyberball played with Ukrainian immigrants (before the Russian invasion on Ukraine in 2022 but even then, Ukrainians were the largest immigrant group in Poland). Witnessing exclusion of the ingroup caused distress, especially at high levels of Polish collective narcissism but not Polish ingroup satisfaction, Polish national identification or individual narcissism (Golec de Zavala, 2023). Another study showed that the self-reported distress when Poles watched their national ingroup excluded by Ukrainians was paralleled by a physiological distress response: Decreased high-frequency heart-rate variability (HF HRV, Hase et al., 2021). Our studies also clarified that it was exclusion of the ingroup specifically that distressed collective narcissists. They reported higher distress when they watched the Polish team excluded in the ball tossing game than when they watched a German team excluded in the same game. In another study, American collective narcissists reported feeling distressed when they watched the American team excluded by a team of Mexican immigrants. However, they did not feel distressed when they watched a game in which the American team excluded the Mexican team (Golec de Zavala, 2023). Those findings suggest that collective narcissists among advantaged groups feel distressed even when exclusion of their ingroup is only temporary, happens in an artificial situation or it is only imagined. Those findings align with studies suggesting that members of advantaged groups fear emancipation of disadvantaged groups because it infringes on privileged status of their ingroup (Scheepers et al., 2009, see also Jetten, 2019). Our studies suggest that this fear is particularly pronounced at high levels of collective narcissism as lowering the ingroup's status threatens the ingroup's exaggerated image.

Collective narcissistic hypersensitivity to the ingroup's image threat (Golec de Zavala et al., 2016) can be also observed in findings that link collective narcissism and biased perception of discrimination. While male collective narcissism is associated with sexism and

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hostility towards women (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021), gender collective narcissists among men responded unfavorably to such statements as: “*If a men says or does something that seems a bit sexist, even if he does it by accident, then it’s sexist*” but favourably when this statement reversed the roles of men and women. While, White collective narcissism predicts racism (Golec de Zavala, 2023), collective narcissists among White men identify the same transgression as racist when they are committed by Black people against White people, but as not racist when they were committed by White people against Black people (West et al., 2022). In a similar vein, studies conducted in Indonesia linked Muslim collective narcissism to refusal to acknowledge that the ingroup member engaged in hate speech against ethnic/religious (non-Muslim Chinese) or religious (Christian) minority outgroup and needed to apologize (Putra et al., 2022). Such results align with earlier findings that racial collective narcissism among British Whites is associated with bias against British Blacks (Bagci et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), but also the denial of the existence of anti-Black racism in the United Kingdom (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Similarly, American and White collective narcissism predict denial of racism in the United States. They predict opposition to teaching the critical race theory, a cross-disciplinary scholarly endeavour to explain various forms of inequality treating social categories such as race as social constructions that advance the interests of advantaged groups (Federico et al., 2023; Vu & Rivera, 2023). Together those results suggest that at high levels of collective narcissism – national, White or male - discrimination looks less like discrimination when the advantaged ingroup discriminates disadvantaged outgroup, but more like discrimination when disadvantaged outgroup discriminates advantaged ingroup.

In this conclusion, collective narcissism literature aligns with what sociologist Michael Kimmel (2013) describes as *aggrieved entitlement*, perceived injustice, feeling of victimization and moral outrage that people in position of power experience when they fear

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being deprived of privileges they consider their right. In his book *“Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the Edge of the Era”*, Kimmel describes the maladaptive reactions to emancipation of historically disadvantaged groups among some American White men, a historically dominant, advantaged and privileged group. Men who constructed their gender and ethnic identities around the privileges their groups have enjoyed feel entitled to their privileged positions, and resentful and angry when those positions are questioned. Our studies explain that men who endorse collective narcissism are more likely to invest their superiority needs in exaggerating the importance and the image of their advantaged ingroup(s).

Collective narcissism and tribal usurpation of national identity

Kimmel (2013) suggests that angry White men often engage with misogynistic communities such as *“manosphere”* and racist White supremacist movements. Collective narcissism research suggests that in such movements male, White and national collective narcissisms align (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021; Golec de Zavala et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2021; Górska et al., 2020). Pointing to the alignment of predictions of national collective narcissism and collective narcissism in advantaged groups – among men or Whites – this research also suggests that narcissistic motivation and resentment may stand behind phenomena such as White nationalism, a belief that White people are inherently superior to other racial groups within the nation and deserve preferential treatment and protection (Reyna et al., 2022).

