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Will they stay or will they go? Narcissistic admiration and rivalry predict ingroup affiliation and devaluation

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Abstract

Objective: Using the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC) as a guiding framework, the current research examines how ingroup affiliation and devaluation are connected to the self-enhancing and self-threatening properties of ingroups for narcissists.

Method: Participants ($N = 374$) completed a group decision-making task and received feedback that factorially manipulated both individual and group performance. Across the four combinations of performance feedback, we examined the conditional effects of narcissistic admiration and rivalry on social identity, perceptions of group member ability, desire to abandon the group, and desire to expel group members.

Results: Narcissistic admiration predicted higher levels of social identity in response to ingroup success, regardless of individual performance. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry predicted more negative views of group ability, as well as a higher desire to abandon the group and expel group members in response to individual success combined with ingroup failure.

Conclusion: The results document and provide insight into narcissists' fickle attachment to ingroups. They provide evidence of the utility of the NARC in group contexts. Our findings suggest that narcissistic admiration is linked to self-enhancing group affiliation, whereas narcissistic rivalry is related to self-protective group distancing and devaluation.

KEYWORDS

group dynamics, narcissism, self-enhancement, self-esteem, social identity

1 | INTRODUCTION

Group affiliation confers a wide range of psychological benefits to group members, including uncertainty reduction, a sense of self-continuity, belonging, self-esteem, distinctiveness, and efficacy (Amiot & Sansfaçon, 2011; Brewer, 1991; Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2012; Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2013; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006). Nevertheless, individuals sometimes abandon or disavow social groups in order to fulfill their own personal needs (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). Although the freedom to enter and exit groups is desirable for individuals, a loss of group members can disrupt a group's dynamics and even destabilize intragroup relations (Arrow & McGrath, 1995). When members abandon a political party or trade union, for example, they may undermine its social influence and power (e.g., Waddington, 2006). Voluntary employee turnover in work groups can be financially costly for organizations. Continuity, or discontinuity, in group membership can clearly carry significant consequences for groups (Dess & Shaw, 2001). It

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is therefore important to understand the factors that shape people's willingness to embrace (or exit from) social groups (Van Vugt, Jepson, Hart, & De Cremer, 2004). We argue that narcissism may be connected to both ingroup affiliation and ingroup devaluation, including the desire to abandon an ingroup or expel other members from it. We formulated and tested a set of novel hypotheses about the role of grandiose narcissism in group affiliation processes, tied specifically to the potentially self-enhancing and self-threatening properties of social groups.

1.1 | Narcissism and social identity

It has long been recognized that group memberships can be part of an individual's self-concept, with implications for personal identity and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People are motivated to affiliate with social groups in order to satisfy a variety of psychological needs, including self-esteem maintenance (Vignoles et al., 2006). Individuals in groups feel more connected and united when they are a part of more successful organizations and teams (e.g., Gully, Devine, & Whitney, 2012). In contrast, individuals tend to psychologically distance themselves from groups that perform poorly or are perceived to be low status (Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986). These tendencies may be especially pronounced in narcissists because they are highly invested in enhancing and protecting their positive self-views (Back et al., 2013; Hepper, Gramzow, & Sedikides, 2010).

At the core of grandiose narcissism is a strong sense of self-importance and entitlement (Krizan & Herlache, 2018). Although vulnerability constitutes an important dimension of narcissism (e.g., Miller et al., 2011), we focus exclusively on grandiose narcissism in this research. For simplicity, we use the term narcissist to denote individuals higher in grandiose narcissism, though we study it as a continuous personality dimension. Narcissists direct considerable effort toward regulating and maintaining their grandiose self-views (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Campbell & Foster, 2007; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). This orientation toward enhancing and protecting self-views may affect how narcissists react to groups. Given their desire to demonstrate superiority over others, narcissism is related to a stronger social dominance orientation (Carnahan & McFarland, 2007; Cichocka, Dhont, & Makwana, 2017) and indirectly related to outgroup prejudice (Hodson, Hogg, & MacInnis, 2009). In addition, grandiose narcissism is positively related to collective narcissism, an unrealistic and grandiose view of an ingroup that fuels hostility and negativity toward outgroup members (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009; Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra, & Baran, 2016). Narcissism is also positively related to self-esteem, which predicts greater ingroup bias (Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000). Thus, evidence suggests that narcissists tend to see outgroups negatively, and are presumably biased to view ingroups positively. However, there is minimal research on grandiose narcissists' perceptions of ingroups. We expect that there are limits to narcissists' positive views of ingroups.

Ingroups sometimes perform poorly, which may hamper narcissists' ability to view those groups positively. They may feel a poor performance reflects poorly on them personally if they identify highly with the ingroup. Negative ingroup performances might thus cause narcissists to distance themselves from and devalue ingroups. Narcissists are highly concerned with social status (Mahadevan, Gregg, & Sedikides, 2018; Zeigler-Hill et al., 2018). They resist occupying lower status positions in groups (Benson, Jordan, & Christie, 2016), disrupt their workplace if they feel constrained in it (Penney & Spector, 2002), and become less engaged in response to workplace incivility. They also care less about developing close relationships (Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002) and are more likely to prioritize self-interests over collective interests (Campbell, Bush, Brunell, & Shelton, 2005). These tendencies may make narcissists likely to distance themselves from ingroups that conflict with or threaten their grandiose self-views.

