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Who respects the will of the people? Support for democracy is linked to high secure national identity but low national narcissism

Short title: *National identity and support for democracy*

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Abstract:

Support for democracy is based on warmth, inclusiveness and a general belief that others are well-intentioned. It is also related to a willingness to respect the rights of outgroups which do not necessarily share the views of one's ingroup. In this research, we analyzed the relationships between different types of national identity and support for democracy. In two surveys (Study 1; American participants, $n = 407$ and Study 2; Polish participants; $n = 570$), we found that support for democracy was negatively linked to collective narcissism, measured in relation to the national group, previously associated with negative intra- and inter-group outcomes. The effect of national narcissism on democracy support was present even when accounting for national identification. In Study 2, we also found that this effect was mediated by social cynicism—a negative view of human nature. In both studies, support for democracy was positively linked to a secure national identity, that is national identification without the

narcissistic component, which tends to be associated with positive attitudes towards others.

We discuss implications for understanding the role of national identity in support for (il)liberal politics.

Keywords:

support for democracy, collective narcissism, ingroup identification, social cynicism

Data availability statement:

The data that support the findings of both studies are available at the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/a2v59/?view_only=6a9d762cc6724ed1afebc2328d75282f.

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Introduction

With the rise of populism and the strengthening of autocratic regimes (Economist Intelligence Unit [EIU], 2020), concerns about the future of democracy are becoming more and more serious (e.g., Diamond, 2015; Foa & Mounk, 2016). Endurance of democracy depends on people's support for it (Classen, 2019; Lipset, 1959). To better understand why people might be more or less enthusiastic about democracy, scholars and practitioners examine not only the social and political context, but also psychological states and traits that contribute to support for democracy (Dahl, 1971; Lipset, 1959).

Psychological research has shown that support for democracy is predicted by lower right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), but higher trust, empathy and openness to experience (Miklikowska, 2012). Democratic attitudes have also been linked to the psychological processes related to the self. Specifically, support for democracy was associated with low levels of psychological threat (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005; Marcus et al., 1995; Sullivan et al., 1981) and high levels of psychological security (Sniderman, 1975; see also Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al., 2019). These results suggested that democratic attitudes may be maintained mostly among those who are free from anxiety and have warm, inclusive and expanding attitudes towards other people (see Laswell, 1962). This should not be surprising as democracy requires citizens to be open to diversity and have abilities to respect the views and opinions of others, even if one disagrees with them.

In line with this logic, previous research showed that those individuals who scored high (vs. low) on preference for democratic values were considerate of people with dissimilar opinions and secure enough to admit that they could hold incorrect information (Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Uslaner, 1999). Similar results were obtained in personality psychology. Specifically, studies found that those individuals who scored high on narcissism—a conviction about one's superiority associated with the need for external

validation, hypersensitivity to criticism and defensiveness in response to threats (e.g., Brummelman et al., 2016; Crocker & Park, 2004; Emmons, 1987; Horvath & Morf, 2009; Marchlewska & Cichocka, 2017; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), were less prone to support democracy (Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al., 2019). It seems that narcissistic sensitivity to threats stemming from criticism or disagreement (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998) might translate into lower support for democratic systems which require respect for opinions that are not necessarily similar to ours.

Past studies, however, focused mainly on individual defensiveness (vs. security) and their relationships with support for democracy. In this research, we aim to examine whether support for democracy may also depend on defensiveness and security associated with different types of national identity. This distinction is inspired by research on self-evaluation where the more defensive, narcissistic self-evaluation (narcissism net of self-esteem) is differentiated from secure self-evaluation (self-esteem net of narcissism)—a realistic pride people take in their strengths which serves as a buffer against psychological threats (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2017; Cichocka, Marchlewska, & Golec de Zavala, 2016; Kernis, 2005; Marchlewska & Cichocka, 2017; Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al., 2019).

Similarly, one can distinguish defensive and secure ingroup identity. These forms of identity can be observed once we co-vary out the variances shared between ingroup identification (that is satisfaction with one's group membership, ties with ingroup members, and centrality of the ingroup to the self; Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008)¹ and collective narcissism—a belief in ingroup's greatness which is contingent on external validation (e.g.,

¹ In the current research, we compare the effects of collective narcissism to ingroup identification understood in terms of affect/satisfaction with group membership, ties with ingroup members, and centrality of the ingroup to the self. As collective narcissism is significantly positively correlated with all of these components (see the Supplement for details), it is key to account for variance shared with all of them (Marchlewska et al., 2020; rather than the satisfaction component only; cf. Golec de Zavala et al., 2020).

Cichocka, 2016; Marchlewska et al., 2020). Those high in collective narcissism believe their group is exceptional and entitled to privileged treatment but not sufficiently recognized by others (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). When the overlap between collective narcissism and ingroup identification is controlled for, what remains is a defensive identity, interpreted as entitlement and concern about external recognition of the ingroup in the eyes of others (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020 Marchlewska et al., 2020). A secure ingroup identity—that is, an unpretentious investment in the ingroup, independent of the recognition of the group in the eyes of others (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Marchlewska et al., 2020), can be observed once collective narcissism is co-varied out from measures of ingroup identification (see Table 1 for a summary of key concept definitions).

