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How narcissists navigate the communal world

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English Summary

How Narcissists Navigate the Communal World

Narcissism can be understood from the perspective of the agentic domain, which predominately reflects individuals' strivings for status, power, and uniqueness, and from the perspective of the communal domain, which reflects individuals' interpersonal relationships with others. Extensive research has shown that whereas narcissistic individuals are greatly concerned with their agentic positive self-views related to personal achievement, status, and power (Carroll, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), they tend to disregard communal concerns and others' interests, and have comparatively high antisocial tendencies (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Sedikides et al., 2002). Given that narcissistic individuals disproportionately frequently emerge as leaders (Grijalva et al., 2015), which gives them great leeway to exert negative interpersonal influence, it is important to further investigate how narcissism relates to communion in order to better understand the social influence of narcissistic individuals. Different from most previous research in which the communal or agentic behaviors of narcissistic individuals were examined, the current dissertation focuses on how narcissistic individuals process and respond to communal features of their social environments. By taking this approach, I aim to provide a more complete understanding of narcissistic individuals in their social environment. Specifically, the present dissertation examined how narcissistic individuals seek out communal information (Chapter 2), select interaction partners using communal information (Chapter 3), and evaluate and behaviorally respond to others based on communal information about others' behaviors (Chapter 4).

In Chapter 2, we examined the relationship between individuals' global grandiose, agentic, and antagonistic narcissism and their selection of antisocial and prosocial information. Based on person-environment fit theory (Caplan, 1987), we hypothesized that narcissistic individuals select more antisocial and less prosocial information and that this selection pattern can be explained by their social motives. The results in Study 2.1 showed that all three operationalizations of narcissism positively predicted the selection of antisocial information, and only antagonistic narcissism negatively predicted the selection of prosocial information. In Study 2.2, the results were less clear-cut, such that only antagonistic narcissism was associated with less selection of prosocial information. However, the mediating role of social motives was significant for all three types of narcissism, such that through stronger prosself (or weaker prosocial) motives, global grandiose, agentic, and antagonistic narcissism positively predicted the selection of antisocial information and negatively predicted the selection of prosocial information. Moreover, the results of an internal meta-analysis provide support for a positive

effect of both agentic and antagonistic narcissism on the selection of antisocial information and a negative effect of antagonistic narcissism on the selection of prosocial information. These findings suggest that narcissistic individuals, especially those higher on antagonistic narcissism, expose themselves relatively more to antisocial versus prosocial information.

In Chapter 3, we further illuminated narcissistic individuals' navigation of the communal world by investigating how narcissism (specifically, antagonistic narcissism) shapes individuals' selection of interaction partners with a focus on prospective partners' communal traits (i.e., sociability and morality). Based on similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1997), we hypothesized that because of narcissistic individuals' own low communal traits (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012) they would be relatively less inclined to appreciate communal traits in interaction partners. Furthermore, we expected that threat would dampen narcissistic individuals' reduced preferences for communal traits because threat generally makes individuals become more affiliative (Schachter, 1959) and may thus motivate narcissistic individuals to build positive relationship with communal others. Across two experimental studies (Studies 3.1 and 3.2) and one correlational field study (Study 3.3), we consistently found that narcissistic individuals (i.e., those scoring higher on antagonistic narcissism) showed lower preferences for *sociability* traits in prospective partners when threat was lower, and that this effect was muted (Studies 3.1 and 3.3) or even reversed (Study 3.2) when threat was higher. However, narcissistic individuals' lower preferences for *morality* traits were not affected by threat. The results of an internal meta-analysis further supported these findings. Taken together, our findings showed that narcissistic individuals have a general lower preference for communal traits in interaction partners; however, their lower preference for sociability traits depended on the degree of threat in the situation, showing a muted or reversed effect when threat was higher than when it was lower.