1.2 | Narcissistic admiration and rivalry

We draw on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC) as an organizing framework (Back et al., 2013) to propose that narcissists may eagerly embrace groups when doing so reinforces their positive self-views, but may just as quickly distance themselves from groups that threaten their self-views. The NARC is consistent with research showing that narcissism is linked to an array of self-enhancing and self-protective tendencies (Hepper et al., 2010). However, the NARC models the behavioral dynamics of narcissism as two distinct processes related to perceived opportunities (admiration) or threats (rivalry) to maintaining grandiose self-views. Supporting this multidimensional perspective, narcissistic admiration and rivalry uniquely predict an array of divergent outcomes, including evaluations of others in relationships (Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018), the positivity and stability of self-views (Geukes et al., 2017), and interpersonal behaviors (Leckelt, Küfner, Nestler, & Back, 2015).

Narcissistic admiration may be particularly relevant for understanding when narcissists will affiliate more with ingroups. Narcissistic admiration orients individuals to engage in assertive self-enhancement and is most active in response to positive outcomes that one can capitalize on and opportunities for self-promotion. Psychological strategies related to admiration reflect assertive self-enhancement, such as striving for social admiration and emphasizing talents and skills in response to positive social outcomes (Back et al., 2013). Specific to group affiliation processes, the admiration pathway might engage a pronounced form of basking in reflected

glory, which is the tendency for individuals to affiliate with successful groups (Cialdini et al., 1976). Supporting this possibility, previous research shows that narcissists strive to associate with high-status partners (Campbell, 1999) and that narcissism buffers against the potentially negative effects of others' ingroup success on one's own self-concept (e.g., Jonkmann, Becker, Marsh, Lüdtke, & Trautwein, 2012). These findings suggest that narcissistic admiration may be related to identification with highly successful groups, even in cases where narcissists perform poorly as individuals because they can maintain positive self-views by affiliating with the successful group.

In contrast, *narcissistic rivalry* may be particularly relevant for understanding when individuals distance themselves from groups and disrupt group stability. Although individuals higher in narcissistic rivalry tend to perceive others as more aggressive, less trustworthy, and less likeable (Back et al., 2013), rivalry is most active in situations of social conflict or when self-views are threatened. Narcissistic rivalry orients individuals to vigorously defend against self-threats through dominance behaviors, devaluing others, and aggression (Back et al., 2013). The antagonistic orientation of narcissistic rivalry may motivate efforts to devalue ingroups when they perform poorly. Particularly in cases where individuals are personally successful but their group performs poorly, narcissistic rivalry may motivate individuals to self-protectively devalue ingroup members or seek to change group membership (by abandoning the group or expelling other members). When both an individual and the group perform poorly, however, narcissistic rivalry may be less consequential because devaluing the group in this case may require a kind of acknowledgment of one's own deficiencies (because one also performed as poorly).

To capture the distinct processes relevant to narcissistic admiration and rivalry, we devised an experimental paradigm in which we manipulated both *group* and *individual* performance feedback. We then assessed both group affiliation (i.e., social identity strength) and group devaluation (i.e., negative perceptions of group member ability, group abandonment, and group member expulsion) tendencies to evaluate the following hypotheses:

> **Hypothesis 1.** Narcissistic admiration will predict ingroup affiliation—specifically stronger social identity—in response to ingroup success. This will occur whether the individual performs well or poorly individually.

> **Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c.** Narcissistic rivalry will predict ingroup devaluation—specifically more negative perceptions of group ability (2a), desire to abandon the group (2b), and desire to expel group members (2c)—in response to ingroup failure, particularly when the individual succeeds.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Participants and procedure

We used a between-subject experiment to test whether the association between narcissism and ingroup affiliation as well as devaluation varies as a function of individual performance (success vs. failure) and group performance (success vs. failure). We conducted a power analysis based on the smallest effect size of interest for the interaction ($r^2 = 0.02$ corresponding to $f^2 = 0.0204$), with a power of 0.80. This suggested a targeted sample size of 387 participants. Recognizing that the observed effect sizes of categorical moderators are generally small (Aguinis, Beaty, Boik, & Pierce, 2005), we chose this effect size based on the smallest effect size observed in our previous work, which evaluated how narcissism interacted with a role assignment procedure in relation to a range of criterion variables ($r^2 = 0.02$; Benson et al., 2016). We overrecruited by approximately 10% and recruited 417 undergraduates from a university in southern Ontario, who participated for partial course credit. After excluding participants based on attention and deception checks (detailed below), the final sample included 374 (262 female; 111 male; 1 unspecified) participants ($M_{age} = 18.41$, $SD = 1.22$). [Correction added on 30 January 2019, after first online publication: Number of female participants has been amended.].

