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**“Cause we are the champions of the World”: National narcissism and group-enhancing
historical narratives**

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Abstract

National narcissism is a defensive form of group identity which is contingent on external validation and involves unrealistic belief in the nation's greatness. Those high in national narcissism are susceptible to ingroup-enhancing narratives. In two pre-registered studies, conducted in Poland ($N=1134$) and in the UK ($N=501$), we hypothesized and found that national narcissism predicts support for historical policies that emphasize the great achievements and past dominance of one's own group. Furthermore, we found that the relationship between national narcissism and support for ingroup-enhancing historical policies can be accounted for by the perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history. We discuss implications for research on collective narcissism and historical policies.

Keywords: national narcissism, ingroup identification, historical policies

“Cause we are the champions of the World”: National narcissism and group-enhancing historical narratives

“No time for losers, ‘Cause we are the champions” (Freddie Mercury, 1977)

Fukuyama (2018) argues that today's world politics is characterized by a constant demand for recognition of one's identity, at the individual and at the group level. For example, when announcing the proposal to build a triumphal arch commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1920 Battle of Warsaw, the Polish Deputy Prime Minister Jacek Sasin argued that: “It will remind the young generation of the achievements of our ancestors, of our great Polish history. It will build our Polish identity and contribute to the fact that we, as the Polish nation, will survive, that we will not melt into some national, general-ethnic European magma” (TokFM, 2021). The cost of building this arch was estimated at approximately 50,000 EUR at the time. Both the local residents and the opposition pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, this money could have been more effectively used for another purpose. Here, we argue that susceptibility to such historical group-enhancing narratives may be underlain by group-based motivations such as group image sensitivity and reputation concerns.

Specifically, we hypothesize that national narcissism – a belief that one's nation is exceptional and deserves external recognition – would predict particular attention to those threads of history which could reinforce the nation's image. We predict and empirically verify whether those scoring high in national narcissism are more willing to support historical policies that focus on emphasizing the outstanding achievements of their own nation and its sacrifices for others, even at the cost of ignoring other important historical events.

History and identity

History is essential for the formation of both personal and collective identity (Liu et al., 2005; Reicher, 2008). In his work on history and identity, Wertsch (1997) described various functions of history in societies and states. First, he agreed with Lowenthal's (1985) observations that history provides citizens with a sense of community and that the awareness of one's own country's history enhances the national identity. Wertsch (1997) also pointed out that history can increase the citizen's loyalty. Thanks to a strong and convincing vision of the history of a given country or nation, conveyed by historians and authorities, citizens might be convinced that the decisions made by these authorities are right and justified. Wertsch (1997) gave also a very vivid example of how the "production" of historical knowledge can be used as a tool for the authorities to enhance the citizen's loyalty: the introduction to *History of the USSR* – the Soviet history textbook from 1989 for the tenth-grade students read: "Every Soviet person must know the history of his motherland well, must love it and cherish it" (Wertsch, 1997, p. 9).

Sociological literature draws attention to various functions of history and, consequently, differentiates between history as a scientific discipline that aims to seek the truth and history as a collective memory that serves the group and its needs (Halbwachs, 1980; Nora, 1989). Empirical research shows that citizens also differentiate between the various functions of history: while historical realists claim that historians should focus on the search of the truth about the past, historical instrumentalists believe that the history distortion is legitimized if it is used to justify one's nation's current actions (Wojcik & Lewicka, 2022). Thus, conflicts and disagreements on how past events are being represented are not unusual (Connerton, 2009). In fact, British historian Timothy G. Ash, interviewed about contemporary Polish politics, pointed out that it is a constant struggle about history (Wężyk, 2014). In this case, history is understood not as an honest scientific discussion, but as a politicized and

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

ideologized spectacle in which the main goal is to win more voters. Thus, the historical policy can be a powerful tool both aimed at promoting stronger national identification, as well as reflecting national sentiments that can be exploited to mobilize political support.

Collective narcissism and politics

Classic and current psychological literature (for a review see Cichocka, 2016) differentiates between secure and defensive forms of group identity. Secure forms of ingroup identity are characterized by a sense of strong bonds and solidarity with one's group and its members, as well as a sense of satisfaction from being a member of this group. Defensive forms of identity are characterized, predominantly, by a belief in ingroup exceptionalism and a constant search for external confirmation for this belief (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). One particular framework that can be applied to various group contexts, beyond the most frequently studied national or ethnic ones, is the distinction between ingroup identification and collective narcissism (or national narcissism when referring to the national group in particular; Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Bilewicz, 2013).

