Leaning Right or Left: The Role of Communal Narcissism in Political Orientation and Activism
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Introduction
Nonclinical narcissism has long been of interest to researchers, primarily because of its pervasive association with negative social outcomes (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Mead et al., 2018; Pauletti et al., 2012).

Yet, much of this research assumes that narcissistic motives are one-dimensional, focusing only on reinforcing the self through agentic means.

Gebauer et al. (2012) challenged this assertion by suggesting that some narcissists achieve their grandiosity in the self by engaging in communal (rather than agentic) behaviors. Indeed, that study demonstrated that communal narcissists over-estimated (but valued) their own communal behaviors.

Given the communal nature of certain political beliefs (e.g., concern for social justice on the American political left), it stands to reason that communal narcissists would openly identify with one party over the other.

Hypotheses
Therefore, we hypothesized that communal narcissism would be positively associated with self-identiﬁed liberal ideology.

We also investigated whether communal narcissists act on those beliefs by measuring self-reported political activism.

Given that communal narcissism is typically researched concurrently with agentic narcissism (e.g., Gebauer et al., 2012) and self-esteem (Zemotjel-Piotrowska et al., 2017), we also explored the role of these variables.

Methods

N = 43 undergraduate students from a university in the southeastern United States

Participants identified their political orientation on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 indicated “very liberal”) and their political activism (number of events in the last year).

All participants completed the following questionnaires:
- NPI-13 (agentic narcissism; Gentile et al., 2013)
- CNI (communal narcissism; Gebauer et al., 2012)
- RSES (self-esteem; Rosenberg, 1965)

Hierarchical linear regression assessed the hypothesis that communal narcissism would be associated with self-identiﬁed liberal ideology.
- Step 1: self-esteem and agentic narcissism (controls)
- Step 2: communal narcissism

Results

Contrary to the hypothesis, communal narcissism predicted stronger conservative ideology ($\beta = .34$, $p = .03$). Neither agentic narcissism nor self-esteem predicted political orientation.

As an exploratory analysis, we used the same model to predict political activism. Notably, communal narcissism did not predict activism, nor did agentic narcissism or self-esteem.

Results (cont.)

Table 1.

Regression analyses predicting political attributes from communal narcissism, agentic narcissism, and self-esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Attribute</th>
<th>Political Orientation</th>
<th>Political Activism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predictor</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentic Narcissm</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agentic Narcissm</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Narcissm</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total $R^2$</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Political orientation was measured on a scale of 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative); political activism was measured as number of political events in the last year. $^*p < .05$, $^p < .10$