The participants completed the study at individual workstations in a laboratory setting, with up to four participants per session. The participants were told they would work in virtual teams on a group decision-making task. To control the possibility that group members might be previously acquainted, the participants were told that their virtual teammates would be randomly selected from other sessions that were occurring at other locations on campus. After completing a brief demographic questionnaire, the participants completed the following measures.

2.2 | Personality measures

We assessed two dimensions of grandiose narcissism with the 18-item Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (Back et al., 2013), which includes 9 items assessing admiration (e.g., "I am great," "I will someday be famous") and 9 items assessing rivalry (e.g., "I want my rivals to fail," "I often get annoyed when I am criticized"). The participants indicated their agreement with each item on a scale from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 6 (*completely agree*). Items on each subscale were averaged together (admiration $\alpha = 0.82$; rivalry $\alpha = 0.83$).

The participants completed the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale as a control variable to test whether the observed results were attributable to self-esteem rather than narcissism. The participants rated their agreement with 10 statements (e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities"; $\alpha = 0.89$) on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). We used more response options than the original 4-point response to allow participants to discriminate more variability in self-esteem. Given the evaluative nature of the manipulation, we also measured perfectionism as a unidimensional construct (Brief Perfectionism Scale; Gosselin, Boone, Sinek, &Tangney, 2001). The participants rated their agreement with seven statements (e.g., "Even making a little mistake can ruin my day"; $\alpha = 0.90$) on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

2.3 | Virtual decision-making task and performance manipulation

The participants were then assigned to a virtual three-member team to complete a series of group tasks. The experiment actually consisted of one group task with other group members being programmed. Preprogrammed responses were used to create the impression that the participants were interacting with virtual teammates throughout the study. To elicit a sense of social identity, the participants briefly communicated with one another via instant messaging and then voted on a group name from five options. The participants were always told that the majority of group members chose the same name they did, which would be their group name for the study. They then completed a pre-task measure of social identity strength (Bruner & Benson, 2018) by indicating their agreement with six statements (e.g., "I feel strong ties to other members of this team"; $\alpha = 0.89$) on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

For the decision-making task, we used a hidden profile paradigm, which requires the group members to exchange information about a puzzle or decision. We used a scenario about a car accident developed in previous work (Toma & Butera, 2009), but modified so that the participants virtually received and gave clues in turns. The participants first received a general description of the scenario (i.e., shared information). Next, each group member received unique clues (i.e., unshared information). The participants were told they would share specific clues with their group and that they would be evaluated on how well they performed as a *team* and *individual*. Team performance would be judged by how many members correctly identified the person who caused the accident. Individual performance would be judged by whether they correctly identified the person *and* shared an ideal clue. In Rounds 1 and 2, the participants received a clue from each teammate. In Round 3, they decided which clue to share. Finally, they were reminded of the clues they received and asked to decide who caused the accident.

After a short delay, to ostensibly allow all members to decide, the participants were given feedback on how they performed as a team and individual. Crucially, the participants had no way of knowing whether their answer was correct or how helpful their clue was to others. Using random assignment, the participants received either individual failure (37th percentile relative to other individuals) or success (85th percentile) feedback. The participants also received either group failure (39th percentile relative to other teams) or success (84th percentile) feedback.

2.4 | Measures of group affiliation and group devaluation

As a measure of group affiliation, the participants indicated their post-task social identity strength using the same scale as the premeasure ($\alpha = 0.94$). As a measure of group devaluation, they indicated their negative perceptions of group ability by indicating the extent to which they felt their teammates were unskilled or inept (five items, e.g., "My group is poor compared to other groups doing this task", "Some members in this group cannot do their jobs well") on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (Riggs & Knight, 1994). Items ($\alpha = 0.89$) were averaged to create a negative group perception score.

Finally, the participants indicated whether they wanted to make personnel changes to their group. They were told, "Based on everyone's answers to the following questions, we may make changes to who is on your team." Two items ($\alpha = 0.79$) assessed the desire to expel group members (e.g., "My group should trade the weakest performing group member to another team [this means your group would be randomly assigned a new member]") and two items ($\alpha = 0.82$) assessed the desire to abandon the group (e.g., "I would like to leave my current team and go to a new team [This means you would be randomly assigned to a new group]"). The participants indicated their agreement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disapprove*) to 7 (*strongly approve*).

2.4.1 | Attention and deception checks

At the end of the study, the participants indicated their personal and group performance scores out of two options (0–50th percentile, 51st-99th percentile). We excluded 42 participants for failing one of these instructional manipulation checks. We also asked the participants what they thought the study was about using an open-ended response. One participant indicated a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and was excluded (e.g., "The teams are not real. The point of this is to see your attitude toward the study and if you are narcissistic in team situations and take control and

will kick people out or not"). As example of those who were closest to the threshold of being excluded but retained, some participants questioned the realism of the negative feedback they received (e.g., "Maybe it was rigged to say we scored below average, since I still think Mr. X was the correct answer"), but these participants did not indicate an awareness of both the manipulation and the study purpose.