The role of collective narcissism in inter- and intragroup relations

Collective narcissism was first described in the works of Adorno (1963) and Fromm (1973). Both defined collective narcissism as an idealization of one's group aimed at compensating for individual shortcomings and failings. Zaromb et al. (2018) and Putnam et al. (2018) conceptualized collective narcissism in terms of an egocentric bias in the perception of the contribution of one's own group to the history of the world or the country. In line with a classic perspective highlighting the role of compensatory needs, Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) captured collective narcissism as a form of group identity characterized by the unrealistic belief in the unmatched greatness of own group, which is related to low self-esteem (Golec de Zavala et al., 2020; cf. Cichocka et al., 2022) and low personal control

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

(Cichocka et al., 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2020). In a similar vein, collective narcissism can be understood as a defensive need for respect and recognition of one's group by others, which can never be fully satisfied (Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Gronfeldt, Cichocka et al., 2022).

Collective narcissism is associated with undesirable intergroup effects. It predicts suspicion of outgroups (Cichocka et al., 2016; Górska et al., 2022) and sensitivity to disrespect or criticism. Collective narcissists tend to react to such threats with prejudice and hostility (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka & Iskra-Golec, 2013). The accumulating evidence reveals also undesirable *intragroup* manifestations of collective narcissism. Cichocka and Cislak (2020) argued that people with a higher level of collective narcissism attach more importance to how the image and status of the group reflects on them. At the same time, they are less preoccupied by the well-being of other members of their group (see also Cichocka, 2016). For example, collective narcissism was associated with a greater readiness to treat other coworkers instrumentally for their own benefit in the organizational context (Cichocka et al., 2021), and with a greater willingness to conspire against other ingroup members (Biddlestone et al., 2022) or leave one's own country for financial benefits (Marchlewska et al., 2020).

Collective narcissism, ideology, and policy support

Collective narcissism is also associated with specific political attitudes. Past work found a positive association between collective narcissism and support for political parties and leaders who can be characterized as national populists (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Forgas & Lantos, 2019, Marchlewska et al., 2018), and a negative relationship with support for democracy (Marchlewska et al., 2022). Collective narcissism was also associated with greater support for the UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit) and voting for Poland's exit from the EU in a hypothetical referendum (Cislak et al., 2020; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). Several studies also observed a positive relationship between collective

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

narcissism and the right-wing political views declared by the respondents (e.g., Bocian et al., 2021; Cislak et al., 2018; Verkuyten et al., 2022).

Importantly, the need for recognition underlying national narcissism means that it predicts support for policies that aim to enhance the ingroup image, at all costs. For example, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, those high in national narcissism were more prone to support reduced COVID-19 testing or releasing an untested vaccine just to look better in international comparisons (Gronfeldt, Cislak et al., 2022). In the context of environmental policies, national narcissism predicted support for promoting the country's "green" image over genuine pro-environmental actions (Cislak, Cichocka et al., 2021; see also Cislak et al., 2018). Even though such policies might have long-term undesirable consequences for the group and its members, they can provide short term boost to the in-group's reputation.

Collective narcissism and national history perception

As we outlined in the introduction, group enhancement can also be driven by historical narratives. Previous work showed that constant reference to the nation's past, especially to its idealized version, is typical of nationalism (Judt, 2012), and the extreme right (Stanley, 2018). In a similar vein, national narcissism was found to be associated with denying the historical facts which might harm the group's image as a response to criticism or intergroup threat (Klar & Bilewicz, 2017). Moreover, Bilewicz and colleagues (2018) showed that national narcissism was related to idealizing the past actions of one's own nation (see also Bocian et al., 2021). Those higher in Polish national narcissism tended to report the lower percentage of Poles collaborating with the Nazis during World War II and to overestimate the percentage of Poles helping Jews during the occupation. Recently, Kazarovytska and Imhoff (2022) demonstrated that Germans high in national narcissism reported also higher levels of demand for historical closure – i.e., a demand to close the chapter of German history concerning the Holocaust (see also Roccas et al., 2006). At the same time, secure national identification was

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

associated with paying more attention to the ingroup's past mistakes and the dark pages of Polish history. Also, national narcissism was associated with more negative opinions about movies that discuss nation's wrongdoings. For example, in Poland it was linked to willingness to protest films referring to Polish involvement in Jewish pogroms during the Second World War (e.g., the 2012 'Aftermath'; Marchlewska et al., 2020), and viewing such films as less artistic (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019).

