How narcissists navigate the communal world

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General Discussion
The current dissertation aimed to enhance our knowledge of how narcissistic individuals navigate the communal environment and our understanding of their influence in the broader social domain, particularly given narcissistic individuals’ general disregard for communal concerns. Different from most existing research that focused on narcissistic people as agents, we focused on how more or less narcissistic individuals observe, perceive, and respond to communal features of social interactions (Bandura, 1977; Gage & Cronbach, 1955). Specifically, this dissertation addressed three research questions: How narcissism shapes individuals’ (1) selection of communal information, (2) selection of interaction partners on the basis of communal information, and (3) evaluation of and behavioral response to others who show high- or low-communal behaviors. In this chapter I will first summarize the main findings of our research. Then I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Finally, I will elaborate on the strengths and limitations of our research and provide directions for future research.

**Overview of Main Findings**

In Chapter 2 we investigated how narcissism (global grandiose, agentic, and antagonistic narcissism) shapes individuals’ selection of social information regarding others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors to get some first insights in narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal environment. Person-environment fit theory posits that people tend to expose themselves to social situations that fit with their personality traits, attitudes, and motives (Caplan, 1987). Given narcissistic individuals’ antisocial tendencies (Du, Miller, et al., 2021; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021), we expected a positive relationship between narcissism and the selection of antisocial information and a negative relationship between narcissism and the selection of prosocial information. We also examined the mediating effect of social motives, expecting that narcissistic individuals’ selection pattern is explained by their stronger proself (or weaker prosocial) motives. We examined these ideas across two studies. In Study 2.1, we found that global grandiose, agentic, and antagonistic narcissism all 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 negatively predicted the selection of prosocial information. However, when taking into account the mediating effect of social motives, all three operationalizations of narcissism were positively associated with the selection of antisocial information and negatively associated with the selection of prosocial information, via stronger proself (or weaker prosocial) motives. Moreover, the results of an internal meta-analysis provided support
for the positive relationship between the selection of antisocial information and both agentic and antagonistic narcissism, and the negative relationship between the selection of prosocial information and antagonistic narcissism. These findings were therefore largely in line with our hypotheses, in that individuals scoring higher (vs. lower) on narcissism tended to select more antisocial and less prosocial information, as accounted for by their stronger proself motives. Interestingly, this trend was stronger and more robust for the maladaptive facet of narcissism (i.e., antagonistic narcissism).

In Chapter 3 we moved on to a second angle in studying narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal world, which focused on how narcissism (specifically, antagonistic narcissism) shapes individuals’ selection of interaction partners with respect to prospective interaction partners’ communal traits (i.e., sociability and morality). According to similarity-attraction theory and homophily theory (Byrne, 1997; Ertug et al., 2022; McPherson et al., 2001), people prefer to connect with others who are similar in terms of their attitudes, traits, and other attributes. Given that narcissistic individuals show low communal characteristics and behaviors (Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Seidman et al., 2020; Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012), we expected narcissistic individuals to show lower preferences for communal interaction partners. However, we proposed that this pattern may change in more threatening situations. Threats usually make individuals more affiliative (Schachter, 1959), which may motivate narcissistic individuals to make positive connections with others. Therefore, we expected that narcissistic individuals’ reduced preferences for communal traits in interaction partners may be muted when threat is higher. Across two experimental studies (Studies 3.1 and 3.2) and one correlational field study (Study 3.3), we consistently found that individuals scoring higher on antagonistic narcissism showed lower preferences for communal sociability traits in prospective partners when threat was lower, however, this effect was muted (Studies 3.1 and 3.3) or even reversed (Study 3.2) when threat was higher. These findings were corroborated by the results of an internal meta-analysis. Interestingly, narcissistic individuals’ (lower) preferences for communal morality traits were not moderated by threat. Taken together, these findings provided support for our hypotheses, such that in general narcissistic individuals preferred interaction partners with lower communal traits, however, narcissistic individuals’ preferences for sociability depended on the situational threat, with higher threat mitigating or even reversing their lower preference for sociability traits.