3 | RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations for the entire sample, and zero-order correlations for each experimental condition are reported in Tables 1–3. Separate ANOVAs were conducted to compare narcissism (admiration and rivalry) and pre-task social identity across the experimental

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics

	Group success		Group failure	
	Individual success[a]	Individual failure[b]	Individual success[b]	Individual failure[b]
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
1. Self-esteem	6.35 (1.29)	6.20 (1.25)	6.71 (1.32)	6.38 (1.56)
2. Perfectionism	4.20 (1.30)	4.11 (1.33)	4.21 (1.22)	4.29 (1.48)
3. Narcissistic admiration	3.61 (0.69)	3.52 (0.77)	3.70 (0.77)	3.73 (0.87)
4. Narcissistic rivalry	2.37 (0.68)	2.37 (0.81)	2.24 (0.71)	2.40 (0.81)
5. Pre-task social identity	4.56 (1.11)	4.89 (1.01)	4.64 (1.17)	4.74 (1.21)
6. Post-task social identity	5.00 (1.13)	4.64 (1.11)	3.59 (1.34)	3.80 (1.15)
7. Perceived lack of group ability	2.04 (0.82)	2.40 (0.89)	4.33 (1.24)	4.09 (1.03)
8. Group abandonment	2.07 (0.95)	2.62 (1.15)	3.78 (1.53)	3.50 (1.34)
9. Group member expulsion	3.03 (1.50)	3.41 (1.30)	4.44 (1.54)	4.43 (1.44)

[a]$n = 101$. [b]$n = 91$.

TABLE 2 Zero-order correlations for the entire sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Perfectionism	−0.22*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. Narcissistic admiration	0.41**	0.06	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. Narcissistic rivalry	−0.25**	0.23*	0.28**	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. Pre-task social identity	0.18**	0.02	0.23**	−0.08	–	–	–	–	–
6. Post-task social identity	0.10	−0.07	0.05	−0.11*	0.64**	–	–	–	–
7. Negative ingroup	0.05	0.15**	0.13*	0.16**	−0.14**	−0.56**	–	–	–
8. Group abandonment	−0.11*	0.14**	0.03	0.10	−0.20**	−0.62**	0.55**	–	–
9. Group member expulsion	−0.06	0.19**	0.17**	0.23**	−0.07	−0.45**	0.57**	0.65**	–
Skewness[a]	−0.50	−0.19	0.01	0.49	−0.38	−0.05	0.29	0.54	0.05
Kurtosis[b]	0.30	−0.59	0.11	−0.09	0.02	−0.31	−0.77	−0.35	−0.75
M	6.41	4.20	3.64	2.35	4.70	4.28	3.18	2.97	3.81
SD	1.37	1.33	0.77	0.75	1.13	1.32	1.42	1.43	1.58

Note. $N = 374$.

[a]Standard error = 0.13. [b]Standard error = 0.25. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

TABLE 3 Zero-order correlations for each experimental condition

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gr. Success + Ind. Success[a]									
1. Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Perfectionism	−0.32**	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. Narcissistic admiration	0.25*	0.09	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. Narcissistic rivalry	−0.28**	0.16	0.28**	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. Pre-task social identity	0.11	−0.06	0.20*	−0.12	–	–	–	–	–
6. Post-task social identity	0.16	−0.08	0.23*	−0.12	0.82**	–	–	–	–
7. Negative ingroup	−0.19	0.05	−0.18	0.24*	−0.38**	−0.50**	–	–	–
8. Group abandonment	−0.25*	0.09	−0.14	0.02	−0.37**	−0.52**	0.51**	–	–
9. Group member expulsion	−0.21*	0.20*	0.01	0.27**	−0.26**	−0.33**	0.50**	0.54**	–
Gr. Success + Ind. Failure[b]									
1. Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Perfectionism	−0.16	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. Narcissistic admiration	0.44**	0.09	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. Narcissistic rivalry	−0.30**	0.26*	0.30**	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. Pre-task social identity	0.15	0.09	0.32**	0.03	–	–	–	–	–
6. Post-task social identity	0.20	0.04	0.28**	0.04	0.78**	–	–	–	–
7. Negative ingroup	−0.15	0.19	.0.07	0.30**	−0.26**	−0.42**	–	–	–
8. Group abandonment	−0.23*	−0.05	−0.19	−0.03	−0.28**	−0.49**	0.35**	–	–
9. Group member expulsion	−0.15	0.07	0.12	0.28**	−0.08	−0.25**	0.36**	0.56**	–
Gr. Failure + Ind. Success[b]									
1. Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Perfectionism	−0.26*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. Narcissistic admiration	0.39**	−0.11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. Narcissistic rivalry	−0.21*	0.23*	0.37**	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. Pre-task social identity	0.25*	−0.03	0.15	−0.20	–	–	–	–	–
6. Post-task social identity	0.12	−0.12	−0.06	−0.30**	0.67**	–	–	–	–
7. Negative ingroup	−0.03	0.21*	0.27**	0.46**	−0.26*	−0.35**	–	–	–
8. Group abandonment	−0.10	0.19	0.16	0.37**	−0.17	−0.58**	0.28**	–	–
9. Group member expulsion	−0.04	0.28*	0.30**	0.54**	−0.11	−0.49**	0.50**	0.63**	–
Gr. Failure + Ind. Failure[b]									
1. Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Perfectionism	−0.17	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. Narcissistic admiration	0.50**	0.12	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. Narcissistic rivalry	−0.21*	0.27*	0.21*	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. Pre-task social identity	0.25*	0.08	0.31**	−0.06	–	–	–	–	–
6. Post-task social identity	0.15	−0.10	0.00	−0.21*	0.65**	–	–	–	–
7. Negative ingroup	0.17	0.27**	0.13	0.06	0.03	−0.32**	–	–	–
8. Group abandonment	−0.20	0.31**	0.04	0.14	−0.20	−0.47**	0.34**	–	–
9. Group member expulsion	−0.03	0.24*	0.18	0.01	0.16	−0.24*	0.40**	0.55**	–