Cichocka and colleagues (2016) also showed that those high in national narcissism were more convinced that their group is underappreciated for their historical contributions. For example, in Poland national narcissism predicted a conviction that Poles were underrecognized for their contribution to the fight against Communism. Such convictions seem to be underpinned by beliefs in conspiracy theories, accusing other groups of purposefully undermining the ingroup's achievements (Cichocka et al., 2016; see also Bertin et al., 2021; Cislak, Marchlewska et al., 2021; Sternisko et al., 2021). More broadly, Wojcik and Lewicka (2022) found that national narcissism is related to the perception of a nation's past as a means to reinforce the image of the nation rather than an objective source of collective knowledge about the nation's past.

Taking a different approach, Zaromb and colleagues (2018) focused on national narcissism manifesting in the overestimation of own nation's contribution to the world's history. The idea was inspired by Ross and Sicoly's (1979) classic work on the tendency to overestimate individual-level contribution. In contrast, Zaromb et al. (2018) asked participants from 35 countries the question regarding a collective contribution: "What contribution do you think the country you are living in has made to world history?". The responses were provided on a scale from 0% to 100%. These estimates of history contributions ranged from 11.3% in Switzerland, to 54.6% and 60.8% in the UK and Russia, respectively. The sum of all estimates from every country in the Zaromb et al's study, vastly exceeded 100%: in fact, the

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

mean value was 1156%, thereby suggesting that participants overestimated their group's (country) contribution to world history. However, it should be noted here that only the sums exceeding 100% given by participants indicate that the contributions were overestimated, as there is no objective ranking of countries' contributions available. Zaromb and colleagues argued (although did not demonstrate directly) that the effect of overestimation stemmed from national narcissism. Similarly, Putnam and colleagues (2018) asked the US participants about their home states' contributions (reminding that there were 50 states and the total contribution for all states had to equal 100%) and observed the same overestimation effects (the total estimate was 907%). Putnam and colleagues explained these results in terms of cognitive (availability heuristics; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973) and motivational factors (collective narcissism).

In the research by Zaromb et al. (2018) and Putnam et al. (2018), collective narcissism was understood as the overestimation of the contribution of own country or home state to the world's or country's history, while other researchers (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) see collective narcissism as an individual belief about the ingroup. Both ways of operationalization brought converging findings concerning the perception of ingroup and its role in past events. Here, we aim to integrate these literatures and verify whether national narcissism, operationalized as a belief in own nation's greatness and entitlement to special treatment, is indeed associated with the perception of own country's higher contribution to the world's history.

Overview of the current studies

We aim to investigate the relationship between national narcissism, perception of the history of one's own country, and support for the group-enhancing historical policy. It has been established that national narcissism is associated with supporting various social policies that may lead to strengthening the group's image (e.g., Cislak et al., 2018; 2020; Gronfeldt,

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Cislak et al., 2022). Hence, we predict national narcissism to be positively associated with the support for the historical policies that emphasize the great achievements of one's own group (Hypothesis 1). We also verify whether national narcissism is indeed positively linked to the perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history (Hypothesis 2). Aiming to integrate past work on collective narcissism, we additionally test whether the perceived own country's contribution to the world's history might indirectly link national narcissism to support for aggrandizing historical policy (Hypothesis 3).

In Study 1, we examined national narcissism as a predictor of the estimation of Poland's contribution to the world's history and support for the changes in history textbooks that put more emphasis on the glorification of own country and nation and its domination over others (controlling for national identification and political orientation). Moreover, we examined whether the relationship between national narcissism and support for the changes in history textbooks is mediated by perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history. In Study 2, we sought to replicate the findings of Study 1 in a different national context (the UK).

Because right-wing political attitudes were found to be associated with national narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2017; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), in both studies we controlled for political orientation. In both studies, we controlled for demographics – gender, age, education, place of residence in Study 1, and gender age, and education in Study 2 (these analyses are reported in the Supplement).

Both studies were pre-registered. We report how we determined our sample size and all measures in the method sections. In all studies we conducted our analyses with the use of bias-corrected bootstrapping (with 1,000 re-samples). All the items and datafiles are posted at https://osf.io/nqymg/?view_only=99cb5ac8ed6e4bcd6b2b4e1187cc6c49

Study 1

Study 1 was a part of a larger survey concerning various forms of national identity and their associations with measures of ideological stance and multiple outcome variables (e.g., health or environmental issues). We measured Polish national identification, national narcissism, political orientation, and attitudes toward historical policy. Also, participants reported basic demographics (gender, age, education, place of residence).