In Chapter 4, we examined how global grandiose narcissism shapes individuals' responsiveness to others' social behaviors to further increase our knowledge of narcissistic individuals' navigation of the communal environment. Responsiveness to antisocial and prosocial behaviors refers to the degree to which individuals respond positively (negatively) to prosocial (antisocial) behaviors in comparison to antisocial (prosocial) behaviors. We tested two competing hypotheses. On the one hand, we predicted narcissistic people to be hypo-responsive because of their lower concern for others (Burgmer et al., 2021; Sedikides et al., 2002) and thus less sensitivity to antisocial and prosocial behaviors that may harm or benefit others. On the other hand, we predicted narcissistic individuals to be hyper-responsiveness regarding antisocial behaviors because these behaviors signal power and dominance (Stamkou

et al., 2020; Van Kleef et al., 2011), which may threaten narcissistic individuals and lead to more negative responses. Across four studies, narcissistic individuals (i.e., people scoring higher on narcissism) consistently showed lower responsiveness to variations in others' antisocial or prosocial behaviors/tendencies, supporting the hypo-responsiveness rather than the hyper-responsiveness hypothesis. Specifically, narcissistic individuals differentiated less between others' antisocial versus neutral behavior (Study 4.1), others' prosocial versus neutral behavior (Study 4.2) and others' antisocial versus prosocial tendencies (Studies 4.3 and 4.4), which was associated with their subsequent moral character evaluations of the protagonist (Studies 4.1–4.4) and reward and punishment responses toward the protagonist (Studies 4.3 and 4.4). These findings suggest that narcissistic individuals are less responsive to others' antisocial and prosocial behaviors, as reflected in their moral character evaluations and behavioral responses.

Taken together, the research in this dissertation broadens our knowledge of how narcissism relates to communion from the perspective of narcissistic individuals processing and responding to the communal features of their social environments. Specifically, our findings show that narcissistic individuals tend to expose themselves to more antisocial and less prosocial information, generally display lower preferences for communal traits (i.e., sociability and morality) in interaction partners (although the lower preference for sociability is attenuated under threat) and demonstrate a lower responsiveness to others' antisocial and prosocial behaviors, as reflected in moral character evaluations and reward and punishment. In sum, these findings suggest that narcissistic individuals hold a relatively positive (negative) attitude towards low (highly) communal features of their social environments, which means that what they see and hear reflects who they are.

Samenvatting

Hoe Narcisten Navigeren door de Communale Wereld

Narcisme kan worden begrepen vanuit het perspectief van het agentische domein, dat vooral het streven van individuen naar status, macht en uniciteit weerspiegelt, en vanuit het perspectief van het communale domein, dat de interpersoonlijke relaties van individuen met anderen weerspiegelt. Uitgebreid onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat narcistische individuen zich veel zorgen maken over hun positieve zelfbeeld met betrekking tot persoonlijke prestaties, status en macht (Carroll, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), terwijl ze de neiging hebben om gemeenschappelijke zorgen en de belangen van anderen te negeren, en relatief hoge antisociale neigingen hebben (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Sedikides et al., 2002). Gezien dat narcistische individuen onevenredig vaak als leider naar voren komen (Grijalva et al., 2015), wat hen veel ruimte geeft om negatieve interpersoonlijke invloed uit te oefenen, is het van belang om verder te onderzoeken hoe narcisme zich verhoudt tot communaliteit om de sociale invloed van narcistische individuen beter te begrijpen. Anders dan het meeste eerdere onderzoek waarin het communale of agentische gedrag van narcistische individuen werd onderzocht, richt de huidige dissertatie zich op hoe narcistische individuen communale kenmerken van hun sociale omgeving verwerken en erop reageren. Met deze benadering wil ik een completer begrip geven van narcistische individuen in hun sociale omgeving. Meer specifiek is in dit proefschrift onderzocht hoe narcistische individuen op zoek gaan naar informatie over communale aspecten van situaties (Hoofdstuk 2), interactie partners selecteren aan de hand van informatie over communale eigenschappen (Hoofdstuk 3), en anderen evalueren en gedragsmatig reageren op basis van informatie over het communale gedrag van anderen (Hoofdstuk 4).