[a]$n = 101$. [b]$n = 91$. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

conditions. None differed across conditions ($ps \geq 0.343$). Suggesting that the brief virtual interaction and team name selection elicited a sense of group affiliation, the pre-task social identity scores were, on average, above the midpoint of the scale ($M = 4.70$). Although there was no relation between rivalry and pre-task social identity ($r = -0.08$), admiration positively predicted pre-task social identity ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). As a result of this unexpected relation between admiration and pre-task social identity, we conducted supplementary analyses in which pre-task social identity was included as a covariate in the regression models (as reported in the supplementary analysis section below). In evaluating the distribution of the scores, desire to abandon was positively skewed (11.2% were at the minimum score; 20.6% below 2.00), as were negative ingroup perceptions (8.0% at the minimum score; 19.8%, below 2.00). As for the predictors, narcissistic rivalry was positively skewed (1.9% at the minimum score; 32.4%, below 2.00) and self-esteem was negatively skewed (1.1% at the maximum score; 13.64% above 8.00; 123 responses, 32.8% above 7.00). All analyses were conducted with Mplus 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998−2017) using a sandwich estimator that produces standard error estimates that are robust to non-normality.

The data and code required to reproduce the analyses presented below are located on the OSF (https://osf.io/p7h59/?view_only=e10ebfb934d449bb849ebda1fd80440b). We conducted a series of moderated multiple regression models to test how narcissism (admiration and rivalry) interacts with group performance and individual performance to predict ingroup affiliation and devaluation (i.e., moderated moderation including the three-way higher order interaction with all two-way lower order interaction terms included in the model). In one set of the analyses, admiration was specified as the predictor variable and rivalry as a covariate. In the other, rivalry was the predictor and admiration a covariate. We also conducted a similar set of analyses without the other dimension of narcissism as a covariate (Vize, Collison, Miller, & Lynam, 2018). NARQ dimensions were grand mean-centered and effect coding was used for individual performance (individual success = 1, individual failure = −1) and group performance (group success = 1, group failure = −1). We decomposed significant interactions by examining lower order conditional effects. We then evaluated the simple slopes in each performance condition. We plotted all of the simple slopes with 95% confidence regions and the underlying observations using interActive, which is an open-source data visualization application (McCabe, Kim & King, 2018). All of the simple slopes are plotted at the minimum and maximum range of the grand mean-centered scores for narcissistic admiration (−2.64 to 2.36) and rivalry (−1.35 to 3.66). To control Type I error due to analyzing four criterion variables, we corrected the nominal α to 0.0125 (0.05/4). For all the analyses, we report the association between narcissism and the criterion variable in each experimental condition. Note, however, that the differences in these associations across conditions should only be inferred in the presence of a higher order interaction. The overall regression models explained significant variance in each criterion, all $ps < 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.23-0.56$ (see Table 4).

3.1 | Narcissism and social identity

Specific to Hypothesis 1, we evaluated whether narcissistic admiration positively predicts social identity in response to group success. The simple slopes are depicted in Figure 1a and b.

3.1.1 | Admiration and social identity

Positive effects of narcissistic admiration and group performance on social identity were qualified by a two-way interaction between narcissistic admiration and group performance ($p = 0.006$) in predicting social identity. The two-way interaction between group and individual performance ($p = 0.017$) as well as the three-way interaction was nonsignificant ($p = 0.934$). When the group succeeded, narcissistic admiration predicted greater social identity in both individual performance conditions (individual success: $b = 0.46$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.010$; individual failure: $b = 0.50$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.001$). When the group failed, however, narcissistic admiration was not associated with social identity (individual success: $b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.993$; individual failure: $b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.540$).