The pre-registration of the design, hypotheses, and analyses can be found at: <https://aspredicted.org/zc2zh.pdf> (Hypothesis 1) and <https://aspredicted.org/tn4xs.pdf> (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants and Design

In Study 1, we recruited a representative Polish sample ($N=1134$), 587 women, aged between 18 and 81 ($M=46.6$, $SD=15.8$). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses conducted with G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) showed that with this sample we had 80% power to detect an effect size of $f^2 = .005$ for regression models presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Measures

National narcissism was measured with the Collective Narcissism Scale (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), e.g., “Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of Poles”. Participants indicated to what extent they agree with given statements on a scale from 1 – *definitely not* to 7 – *definitely yes*, $M=4.1$, $SD=1.4$, $\alpha = .91$.

National identification was measured with ten items (e.g., “I feel a bond with other Poles”) of group-level self-investment subscales of Leach and colleagues’ (2008) scale

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

adapted to the Polish national context (Jaworska, 2016).¹ Participants indicated to what extent they agree with given statements a scale from 1 – *definitely not* to 7 – *definitely yes*, $M=5.0$, $SD=1.6$, $\alpha=.97$.

Perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history was measured with one item based on Zaromb et al. (2018) – “In your opinion, what contribution has Poland made to the history and development of the world (expressed as a percentage)?”, $M=34.3$, $SD=27.0$.

Support for the changes in history school textbooks was measured with an own scale, consisting of six items, e.g., “History textbooks should put more emphasis on the outstanding achievements of Poland and Poles, even at the expense of other historical information”. Participants indicated to what extent they agree with given statements on a scale from 1 – *I strongly disagree* to 7 – *I definitely agree*, $M=4.4$, $SD=1.5$, $\alpha=.92$.

Political ideology was measured with one item, “Please specify your political views” on a scale from 1 – *definitely left-wing* to 7 – *definitely right-wing*, $M=4.0$, $SD=1.4$.

Results and discussion

Correlations between focal variables are presented in Table 1. All variables measured in Study 1 were significantly and positively correlated.

----Table 1----

To test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses. First, we examined national narcissism as a predictor of perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history. The increase of national narcissism by one unit of the scale was associated with the increase of perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history by 8.56% (as evidenced in

¹ Note that the survey also included items measuring group-level self-definition. Including these items does not affect the pattern of results (see the Supplement for details).

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 2). This pattern remained the same when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.

----Table 2----

Then, we examined national narcissism and perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history as predictors of support for the changes in history school textbooks (Table 3). Support for the changes in history school textbooks was positively predicted by these variables, and this pattern remained the same when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.

----Table 3----

In addition to the analyses described in the pre-registrations, we tested whether the perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history accounts for the relationship between national narcissism and support for the changes in history school textbooks. Using jamovi 1.8.1 (Gallucci, 2020), we tested an indirect effects model, with national narcissism as the predictor, support for the changes in the history school textbooks as the dependent variable, and perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history as the mediator. National narcissism significantly predicted perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history, which, in turn, predicted support for the changes in history school textbooks, $IE=0.07 [0.05, 0.10]$, $\beta=0.07$, $p < .001$ (Figure 1).

----Figure 1----

Study 1 offered support for our pre-registered hypotheses in the Polish context. National narcissism positively predicted perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history and support for the changes in history textbooks that put more emphasis on the glorification of own country and nation and its domination over others. Also, perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history mediated the relationship between national

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

narcissism and support for the changes in history textbooks. As suggested by Zaromb et al. (2018) and Putnam et al. (2018), a higher perceived contribution of one's own nation into the world history was indeed associated with national narcissism captured as an individual belief about the nation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), thereby allowing to integrate past work on group-based narcissism.

Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed to test our hypotheses in a different national context. We examined whether national narcissism predicts the estimation of Great Britain's contribution to the world's history and support for the changes in history textbooks that put more emphasis on the glorification of own country and nation and its domination over others. The design, hypotheses, and analyses were pre-registered: <https://aspredicted.org/ga6zj.pdf>².

Method

Participants and Design

The survey was completed by 501 participants recruited from Prolific, 250 women, aged between 18 and 76 ($M=39.5$, $SD=13.8$). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses conducted with G*Power showed that with this sample we had 80% power to detect an effect size of $f^2 = .01$ for regression models presented in Table 5 and Table 6.