Table 1

Key Concepts and Their Definitions

Concept	Definition
Support for democracy	Evaluation of democratic performance, preference for democracy over autocracy and explicit democratic support.
Collective narcissism	A belief in ingroup’s greatness, contingent on external validation.
Ingroup identification	Centrality of ingroup identification, solidarity with ingroup members, and satisfaction with group membership.
Defensive ingroup identity	Collective narcissism net of ingroup identification.

Secure ingroup identity	Ingroup identification net of collective narcissism.
Social cynicism	A negative view of human nature that depicts humans as easily corrupted by power.

We predicted that a defensive national identity (that is collective narcissism net of identification) would negatively predict support for democracy. Past research has consistently shown that collective narcissism measured in relation to the national group (which we refer to as national narcissism for the sake of brevity) may undermine social order and cohesion (Cichocka, 2016; Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). National narcissism is related to negative attitudes toward outgroups, including minorities and disadvantaged groups within the society. For example, it has been linked to exaggerated perceptions of threat to the ingroup and convictions that certain groups purposefully seek to undermine its value and are conspiring against the ingroup (Bertin et al., 2021; Cichocka, Marchlewska, Golec de Zavala, & Olechowski, 2016; Cislak et al., in press; Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012; Golec de Zavala & Federico, 2018). National narcissism has also been linked to prejudice towards minorities who can be seen as threatening to the majority group (Lyons et al., 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020; for similar results in the gender or religious contexts see Marchlewska et al., 2021 and Marchlewska, Cichocka et al., 2019 respectively). It has also been linked to support for extreme violence and aggression, especially towards those groups who criticized the ingroup or somehow insulted its positive image (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Marchlewska, Cichocka et al., 2019; see also Jaśko et al., 2020). Furthermore, Polish national narcissism negatively predicted engagement in collective action in solidarity with refugees which additionally suggests that those who identify with a majority group in a defensive way are generally less prone to respect the minority groups rights

(Górska et al., 2020). Thus, collective narcissism might not favor a system which equally respects the rights of different group members.

It is worth stressing that although those high in collective narcissism seem to invest in a defending a positive ingroup image, they are generally more focused on protecting their group from enemies, real or imagined, than investing individual effort to actually benefit the group (Cichocka, 2016; Cislak et al., 2021; Marchlewska et al., 2020). Recent research showed that in some cases they are even ready to act contrary to the interests of their own group members which may result in potentially problematic relations within the ingroup itself (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2020). For example, in recent work Marchlewska and colleagues (2020) found that national narcissism (net of national identification) predicted greater willingness to leave an ingroup (i.e., one's homeland) for a personal gain thereby revealing ingroup disloyalty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, those high in national narcissism reported engaging in hoarding resources (Nowak et al., 2020). Evidence from the organizational context has also shown that collective narcissists try to benefit personally by treating their co-workers in an instrumental way (Cichocka, Cislak, et al., 2021). Crucially, those scoring high in collective narcissism were also ready to engage in non-democratic practices and conspire against fellow group members. For example, they were willing to tolerate and even engage in surveillance activities within their own groups (Biddlestone et al., 2020). These results suggest that despite the fact that those scoring high in collective narcissism present their ingroup in an extremely positive way, for them the group mostly serves to protect their self-interests. In fact, they do not seem to respect their ingroup members, trust in their abilities to make wise decisions, or take care about their freedoms. As a result, they may not be willing to support political system that assumes their ingroup members' (i.e., other citizens') participation in the political process.

Past research provides initial evidence for this possibility. National narcissism has been linked to support for leaders and parties which can be characterized as national populist. For example, national narcissism was associated with Trump support in the US (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2018), and Law and Justice support in Poland (Marchlewska et al., 2018). In a US survey (Cichocka, Bocian, et al., 2021), White collective narcissism has been linked to support for the alt-right—a racist movement that fundamentally rejects democracy (Matthews, 2016). British and Polish national narcissism were positively related to support for Brexit (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska et al., 2018) or a potential ‘Polexit’ (Cislak et al., 2020) respectively, that is for leaving a supranational organization that requires coordination with others and is strongly based on democratic values (Cislak et al., 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2018). In fact, these findings have led some researchers to theorize (but not test empirically) that national narcissism might undermine support for democracy (e.g., Forgas & Lantos, 2019; Gronfeldt et al., 2021).

One reason for the low support for democracy associated with national narcissism could be social cynicism. Collective narcissism has previously been linked to maladaptive psychological outcomes (e.g., negative emotionality; Golec de Zavala, 2019). Fromm (1973) theorized that collective narcissism compensates for “ego fragility”, which is thought to explain why it is adopted to serve the self rather than the ingroup (Cichocka, 2016). Indeed, there is empirical evidence that experimentally inducing low levels of personal control boosts national narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2018) and, as we illustrated above, that those high in national narcissism prioritize personal gains over ingroup loyalty (Marchlewska et al., 2020). For these reasons, those scoring high in national narcissism may be expected to be rather cynical towards their ingroup members and, thus, less ready to let them decide about the future of their country.