In Chapter 4 we examined how global grandiose narcissism shapes individuals’ responsiveness to others’ social behaviors to further understand how narcissistic individuals navigate the communal environment. Responsiveness was operationalized in terms of the
degree to which individuals responded positively to prosocial (high communal) behaviors and negatively to antisocial (low communal) behaviors. Specifically, more positive (negative) responses to prosocial (antisocial) behaviors versus to antisocial (prosocial) behaviors reflect higher responsiveness. We proposed two competing hypotheses regarding the effects of narcissism on individuals’ responsiveness to others’ social behaviors. On the one hand, narcissistic people are less concerned with others’ situations (Burgmer et al., 2021; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Sedikides et al., 2002) and thus may be less sensitive to antisocial and prosocial behaviors that could bring about harm or benefit to someone else. We therefore expected that narcissistic individuals would be less responsive to these behaviors (i.e., hypo-responsiveness). On the other hand, antisocial behaviors signal power of the actor (Bellezza et al., 2014; Van Kleef et al., 2011), which may well threaten narcissistic individuals who themselves crave for power (Carroll, 1987). This might make narcissistic people more likely to respond negatively to antisocial behaviors (i.e., hyper-responsiveness). Conversely, prosocial behaviors may not be threatening to narcissistic people because they usually do not self-enhance through prosociality (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Nehrlich et al., 2019). Across four experimental studies, individuals scoring higher on narcissism consistently showed lower responsiveness to variations in others’ antisocial or prosocial behaviors or tendencies, providing support for 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). This lack of differentiation was in turn associated with their moral character evaluations of the protagonist (Studies 4.1–4.4) and reward and punishment responses (Studies 4.3 and 4.4). To sum up, these findings suggest that narcissistic individuals are less responsive to variations in the communal features of their social environments.

Theoretical Implications

The current dissertation has a number of theoretical implications. First, it helps to broaden our understanding of the relationship between narcissism and the communal domain. Most existing research investigating this relationship demonstrated that narcissistic individuals show low communal tendencies as protagonists in social interactions, as illustrated by their low empathy and prosociality and high aggression (Burgmer et al., 2021; Du, Miller, et al., 2021; Kjærvik & Bushman, 2021; Nehrlich et al., 2019). We focused on narcissistic individuals’ processing of and response to communal features of their social environments and found that,
in general, narcissistic individuals displayed relatively weaker preferences for high compared to low communal features than their less narcissistic counterparts. That is, narcissistic individuals sought out relatively more antisocial information and chose to interact with others with lower communal traits, they selected less prosocial information, and they were less likely to choose highly communal interaction partners. Moreover, narcissistic individuals differentiated less clearly between others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors in terms of their moral character evaluations of and reward and punishment responses to actors. Observing and responding to others and others’ behaviors are essential forms of participation in social interactions (Bandura, 1977; Gage & Cronbach, 1955). Through these processes individuals learn social rules, regulate their own behaviors, and display attitudes and responses towards others or social events, which could consequently shape both individuals’ and others’ behavioral tendencies (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Du, Thomas, et al., 2021; Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004a; Meier et al., 2006). Therefore, by switching the attention to how narcissistic individuals process and respond to communal features of social situations, the present research extends prior research and enhances our understanding of narcissistic individuals in social situations.