Measures

National narcissism was measured with five items of the Collective Narcissism Scale (e.g., "I wish other countries would more quickly recognize the authority of the British");

² Please note that due to a clerical mistake in our preregistration of Study 2 on aspredicted we referred to Poland (instead of the UK) in Hypotheses 1 and 2.

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), on a scale from 1 – *definitely not* to 7 – *definitely yes*, $M=2.7$, $SD=1.3$, $\alpha=.90$.

National identification was measured with five items (e.g., “Being British is an important reflection of who I am”) of the Social Identity scale (Cameron, 2004) adapted to the British national context, on a scale from 1 – *definitely not* to 7 – *definitely yes*, $M=4.5$, $SD=1.3$, $\alpha=.90$.

Perceived contribution of one’s own country to the world’s history was measured as in Study 1, with reference to Great Britain, $M=47.9$, $SD=22.6$.

Support for the changes in history school textbooks was measured as in Study 1, referring to Great Britain, on a scale from 1 – *definitely not* to 7 – *definitely yes*, $M=3.0$, $SD=1.4$, $\alpha=.93$.

Political ideology was measured as in Study 1, $M=3.5$, $SD=1.3$.

Results and discussion

Correlations between variables are presented in Table 4. All variables measured in Study 2 were significantly and positively correlated.

----Table 4----

To test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses. Perceived Great Britain’s contribution to the world’s history was positively predicted by national narcissism (Table 5). The increase of national narcissism by one unit of the scale was associated with the increase of perceived Great Britain’s contribution to the world’s history by 6.58%. This pattern remained the same when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.

----Table 5----

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Then, we examined national narcissism and perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history as predictors of support for the changes in the history school textbooks (Table 6). Support for the changes in history school textbooks was positively predicted by these variables. These patterns of results remained the same when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.

----Table 6----

We then tested the hypothesis that the perceived contribution of own country to the world's history would account for the relationship between national narcissism and support for the changes in history school textbooks. Using jamovi 1.8.1, we again tested an indirect effects model, with national narcissism as the predictor, support for the changes in history school textbooks as the dependent variable, and perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history as the mediator. National narcissism significantly predicted perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history, which, in turn, predicted support for the changes in history school textbooks, $IE=0.06$ [0.03, 0.09], $\beta=0.06$, $p < .001$ (Figure 2).

----Figure 2----

In Study 2, we replicated the findings from Study 1, this time in the British context. National narcissism positively predicted perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history and support for the changes in history textbooks that put more emphasis on the glorification of own country and nation and its domination over others. In line with our hypothesis, perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history accounted for the relationship between national narcissism and support for the changes in history textbooks.

General discussion

In two studies, involving Polish and British national contexts, we hypothesized and found that national narcissism was associated with higher support for the changes in history

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

textbooks that emphasize the great achievements of one's own group and past domination over other nations. We found the indirect relationship between national narcissism, the perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history, and support for the group-enhancing historical policy. Study 1 relied on a representative sample, thus strongly increasing external validity and the generalizability of these findings. Also, increasing internal validity, we showed that this effect was significant over and above the effect of secure national identity, political orientation, and demographics (Study 1 and 2).

We observed an indirect effect of national narcissism on support for the changes in history school textbooks that put more emphasis on the glorification of own country and nation and its domination over others via the perceived contribution of one's country to the world's history. In other words, the belief in national greatness translates into the grandiose vision of the own country's contribution to the world's history, which, in turn, predicts the support for the historical policies that further maintain such visions. Thus, our findings illustrate the potentially vicious cycle, where the initial beliefs in a nation's greatness can fuel the political support for policies that may further reinforce such a vision.

Zaromb and colleagues (2018) showed that a high level of group identification is associated with the overestimation of the perceived own group's contribution to the history of the development of the world and civilization. However, Zaromb et al. (2018) and Putnam et al. (2018) speculated that this overperception can be a manifestation of national narcissism. In our research, we directly verified these suggestions, showing that national narcissism was a significant and strong predictor of the perceived contribution of one's own country to the world's history: the higher the national narcissism, the higher the perceived contribution to world history. Importantly, when national narcissism has been controlled for, the effect of national identification was either weaker (as evidenced by the non-overlapping confidence intervals, Study 1) or non-significant (Study 2). Thus, the current research shows that the

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

tendency to perceive one's own country's contribution to world history as higher is indeed a manifestation of national narcissism rather than of secure national identity. The relationship between biased perception and national identification observed by Zaromb and colleagues (2018) can be explained by their associations with national narcissism.