Cynicism towards the society and its members is one of so-called social axioms (Pattyn et al., 2012). It refers to a negative view of human nature that depicts humans as easily corrupted by power (Nalipay et al., 2017). Those high in social cynicism are more prone to prioritize self-interests and are less concerned with the well-being of others (Leung & Bond, 2004). Previous research also tied social cynicism to defensiveness: it showed that a cynical attitude is significantly related to neuroticism (Chen et al., 2006), psychological distress and emotional rumination (Chen et al., 2005). As social cynicism is related to mistrust of others and institutions, the endorsement of social cynicism beliefs may be related to lower support for democratic decision making and, more broadly, to lower support for democratic political systems. Thus, we predicted that those scoring high in national narcissism would be skeptical about democracy, at least in part due to their higher social cynicism.

We do not propose, however, that all forms of national identity would be related to low support for democracy. For those ingroup identifiers that are secure, we would expect opposite effects. Thus, we hypothesized that especially after controlling for national narcissism, national identification would positively predict support for democracy. It should be associated with beliefs in good intentions of other ingroup members and their ability to make rational decisions that are good for the country (Cichocka, 2016). Secure national identity stems from satisfied psychological needs (e.g., high feelings of personal control; Cichocka et al., 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2020) and it is based on the foundation of stable and secure self (Cichocka et al., 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2019; Marchlewska et al., 2020). It refers to general satisfaction with being a member of a national group, lesser need to protect its image in the eyes of others, and greater willingness to realize own potential by benefiting the group (Cichocka, 2016). Those citizens who identify with their nation in a secure way, are less vigilant to different types of threats. For example, they reject beliefs in outgroup conspiracies (Cichocka, Marchlewska, Golec de Zavala, & Olechowski, 2016) and

have favorable attitudes towards outgroups in general (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Marchlewska et al., 2020). As this type of ingroup identity can serve as a buffer against psychological threats (Cichocka, 2016), secure identifiers should have more positive attitudes not only towards outgroup but also ingroup members – even those who do not necessarily share their own worldview. Thus, we assumed that secure national identity should be positively associated with support for democracy.

Overview of the current research

We tested our assumptions in two studies conducted in two different socio-political contexts: a Western democracy (i.e., the U.S.) and a post-Communist country (i.e., Poland). We assumed that support for democracy should be negatively predicted by a defensive national identity, but positively by a secure national identity. In Study 1, conducted in the U.S., we examined the basic relationship between both types of ingroup identity and democratic support. In Study 2, we sought to replicate the results of Study 1 in Poland, where support for the overarching socio-political system tends to be lower than in Western democracies (Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Cichocka et al., 2015; see also Baryła et al., 2015).

In Study 1 and Study 2 we tested national narcissism and national identification as predictors and support for democracy as the dependent variable. In Study 2, we additionally measured social cynicism to examine whether it accounts for some of the variance shared between national identities and support for democracy. In both studies, we aimed to include at least 400 participants, which gave us a power of .80 for detecting even small associations between variables (for $r = .14$; Cohen, 1988; G*Power yields a target of 395 participants).

Data for both studies are available at the Open Science Framework:

https://osf.io/a2v59/?view_only=6a9d762cc6724ed1afebc2328d75282f.

Study 1

Study 1 was based on a reanalysis of a dataset previously used by Marchlewska, Castellanos, and colleagues (2019). We examined the associations between national narcissism and identification, controlling for the variables examined by Marchlewska, Castellanos, and colleagues (2019). They found that support for democracy was differently associated with self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) and individual narcissism (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Horvath & Morf, 2009; see also Brummelman et al., 2016). Support for democracy was predicted positively by secure, and negatively by narcissistic self-evaluation. We also accounted for the effects of the ideological predispositions that show robust effects on political behavior and attitudes: RWA – a “threat-driven motivation for collective security and social cohesion” (Sibley & Duckitt, 2009, p. 546) and social dominance orientation (SDO) – a general desire for group-based hierarchy (Altemeyer, 1998; Duckitt, 2001; Jost et al., 2003; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Weber & Federico, 2007). Previous studies showed that lower support for democracy is predicted by RWA (Miklikowska, 2012; Shaffer & Hastings, 2004) and might be also linked to SDO, as it was positively (albeit weakly) associated with support for restrictions of civil liberties (Cohrs et al., 2005).

Method

Participants and procedure

Study 1 was an online survey conducted in 2016. Participants were recruited via the Prolific Academic platform. A total number of 407 participants completed the survey: 182 women (coded as 1), 225 men (coded as 0), aged 18-70 ($M = 32.41$, $SD = 11.84$). The majority of participants reported higher education ($n = 238$). Mode family income was between \$50,000 and \$59,999. The ethnicity of the participants was as follows: Caucasian, $n = 305$; Asian, $n = 38$, Hispanic, $n = 24$, African American, $n = 23$, other, $n = 17$.

