

Collective narcissism as a threat to democracy and social cohesion

Aleksandra Cichocka (University of Kent)

Many recent political movements rely on a rhetoric of national exceptionalism. While traditional social psychological approaches highlight positives of fostering a strong ingroup identity, we argue that a belief that one's country is exceptional and deserves special treatment, i.e., collective narcissism, can be linked to societally undesirable outcomes. In our research, we demonstrate that collective narcissism is a defensive form of national identity as it is underlined by frustrated psychological needs. Those high in collective narcissism tend to compensate for personal shortcomings by an excessive focus on the group enhancement, even at the expense of ingroup members. We review empirical evidence showing that collective narcissism is associated not only with intergroup animosity but also support for decisions and policies that can help create a positive ingroup image in the short run but harm other group members in the long run. Collective narcissism also predicts greater support for populist and extremist politicians and social movements. We argue that collective narcissism benefits neither out-group nor in-group members and instead it serves manage psychological needs of the individual. We discuss implications for social cohesion and democratic practices.

Aleksandra Cichocka ([pronounce](#))

Professor of Political Psychology

Deputy Head of School

School of Psychology