In the regression model without rivalry as a covariate, narcissistic admiration and group performance significantly interacted in predicting social identity ($p = 0.008$), but none of the remaining interaction terms were significant at $p < 0.0125$. The simple slopes analyses revealed a pattern similar to the initial regression model, although the magnitude of the relations differed. When the group succeeded, narcissistic admiration positively predicted social identity in the individual failure condition ($b = 0.40$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = 0.005$). However, this positive association was not statistically significant in the individual success condition ($b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.039$). When the group failed, narcissistic admiration was not associated with social identity (individual success: $b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = 0.607$; individual failure: $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.956$).

3.1.2 | Rivalry and social identity

There was a significant negative effect of narcissistic rivalry ($p < 0.001$) and a positive effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on social identity, but none of the higher order interaction terms were significant. Overall, narcissistic rivalry was associated with weaker social identity. The simple slopes

TABLE 4 Moderated multiple regression: The interactive effects of narcissism and performance feedback

	Social identity		Negative ingroup perceptions		Desire to abandon the ingroup		Desire to expel ingroup members	
	b (*SE*)	*t*	*b* (*SE*)	*t*	*b* (*SE*)	*t*	*b* (*SE*)	*t*
Admiration as focal predictor								
Constant	4.28 (0.06)***	72.07	3.20 (0.05)***	65.64	2.98 (0.06)***	47.30	3.82 (0.07)***	54.27
Admiration	0.25 (0.08)**	3.11	0.02 (0.07)	0.27	−0.09 (0.09)	−1.04	0.15 (0.10)	1.53
Individual performance	0.02 (0.06)	0.26	−0.02 (0.05)	−0.43	−0.05 (0.06)	−0.85	−0.08 (0.07)	−1.10
Group performance	0.59 (0.06)***	9.92	−1.00 (0.05)***	−20.29	−0.66 (0.06)***	−10.44	−0.61 (0.07)***	−8.63
Rivalry	−0.31 (0.08)***	−3.78	0.34 (0.08)***	4.51	0.26 (0.10)**	2.66	0.47 (0.10)***	4.67
ADM × Ind	−0.03 (0.08)	−0.33	−0.01 (0.07)	−0.11	0.08 (0.09)	0.96	0.02 (0.09)	0.25
ADM × Group	0.22 (0.08)**	2.75	−0.19 (0.07)**	−2.84	−0.22 (0.09)*	−2.54	−0.18 (0.09)	−1.92
Ind × Group	0.14 (0.06)*	2.38	−0.16 (0.05)**	−3.27	−0.21 (0.06)***	−3.28	−0.11 (0.07)	−1.60
ADM × Ind × Group	0.01 (0.08)	0.08	−0.13 (0.07)	−1.94	−0.03 (0.08)	−0.34	−0.10 (0.09)	−1.08
Rivalry as focal predictor								
Constant	4.25 (0.06)***	70.72	3.23 (0.05)***	63.74	3.01 (0.06)***	47.25	3.85 (0.07)	55.47
Rivalry	−0.32 (0.08)***	−3.90	0.37 (0.08)***	4.63	0.28 (0.09)**	3.02	0.52 (0.10)***	5.42
Individual performance	0.01 (0.06)	0.23	−0.01 (0.05)	−0.17	−0.04 (0.06)	−0.68	−0.07 (0.07)	−0.93
Group performance	0.60 (0.06)***	10.02	−1.02 (0.05)***	−20.28	−0.67 (0.06)***	−10.66	−0.63 (0.07)***	−9.27
ADM	0.25 (0.08)***	3.25	0.01 (0.07)	0.16	−0.10 (0.09)	−1.12	0.13 (0.10)	1.35
RIV × Ind	−0.14 (0.08)	−1.70	0.17 (0.08)*	2.22	0.16 (0.09)	1.77	0.32 (0.09)***	3.55
RIV × Group	0.19 (0.08)*	2.27	−0.07 (0.08)	−0.86	−0.26 (0.09)**	−2.84	−0.03 (0.09)	−0.38
Ind × Group	0.13 (0.20)	0.63	0.27 (0.18)	1.53	0.07 (0.22)	0.32	0.45 (0.21)	2.10
RIV × Ind × Group	0.01 (0.08)	0.16	−0.19 (0.08)*	−2.43	−0.13 (0.09)	−1.41	−0.25 (0.09)**	−2.72

Note. ADM = Narcissistic admiration; RIV = Narcissistic rivalry; Ind = Individual performance feedback; Group = Group performance feedback. $N = 374$.
*$p \leq 0.05$. **$p \leq 0.01$. ***$p \leq 0.001$.

showed a significant negative relation with social identity when the group failed (individual success: $b = -0.66$, $SE = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$; individual failure: $b = -0.36$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.004$). However, the slopes were nonsignificant in the remaining conditions (group success + individual success: $b = -0.26$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.149$; group success + individual failure: $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = 0.935$).