Participants filled out measures of support for democracy, identification with own national group, national narcissism, as well as the four adjustment variables (RWA, SDO, narcissism, self-esteem) among other variables².

Measures

Support for democracy was measured using items based on the WVS Democratic Support Scale (e.g., Ingelhart et al., 2018; Magalhães, 2014; Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al., 2019). Participants were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with statements such as: “Democracies are indecisive and squabble too much,” “In democracy, the economic system runs badly,” “Democracies are not good at maintaining order,” “The military should govern in this country,” “Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of the government” using a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .77$, $M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.88$.

Ingroup identification was measured using social identity scale by Cameron (2004), consisting of 12 items such as, “Being an American is an important part of my self-image,” “In general I'm glad to be an American,” “I have a lot in common with other Americans”. Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 = *extremely disagree* to 7 = *extremely agree*, $\alpha = .91$, $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.11$.

Collective narcissism was measured with the five-item version (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013) of the Collective Narcissism Scale by Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) adapted to the national context, with statements such as “Americans deserve special treatment” or “If Americans had a major say in the world, the world would be a much better place”. Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 = *extremely disagree* to 7 = *extremely agree*, $\alpha = .88$, $M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.27$.

² This dataset was also used by Marchlewska et al. (2018).

Self-esteem was measured with Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale. Sample items include: "I take a positive attitude toward myself," and "I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others." Participants responded to 10 items on a scale from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .93$, $M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.65$.

Narcissism was measured with a six-item questionnaire by Back and colleagues (2013), where participants rated statements representing narcissistic traits, for example, "I deserve to be seen as a great personality" or "I want my rivals to fail" on a scale from 1 = *not at all like me* to 6 = *very much like me*, $\alpha = .75$, $M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.86$.

RWA was measured using four items from the scale by Duckitt et al. (2010), such as, "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn." Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1= *extremely disagree* to 7 = *extremely agree*, $\alpha = .87$, $M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.52$.

SDO was measured with four items such as "Group equality should be our ideal" (Pratto et al., 2012). Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1= *extremely oppose* to 7 = *extremely favor*, $\alpha = .85$, $M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.24$.

Results

Zero-order correlations. We first computed correlations between all continuous variables (see Table 1). As predicted, support for democracy was positively related to ingroup identification and negatively related to collective narcissism. Support for democracy was also positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to narcissism, RWA and SDO. We also found significant positive relationship between ingroup identification and collective narcissism. Ingroup identification and collective narcissism were also positively related to both dimensions of self-evaluation, RWA and SDO.

Table 2

Zero-order Correlations between Continuous Variables (Study 1)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Support for democracy	-					
2. Ingroup identification	.23***	-				
3. Collective narcissism	-.15**	.54***	-			
4. Self-esteem	.16**	.42***	.17***	-		
5. Narcissism	-.23***	.10*	.37***	.04	-	
6. RWA	-.24***	.33***	.57***	.13**	.26***	-
7. SDO	-.29***	.16**	.35***	.05	.29***	.36***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Regression analysis. Second, we performed a stepwise hierarchical regression analysis. In Step 1, we tested our main hypotheses and investigated the relationships between ingroup identification, collective narcissism and support for democracy. In the next steps, we controlled for any confounding effects of narcissism, self-esteem, RWA and SDO (Step 2) and demographics (gender, education level and income; Step 3). The results (see Table 2) showed that after accounting for their shared variance, we still observe a significant positive relationship between ingroup identification and support for democracy. We also observe significant negative relationship between collective narcissism and support for democracy. These associations proved to be consistent even after controlling for additional variables (Step 2 and 3)³.

³ We additionally checked for the relationships between the two types of self-evaluation (i.e., individual narcissism vs. self-esteem) and the two types of national identity. In both studies ingroup identification (net of collective narcissism) was positively predicted by self-esteem, but negatively by individual narcissism. Collective narcissism (net of identification) was positively predicted by individual narcissism both in Study 1 and Study 2. The significant negative link between collective narcissism and self-esteem was found only in Study 2 (cf. Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). Please see Table S1 – S4 in Supplements for further details on these analyses.

Table 3

Regression for Ingroup Identification, and Collective Narcissism Predicting Support for Democracy, Controlling for Self-Esteem, Narcissism, RWA, SDO and Demographics (Study 1)

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Ingroup Identification	0.35(0.04)	.45	<.001	0.32(0.04)	.40	<.001	0.30(0.04)	.38	<.001
Collective Narcissism	-0.27(0.04)	-.40	<.001	-0.11(0.04)	-.16	.009	-0.11(0.04)	-.17	.009
Self-esteem				0.08(0.06)	.06	.217	0.05(0.06)	.04	.414
Narcissism				-0.11(0.05)	-.10	.030	-0.13(0.05)	-.13	.008
RWA				-0.11(0.03)	-.19	<.001	-0.10(0.03)	-.18	.001
SDO				-0.14(0.03)	-.20	<.001	-0.15(0.03)	-.22	<.001
Gender (1 = female, 0 = male)							-0.05(0.08)	-.03	.489
Education							0.03(0.03)	.05	.270
Income							0.03(0.01)	.11	.017
<i>F</i>	39.98		<.001	23.35		<.001	26.66		<.001
<i>df</i>		2,404			6,400			9,396	

