How narcissists navigate the communal world

Chen, J.

Publication date
2022

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Chapter 1

General Introduction
Introduction

At first glance, people are often impressed by narcissistic individuals’ dominance, extraversion, over-confidence, self-efficacy, charm, and energy. These adaptive characteristics overlap with traits that leaders possess (Smith & Foti, 1998). Therefore, it is not surprising that narcissistic individuals, across ages, tend to emerge as leaders in various fields (Brummelman et al., 2021; Brunell et al., 2008; Grijalva et al., 2015; Nevicka et al., 2011), ranging from politicians (e.g., Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump; Maak et al., 2021; Nai & Maier, 2018), to business executives (e.g., Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Jeff Bezos; Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017), and to popular culture celebrities (e.g., reality TV show personalities, actors, and musicians; Rubinstein, 2016; Young & Pinsky, 2006). While narcissistic individuals seem to be successful in securing prominent positions in society, in the long run, other people often experience the brunt of their selfishness, lack of empathy, aggression, and hostility (Burgmer et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2005; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021). These characteristics of narcissistic individuals may be particularly problematic given that their influential positions provide them more leeway to exert interpersonal or social influence. To better comprehend the social impact of narcissism, it is important to gain additional insight into how narcissistic individuals maneuver their social environment.

Our understanding of narcissistic individuals can be obtained through the lens of two domains: Agency relating to their personal achievement and communion pertaining to their social relationships. To date, a great amount of research demonstrates that whereas narcissistic individuals are concerned with and have high strivings for a positive self-view in the agentic domain (e.g., competence, power, intelligence), they tend to disregard communal values that facilitate social relationships (e.g., warmth, compassion, and honesty; Carroll, 1987; Grapsas et al., 2020; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Sedikides et al., 2002; Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019). While most previous work has spoken to the importance of agency for narcissists, I argue in the current dissertation that in order to understand how narcissists influence others or their social environment, it is crucial to focus on the manifestations of global grandiose narcissism as well as its agentic and antagonistic dimensions, the choice of which will be discussed in the next section.
narcissism in the communal domain (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Arguably, communal features are the primary drivers of social interactions as these reflect how individuals would treat others (Wojciszke, 2005) and they are also important in the formation of positive social bonds that facilitate cooperation (Jehn & Shah, 1997; Peng & Hsieh, 2012). Simply assuming that narcissists do not care about communal features might be an oversimplification of their experiences and responses in social contexts.

Additionally, individuals’ participation in social interactions does not only make them protagonists or agents proactively displaying behaviors but also implies they observe, perceive, and respond to social features in their environments (Bandura, 1977; Gage & Cronbach, 1955). This means that narcissistic individuals, despite their general lack of interest in others and interpersonal intimacy (Carroll, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), inevitably find themselves embedded in all kinds of social relationships and have to deal with and relate to communal features that are core to such social relationships (e.g., behaviors that harm or benefit others). More importantly, the way individuals process and respond to communal features of their social environments could significantly shape their personal and interpersonal consequences (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Du, Thomas, et al., 2021; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004a; Meier et al., 2006). For instance, frequently exposing oneself to low communal information (e.g., social news about antisocial behaviors) could lead individuals to engage in more low communal behaviors themselves (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Then a critical question arises: How do narcissistic individuals, with their blindness for communal features, navigate the communal environment? The current dissertation aims to answer this question by investigating how narcissistic individuals process and react to communal features in their social environments. This way, I aim to broaden our knowledge of how narcissism relates to the communal domain so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of narcissistic individuals’ social influence.

In this dissertation, I report a series of studies investigating what social information narcissistic individuals attend to, what social information they use to select people to interact with in different contexts, and how they respond to social information in terms of their evaluations of and behaviors towards other people. In the remainder of this chapter, I will first introduce narcissism in more detail, especially focusing on its expression and influence in the agentic and communal domains. I will then argue why examining the aforementioned research questions could further enhance our understanding of narcissistic individuals’ social influence. Finally, I will provide an overview of the empirical chapters.
Narcissism