Without admiration as a covariate, there was a significant negative effect of narcissistic rivalry ($p = 0.001$) and a positive effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on social identity, but none of the higher order interaction terms were significant. The simple slopes revealed associations in line with the previous analysis: group failure + individual success: $b = -0.57$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.005$; group failure + individual failure: $b = -0.30$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.013$; group success + individual success: $b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.300$; group success + individual failure: $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = 0.670$).

3.2 | Narcissism and perceived group ability

Specific to Hypothesis 2a, we evaluated whether narcissistic rivalry predicts more negative perceptions of ingroup ability when individual performance is superior to group performance. The simple slopes are depicted in Figure 2a and b.

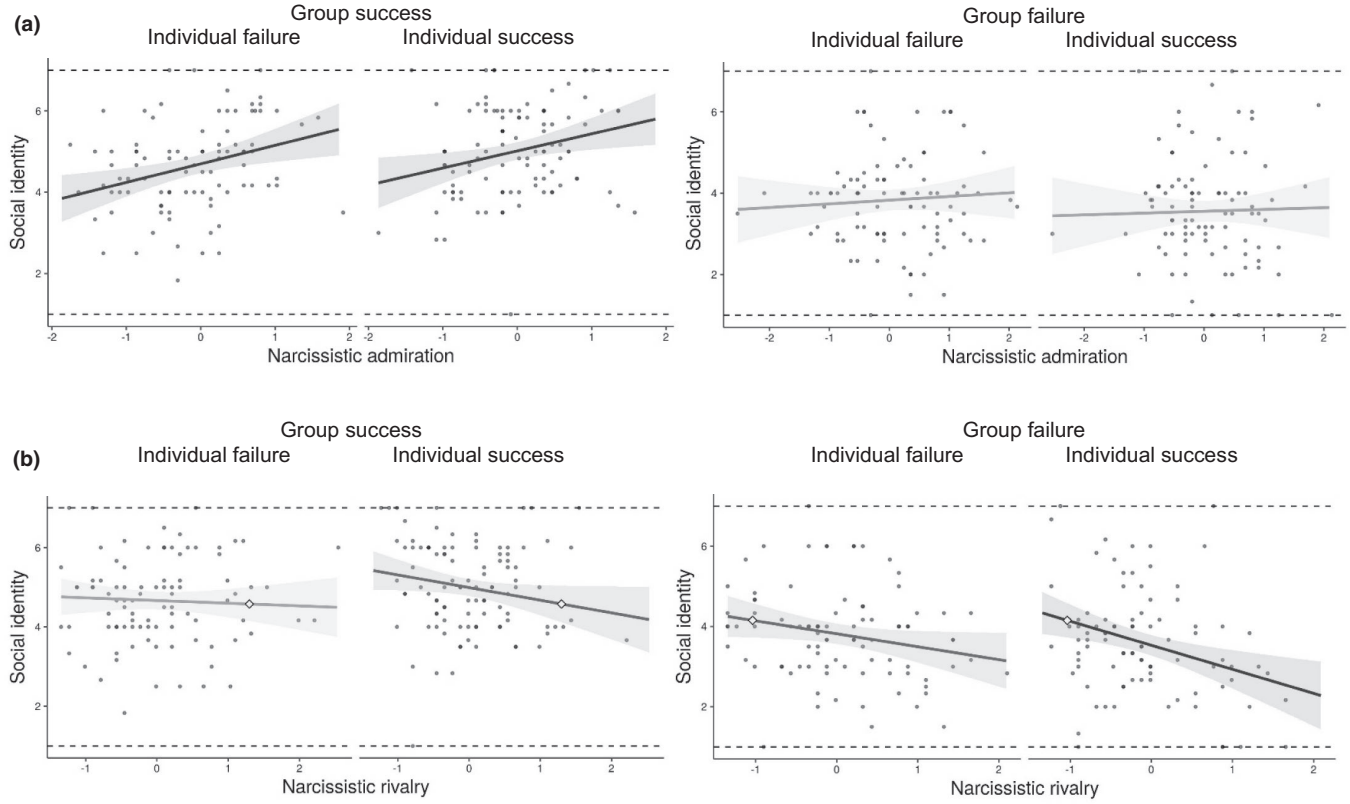

FIGURE 1 The effect of narcissistic admiration (Panel A) and narcissistic rivalry (Panel B) on social identity strength as a function of individual and group performance feedback