R^2	.17		.26		.28	
ΔR^2	.17		.09		.02	
$F \Delta$	39.98	<.001	12.71	<.001	2.79	.04

Discussion

Study 1 showed that although national ingroup identification and collective narcissism were positively correlated, after their shared variance was accounted for, collective narcissism predicted lower and identification predicted higher support for democracy. We observed these relationships even after controlling for RWA and SDO. Thus, Study 1 offered first empirical evidence that support for democracy may depend on different types of national identity. Those who are more defensive about their group membership, seem less prone to support a democratic system. In contrast, national identification without the narcissistic component goes hand in hand with support for democracy and, thereby, with support for including other members of the society into the political decision-making process.

In Study 1, we relied on data previously used by Marchlewska, Castellanos, and colleagues (2019), who examined the associations between self-evaluation and support for democracy. Here, we found that both individual and collective narcissism were predictive of lower support for democracy, indicating that the relationship is present both for personal and collective defensiveness. However, in this model secure self-evaluation was no longer predictive of support for democracy, possibly due to its overlap with secure identity (see Golec de Zavala et al., 2020).

We have also found even after accounting for collective narcissism, support for democracy was still negatively associated both with RWA and SDO (see Marchlewska et al., 2018). The findings for RWA are consistent with past research by Miklikowska (2012), and suggest that authoritarians may be less prone to put power into the hands of the citizens and, instead, vote for a specific person/authority that could be fully responsible for ruling the country. The effect for SDO might be due to the low concern for civil liberties associated with SDO (see Cohrs et al., 2005).

Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed to replicate the relationships observed in Study 1 in a different context – this time, in a post-Communist country which engaged in a democratic transition in 1989 and where support for democracy tends to be lower than in Western democracies (Cichocka & Jost, 2014; Cichocka et al., 2015; see also Baryła et al., 2015). We also sought to extend the findings of Study 1, by verifying whether social cynicism would account for the relationship between a defensive national identity (that is collective narcissism net of ingroup identification) and support for democracy. As social cynicism is related both to mistrust of others and defensiveness (Leung & Bond, 2004) it may be linked both to high defensive national identity and low support for democracy.

Method

Participants and procedure

The data for Study 2 was obtained from a 2019 online survey, conducted by a local research company. The survey was completed by 570 Polish speaking, Caucasian participants, aged 18-25 ($M = 22.14$, $SD = 2.24$), 284 women, 286 men. The education level of participants was as follows: $n = 130$ primary, $n = 82$ vocational, $n = 267$ secondary, $n = 91$ higher education. The sample was quota-based, and representative for the population of young Poles aged 18-25, with respect to gender, age and size of the place of residence. Mode family income was between PLN36,000 (\$9,505) and PLN60,000 (\$15,843).

Participants filled out measures of ingroup identification, collective narcissism, social cynicism and support for democracy, as well as the four control variables (self-esteem, individual narcissism, RWA and SDO) among other measures.

Measures

Support for democracy was measured similarly as in Study 1, using the Polish version of the Democratic Support Scale (e.g., Magalhães, 2014; Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al.,

2019)⁴. Participants were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements using a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .74$, $M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.60$.

Ingroup identification, as in Study 1, was measured using twelve-item social identity scale by Cameron (2004), used in Study 1, but this time participants responded on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*, in Polish adaptation by Bilewicz and Wójcik (2010), $\alpha = .86$, $M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.61$.

Collective narcissism was measured with the same items as in Study 1, but this time participants responded on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* used in the original 5-item version of collective narcissism scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013), $\alpha = .85$, $M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.78$.

Social cynicism was measured with the six-item scale derived from Pattyn and colleagues (2012), with items such as “I am often skeptical and cynical about people’s intentions”, “Many people take advantage of unselfish others”. Participants responded on a scale from 1 = *extremely disagree* to 5 = *extremely agree*, $\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.67$.

Self-esteem was measured with Rosenberg’s (1965) self-esteem scale, used in Study 1, in Polish adaptation by Łaguna et al. (2008), $\alpha = .78$, $M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.56$.

Narcissism was measured with a six-item questionnaire derived from Back and colleagues (2013), used in Study 1, $\alpha = .81$, $M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.74$.

RWA was measured with twelve-item scale by Funke (2005) in Polish version by Bilewicz and colleagues (2017) with items such as “Obedience and respect for authority are

⁴ We used the same items as in Study 1, except for one item which did not translate effectively into Polish (i.e., “Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of the government”).

the most important values children should learn”. Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 = *extremely disagree* to 5 = *extremely agree*, $\alpha = .62$, $M = 2.93$, $SD = .44$.

SDO was measured with four items such as “Group equality should be our ideal” (Pratto et al., 2012), same as in Study 1. Participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 = *extremely oppose* to 5 = *extremely favor*, $\alpha = .67$, $M = 2.84$, $SD = .74$.