In addition, in Chapter 3 our findings on the attenuating effect of situational threat on narcissistic individuals’ disregard of communal features in others further broaden our knowledge of narcissistic individuals’ relationship with the communal domain. As for communal traits in themselves, narcissistic individuals generally value these traits less (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012). This may explain why they do not tend to engage in self-enhancement of their communal characteristics (e.g., agreeableness, morality; Campbell, Rudich, et al., 2002; Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Nehrlich et al., 2019) and display interpersonal behaviors that are low communal (Nehrlich et al., 2019; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). However, narcissistic individuals can sometimes strategically exhibit communal behaviors, such as helping others and showing interest in approaching friends (Barry, Lui, & Anderson, 2017; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Brunell et al., 2014; Foster et al., 2009; W. Hart et al., 2018; Konrath et al., 2016), although such temporary communal demonstrations mainly serve their selfish goals or needs, like drawing attention to themselves, promoting self-gain, and making themselves seem appealing and superior in front of an audience. Narcissistic individuals also tend to devalue communal traits in others. For instance, narcissistic people find caring and kind romantic partners less attractive (Campbell, 1999; Jonason et al., 2011). Accordingly, our findings show that narcissistic individuals exhibit a relatively higher preference for interaction partners with low communal traits compared to those lower on narcissism. Moreover, we found that when the situation was highly threatening, narcissistic individuals can suppress their
comparative disregard of sociable or friendly people and may even choose to approach and interact with these people, as a way of shielding of threat. Our findings suggest that narcissistic individuals not only strategically use communal features in themselves (e.g., displaying prosocial behaviors) but also strategically use others’ communal traits (e.g., approaching friendly others in times of threat). As such, our research extends research on narcissistic individuals’ strategic use of communal features by specifically focusing on their interest in others’ communal traits in situations with different threat levels.

Our findings also contribute to the body of research on narcissistic individuals’ social influence. Prior research shows that narcissism is associated with social contexts characterized by lower communal features, for example those in which people devalue integrity and show less cooperation and information exchange (Bush-Evans, 2020; Lynch et al., 2022; Nevicka et al., 2011; O’Reilly et al., 2021). O’Reilly and colleagues (2021) tried to understand the process by which narcissism shapes the communal features of social environments and found that narcissistic leaders ignored collaboration and integrity in their endorsement of policies and procedures, which thus guided group members’ behaviors towards less collaboration and lower integrity. Our research implies two additional explanations of how narcissism may influence communal features of social contexts. First, highly communal individuals can stimulate others’ communal behaviors through social reciprocity (Schauf et al., 2022), which over time creates a communal environment. Therefore, having highly communal individuals in social contexts is important for the formation of communal environments. Our research suggests that narcissistic individuals may shape their social environment to be lower on communal features through their selection of interaction partners with lower communal characteristics. Second, previous research showed that individuals’ distinctive responses to others’ antisocial behaviors (e.g., punishment and condemnation) and prosocial behaviors (e.g., praise and admiration) help to discourage future antisocial behaviors while reinforcing prosocial behaviors (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004a; Henrich et al., 2005), thereby promoting a more communal social environment. According to our research, narcissistic individuals differentiate less in their responses to others’ antisocial versus prosocial behaviors, both in terms of their moral character evaluations as well as their reward and punishment behavioral responses. Thus, narcissistic individuals’ less differentiated responses to others’ behavior may signal more opaque normative guidelines, and this may, over time, lead to an increase in antisocial and a decrease in prosocial behaviors in others in their social sphere, consequently engendering a low communal environment.

Our research also implies a possible self-reinforcing loop in which narcissistic
individuals’ behavioral tendencies contribute to the creation of low communal social environments, which in turn beget low communal behaviors. From the perspective of person-environment fit (Caplan, 1987; Caspi et al., 1989; Ickes et al., 1997; Klapper, 1960) and similarity-attraction theories (Byrne, 1997; Ertug et al., 2022), people generally expose themselves to situations and approach others that fit or show similarities with their traits, attitudes, and motives. Our findings are in line with this notion in that they show that narcissistic individuals tended to expose themselves to relatively more antisocial and less prosocial information and to select interaction partners with lower communal traits. These tendencies imply that narcissistic individuals are more likely to get access to antisocial stimuli in daily life, by reading more antisocial news and witnessing more antisocial behaviors of others in their social environment. Cumulative exposure to antisocial stimuli could strengthen individuals’ antisocial schemas in memory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and beliefs that antisocial behaviors are common representations of life and permissible (Eron et al., 1972), which may thus stimulate more antisocial behaviors in individuals. In addition, interacting with relatively low communal others implies that individuals may be less likely to get support from and even more likely to be harmed by these interaction partners (Bowling et al., 2005; Fiske et al., 2002). As such, our findings on narcissistic individuals’ preferences for low communal others suggest that narcissistic people may experience less prosocial and/or more antisocial behaviors from their interaction partners. Receiving less prosocial and more antisocial behaviors from others during social interactions could in turn trigger reciprocated associated behaviors in individuals (Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998; Schauf et al., 2022). Therefore, it is possible low communal interaction partners who are chosen by narcissistic individuals stimulate more reciprocated antisocial behaviors in narcissistic individuals. Taken together, our findings imply that narcissistic individuals may reinforce their antisocial (or low communal) tendencies via their selection of relatively more antisocial versus prosocial information and selection of lower communal interaction partners. However, future research is needed to directly examine this potential self-reinforcing loop.