Research reveals that White and American collective narcissists sympathize with alt-right, White supremacist movements. For example, American and White collective narcissism was positively associated with support for the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville that involved protests against the removal of the statue of Robert Lee, a symbol of the Confederate States, but it was negatively associated with support for the Black

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Lives Matter social movement for racial equality (Marinthe et al., 2022). Similarly and more generally, American and White collective narcissism align to predict symbolic racism in the United States (Golec de Zavala, 2023; Golec de Zavala et al., 2023). British, American and White collective narcissism align to predict support for the argument that grievances against racial equality as marginalization of Whites are legitimate and need to be accommodated in protective state legislations (Kaufmann, 2018). This argument claims the “*unprecedented White demographic decline*” and the need for “*equal treatment*” of the culture of all ethnic groups, while suggesting that White culture is a target of discrimination in the context of increasing racial equality, inclusion and diversity. British, American and White collective narcissists agreed with such statements as “*A White American who identifies with her group, and its history and supports a proposal to reduce immigration*” do not express racism (Cichočka et al., 2022).

Studies in Poland leave no doubt that the alignment of national and advantaged group’s collective narcissism in predicting prejudice goes beyond racial relations (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021). Polish, Catholic and male collective narcissisms align in predicting sexism, prejudice toward and discriminatory treatment of women as a social group (Glick & Fiske, 2001) that justifies gender inequality (Jost & Kay, 2005). The link between gender collective narcissism among men and hostility towards women is driven by the belief that men and women are defined by their traditional social roles and masculinity is a precarious social status that can be lost. Catholic (dominant religion in Poland) collective narcissism is associated with justification of domestic violence (targeting predominantly women) as a “*family issue*” rather than a crime that should be persecuted by the state. Both Catholic collective narcissism and Catholic religious fundamentalism, among men and women alike, predicted greater acceptance of a particular case of wife beating perpetrated by a Polish male MP representing the ruling populist party *Law & Justice*. Polish collective

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narcissism is also robustly associated with hostile and benevolent sexism (Golec de Zavala & Bierwaczzonek, 2021; Golec de Zavala et al., 2023).

Given that national narcissism is sometimes interpreted as exaggerated national ingroup love, it may seem puzzling that national narcissism predicts hatred of the ingroup members (e.g. Gronfeldt et al., 2022). To understand this mystifying lack of ingroup loyalty, it is important to consider what Erich Fromm (1964, p 51) famously said: “*Narcissistic love is the love of oneself, and of all those who represent oneself.*”. Collective narcissism has little to do with love but a lot to do with using the ingroup to satisfy own superiority needs. The evidence discussed above suggests that collective narcissists in advantaged groups within the nation project the need to have their advantaged subgroup (e.g, White or male) recognized as better onto the national identity. They usurp national representation and frame buttressing of traditional group-based hierarchies as patriotic advancement of national interests (e.g., Brewer et al., 2013; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Predictions of national and advantaged groups’ (e.g. White or male) collective narcissism remarkably align when it comes to endorsement of hierarchy-justifying prejudice, anti-egalitarianism, legitimization of inequality and rejection of collective movements for equality (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023). Moreover, our results also reveal that the correlation between national collective narcissism and subgroup collective narcissism (e.g., ethnic or gender group) is stronger in advantaged than in disadvantaged groups. To put otherwise, American and White collective narcissisms are correlated stronger than American and Black or Latinx collective narcissisms (Keenan & Golec de Zavala, 2023). Polish and male collective narcissisms are correlated stronger than Polish and female collective narcissisms (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023). Finally, and perhaps the most worryingly endorsing national collective narcissism by members of disadvantaged groups predicts their legitimization of social hierarchies that disadvantage them.