Narcissism originates from Greek mythology, in which a handsome youth Narcissus, who loved no one till he saw his own reflection in a pool of water and fell in love with that, eventually died after staring at the reflection for the rest of his life. Narcissism is defined as a pattern of seeing one’s own needs and goals as more significant than others’ and displaying an inflated sense of importance and desiringness (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). Although both narcissism and self-esteem highlight self-importance, which may make these constructs appear similar, narcissism differs from self-esteem in that the former especially emphasizes superiority compared to others while the latter values a sense of self-worth (Brummelman et al., 2016). We acknowledge that narcissism is continuous—there is no clear line between non-narcissists and narcissists (Foster & Campbell, 2007). However, for ease of exposition, we use the term “narcissistic individuals/people” throughout to refer to individuals with relatively higher scores on narcissism. Previous research on narcissism demonstrated its links with strong strivings for social status and power (Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017; Gebauer et al., 2012; Grapsas et al., 2020; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2019), egocentricity and uniqueness (Emmons, 1984, 1987), over-confidence (Campbell et al., 2004), arrogance (Paulhus, 1998), dominance (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2021), competitiveness (Luchner et al., 2011; Raskin & Terry, 1988), hostility (P. L. Hart & Joubert, 1996), superiority (Krizan & Bushman, 2011), extraversion (Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002), risk-taking (Campbell et al., 2004; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007), and lack of empathy (Burgmer et al., 2021).

Narcissism is a multidimensional construct. Earlier work decomposed narcissism into a two-faceted concept: Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Miller et al., 2011; Miller & Maples, 2011; Wink, 1991), with the former predominately marked by a sense of superiority, need for admiration and exhibitionism, and dominance, with a link to leadership (Grijalva et al., 2015; Watts et al., 2013), and the latter mainly characterized by intense negative affectivity, defensiveness, and disagreeableness. While vulnerable narcissism represents a clinical pathological expression of narcissism (Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2010, 2011), grandiose narcissism represents a subclinical personality trait in the general population, which can be further decomposed into agentic and antagonistic dimensions (Ackerman et al., 2011; R. P. Brown et al., 2009). In more recent years, consensus has emerged that narcissism can be grouped into three facets that reflect different ways in which narcissistic self-importance and entitlement are manifested (Du et al., 2022; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2016; Mota et al., 2020; Rogoza et al., 2022): Agentic narcissism (narcissistic
self-promotion; grandiose fantasies, exhibitionism), antagonistic narcissism (narcissistic self-defense; exploitativeness, arrogance, manipulativeness), and neurotic narcissism (narcissistic insecurity; need for admiration, shame, indifference), which is considered to be another label for vulnerable narcissism. In addition, communal narcissism is another type of grandiose narcissism that involves different tactics to satisfy the same self-motives as grandiose agentic narcissism (i.e., grandiosity, self-esteem, power, and entitlement; Gebauer et al., 2012). The agency model of narcissism proposes that people with higher grandiose agentic narcissism satisfy these self-motives through agentic means, such as by boasting about their agentic characteristics (e.g., intelligence and creativity; Campbell et al., 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007) and they tend to disregard communal concerns. The agency-communion model of narcissism, on the other hand, posits that people with higher grandiose communal narcissism satisfy the same self-motives via communal means, such as by exaggerating their communal traits (e.g., helpfulness, warmth, and morality; Gebauer et al., 2012). Indeed, communal narcissism positively relates to displaying communal behaviors and communal self-enhancement (e.g., prosociality and trusting others; Barry, Lui, Lee-Rowland, et al., 2017; Kwiatkowska et al., 2019; Nehrlich et al., 2019).

While their prosocial efforts are motivated by self-interest, grandiose communal narcissists do seem better equipped at navigating the communal domain with a more positive resultant social impact on others, whereas this does not seem to be the case for grandiose agentic narcissists whose agentic self-enhancement and disregard of communal features such as warmth and honesty comes at a cost to others, for example as seen in their selfish, hostile, and unethical behavior (Campbell et al., 2005; Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Sedikides et al., 2002). Seeing that individuals who score higher on grandiose agentic narcissism are more likely to find themselves in positions of influence, and thereby have a greater opportunity to affect others, and given their apparent disconnect with communal features of their social environment, which are critical for social functioning, the current dissertation focuses on grandiose agentic narcissism and its two sub-facets (i.e., agentic and antagonistic narcissism) in terms of how they relate to navigating the communal environment. In this way I aim to better understand how narcissism affects others and society at large. Next, I will elaborate more on (grandiose agentic) narcissism regarding its manifestations and effects in the agentic and communal domains.