Narcissism is a multi-faceted construct (Mota et al., 2020; Rogoza et al., 2022) and we especially focused on the grandiose aspect and its two sub-dimensions, that is agentic and antagonistic narcissism. Specifically, we examined how these three measures of narcissism relate to social information selection in Chapter 2 and found that antagonistic narcissism showed the most consistent and robust results. In Chapter 3, we examined individuals’ selection of interaction partners by mainly focusing on antagonistic narcissism but also including agentic narcissism for exploratory purposes (see results in Supplemental Material Chapter 3), and we
again obtained rather consistent and robust results with antagonistic narcissism. In Chapter 4, we investigated individuals’ responsiveness to others’ social behaviors by mainly looking at global grandiose narcissism but also exploring the effects of agentic and antagonistic narcissism (see results in Supplemental Material Chapter 4). The results of these three operationalizations of narcissism showed similar patterns in this chapter. Taken together, these findings across chapters suggest that antagonistic narcissism demonstrated the strongest and the most negative relation to communal features. Antagonistic narcissism represents narcissistic individuals’ maladaptive side and captures their self-defense strategies to maintain a grandiose sense of self, such as by derogating others (Back et al., 2013). Moreover, compared with other measures of narcissism, antagonistic narcissism more closely relates to adverse interpersonal consequences (e.g., hostility, aggression, revenge, and social conflicts; S. Chen et al., 2021; Grove et al., 2019; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; J. Lange et al., 2016; Wurst et al., 2017). As such, it is plausible antagonistic narcissism consistently and negatively relates to various manifestations of communal features. Our findings, therefore, further highlight the importance of employing different dimensions of narcissism depending on the specific research questions under investigation.

Finally, our research contributed by uncovering differential effects of narcissism on preferences for two different yet related aspects of communion: sociability versus morality. Whereas sociability refers to being benevolent to others in a way that facilitates building affectionate social relationships with them, morality means treating others in a way that promotes correct and principled relationships (Abele et al., 2016; Brambilla & Leach, 2014; Wojciszke, 2005). Because others’ morality traits affect individuals’ self-interest more directly than sociability traits (Hartley et al., 2016), the former is perceived as more important in others when making social evaluations (De Bruin & Van Lange, 2000; Goodwin et al., 2014; Judd et al., 2005). Our findings in Chapter 3 are consistent with this line of research by showing that in general the desirability of morality traits in prospective interaction partners was the highest across all three studies, despite the existence of individual differences related to narcissism. Furthermore, our findings on sociability provide new insight into the importance of sociability traits in others being dependent on situations where being affiliated with others is highly needed or not. Although others’ sociability is seen as relatively less important than their morality, our research suggests that in certain situations, such as highly threatening contexts where people especially need positive social relationships, others’ sociability might be particularly desired by individuals who want to connect with others to protect against the threat (e.g., Study 3.2 Chapter 3). Given that we only observed narcissistic individuals’ increased preferences for
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sociability traits in one study, where we explicitly manipulated the perception of situational threat, future research could set out to replicate our findings by manipulating other types of threat, such as social exclusion and mortality salience that also increase individuals’ need for social connections (Maner et al., 2007; Wisman & Koole, 2003).