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Among Blacks in the United States and among women in Poland, national collective narcissism is associated with internalization of prejudice and beliefs that legitimize inequality. American collective narcissism is associated with overtly reporting engaging in the Black Lives Matter collective action, but at the same time endorsing anti-egalitarian worldview, beliefs legitimizing racial inequality, symbolic racism and supporting state repressions against the Black Lives Matter (Keenan & Golec de Zavala, 2023). It seems that in the United States, supporting the Black Lives Matter but not racial equality has become a national norm. Moreover, at the highest levels of American collective narcissism symbolic racism is higher among Blacks than among Whites (Golec de Zavala, 2023). American collective narcissism is associated with support for repressions towards the Black Lives Matter social movement and anti-egalitarianism more strongly among Blacks than among Whites (Keenan & Golec de Zavala, 2023). Those results parallel the findings indicating that Polish collective narcissism and hostile sexism are similarly positively associated among men and women, whereas the association between national collective narcissism and benevolent sexism is stronger among women than among men (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021). Hostile sexism comprises derogatory and antagonistic beliefs about women rooted in group-level competition of men with women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). The association between national collective narcissism and hostile sexism has driven the link between national collective narcissism and acceptance of domestic violence (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021) and support for the restrictive anti-abortion law in Poland (Szczepanska et al., 2022), among men and women. Benevolent sexism comprises paternalistic prejudice based on the belief that women are passive and incompetent and should be protected. Although superficially positive, benevolent sexism is associated with hostile sexism, legitimization of gender inequality and reduced ambitions among women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). The pattern of associations of Polish collective narcissism with sexism

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across both genders suggests that women internalize sexism but prefer to internalize benevolent to hostile sexism. Women often endorse benevolent sexism for self-protection, when they feel threatened by men (Exposito et al., 2010; Fischer, 2006). As women who endorse national collective narcissism are likely to associate with like-minded men, they may continuously experience such threat (Golec de Zavala & Bierwiazzonek, 2021).

The predicament of members of disadvantaged groups who endorse national collective narcissism deserves further research. It represents a case of group members investing in pursuing the external recognition of the ingroup in which, by definition of their disadvantaged status, they are treated as second-class members. They may feel compelled to overcompensate for the lower status. Women who endorse national narcissism may be, for example, exceptionally hostile towards other women, especially those who violate traditional gender norms and those who challenge gender inequality. They may participate in movements opposing gender equality like women representing the Polish Life and Family Foundation, a proponent of the “Stop abortion” bill, the most restrictive abortion law penalizing any case of abortion, or women who label proponents of reproductive women’s rights as “fans of killing babies” (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023).

Collective narcissism and tribal collective resistance

In contrast to national narcissism and collective narcissism in advantaged groups, collective narcissism in disadvantaged groups predicts opposition to discrimination, egalitarianism and collective pursuit of equality. For example, among Blacks in the UK, racial collective narcissism is associated with challenging anti-Black racism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Among Blacks and Latinx participants in the United States, racial collective narcissism is linked to support for the Black Lives Matter movement, egalitarian values and intentions to engage in collective action for racial equality (Keenan & Golec de Zavala,

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2023). Among the LGBTQIA+ community in Turkey, collective narcissism predicts endorsement of collective action challenging discrimination against sexual minorities (Bagci et al., 2022). Gender collective narcissism among women in Poland is associated with anger and distress at women's exclusion by men (Golec de Zavala, 2022), and predicts support for the All Poland Women's Strike and engagement in collective action for gender equality (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023). Those predictions are specific to collective narcissism when compared to predictions of individual narcissism, non-narcissistic ingroup satisfaction and the importance of ingroup identity to the self.

Such findings, demonstrate, for the first time, potentially constructive social consequences of collective narcissism (cf. Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). They align with the argument that intergroup conflict, when well-managed, has a potential of bringing up a constructive social change and more equal organization of societies but disadvantaged groups need to oppose their predicament (Dixon et al., 2012; Dixon & McKeown, 2021; Hässler et al., 2021). Some intergroup antagonism and willingness to fight for the disadvantaged ingroup are necessary to pursue equality, as historical evidence indicates greater equality is more often won than deservingly received or voluntarily given away (Osborne et al., 2019). Persistent collective action for equality may inspire sustainable social movement to bring about the desired change (Selvanathan & Jetten, 2020).

Although collective action of the disadvantaged groups is seen more favourably when it uses normative and legal means in contrast to violent and illegal means (Orazani & Leidner, 2019; Teixeira, et al., 2020), moderately disruptive, non-normative collective action when combined with transparent constructive intention (e.g., egalitarian cause), elicit concessions from advantaged groups (Shuman et al., 2021; 2022). Studies point to greater effectiveness of protests that mix normative and non-normative, disruptive collective action. Such "*constructively disruptive*" protests strike a balance between being perceived as

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unsettling the system with positive intentions to pursue a change eventually beneficial to all (Shuman et al., 2021). For example, a combination of normative and non-normative collective actions associated with the Black Lives Matter protests has been linked to increased support for the policy reforms advanced by this movement (Shuman et al., 2022). Exposure to the 2017 Women's Marches against the presidential nomination of openly misogynistic Donald Trump made men more sympathetic towards the women's plight (Saguy & Szekeres, 2018). Collective narcissism as a robust predictor of intergroup hostility and preference of coercive methods of advancing the ingroup goals (Golec de Zavala, 2011; 2023) may be a factor motivating members of disadvantaged groups to take action to challenge inequality.

