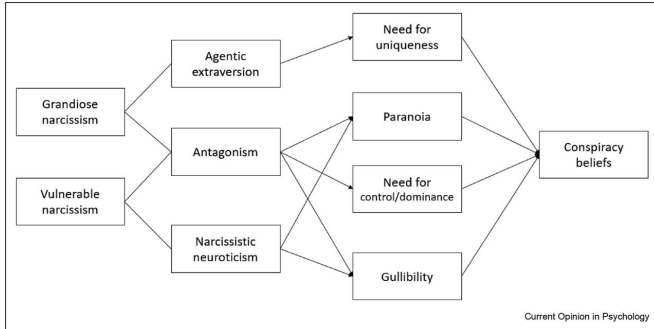


Why narcissists are more likely than others to believe in conspiracy theories

24 August 2022, by Bob Yirka



Components of narcissism proposed by Miller and colleagues and their links to conspiracy beliefs. Credit: *Current Opinion in Psychology* (2022). DOI: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101386

A trio of researchers from the University of Kent, the Polish Academy of Sciences and the University of Cambridge believe they may have discovered why narcissists are more likely to believe conspiracy theories than other people. In their paper published in the journal *Current Opinion in Psychology*, Aleksandra Cichocka, Marta Marchlewska and Mikey Biddlestone describe characteristics of narcissistic people that may cause this.

As the pandemic has worn on and politics have heated up in many countries around the world, conspiracy theories have become a mainstream topic of conversation. Such thinking is nothing new, of course; what has changed is how easily it spreads via social media. Over the past several years, multiple studies have shown that narcissistic people are more susceptible to believing conspiracy theories. In this new effort, the researchers have sought to explain why that might be.

Narcissists, as described by the psychology community, hold beliefs about their own superiority

and entitlement that place them above average people. Prior research has also shown that people with [narcissism](#) tend to have three specific traits: [neuroticism](#), antagonism and agent extraversion. And it is these three traits, the researchers argue, that make narcissists so susceptible to conspiracy theories.

- Neuroticism is generally defined as a tendency to react emotionally and irrationally to information—prior research has suggested it is often related to feelings of low self-esteem, relationship difficulties and shame. It has also been linked to paranoia.
- Antagonism is aggression toward others and their opinions, usually as a means of achieving or maintaining control over events or other people.
- Agent extraversion describes aggressive or assertive behavior. It tends to go along with [self-confidence](#) and quite often an ability to charm.

The researchers suggest that paranoia can lead to openness regarding conspiracy theories and that the need to remain in control during times of uncertainty, such as a [pandemic](#), can lead narcissists to seize on outlandish claims to make themselves feel like they are still in control of their lives. And [antagonism](#) comes to the fore when others challenge their views regarding [conspiracy theories](#), which only serves to bolster their support of them.

More information: Aleksandra Cichocka et al, Why do narcissists find conspiracy theories so appealing?, *Current Opinion in Psychology* (2022). DOI: [10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101386](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101386)

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