**Practical Implications**

Our research has several practical implications. First, our findings provide clues for interventions to potentially reduce maladaptive effects of narcissism. Previous research showed that a communal focus can reduce individuals’ narcissism level and increase their empathy, such as by encouraging people to care more about others or feel more connected to others (Jordan et al., 2014) and by asking people to take others’ perspective (Hepper et al., 2014). Moreover, just viewing images of others’ prosocial behaviors can also increase ones’ prosocial tendencies, and this effect is stronger among narcissistic individuals than those lower on narcissism (Finkel et al., 2009). As elaborated above, our findings regarding narcissistic individuals’ selection of social information show that narcissistic individuals are more likely to read antisocial news, which could stimulate their own antisocial behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). To deter this negative effect and increase narcissistic individuals’ prosocial tendencies, a possible intervention could be increasing narcissistic individuals’ access to prosocial news in their daily life, for instance by employing algorithms that prioritize the presentation of prosocial news articles on social media feeds.

Second, the potential negative effects of narcissism on the communal features of social environments suggest that organizations may need to be cautious and take relevant actions to reduce the influence of narcissistic individuals, particularly given that they are more likely to occupy leadership positions (Grijalva et al., 2015). For instance, narcissistic leaders would have more control over recruitment processes, and thereby may hire employees with lower communal traits. They would also be influential in shaping social norms in the organization by signaling less clear-cut reward or punishment of prosocial and antisocial behavior. Organizations can take two strategies to reduce these potential negative effects of narcissism. One tactic is to target the source of the negative effects by introducing interventions to reduce leaders’ narcissism level (Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). As stated above, except for those existing validated interventions using a communal focus, our findings suggest the possibility of encouraging narcissistic individuals to read more prosocial news. Another tactic might be to introduce clear principles of conduct combined with incentives and sanctions that are independent of leaders’ decisions to limit the influence of narcissistic leaders’ less
differentiated responses to employees’ social behaviors.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research**

Our research has several strengths. First, we included both experimental studies (Chapters 2-4) and one correlational field study (Chapter 3), which allowed us to examine our hypotheses in more controlled conditions as well as test the generalizability of some of our findings in real-world situations. Second, we developed and employed innovative experimental paradigms to examine narcissistic individuals’ responses to information in the communal domain. For instance, we developed a behavioral news headline selection task in Chapter 2. This task resembles how people choose among news articles on social media in daily life, therefore, our findings have relatively high ecological validity and can be generalized to real-life contexts. Furthermore, we developed paradigms that successfully primed and manipulated situational threat in Chapter 3 and that manipulated individuals’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors or tendencies in Chapter 4, which can be easily implemented in future research. Third, the communal features of social environments were operationalized in different ways, namely by presenting social news about others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors, by asking participants to rate potential interaction partners’ communal traits, and by observing others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors or tendencies in social contexts. Through the diverse manifestations of communal features, our research provided a more comprehensive picture of narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal world. Fourth, we examined the effects of different narcissism facets, which allowed us to provide a more nuanced understanding of how narcissism relates to the communal domain (Mota et al., 2020; Rogoza et al., 2022). Fifth, we conducted internal meta-analyses to synthesize our results of individual studies in Chapters 2 and 3, which helped to further corroborate the robustness of our findings. Sixth, we pre-registered one study in each empirical chapter to provide a robust test of our hypotheses.

Of course, the research in this dissertation is not without limitations. One possible weakness is that there may still exist alternative explanations for our findings. In Chapter 2, the antisocial and prosocial news headlines may not only differ in antisociality/prosociality but also in other dimensions, such as thrill and excitement. Usually, antisocial news is more thrilling and exciting than prosocial news (Alves et al., 2017). Given that narcissistic individuals are sensation seekers (Emmons, 1981), their preference for antisocial versus prosocial news may also be explained by their attraction to the thrilling and exciting aspect of antisocial news (Zaleski, 1984). Although we balanced the general interest level of antisocial and prosocial news when developing the news headline materials in our pilot study, future
research could replicate the study by controlling for perceived thrill or excitement to rule out this alternative explanation. In Chapter 4, we found that narcissistic people engaged in more punishment towards both antisocial and prosocial others, indicating their lower responsiveness to antisocial and prosocial behaviors. However, because of their high sense of power (Nevicka & Sedikides, 2021), narcissistic individuals’ generally high punishment response could also be a signal of dominance. Put it differently, narcissistic individuals may have wanted to assert their dominance by showcasing their free will to punish others. Future research could further explore the underlying mechanism of such unprovoked aggression of narcissistic individuals.

