



Narcissism and trust: Differential impact of agentic, antagonistic, and communal narcissism[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that individuals high in narcissism mistrust others, yet little is known about narcissism's relation to trust. In the current study ($N = 727$), we aim to close this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between facets of trust (i.e., cognitive bias in the evaluation of others and personal trustworthiness) and facets of grandiose narcissism (i.e., agentic, antagonistic, and communal). We strive to answer the question whether narcissistic individuals believe that others are reliable, honest, and benevolent (how they perceive others) and whether they present themselves as trusting of others (how they perceive themselves). We posit and show that agentic narcissism is not related to any of the studied trust facets, suggesting that the concept of trust is not relevant to their self-image. In contrast, antagonistic narcissism is negatively related to perceiving others and oneself as trustful, and communal narcissism is positively related to these trust facets, purportedly due to communal self-enhancement. We discuss our findings of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept as well as to the Agency-Communion model of grandiose narcissism.

1. Introduction

Trust can be defined as a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of others (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). The acceptance of one's vulnerability seems to be antithetical to narcissism (Miller, Lynam, Hyatt, & Campbell, 2017). Most of the previous studies examined how narcissism is related to distrust (Kerr, Patton, Lapan, & Hills, 1994; Krizan & Johar, 2015) and not trust per se. Trust and distrust, however, are distinct constructs with distinguishable characteristics and determinants (e.g., Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). While distrust refers to confident negative expectations regarding others' behaviour (Lewicki et al., 1998), trust refers to a general assumption about the good nature of others (Evans & Revelle, 2008; Rotter, 1971). High distrust and low trust are distinct –the former is characterised by scepticism, defensiveness, and watchfulness, while the latter involves passivity, hesitation, and lack of hope (Lewicki et al., 1998).

High levels of trust are related to many desirable social outcomes, like cooperation (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013), relationship commitment (Righetti & Finkenauer, 2011), organisational citizenship behaviours (Duffy & Lilly, 2013), or civic and political engagement (Putnam,

1995). For this reason, examining the extent to which narcissism is related to trust is important for better understanding the social functioning of narcissists. The present paper adopts the distinction between three facets of grandiose narcissism: agentic, antagonistic, and communal. We examine narcissism in relation to trust as measured both by the general assumption about the positivity of human nature (Evans & Revelle, 2008; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994) and the general propensity to rely on others, which is expressed in trustworthiness as an aspect of agreeableness (Soto & John, 2017). Such an approach allows for a more in-depth understanding of the differential relations between distinct facets of narcissism and trust, thereby allowing us to integrate studies on grandiose narcissism and trust from both social and personality psychology perspective.

1.1. Three facets of grandiose narcissism

Within the literature, at least two theoretical models of grandiose narcissism can be distinguished, that is, the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) and the Agency-Communion (A-C) model of narcissism (Gebauer, Sedikides, Verplanken, & Maio,

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2012). Together, they define grandiose narcissism as a construct containing three facets: agentic, antagonistic, and communal. The agentic facet of narcissism is depicted within the NARC (Back et al., 2013) as *narcissistic admiration* and reflects the assertive features of narcissistic personality, such as fantasies of grandiosity, uniqueness, and charm- ingness (Back et al., 2013; Rogoza, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Rogoza, Piotrowski, & Wyszynska, 2016). The antagonistic facet of narcissism is also depicted within the NARC as *narcissistic rivalry* and encompasses the malignant features of narcissistic personality, such as aggressiveness, hostility, and other-derogation (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015).¹ Finally, the communal facet of narcissism is only expressed in the A-C model of narcissism as *communal narcissism*, which emphasizes that narcissists fulfill their core self-motives (e.g., entitlement, power, and esteem) not only through agentic but also communal means (e.g., being extraordinarily helpful or trustworthy; Gebauer et al., 2012).

Most of the previous studies focused only on comparing two out of three narcissism facets (e.g., agentic vs antagonistic or agentic vs communal; Wetzel, Leckelt, Gerlach, & Back, 2016; Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Czarna, Piotrowski, Baran, & Maltby, 2016). Fatfouta, Zeigler-Hill, and Schröder-Abé (2017) confirmed that the antagonistic and agentic facets are positively related to each other. Additionally, they revealed that while the communal facet is positively related to the agentic facet, it is unrelated to the antagonistic facet (Fatfouta et al., 2017). However, this lack of relation between antagonistic and communal narcissism might be obscured by communal self-enhancement. Antagonistic narcissism is directed against others through aggressiveness, hostility, or unforgiveness (Back et al., 2013; Grove, Smith, Girard, and Wright, in press). In contrast, communal narcissism (at least as expressed in the self-report) involves supporting others through (apparent) friendliness or warmth (Gebauer et al., 2012), although it is unrelated to actual communal behaviours (Nehrlich, Gebauer, Sedikides, & Schoel, 2018). For this reason, one would expect that outcomes related to communal and antagonistic aspects of narcissism are opposite, at least in self-report studies.