In line with past work, we found that although right-wing political orientation tends to correlate positively with national narcissism (Cichocka et al., 2017; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), it is distinct from it (Cislak, Cichocka et al., 2021). When national narcissism was included as a predictor, political orientation was either less strongly related (as evidenced by non-overlapping confidence intervals), or unrelated to our focal outcome variables, thereby suggesting that the tendency to perceive one's nation's contribution to global history as greater and support for including past greatness narratives in history textbooks might be driven by the social identity dynamics rather than by political ideology. In a similar vein, past work showed that support for reinforcing the national ingroup image through political greenwashing is positively related to national narcissism, but negatively related to left-right political orientation (Cislak, Cichocka et al., 2021). Support for political narratives of ingroup greatness (e.g., environmental or historical) seem to be specifically related to national narcissism, thus, suggesting that such narratives uniquely satisfy needs for group recognition and appreciation (rather than the needs for order and structure underlying right-wing political orientation; Jost et al., 2003).

Implications, limitations, and future directions

Our findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Collective narcissism allows individuals to compensate for their own failures and frustrations (Cichocka et al., 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020). People with a high level of collective narcissism can use their own group – its status, perceived greatness, and, importantly from the point of view of this research, history, and outstanding achievements – to enhance their own image (Cichocka,

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

2016; Eker et al., 2022; Gronfeldt, Cislak et al., 2022). This may suggest that those high in collective narcissism will support various historical policies and visions of history that present their own group (country and nation) in a positive way, emphasizing the greatness of its achievements and importance in the development of civilization and the world.

History and group narratives can be an important element of state policy, where a common vision of the glorious past of a given country and nation may build a sense of national pride and sustain the loyalty of citizens and greater acceptance of the authorities' actions (Lowenthal, 1985; Wertsch, 1997). At the same time, history is one of the most important subjects at school during the entire process of educating children and youth. Decision-makers in ministries of education around the globe are faced with an important question – what historical events should be included in history textbooks and which ones should be omitted? It is not surprising then that the authorities sometimes try to exploit history for their own purposes by accentuating certain events in the history of their country and nation, and ignoring or even negating others (Connerton, 1989; Pennebaker et al., 1997). Thus, a nation's past can be re-written and re-shaped to respond to the current political climate. The findings of our research show that those scoring high in national narcissism are more susceptible to historical narratives that promote national exceptionalism. Group-enhancing narratives may then be used by politicians in order to mobilize political support and guide political cognition (cf. Gilovich, 1981).

Such strategies can have problematic consequences for the group. The emphasis on the reinforcement of the ingroup image can, in fact, prevent the constructive change and translate into supporting various activities made solely “for show” instead of putting some effort in genuine actions (Cislak, Cichocka et al., 2021). Denying ingroup wrongdoings can also impede reconciliation with difficult past (Kazarovytska & Imhoff; 2022; Roccas et al., 2006). Thus, the current results are in line with the growing literature showing that collective

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

narcissism is not only related to negative attitudes towards other groups but also to the support of various policies and attitudes that may harm one's own group (Cislak et al., 2018; Gronfeldt, Cislak et al., 2022).

This line of studies is not without limitations. The findings are based on correlational data, which does not allow us to draw conclusions about causality. Future research could investigate this more directly, for example using a longitudinal design, which could be helpful in verifying the vicious cycle hypothesis. Also, both studies were conducted in European countries. Future work could take into account the potential cross-cultural differences and investigate these relationships beyond the European context. Future research could also focus on individual-level motives behind the support for such historical policies. Arguably, frustrated individual needs may make people particularly susceptible to group-enhancing narratives which may put them (Cislak, Marchlewska et al., 2021; Sternisko et al., 2021) or their own group (Cislak et al., 2018; Cislak, Cichočka et al., 2021) at risk. Grandiose narratives may not go hand in hand with a constructive attitude. Future work would do well to verify that these narratives in the historical domain are associated with a reluctance to introduce genuine changes in a similar manner as previously observed in the environmental domain (Cislak, Cichočka et al., 2021).

Concluding remarks

History can be used by politicians and authorities to promote their own political agendas rather than to promote the greater good. We found that those scoring high in national narcissism might be particularly susceptible to group-enhancing narratives that glorify the nation's past and thus readily support historical policies aimed at reinforcing the nation's past greatness and its past dominance over others. Tragically, beliefs in the nation's greatness and dominance of yore may only too easily translate into support for policies endorsing appreciation and dominance today.