Another limitation is that all our studies were conducted online. The major issue with this method might be that participants are less attentive and more easily distracted, which may affect data quality. However, we took several precautions to reduce these potential influences, such as including attention check items in each study survey and removing participants who failed these attention checks, adding incentives (e.g., monetary reward) to motivate participants to immerse themselves in our manipulation scenarios, comparing results before and after excluding participants who failed the manipulation checks, recording the time participants spent on the manipulation page as a proxy of paid attention and examining the potential effect of this spent time on our main results. These additional analyses did not lead to different conclusions. We obtained rather consistent findings across different studies and across analytical approaches in each chapter, which suggests that our conclusions are robust. Another potential concern about online studies is that participants tend to consult outside sources, such as by browsing the Internet or talking with another person, which is most likely to happen when they answer questions beyond their knowledge (e.g., political knowledge; Clifford & Jerit, 2014). However, in all our studies we asked for participants’ personal attitudes and responses to others’ traits and behaviors and their preferences for others’ traits, which can be easily answered without need for others’ help, suggesting that consultation of outside sources is unlikely to have been much of an issue. Nevertheless, future research could focus on real-life contexts involving face-to-face interactions between individuals to further contribute to the generalizability of our findings.

In Chapter 3, we focused on the selection of single individuals with different levels of communal traits. Future research may examine the effect of narcissism on individuals’ decisions to join groups or organizations that have different level of communal culture. According to the selection-attraction-attrition approach (Schneider & Reichers, 1983), individuals are attracted to organizations or jobs that fit their personality traits, because in a fitting culture, individuals can actualize their self-concepts (Super, 1953) and satisfy their
needs (Vroom, 1964) to a greater degree. Similarly, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel et al., 1979) proposes that people tend to be affiliated with organizations or teams whose attributes afford them a positive social identity. For example, people generally care about their reputation in the communal domain and thus are more likely to join an organization with a highly communal (e.g., moral) reputation which might transfer to the reputation of the individuals working there (Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015). However, we assume that this effect may be limited to individuals who value their self-image in the communal domain (e.g., moral reputation), while those who devalue their communal self-image (e.g., narcissistic individuals) may not be as attracted to highly communal organizations. Based on these arguments, we expect that narcissistic individuals would tend to join organizations or groups with lower communal climates than those lower on narcissism.

Another potential avenue for future research is how narcissism shapes individuals’ wellbeing, performance, and attrition in organizations with different communal climates, once they are a part of those organizations. Previous research showed that narcissistic leaders were perceived as ineffective and unethical in highly ethical contexts (Hoffman et al., 2013). This may be because narcissistic individuals’ counterproductive and unethical behaviors that defy prevailing norms are especially salient in highly ethical contexts, leading to extreme disapproval from other organization members (Hoffman et al., 2011). Negative evaluations and disapproval from others in highly communal organizations may lead to lower sense of belongingness and acceptance in narcissistic individuals (Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2013), which could further result in deteriorated work performance (Randel et al., 2018) and higher tendencies to resign (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Therefore, we expect that, compared with people lower on narcissism, narcissistic individuals would have more negative experiences (e.g., lower sense of belongingness) in, perform worse, and be more likely to leave highly communal organizations.

Our findings regarding narcissistic individuals’ selections of social information and interaction partners imply potential effects on narcissistic individuals’ own antisocial tendencies in a reinforcing manner. However, we did not directly examine these downstream and longer-term consequences in our studies. Future research could measure individuals’ own behavioral tendencies as the outcome and examine whether narcissistic individuals’ selection of social information and interaction partners affects their own behavioral tendencies over time by adopting a longitudinal design.