1.2. Narcissism and trust

Trust can be described as a personality characteristic that refers to the general willingness to trust others or the general assumption about the positive nature of the social world (Evans & Reville, 2008; Farris, Senner, & Butterfield, 1973; Mayer et al., 1995; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Individuals with a higher propensity to trust are more likely to perceive other people as trustworthy and consider their intentions as benevolent (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). In the Five Factor Model of personality, trust is regarded as a cognitive facet of the agreeableness trait and refers to the propensity of an individual to trust others (Costa Jr. & McCrae, 1992; Soto & John, 2017). However, it could also be regarded as a stable style of thinking about others (Evans & Reville, 2008; Rotter, 1971; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Therefore, trust can be examined both from a personality and social psychology perspective. A distinction between trust understood as a personality trait or as an individual-difference variable associated with stable assumptions about the nature of the social world seems to be irrelevant to narcissism as both approaches assume that trusting people manifests in positive perceptions of others. However, trust considered as an individual-difference variable might be associated with two aspects: (1) cognitive bias or generalised attitude toward others, so that it is based on beliefs about the human nature, or (2) self-perception as a person who appears open and benevolent to others due to one's own trustworthiness, so that it is associated with one's self-image (Gebauer et al., 2012). Therefore, the first aspect refers to the question, *how*

narcissists perceive others, while the latter refers to *how narcissists perceive themselves*. Hence, including both perspectives on trust, that is, as a cognitive bias/attitude and as a personality trait, might help us understand the complicated relationship between trust and different facets of grandiose narcissism.

Narcissists can skillfully exploit social relationships to build up their own position and status, but over time these relationships deteriorate due to narcissists' lack of empathy and trust toward others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Indeed, individuals scoring high in grandiose narcissism tend to score low on trust measured as a general opinion about others (Konrath, Chopik, Hsing, & O'Brien, 2014). However, Glover, Miller, Lynam, Crego, and Widiger (2012) found a positive relation only between antagonistic expressions of narcissism and distrust, suggesting that the distinction between antagonistic and agentic narcissism would be important in examining convictions about the human nature. Noteworthy, all of the studies above did not investigate how communal narcissism relates to trust. Thus, it is not clear to what extent communal self-views as a trustworthy person go along with positive views of others' benevolence. In light of the observed inconsistencies and the lack of inclusion of communal narcissism in previous research, the current study aims to systematically examine the narcissism-trust relationship in a more nuanced way by scrutinising distinct narcissism and trust facets.

Antagonistic narcissism is related to overt competition with others. For this reason, this facet should be related to social convictions associated with negative views of interpersonal relationships, like zero-sum thinking, assuming opposition in the interests of individuals, and this way of thinking is negatively related to trust (Rózycka-Tran, Boski, & Wojciszke, 2015). Agentic narcissism, however, is associated with self-enhancement in the agentic domain, which is less relevant to the perception of the human nature as trustworthy (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008). Indeed, Back et al. (2013) reported a lack of correlation between perceptions of trustworthiness and agentic narcissism, while antagonistic narcissism was negatively correlated with these perceptions. Finally, communal narcissism is positively associated with self-enhancement in the communal domain (Gebauer et al., 2012). Moreover, communal narcissists consider themselves as “extraordinarily trustworthy” (Gebauer et al., 2012; p. 878). It is important to note that due to social norms, people present high levels of trust even if they actually do not experience trust (Dunning, Anderson, Schösser, Ehlebracht, & Fetchenhauer, 2014). Therefore, communal narcissists should follow this social norm for self-presentation aims, given that by presenting their own trustworthiness they could successfully maintain their communal self-view in front of others.

2. Current study

The main aim of the present study was to investigate the relations between facets of narcissism and trust. As narcissism is a heterogeneous construct (Ackerman et al., 2011; Wink, 1991), the current research distinguished three facets: agentic, antagonistic, and communal. We hypothesised that each of these narcissism facets would have a unique relation to trust: (1) agentic narcissism would be unrelated; (2) antagonistic narcissism would be negatively related; and (3) communal narcissism would be positively related to trust. As existing research suggests that these facets of narcissism are interrelated (Back et al., 2013; Fatfouta et al., 2017), we conducted linear regression models in which the different forms of narcissism were simultaneous predictors of trust. We provide the data used for our analyses via the Open Science Framework [please insert the link provided in the letter to the Editor].

3. Method

3.1. Participants and procedure

Following Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013), we aimed for a

¹ We use the terms narcissistic rivalry and antagonistic narcissism as well as narcissistic admiration and agentic narcissism as interchangeable.

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