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NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 1

Bootstrapped Correlations between Continuous Variables with Standardized 95% Confidence Intervals (Study 1)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. National narcissism	–			
2. National identification	.69*** [.65, .72]	–		
3. Perceived contribution to the world's history	.44*** [.39, .48]	.38*** [.33, .43]	–	
4. Support for the changes in history school textbooks	.67*** [.64, .71]	.56*** [.51, .60]	.42*** [.37, .46]	–
5. Political ideology	.43*** [.37, .48]	.37*** [.32, .42]	.22*** [.16, .27]	.37*** [.31, .42]

*** $p < .001$.

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 2*Regression Models with Perceived Poland's Contribution to the World's History as Dependent Variable (Study 1)*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
1. National narcissism	8.56 [7.51, 9.60]	.44	< .001	6.51 [5.03, 7.91]	.33	< .001	6.37 [4.84, 7.84]	.33	< .001
2. National identification				2.64 [1.41, 3.78]	.15	< .001	2.58 [1.35, 3.77]	.15	< .001
3. Political ideology							0.42 [-0.81, 1.62]	.02	.473
	$F(1, 1132)=270.91, p < .001$			$F(2, 1131)=146.32, p < .001$			$F(3, 1130)=97.69, p < .001$		
	$R^2_{adj}=.19$			$R^2_{adj}=.20$			$R^2_{adj}=.20$		
				$\Delta R^2=.01, p < .001$			$\Delta R^2=.00, p = .460$		

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 3*Regression Models with Support for the Changes in History School Textbooks as Dependent Variable (Study 1)*

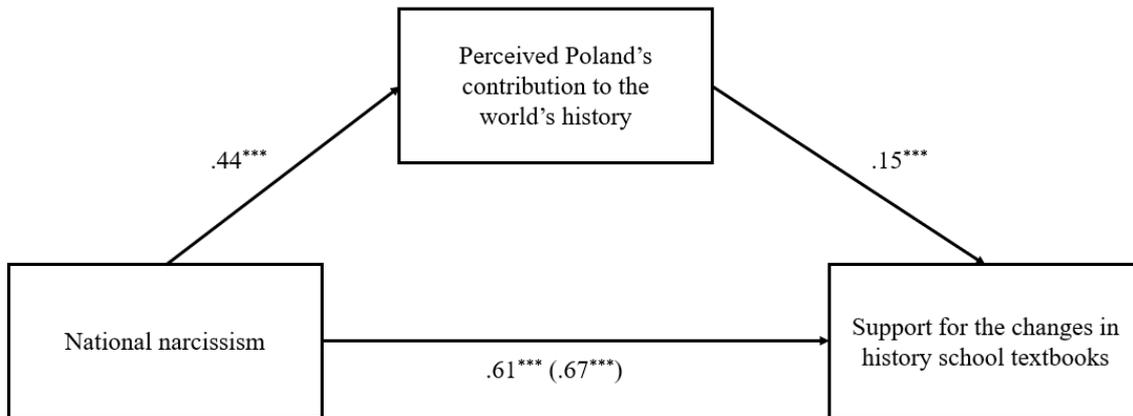
Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
1. National narcissism	0.74 [0.68, 0.79]	.67	< .001	0.57 [0.49, 0.64]	.52	< .001	0.52 [0.44, 0.60]	.48	< .001
2. National identification				0.17 [0.10, 0.24]	.17	< .001	0.15 [0.08, 0.22]	.15	< .001
3. Political ideology				0.09 [0.04, 0.14]	.08	.002	0.08 [0.04, 0.13]	.08	.002
4. Perceived Poland's contribution to the world's history							0.01 [0.004, 0.01]	.13	< .001
	$F(1, 1132)=939.56, p < .001$			$F(3, 1130)=342.99, p < .001$			$F(4, 1129)=271.43, p < .001$		
	$R^2_{adj} = .45$			$R^2_{adj} = .48$			$R^2_{adj} = .49$		
				$\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .001$			$\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .001$		

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Figure 1

Indirect Effect of National Narcissism on Support for the Changes in History School

Textbooks via Perceived Poland's Contribution to the World's History (Study 1)



$^{***} p < .001$.

Note. Entries are standardized coefficients; the total effect is reported in brackets; the direct effect is reported without brackets³.