In all chapters in this dissertation, we mainly focused on global grandiose narcissism and its two facets (i.e., agentic and antagonistic narcissism), but we also included communal
narcissism for exploratory purposes (see Supplementary Material for Communal Narcissism). In Chapter 2, communal narcissism was included in both studies. In Study 2.2, communal narcissism positively predicted the selection of prosocial information but did not predict the selection of antisocial information, however, both the main effect of communal narcissism and the interaction effect were not significant in Study 2.1. In Chapter 3, we included communal narcissism in Study 3.2 and only found that it positively predicted preferences for sociability traits in potential interaction partners regardless of threat. In Chapter 4, we included communal narcissism in Study 4.4 and found that individuals scoring higher on it showed hypo-responsiveness on moral character evaluations and generally tended to reward and punish others more. These findings suggest a mixed relationship between communal narcissism and the communal domain. On the one hand, the findings across Chapters 2 and 3 and part of the findings in Chapter 4 (i.e., on reward) are in line with previous research that suggests a relatively positive relationship between communal narcissism and communal features (Gebauer et al., 2012; Kwiatkowska et al., 2019; Nehrlich et al., 2019). This may be because communal narcissistic individuals primarily adopt communal means to self-enhance their exaggerated self-views (Barry, Lui, Lee-Rowland, et al., 2017; Gebauer et al., 2012; Kwiatkowska et al., 2019; Nehrlich et al., 2019). As such, communal narcissistic individuals’ selection of prosocial information, higher preferences for sociability traits, and more reward towards others may just reflect their self-enhancement strategies. On the other hand, however, even though communal narcissistic individuals seem to indicate higher communal tendencies, they, like grandiose (agentic) narcissistic people, also differentiated less between others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors when making moral character evaluations and showed generally higher tendencies to punish others. Accordingly, the consequences (both personal and interpersonal) of communal narcissistic individuals’ navigation of the communal world are also mixed. First, their relatively higher exposure to prosocial information and more frequent interaction with communal others may actually promote higher prosocial tendencies in themselves, although their initial purpose may be selfish. Moreover, communal narcissistic individuals’ selection of more communal interaction partners into social contexts could contribute to a communal social environment, and their generally higher tendencies to reward others also signal their socially desirable side. However, communal narcissistic individuals may also bring about negative outcomes, such as leading to an erosion of social norms via their lower-responsiveness to others’ social behaviors (O’Reilly et al., 2021) and harming others via relatively high punishment tendencies. However, these preliminary and exploratory findings are based on a limited number of studies, and more empirical evidence is needed to illuminate
the relation of communal narcissism to communal features of social environments and its potential consequences. Moreover, given communal narcissistic individuals’ strategic nature of using communal features to self-enhance on their self-concept (Gebauer et al., 2012), future research could examine whether their processing of and response to communal features are influenced by the presence of opportunities of self-enhancement. For example, future research could investigate whether communal narcissistic individuals’ selection of antisocial and prosocial news is moderated by the need to share with others what they have read, or whether their responses to others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors are qualified by whether or not they are observed by an audience.

**Conclusion**

Different from the predominant angle of examining narcissistic individuals and their strivings in the agentic domain, our research focused on the communal domain. Given that the communal domain generally reflects how individuals connect and form social bonds with each other, this focus allows for a more comprehensive understanding of narcissistic individuals in social interactions. Moreover, rather than examining narcissistic individuals as agents, we focused on how narcissistic individuals process and respond to communal features of their social environments, which constitutes another essential part of individuals’ participation in social interactions. Specifically, we investigated how narcissism affects individuals’ selection of communal information, their selection of interaction partners based on communal traits, and their evaluation of and behavioral responses to communal information. The empirical research in the current dissertation demonstrates that narcissistic individuals selected relatively more antisocial and less prosocial information, generally showed lower preferences for potential interaction partners’ communal traits (i.e., sociability and morality)—although their reduced preference for sociability traits was muted or even reversed under threat—, and displayed hypo-responsiveness to others’ antisocial and prosocial behaviors. Taken together, our findings suggest that narcissistic individuals have a comparatively higher (lower) preference for low (high) communal features of their social environments, implying that what they see and hear reflects who they are. With these novel findings, our research sets a new stage for investigating narcissistic individuals as perceivers and evaluators of and responders to communal features of their social environments.