---

2 For exploratory purposes we also measured communal narcissism in at least one study in each of the empirical chapters. Details on methods and results are presented in Supplementary Material for Communal Narcissism.
General Introduction

Narcissism in Social Contexts: Agency and Communion

Agency and communion are two fundamental modalities of human existence (Bakan, 1966). Agency is predominantly associated with goal achievement and reflects individuals’ strivings for individuality (i.e., getting ahead), whereas communion is predominantly associated with social relationships and reflects individuals’ desires for relatedness and connections with others (i.e., getting along; Abele et al., 2021; Hogan, 1983; Judd et al., 2005). Accordingly, the agentic domain in social contexts is characterized by achievement- and individuality-related traits and behaviors of individuals, such as need for and pursuit of achievement, status, and power, while the communal domain in social contexts reflects how individuals get along with each other, such as in terms of their (un)ethical, altruistic, empathetic and (un)friendly behaviors.

Narcissism and the Agentic Domain

Narcissistic people hold an exaggerated self-view in the agentic domain, overestimating their intelligence, power, and physical attractiveness (Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). According to the agency model of narcissism (Campbell et al., 2006; Campbell & Foster, 2007), narcissistic individuals satisfy their inflated agentic self-views through a variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal self-regulatory strategies that fall into the agentic domain (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The intrapersonal strategies include various cognitive self-enhancement biases (Hepper et al., 2010), such as making self-serving attributions on agentic traits (e.g., intellectual skills; Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002), selectively remembering positive-agentic information about themselves (e.g., clever and admirable; L. L. Jones et al., 2017; L. L. Jones & Brunell, 2014; Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002), and selectively attending to and reacting faster to positive-agentic traits that describe them (e.g., bright and wise; Krusemark et al., 2015). In terms of interpersonal strategies, narcissistic people also seize opportunities to self-enhance on their agentic characteristics in their social interactions (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016). To make themselves seen as successful, special, superior, and entitled, narcissistic individuals brag about their accomplishments (e.g., academic and athletic; Buss & Chiodo, 1991), purchase high-prestige and symbolic products (Cisek et al., 2014; Kang & Park, 2016; Sedikides et al., 2007), and wear flashy, stylish and neat outfits (Back et al., 2010; Vazire et al., 2008). In a similar vein, narcissistic people strategically approach others who admire them or have high status to enhance their own positive self-views and status (Campbell, 1999; Tanchotsrinon et al., 2007), such as their supervisors in the workplace (Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021). Narcissistic people also strategically use social media
for self-presentation and self-promotion, such as frequently updating their status, posting attractive photos and, gathering a large number of audience members and connections to seek out attention and praise (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Gnambs & Appel, 2018; McCain & Campbell, 2018).

However, narcissistic individuals’ strivings for admiration, power, and status often occur at the expense of other people (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Sedikides et al., 2002). Narcissistic people prioritize their own needs and goals over the needs and goals of others, as illustrated by their disregard of collective interests compared to self-interests (Campbell et al., 2005), and their tendency to take credit for collaborators’ work or blame others for suboptimal performance (Campbell et al., 2000) and display dishonesty without feeling guilty (Brunell et al., 2011). When facing ego-threat, especially related to their self-views in the agentic domain, narcissistic individuals respond aggressively, for instance by derogating others who provide them with unfavorable feedback on their writing skills or intelligence or punishing people who reject them, which signals a loss of social status (Baumeister et al., 2000; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Smalley & Stake, 1996; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Due to their high sense of entitlement, narcissistic people are less likely to apologize for their interpersonal transgressions (Leunissen et al., 2017) or forgive others who offend them and insist on greater punishment of the offenders (Exline et al., 2004). Narcissistic individuals were also found to show more infidelity, dishonesty, and deception and less commitment in romantic relationships because of their need for power and autonomy (Campbell, Foster, et al., 2002). In addition, narcissistic people could negatively affect groups by showing more white-collar crime for financial gain (Blickle et al., 2006). All these findings regarding narcissistic individuals’ interpersonal behaviors are essentially byproducts of their strivings for maintaining a positive self-view in the agentic domain. To develop a more complete understanding of how narcissists navigate the social world, we need to consider how they relate to the communal aspects of their social environments.