Results

Zero-order correlations. We first computed correlations between all continuous variables (see Table 3). Support for democracy was negatively related to collective narcissism, but not significantly related to ingroup identification. Social cynicism, as predicted, was negatively related to support for democracy and positively related to collective narcissism. However, there was no significant relation between social cynicism and ingroup identification. Support for democracy was also negatively related: to narcissism, RWA and *SDO*. In this study, the correlation between support for democracy and self-esteem was not significant.

Table 4

Zero-order Correlations between Continuous Variables (Study 2)

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Support for democracy	-						
2. Ingroup identification	.05	-					
3. Collective narcissism	-.47***	.38***	-				
4. Self-esteem	.05	.28***	.02	-			
5. Narcissism	-.30***	-.13**	.31***	.02	-		
6. RWA	-.18***	.32***	.43***	-.04	.06	-	
7. <i>SDO</i>	-.20***	-.04	.20***	-.12**	.17***	.45***	

8. Social cynicism	-.40***	.07	.21***	-.01	.21***	-.05	-.15**
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* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Regression analyses. We performed multiple regression analyses to investigate the relationships between collective narcissism, ingroup identification, social cynicism and support for democracy.

Ingroup identification and collective narcissism as predictors of social cynicism.

First, we investigated the relationships between ingroup identification, collective narcissism and social cynicism (Table 4). We found a significant positive relationship between collective narcissism and social cynicism. However, we did not find a significant relationship between ingroup identification and social cynicism.

Table 5
Regression for Ingroup Identification and Collective Narcissism Predicting Social Cynicism, Controlling for Self-Esteem, Narcissism, RWA, SDO, and Demographics (Study 2)

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Ingroup Identification	-0.02(0.05)	-.02	.716	0.05(0.05)	.05	.320	0.05(0.07)	.05	.408
Collective Narcissism	0.19(0.04)	.22	<.001	0.18(0.04)	.21	.000	0.18(0.05)	.21	.000
Self-esteem				-0.07(0.05)	-.06	.189	-0.07(0.06)	-.06	.265
Narcissism				0.17(0.04)	.19	.000	0.18(0.05)	.19	.000
RWA				-0.14(0.08)	-.09	.084	-0.14(0.09)	-.09	.148
SDO				-0.18(0.05)	-.18	.000	-0.17(0.06)	-.17	.002
Gender (1 = female, 0 = male)							0.06(0.07)	.05	.337
Education							-0.01(0.03)	-.01	.850
Income							0.02(0.02)	.04	.476
<i>F</i>	13.40		<.001	12.69		<.001	5.98		<.001
<i>df</i>		2,567			6,563			9,386	
<i>R</i> ²		.05			.12			.12	
ΔR^2		.05			.07			.00	

<i>FA</i>	13.40	<.001	11.82	<.001	0.47	.703
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Note. Drop in degrees of freedom in step 3 is observed, because $n = 174$ participants, who did not report their income, were excluded from the analysis.

Ingroup identification and collective narcissism as predictors of support for democracy. In order to test the hypotheses that high secure and low defensive national identity will predict support for democracy, and that these relationships will be accounted for by social cynicism, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 5).

In the first step, we introduced ingroup identification and collective narcissism as joint predictors of support for democracy. Although ingroup identification alone was not correlated with support for democracy, when we accounted for its overlap with collective narcissism, it became a significant positive predictor of support for democracy. This relationship did not change after introducing the control variables: self-esteem, narcissism, RWA and SDO (Step 2), and demographics (Step 3). Among these variables, only individual narcissism was significantly, negatively associated with support for democracy.

In the last step, we introduced social cynicism which was negatively associated support for democracy. Still, we found a significant positive relationship between ingroup identification and support for democracy. We also found negative relationship between collective narcissism and support for democracy.

To perform a full test of our hypotheses, we conducted mediation analysis using Process Software 3.0 (Hayes, 2018; model 4). First, we tested whether social cynicism mediated the path between collective narcissism and support for democracy, controlling for the effects of ingroup identification, and self-esteem, narcissism, RWA, SDO, and demographics. The results are presented in Figure 1. The indirect negative effect of collective narcissism on support for democracy via social cynicism of -0.05, was significant with a bootstrapped 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of -0.10 to -0.02. Then, we tested whether social cynicism mediated the path between ingroup identification and support for democracy, controlling for the effects of collective narcissism, self-esteem, narcissism, RWA, SDO, and demographics. The indirect negative effect of ingroup identification on support for

democracy via social cynicism of -0.02 , was not significant, with a bootstrapped 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of -0.05 to 0.02 . Thus, only the indirect effect of collective narcissism on support for democracy via social cynicism was statistically significant.