However, while collective narcissism may motivate members of disadvantaged groups towards effective collective action, it is also likely to motivate their radicalization when the collective action is met with reactionary backlash. Reactionary backlash elicits pessimism regarding the possibility of systemic change in disadvantaged groups (Tabri & Conway, 2011; Tausch & Becker, 2013), and pushes them towards more extreme and disruptive collective action (Louis et al., 2020; Simon, 2020). The antagonistic mind-set associated with collective narcissism (comprising black-and-white perceptions of intergroup situations, hypersensitivity to threat, ultimate attribution error and hostile attribution bias, Golec de Zavala, 2023) is likely to facilitate black-and-white and zero-sum perception of the intergroup relations. It is likely to prevent members of disadvantaged groups from seeing the possibility of reconciliation or allyship with advantaged groups (Hässler et al., 2020; 2022; Urbiola et al., 2022). While collective narcissism in advantaged groups motivates the reactionary backlash to disadvantaged groups' pursuit of recognition (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2021), in disadvantaged groups it may motivate radicalization towards political violence and terrorism (Jasko et al., 2020).

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However, one aspect of collective action may have a disarming effect on radicalization of collective narcissists. Among disadvantaged groups, the ingroup's goals align with social justice goals and egalitarian values. This underscores moral aspect of the protests as well as the importance of communal, selfless emotions. Exposure to communal, self-transcendent emotions reduces the robust association between collective narcissism and intergroup hostility and helps collective narcissists to constructively deal with distress they experience in face of intergroup exclusion (Golec de Zavala et al., 2023). Thus, the typical collective narcissistic hostility may be neutralized by communal normative context and positive, prosocial emotions that accompany collective pursuit of social equality.

Contribution of collective narcissism research

In sum, collective narcissism research extends our understanding of vicarious ostracism (Wesselmann et al., 2013) and parochial empathy (Cikara et al., 2011). It indicates that at high level of collective narcissism vicarious distress of group-by-group ostracism tends to be parochial. Studies that examine the consequences of intergroup exclusion without taking collective narcissism into account may produce inconsistent findings. Similarly, attributing exclusion to group membership may produce different results on high and low levels of collective narcissism. This may explain why some studies demonstrated that distress of exclusion was aggravated among women who attributed their exclusion in the Cyberball game to their group membership (Schaafsma & Williams, 2012), whereas other studies showed that members of an ethnic minority who were excluded in the Cyberball game and attributed their exclusion to their ethnic group membership felt less distressed by exclusion (Masten et al., 2011).

In a similar vein, research has also shown that ingroup identification may ameliorate (Bolling et al., 2012) or aggravate (McCoy & Major, 2003) gender discrimination distress depending on which aspect of gender identification is activated (Schmitt et al., 2014). The

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findings of collective narcissism research are at odds with the Rejection Identification Model (Branscombe, et al., 1999), which suggests that ingroup identification increases and should play a palliative role in the face of aversive experiences such as the ingroup's exclusion. Our research clarifies that the positive and protective role of sharing a social identity depends on the aspect of ingroup identification that is activated and measured. Collective narcissism emphasizes under-appreciation of the ingroup by others. When collective narcissism is embraced as a way of defining the excluded ingroup's identity, it is likely to further undermine, not protect, group members' wellbeing and make group members more sensitive to distress of exclusion (Bagci et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala, 2019; Golec de Zavala et al., 2023). Thus, to understand the role of ingroup identification in the context of intergroup exclusion, it is important to examine not only whether group members identify with the excluded ingroup, but also how they identify with it, as ingroup identification is a multifaceted phenomenon (Ashmore et al., 2004; Leach et al., 2008).

The collective narcissism research offers a more nuanced explanation of the role of positive ingroup identification in shaping attitudes towards equality among advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The results of this research are in line with the proposition that ingroup identification should be considered at different levels of self-categorization (subordinate and superordinate group memberships) to explain why group members legitimize vs. challenge unequal social systems (Owuamalam et al. 2018; Reynolds et al., 2013). The theory of collective narcissism offers a common perspective to integrate the system justification (e.g., Jost, 2019), and collective action (van Zomeren, 2016; van Zomeren et al, 2018) literatures (Osborne et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020) with the critical reflection on the role of positive identification with the common, superordinate ingroup in pursuit of equality (Dixon & McKeown, 2021; Dovidio et al., 2009; Hässler et al., 2020).