In Hoofdstuk 2 onderzochten we de relatie tussen het globale grandioze, agentische en antagonistische narcisme van individuen en hun selectie van antisociale en prosociale informatie. Gebaseerd op de persoon-omgeving fit theorie (Caplan, 1987), stelden we de hypothese dat narcistische individuen meer antisociale en minder prosociale informatie selecteren en dat dit selectiepatroon verklaard kan worden door hun sociale motieven. De resultaten in Studie 2.1 lieten zien dat alle drie de operationalisaties van narcisme de selectie van antisociale informatie positief voorspelden, en dat alleen antagonistisch narcisme de selectie van prosociale informatie negatief voorspelde. In Studie 2.2 waren de resultaten minder eenduidig, en bleek alleen antagonistisch narcisme geassocieerd met minder selectie van prosociale informatie. De mediërende rol van sociale motieven was echter significant voor alle drie de typen narcisme, zodanig dat door sterkere pro-zelf (of zwakkere prosociale) motieven, globaal grandioos, agentisch, en antagonistisch narcisme de selectie van antisociale informatie

positief voorspelden en de selectie van prosociale informatie negatief voorspelden. Bovendien ondersteunen de resultaten van een interne meta-analyse een positief effect van zowel agentisch als antagonistisch narcisme op de selectie van antisociale informatie en een negatief effect van antagonistisch narcisme op de selectie van prosociale informatie. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat narcistische individuen, vooral diegenen die hoger scoren op antagonistisch narcisme, zichzelf relatief meer blootstellen aan antisociale informatie en minder aan prosociale informatie, vergeleken met individuen die lager scoren op (antagonistisch) narcisme.

In Hoofdstuk 3 hebben we de navigatie van narcistische individuen door de communale wereld verder belicht door te onderzoeken hoe narcisme (in het bijzonder antagonistisch narcisme) de keuze van individuen voor interactie partners beïnvloedt met een focus op de communale eigenschappen van toekomstige partners (i.e. sociabiliteit en moraliteit). Op basis van de similariteit-attractie theorie (Byrne, 1997), stelden we de hypothese op dat narcistische individuen door hun eigen lage communale neigingen (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012) relatief minder geneigd zouden zijn communale kenmerken in interactiepartners te waarderen. Verder verwachtten we dat dreiging de verminderde voorkeur van narcistische individuen voor communale eigenschappen zou temperen, omdat dreiging er over het algemeen voor zorgt dat individuen meer affiliatief worden (Schachter, 1959) en narcistische individuen dus kan motiveren om positieve relaties op te bouwen met communale anderen. In twee experimentele studies (Studies 3.1 en 3.2) en één correlationele veldstudie (Studie 3.3) vonden we consistent dat narcistische individuen (i.e. degenen die hoger scoren op antagonistisch narcisme) lagere voorkeuren vertoonden voor sociabiliteitseigenschappen bij toekomstige partners wanneer de dreiging lager was, en dat dit effect werd gedempt (Studies 3.1 en 3.3) of zelfs omgekeerd (Studie 3.2) wanneer de dreiging hoger was. De lagere voorkeur van narcistische individuen voor moraliteitskenmerken werd echter niet beïnvloed door dreiging. De resultaten van een interne meta-analyse ondersteunden deze bevindingen verder. Al met al toonden onze bevindingen aan dat narcistische individuen over het algemeen een lagere voorkeur hebben voor communale kenmerken in interactiepartners; hun gebrek aan voorkeur voor sociabiliteitskenmerken hing echter af van de mate van dreiging in de situatie, en werd gedempt of omgekeerd wanneer de dreiging hoger was dan wanneer deze lager was.