Table 6

Regression for Ingroup Identification, Collective Narcissism Predicting Support for Democracy, controlling for Self-Esteem, Narcissism, RWA, SDO, demographics, and Social Cynicism (Study 2)

Variables	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			Step 4		
	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B(SE)</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Ingroup Identification	0.27(0.04)	.27	<.001	0.24(0.04)	.24	<.001	0.24(0.05)	.24	<.001	0.26(0.05)	.26	<.001
Collective Narcissism	-0.44(0.03)	-.57	<.001	-0.40(0.03)	-.52	<.001	-0.40(0.04)	-.52	<.001	-0.35(0.04)	-.45	<.001
Self-esteem				-0.02(0.04)	-.02	.585	-0.02(0.05)	-.02	.645	-0.04(0.05)	-.04	.340
Narcissism				-0.08(0.03)	-.10	.014	-0.08(0.04)	-.09	.049	-0.02(0.04)	-.03	.532
RWA				0.01(0.06)	.01	.856	0.01(0.07)	.01	.876	-0.03(0.07)	-.02	.670
SDO				-0.07(0.04)	-.08	.068	-0.06(0.04)	-.07	.151	-0.11(0.04)	-.13	.006
Gender (1 = female, 0 = male)							0.01(0.05)	.01	.867	0.03(0.05)	.02	.565
Education							-0.04(0.03)	-.06	.176	-0.04(0.02)	-.06	.124
Income							0.01(0.02)	.01	.776	0.01(0.02)	.02	.549

Social cynicism							-0.30(0.04)	-.34	<.001
<i>F</i>	113.04	<.001	40.10	<.001	18.63	<.001	26.10		<.001
<i>df</i>	2,567		6,563		9,386		10,385		
<i>R</i> ²	.29		.30		.30		.40		
ΔR^2	.29		.01		.00		.10		
<i>F</i> Δ	113.04	<.001	2.88	.02	0.64	.589	65.36		<.001

Note. Drop in degrees of freedom in steps 3 and 4 is observed, because $n = 174$ participants, who did not report their income, were excluded from the analysis.

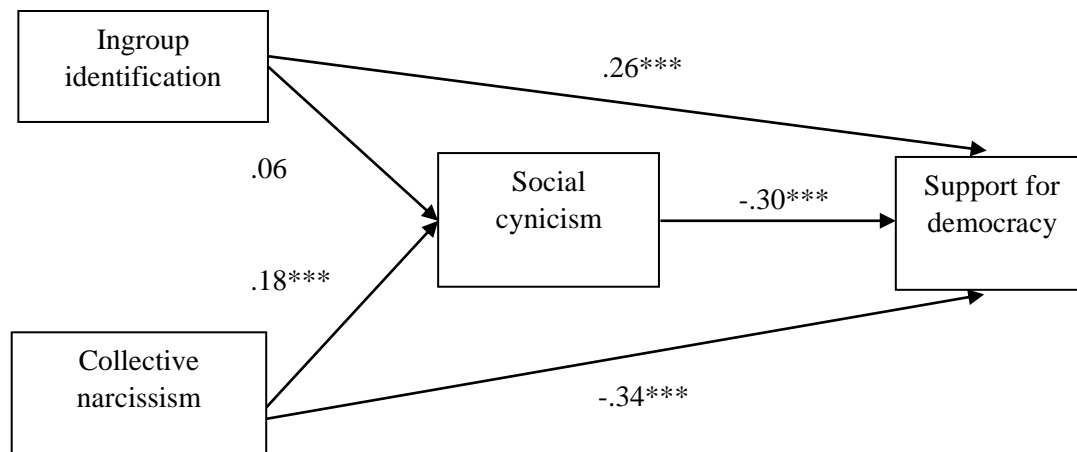


Figure 1. Indirect effects of the two forms of national identity on support for democracy via social cynicism (Study 2). Entries are standardized coefficients.

*** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 2 corroborated and extended the results of Study 1. Once again, we found that support for democracy was positively related to secure but negatively to defensive national identity. Study 2 also replicated the results of Study 1 in terms of the positive relationship between support for democracy and SDO. This time the relations between RWA and support for democracy did not reach significance, suggesting that it may be more context dependent. The results also demonstrated that the effect of collective narcissism (net of identification) on support for democracy was to some degree accounted for by social cynicism, over and above any effects of individual narcissism. This is in line with previous findings emphasizing the dark sides of collective narcissism found not only in inter- but also in intragroup processes (e.g., Cichocka, 2016; Marchlewska et al., 2020; for a review see Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). Those scoring high in collective narcissism seem sceptical and cynical about people’s intentions and do not believe in the sincerity or goodness of the members of their society. This association was found even after accounting for individual narcissism—one of the dark personality traits. The mediation effect provides some indication as to why those who are

narcissistic about their nations may be less willing to support political systems which, rather than creating a centralized power base for ruling over people, give citizens a chance to become involved in governance.