³ The pattern of results remained similar when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 4

Bootstrapped Correlations between Continuous Variables with Standardized 95% Confidence Intervals (Study 2)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. National narcissism	–			
2. National identification	.59*** [.53, .64]	–		
3. Perceived contribution to the world's history	.39*** [.30, .47]	.28*** [.19, .36]	–	
4. Support for the changes in history school textbooks	.73*** [.69, .78]	.50*** [.44, .56]	.41*** [.32, .48]	–
5. Political orientation	.44*** [.37, .51]	.41*** [.33, .47]	.24*** [.15, .33]	.40*** [.33, .47]

*** $p < .001$.

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 5*Regression Models with Perceived Great Britain's Contribution to the World's History as Dependent Variable (Study 2)*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
1. National narcissism	6.58 [5.00, 7.95]	.39	< .001	5.84 [3.95, 7.55]	.35	< .001	5.43 [3.53, 7.18]	.32	< .001
2. National identification				1.24 [-0.46, 3.07]	.07	.161	0.93 [-0.82, 2.77]	.06	.294
3. Political ideology							1.42 [-0.26, 3.10]	.08	.096
	$F(1, 499)=88.42, p < .001$			$F(2, 498)=45.35, p < .001$			$F(3, 497)=31.35, p < .001$		
	$R^2_{adj}=.15$			$R^2_{adj}=.15$			$R^2_{adj}=.15$		
				$\Delta R^2=.004, p = .148$			$\Delta R^2=.01, p = .084$		

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Table 6*Regression Models with Support for the Changes in History School Textbooks as Dependent Variable (Study 2)*

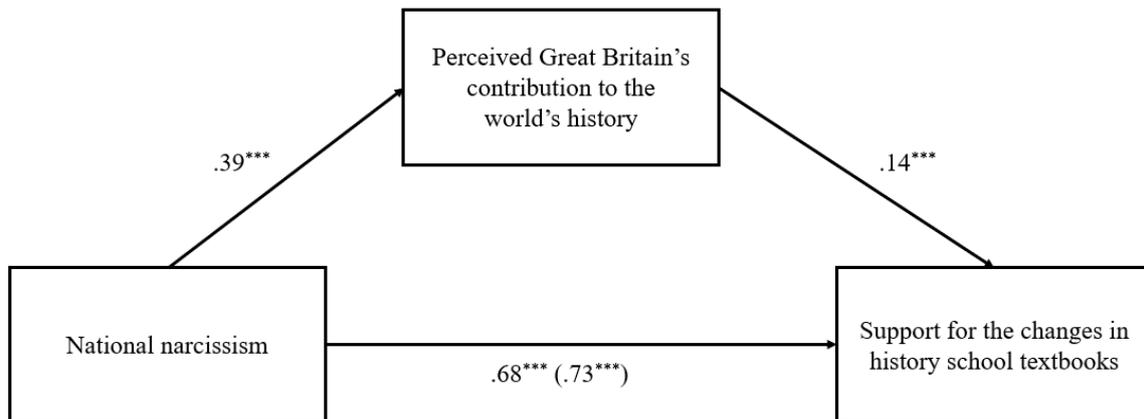
Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i> [95% CI]	β	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>
1. National narcissism	0.78 [0.71, 0.84]	.73	< .001	0.68 [0.59, 0.77]	.65	< .001	0.64 [0.55, 0.73]	.61	< .001
2. National identification				0.09 [0.003, 0.18]	.09	.049	0.08 [-0.01, 0.17]	.08	.070
3. Political ideology				0.09 [0.02, 0.17]	.08	.014	0.08 [0.01, 0.15]	.07	.021
4. Perceived Great Britain's contribution to the world's history							0.01 [0.004, 0.01]	.13	< .001
	$F(1, 499)=581.65, p < .001$			$F(3, 497)=203.13, p < .001$			$F(4, 496)=161.21, p < .001$		
	$R^2_{adj} = .54$			$R^2_{adj} = .55$			$R^2_{adj} = .56$		
				$\Delta R^2 = .01, p = .001$			$\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .001$		

NATIONAL NARCISSISM AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Figure 2

Indirect Effect of National Narcissism on Support for the Changes in History School

Textbooks via Perceived Great Britain's Contribution to the World's History (Study 2)



Note. Entries are standardized coefficients; the total effect is reported in brackets; the direct effect is reported without brackets⁴.

⁴ The pattern of results remained similar when we controlled for national identification and political ideology.