**Narcissism and the Communal Domain**

To date, there is some research that investigated how narcissistic individuals relate to others or their social environment with the communal aspect being the focal attention. From an intrapersonal perspective, narcissistic individuals devalue communal traits in themselves (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012) and do not engage in intrapersonal self-enhancement of their communal characteristics (e.g., agreeableness, morality; Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002; Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Nehrlich et al., 2019). From an interpersonal perspective, it has been
demonstrated that narcissism is negatively related to a wide variety of communal manifestations, such as interest in interpersonal intimacy and closeness (Campbell, Foster, et al., 2002; Carroll, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), empathy (Burgmer et al., 2021), perspective-taking (Lee & Kang, 2020), agreeableness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), commitment in romantic relationships (Campbell & Foster, 2002), prosociality (Nehrlich et al., 2019), tendencies to pay it forward after receiving help (Zhong et al., 2022), feeling guilty for one’s own transgression (Leunissen et al., 2017; Poless et al., 2018), and posting selfies related to affiliation with others on social media (Barry, Doucette, et al., 2017). Furthermore, narcissism positively associates with interpersonal (unprovoked) aggression and hostility (Du, Miller, et al., 2021; Fossati et al., 2010; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Reidy et al., 2010), prejudice (Cichocka et al., 2017; Schnieders & Gore, 2011), and unethical decision-making (Blair et al., 2008; Sedikides & Campbell, 2017).

While prior research has given us some indication of how narcissistic individuals behave as protagonists in navigating the communal world, it is also important to understand how they process and respond to communal features. In social interactions, individuals can learn social rules and skills from observing and perceiving how people treat each other and build social relationships with each other (Bandura, 1977; Gage & Cronbach, 1955). They can also express their attitudes and opinions about and show behavioral responses to others’ behaviors and social events, which may in turn shape other people’s behavioral tendencies and perception of social norms (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004b; Fehr & Gächter, 2002). For instance, people who witness others’ prosocial behaviors are motivated to imitate these behaviors (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Silvers & Haidt, 2008) and those who punish free-riders can contribute to the maintenance of cooperation among individuals (Fehr & Schmidt, 1999). As such, individuals’ processing of and response to communal features can considerably influence their own functioning in social situations as well as the functioning of social collectives. Narcissistic individuals’ apparent blindness for communal features makes one wonder how they cope with these features in their social environment. In this dissertation, I attempt to answer this question by focusing on how narcissistic individuals (1) seek out communal information, (2) use communal information when choosing interaction partners, and (3) evaluate and behaviorally respond to others who show high or low communal behaviors.3

3 Please note that Chapters 2-4 were written as independent research articles and as a result there is some overlap in the theoretical introductions.
**Selection of Social Information**

As the first step to understanding narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal world, we focus on their selection of social information with communal features. People’s antisocial (e.g., bullying) or prosocial (e.g., donating) behaviors involve different levels of concern for and empathy with others, as such reflecting the essence of communion. The information selection process is critical for individuals’ navigation in social environments because it is the first step in engaging with one’s social surroundings by determining which information sources are selected for further processing (Pashler, 1998). According to the social information-processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), information that is selected and encoded can shape individuals’ subsequent attitudes and responses. Prior research supports this argument by showing that people display more antisocial thoughts and behaviors after being exposed to antisocial information (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Eron et al., 1972; Meier et al., 2006), whereas they become more prosocial after witnessing prosocial information (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Silvers & Haidt, 2008). Given the significant consequences of social information selection, examining narcissistic individuals’ pattern of selecting prosocial versus antisocial information would be a good way to understand their behavioral tendencies (and ultimately their impact on others or the social environment at large).

According to person-environment fit theory (Caplan, 1987), people tend to expose themselves to social situations that fit with their own traits, attitudes, and motives (Caspi et al., 1989; Ickes et al., 1997), which also applies to social information selection. This implies that individuals who show higher antisocial tendencies and are more selfish may select more antisocial information picturing others’ antisocial behaviors, and that those who show higher prosocial tendencies and are more selfless may tend to seek out prosocial information that describes others’ prosocial behaviors. Previous research shows that narcissistic individuals have higher antisocial tendencies and have lower concern for others (Burgmer et al., 2021; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Sheldon et al., 2020). Therefore, we expected that narcissism may positively relate to individuals’ selection of antisocial versus prosocial information. In addition, we also explored whether narcissistic individuals’ proself (vs. prosocial) motives might account for their selection pattern as the underlying mechanism.