In Hoofdstuk 4 onderzochten we hoe globaal grandioos narcisme de responsiviteit van individuen op sociaal gedrag van anderen beïnvloedt om onze kennis over de navigatie van narcistische individuen door de communale omgeving te vergroten. De responsiviteit op asociaal en prosociaal gedrag verwijst naar de mate waarin individuen positief (negatief) reageren op prosociaal (antisociaal) gedrag in vergelijking met antisociaal (prosociaal) gedrag.

We testten twee concurrerende hypothesen. Aan de ene kant voorspelden we dat narcistische mensen hypo-responsief zouden zijn vanwege hun lagere zorg voor anderen (Burgmer et al., 2021; Sedikides et al., 2002) en dus minder gevoelighed zouden tonen voor antisociaal en prosociaal gedrag dat anderen kan schaden of ten goede kan komen. Anderzijds voorspelden we dat narcistische personen hyper-responsief zouden zijn ten aanzien van antisociaal gedrag omdat dit gedrag macht en dominantie signaleert (Stamkou et al., 2020; Van Kleef et al., 2011), wat narcistische personen kan bedreigen en kan leiden tot meer negatieve reacties. In vier studies vertoonden narcistische individuen (i.e. mensen die hoger scoorden op narcisme) consistent een lagere responsiviteit op variaties in antisociaal of prosociaal gedrag of gedragstendensen van anderen, wat een sterkere ondersteuning biedt voor de hypothese van hypo-responsiviteit dan de hypothese van hyper-responsiviteit. Meer specifiek, narcistische individuen maakten minder onderscheid tussen andermans antisociaal versus neutraal gedrag (Studie 4.1), andermans prosociaal versus neutraal gedrag (Studie 4.2) en andermans antisociale versus prosociale neigingen (Studies 4.3 en 4.4), wat samenhang met hun daaropvolgende morele karakterbeoordelingen van de protagonist (Studies 4.1-4.4) en belonings- en bestraffingsreacties ten opzichte van de protagonist (Studies 4.3 en 4.4). Deze bevindingen suggereren dat narcistische individuen minder gevoelig zijn voor antisociaal en prosociaal gedrag van anderen, zoals blijkt uit hun morele karakterbeoordelingen en gedragsreacties.

Al met al verbreedt het onderzoek in dit proefschrift onze kennis over hoe narcisme samenhangt met communaliteit vanuit het perspectief van narcistische individuen die de communale kenmerken van hun sociale omgeving verwerken en erop reageren. Meer specifiek laten onze bevindingen zien dat narcistische individuen de neiging hebben zichzelf bloot te stellen aan meer antisociale en minder prosociale informatie, over het algemeen lagere voorkeuren vertonen voor communale kenmerken (i.e., sociabiliteit en moraliteit) in interactiepartners (hoewel de lagere voorkeur voor sociabiliteit wordt afgezwakt onder dreiging), en een verminderde respons vertonen op het antisociale en prosociale gedrag van anderen, zoals weerspiegeld in morele karakterbeoordelingen en beloning en bestraffing. Samenvattend suggereren deze bevindingen dat narcistische individuen een relatief positieve (negatieve) houding hebben ten opzichte van lage (hoge) communale kenmerken van hun sociale omgeving, wat betekent dat wat zij zien en horen een afspiegeling is van wie zij zijn.

Contributions to Empirical Chapters

Chapter 2

Chen, J., Nevicka, B., Homan, A. C., & van Kleef, G. A. (manuscript in preparation). You are what you read: Narcissism predicts increased preference for antisocial and reduced preference for prosocial information.

Studies were designed by J.C, B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. Data were collected and analyzed by J.C, with input from B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. The chapter was written by J.C., and B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. provided critical revisions.

Chapter 3

Chen, J., Nevicka, B., Homan, A. C., & van Kleef, G. A. (manuscript in preparation). The role of threat in narcissists' selection of interaction partners.

Studies were designed by J.C, B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. Data were collected and analyzed by J.C, with input from B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. The chapter was written by J.C., and B.N., A.C.H., and G.A.v.K. provided critical revisions.

Chapter 4

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