General Discussion

In two studies, conducted in two different socio-political contexts, the U.S. and Poland, we explored the role of national identity in predicting support for democracy. We found that support for democracy was positively related to a secure national identity (that is national identification net of national narcissism) and negatively related to a defensive national identity (that is national narcissism net of identification). This is in line with classic theorizing which suggested that support for democratic values should be higher among individuals with lower (vs. higher) levels of psychological defensiveness (Hastings & Shaffer, 2005; Marcus et al., 1995; Sullivan et al., 1981) who have warm, inclusive and expanding attitudes towards other people (Laswell, 1962). Previous research, however, focused mainly on individual levels defensiveness by showing, for example, opposite relationships between support for democracy and narcissistic versus secure self-evaluation (Marchlewska, Castellanos, et al., 2019). In our research we focused on identity defensiveness and showed that the way people identify with their nation may have robust associations with their support for a democratic political system. Importantly, these results were significant even after we controlled for variables related to individual defensiveness (i.e., individual narcissism) as well as typical predictors of political attitudes (i.e., RWA and SDO).

Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that collective narcissism—previously linked to negative intergroup and intragroup outcomes (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2020)—indeed does not go hand in hand with support for democracy. Although collective narcissism is based on feelings of lack of acknowledgment from other groups and captures higher concern with protecting the ingroup's image (Cichocka, 2016), it does not guarantee trust in

the rules exercised by the majority of ingroup members. Ironically, it seems that those who idolize their nation are less prone to accept political system based on the power directly held by “the people” themselves or by representatives chosen by ingroup members.

The results of Study 2 additionally pointed to social cynicism as a potential statistical mediator of the relationship between collective narcissism and lower support for democracy. This may suggest that those scoring high on collective narcissism with respect to their national group mistrust society and its members in general, and thus, have negative attitudes towards democratic values. It is worth noting, however, that although the significant indirect effect via social cynicism indicated that this variable can help explain a certain amount of variance shared between collective narcissism and support for democracy, this do not provide evidence for the causal model (see MacKinnon et al., 2000). Future studies would do well to establish causality of the observed relationships with the use of experimental or longitudinal studies as well as to investigate the relationships between different forms of identity and support for democracy with the use of methods other than self-report. Another potentially fertile ground for future studies would also be to replicate these results in other countries and cultures, especially beyond WEIRD contexts (Henrich et al., 2010).

Our research also corroborated and extended previous findings on the role of secure ingroup identity in shaping positive intragroup attitudes (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Marchlewska et al., 2020). Specifically, we found that national identification (without the narcissistic component) was positively linked to support for democracy. It seems probable that secure identifiers would develop better social networks, based on openness towards their ingroup, but also outgroup, members (Cichocka, 2016). This may further help foster mutual respect, openness to other’s views and tolerance of ideological diversity. Moreover, if secure identifiers are indeed ready to honestly act on the behalf of their ingroup, they should be more prone to trust that others would to the same (e.g., by focusing not only on their individual

profits, but also collective priorities). As we did not find a significant relationship between secure identity and (lower) social cynicism, future research should further investigate factors accounting for the positive link between a secure national identity and support for democracy.

Our research complements broader literature on the role of national identities in political attitudes. National narcissism is conceptually related to other forms of national identities that have been linked to undesirable intergroup attitudes, such as nationalism (understood as national dominance; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989), “blind” patriotism (understood as uncritical attachment to the nation; Schatz & Staub, 1997) or glorification (understood as national superiority and respect for national symbols; Roccas et al., 2006). In fact, national narcissism can be seen as an underlying construct that, depending on context, could lead into both aggrandizing (captured by glorification) and dominating (captured by nationalism) strategies in the struggle for group recognition (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020). In past scholarship, the relationship between nationalism and democracy support has been a subject of wide, interdisciplinary discussions. Some authors have proposed that nationalism is a sort of constitutional spirit of democracy, as it fosters perceptions of the national cohesion (Calhoun, 2007), and has the potential to power independence and democratization movements (Pamir, 1997). However, others have argued that nationalism may sometimes weaken democratic institutions (e.g., Rutland, 1994) and that support for democratic institutions and participation (Kahne & Middaugh, 2006; see also Huddy & Khatib, 2007) might be more strongly linked to constructive forms of patriotism, connected with a general identification and attachment to one’s country (Schatz & Staub, 1997). For example, Rugar and colleagues (2020) found that political and social engagement was positively predicted by constructive patriotism (but negatively by glorification). A more recent investigation found also that support for democracy is positively linked to having a civic conception of national membership (based on language, shared political culture) but negatively linked to an ethnic

conception of national membership (based on ancestry and birth; Erhardt et al., 2021). Still, none of these studies directly focused on the association between national identities and support for democracy, which we examined here.

Overall, our results provide one of the potential explanations for why some people are more supportive of democracy than others. They showed that national narcissism—previously also linked to support for populist parties and politicians (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2018)—may serve as a negative predictor of support for democracy. In fact, it is possible that this scoring high in national narcissism feel that only specific ingroup members should have a right to make important decisions about their country. Maybe —just as populist leaders—they would like to define a group that should be recognized as the only legitimate representation of “the people” (“real Poles” or “real Americans”). Overall, our results suggest that priming narcissistic views of the nation may result in social cynicism and discourage citizens from supporting democracy. Thus, future research would do well to identify ways to effectively boost secure national identities, which we found here to be associated with greater support for democracy.

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