**Selection of Interaction Partners Based on Social Information**

As the second step to investigating how narcissistic individuals navigate the communal environment, we focused on their selection of interaction partners based on potential partners’ communal traits. Previous research showed that narcissism is related to low communal contexts
that are characterized by less cooperation, lower cohesion, or devaluation of integrity (Bush-Evans, 2020; Felty et al., 2015; Lynch et al., 2022; O’Reilly et al., 2021), which were associated with several unfavorable outcomes at both individual and group level (e.g., lower performance, lower satisfaction, higher turnover intentions in the work contexts, and greater prevalence of social exclusion; M. T. Braun et al., 2020; Chaman et al., 2022; Mayer et al., 2007; Simons & Roberson, 2003). Therefore, it is critical to understand the process by which narcissistic individuals shape the communal features of their social environment, specifically through the types of people they choose to engage with in social interactions.

According to the generalized reciprocity theory (Schauf et al., 2022), people with higher communal tendencies stimulate others’ communal behaviors, as such creating a communal interaction context (Bell et al., 2018; Colquitt, 2004; Prewett et al., 2018). This implies that having highly communal individuals in social interaction contexts facilitates the formation of a communal environment. Further, one can expect that individuals’ selection of others with different communal tendencies into social contexts may affect the communal features of those social contexts. In an effort to understand narcissistic individuals’ effect on communal features of their social environment, we investigated whether narcissism shapes selection of interaction partners with different communal traits.

Similarity-attraction theory and homophily theory posit that individuals tend to associate with others who are similar to them in terms of attitudes, traits, and other attributes (Byrne, 1997; Ertug et al., 2022; McPherson et al., 2001), with empirical support for these theories shown across many studies (Burleson & Denton, 1992; Grosz et al., 2015; Morry, 2007; Schug et al., 2009; Tidwell et al., 2013). It is well-documented that narcissistic individuals are less other-oriented and have lower communal traits (Sauls & Zeigler-Hill, 2020; Seidman et al., 2020; Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012). Accordingly, we expected that narcissistic individuals would be more inclined to interact with others who also have low communal traits. In addition, we examined the potential moderating effect of situational threat on narcissistic individuals’ selection of interaction partners. Threatening situations can make people more affiliative (Schachter, 1959), and narcissistic individuals may thus be motivated to make positive connections with others under threat. People with high communal traits (e.g., agreeable and affectionate) are more likely to provide support and promote feelings of acceptance (Bowling et al., 2005; Denes et al., 2017) and may thus be appealing to narcissistic individuals in times of threat. Therefore, we expected that the degree to which narcissistic individuals are inclined to select communal others depends on the level of situational threat.
Responses to Social Information

The third step we took in examining narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal world was to focus on their responses to social information about others’ communal behaviors. Individuals’ social impact can be immediately and directly observed through their antisocial (low communal) and prosocial (high communal) behaviors towards others. However, people can also indirectly exert influence by responding to someone else’s social behavior. Usually, people blame, condemn, or punish others who behave antisocially and praise, respect, or admire those who show prosocial behaviors, which signals the unacceptability of antisocial behaviors and appreciation of prosocial behaviors respectively (Brambilla et al., 2013; Hamilton et al., 1988). Such distinctive reactions to antisocial and prosocial behaviors provide a clear code of conduct to both actors and observers about which behaviors are encouraged or discouraged and thus can discourage antisocial behaviors and reinforce prosocial behaviors (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004a; Henrich et al., 2005; Van Kleef et al., 2015). Whereas narcissistic individuals’ antisocial tendencies towards others have been well-documented, their indirect impact on others through responses to others’ social behaviors are unclear. Therefore, we investigated how narcissism shapes responsiveness to variations in others’ social behaviors, defined as either low (i.e., antisocial) or high (i.e., prosocial) on communion. Responsiveness refers to the degree to which individuals respond positively to prosocial others and negatively to antisocial others. That is, the more positive (negative) responses to a prosocial (antisocial) target relative to an antisocial (prosocial) target, the higher an observer’s responsiveness. We proposed two competing hypotheses.