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The system justification theory proposes that members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups are motivated to endorse the hierarchical status quo in which they participate (Jost, 2019). Collective narcissism research clarifies that this expectation is fulfilled reliably at high levels of national collective narcissism, an aspect of identification with the nation. At high levels of national narcissism, members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups alike endorse ideologies justifying inequality. Moreover, sometimes, members of disadvantaged groups who endorse national collective narcissism endorse those ideologies stronger than members of advantaged group. This is in line with the system justification theory's prediction that members of disadvantaged groups may be even more than members of advantaged groups motivated to justify inequality. However, our results clarify that this happens specifically at high levels of national collective narcissism.

Collective narcissism research extends the social identity model of collective action (van Zomeren, 2016; van Zomeren et al., 2018). This model posits that members of disadvantaged groups are motivated to improve their status by advancing goals of equality. The more the group members identify with their disadvantaged ingroup, the more they should engage in collective action for equality. However, research has established that identification with disadvantaged ingroup is not enough to predict engagement in collective action on its behalf. It needs to be accompanied by feelings of frustration and anger with discrimination, the belief in ingroup effectiveness and ideology underscoring moral value of social justice and equality (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2018). Collective narcissism in disadvantaged groups is an aspect of ingroup identification that comprises in one variable all preconditions for collective action for equality. It is strongly correlated with perceiving the disadvantaged ingroup as important to the self and an exaggerated idea about the ingroup efficacy (Bagci et al., 2022). It is associated with an exaggerated sense of ingroup deservingness that conduces to seeing the ingroup as constantly deprived and wronged by

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others and feeling angered and resentful because of this (Golec de Zavala et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2021). Collective narcissism research indicates that the predictions of the social identity model of collective action are robustly supported on high level of collective narcissism among disadvantaged groups.

Collective narcissism research also elucidates the efforts to integrate the system justification and collective action models (Osborne et al., 2019). This integration proposes that collective action may be used to challenge or advance unequal social systems. To put otherwise, collective action may be either progressive or reactionary. The association between ingroup identification and justification of unequal systems should thus, depend on the ingroup status: it should be positive in advantaged groups and negative in disadvantaged groups. Conversely, ingroup identification should be associated positively with system challenge in disadvantaged group but negatively in advantaged groups (Jost, 2019; Jost et al., 2017). Our research clarifies that those predictions are consistently supported specifically at high levels of collective narcissism, but not supported at high levels of other aspects of ingroup identification (Golec de Zavala, 2023; Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023).

Finally, the collective narcissism research aligns with the recognition of change-inspiring potential of intergroup conflict. Salience of group boundaries, discrepancies in group interests and intergroup conflict management are necessary aspects of pursuit of equality as it meets resistance of advantaged groups (Dixon & McKeown, 2021; Osborne et al. 2019). Even when members of advantaged groups support equality in principle, they often oppose specific policies to actually increase equality (Durrheim & Dixon, 2004). Thus, collective action for equality has a greater chance to be effective when positive intergroup connections are accompanied by awareness and salience of unjust disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Saguy et al., 2008). Indeed, protests are more

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effective when they mix confrontational and coercive means with pursuit of egalitarian values (Shuman et al., 2021; 2022). Collective narcissism is associated with preference for such means and thus, when managed, it may be a factor inspiring pursuit of social justice among disadvantaged groups.

Findings of collective narcissism research are also in line with the literature suggesting that reducing prejudice and tensions between advantaged and disadvantaged groups by efforts to foster re-categorization and identification with a common ingroup (e.g., a nation) may impair the chances for a social change towards greater equality. Identification with the common ingroup discourages members of disadvantaged groups to pursue the ingroup interests. It raises their unrealistic expectations regarding fairness in resource distribution between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. It also prompts their over-optimistic expectations regarding the individual ability of attaining high social status regardless of their group membership (Dovidio et al., 2009; 2016; Saguy et al., 2008; Ufkes et al., 2016). Our research clarifies that as far as pursuit of equality is concerned, promoting the “broader we” identification is counterproductive, especially when it takes a form of propagating national collective narcissism. National collective narcissism is associated with pursuing the interests of advantaged groups. Even non-narcissistic ingroup identification encourages the perception of existing inequalities as justified (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2023).

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