On the one hand, narcissistic individuals have high strivings for agency, such as power, status, uniqueness (Gebauer et al., 2012; Grapsas et al., 2020) and show low concern for others (Burgmer et al., 2021). According to the iterative reprocessing model (van Bavel et al., 2012), people are more (vs. less) sensitive to motivation-relevant (vs. motivation-irrelevant) stimuli, hence it is possible that narcissistic individuals are less sensitive to and inhibit their processing of communal information that reflects others’ situations (i.e., antisocial and prosocial behaviors that harm or benefit others). In other words, narcissistic individuals may be less likely to differentially respond to antisocial and prosocial behaviors (i.e., hypo-responsiveness). On the other hand, people who show antisocial behaviors, which are seen as higher in power and status (Bellezza et al., 2014; Stamkou et al., 2020; Van Kleef et al., 2011), could constitute a threat to narcissistic individuals who have high need for power and status (Grapsas et al., 2020; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and hence they may respond more negatively to antisocial others (i.e.,
hyper-responsiveness). However, this may not apply to prosocial others, because narcissistic individuals’ self-enhancement on power or status usually happens in the agentic domain rather than the communal domain.

Summary and Overview

The current dissertation contains three empirical chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) that test the aforementioned research questions.

In Chapter 2, we examined how narcissism (operationalized as global grandiose, agentic, and antagonistic narcissism) shapes individuals’ selection of antisocial and prosocial information. Drawing on the person-environment fit (Caplan, 1987), which posits that individuals prefer information that fits their own traits and motives, we hypothesized that individuals higher (vs. lower) on narcissism would select relatively more antisocial and less prosocial information. We tested our hypothesis in Studies 2.1 and 2.2 by examining the relationship between individuals’ narcissism and the number of antisocial and prosocial news items they selected to read. In Study 2.2, we also examined the potential mediating effect of individuals’ momentary social motives on their information selection.

In Chapter 3, we investigated how narcissism (specifically, antagonistic narcissism) affects individuals’ preferences for communal traits in prospective interaction partners. Based on similarity attraction theories (Byrne, 1997; McPherson et al., 2001), we hypothesized that individuals scoring higher on antagonistic narcissism (vs. those lower on antagonistic narcissism) would select interaction partners who are similar to themselves, namely having low communal traits. Furthermore, we expected this preference would be reduced in higher threat situations because being affiliated with communal others (e.g., friendly and moral) can help to buffer threat (Coan et al., 2006; Nash et al., 2014). We conducted two experimental studies and one field study to test our hypotheses. In Study 3.1, we primed threat by invoking a personal (interaction with a prospective friend; lower threat) versus a work (interaction with a prospective colleague; higher threat) context and asked participants to indicate the extent to which they wanted their prospective friend/colleague to have a list of communal traits (i.e., sociability and morality). In Study 3.2, we zoomed in on a hypothetical work context and manipulated threat using a cooperative (lower threat) versus a competitive (higher threat) context and asked participants to indicate the desirability of communal traits in a prospective colleague. In Study 3.3, we aimed to generalize our findings to a real-world context by asking employees across different organizations to pick a colleague to work with on a project and rate that colleague’s communal traits, with situational threat measured as a continuous variable. As
a comparison, we also included preferences for interaction partners’ agentic traits (i.e., assertiveness and ability).

In Chapter 4, we examined how narcissism (specifically, global grandiose narcissism) shapes individuals’ responsiveness to variations in others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors. On the one hand, narcissistic people have high motivation to enhance their positive self-views in the agentic domain and lack interest in and empathy with others’ situation (Burgmer et al., 2021; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), and they may therefore be less sensitive to others’ social behavior in the communal domain. Therefore, we hypothesized that they would be hyporesponsive to variations in others’ social behavior. On the other hand, others’ antisocial behaviors signal power (Stamkou et al., 2020; Van Kleef et al., 2011), which could form a threat to narcissistic people, who may thus show hyperresponsiveness to antisocial others. We tested these competing hypotheses across four studies. In Study 4.1, we contrasted antisocial and neutral behavior and measured participants’ moral character evaluations of the actor as the response outcome; we also manipulated self-relevance of the behavior to explore its moderating effect. In Study 4.2, we manipulated others’ behavior to be either prosocial or neutral and examined the effect of narcissism on observers’ responsiveness on moral character evaluations. In Studies 4.3 and 4.4, we contrasted antisocial and prosocial tendencies and additionally measured participants’ reward and punishment responses towards others in addition to moral character evaluations. Across all studies, we examined the mediating effect of recognized antisociality/prosociality.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I will summarize the main findings from the empirical chapters and discuss their theoretical and practical implications. I will also provide some suggestions for research directions to further expand our findings and indicate issues that need to be addressed in the future.