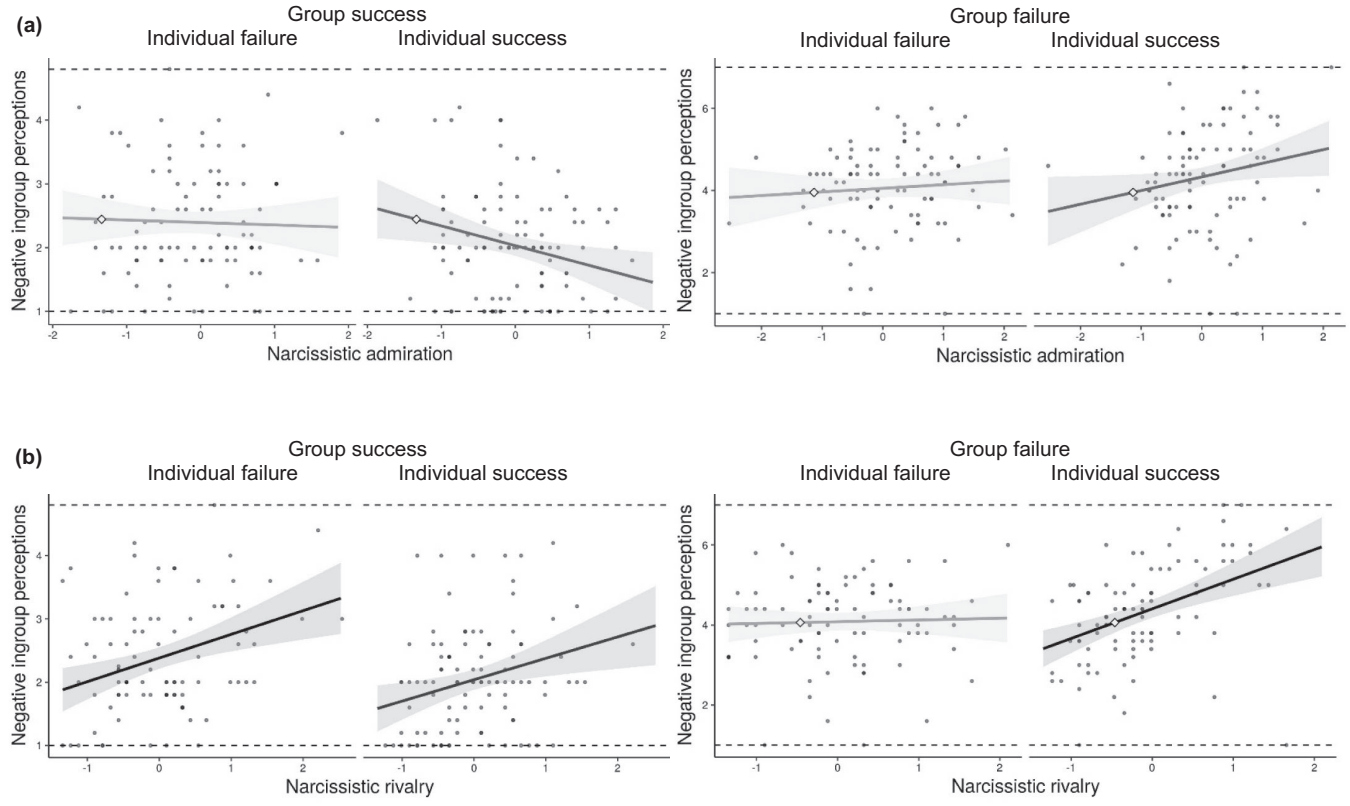

FIGURE 2 The effect of narcissistic admiration (Panel A) and narcissistic rivalry (Panel B) on negative ingroup perceptions as a function of individual and group performance feedback

3.2.1 | Rivalry and group ability

Significant effects of rivalry ($p < 0.001$) and group performance ($p < 0.001$) on perceptions of in-group ability were qualified by a three-way interaction ($p = 0.015$). To decompose this interaction, we tested the two-way interaction between narcissistic rivalry and individual performance at each level of group performance. When the group failed, rivalry significantly interacted with individual performance to predict the negative perceptions of group ability ($b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.009$). The simple slopes analyses indicate that narcissistic rivalry predicted more negative views of group ability in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 0.80$, $SE = 0.24$, $p = 0.001$), but was unrelated to the perceptions of group ability in the group failure and individual failure condition ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.564$). In contrast, when the group succeeded, narcissistic rivalry did not interact with individual performance to predict the perceptions of group ability ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.822$). The relation between narcissistic rivalry and negative perceptions of group ability was similar in the group success and individual success condition ($b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.010$) and the group success and individual failure condition ($b = 0.32$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.004$).

Without admiration as a covariate, significant effects of rivalry ($p < 0.001$) and group performance ($p < 0.001$) on perceptions of in-group ability were qualified by a three-way interaction ($p = 0.015$). Decomposing this interaction revealed a similar pattern of associations between narcissistic rivalry and negative views of group ability across the four experimental conditions (group failure + individual success: $b = 0.80$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = 0.001$; group failure + individual failure; $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.551$; group success + individual success: $b = 0.29$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.009$; group success + individual failure condition: $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.003$).

3.2.2 | Admiration and group ability

An effect of group performance on perceived group ability was qualified by two-way interactions between narcissistic admiration and group performance ($p = 0.004$) as well as individual and group performance ($p = 0.001$). The three-way interaction was nonsignificant ($p = 0.052$). Although none of the simple slopes were significant at the adjusted alpha level, narcissistic admiration was related to less negative perceptions of ingroup ability in the group success and individual success condition ($b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.014$), and more negative perceptions of ingroup ability in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.038$). In the presence of individual failure, there were nonsignificant relations between narcissistic admiration and perceptions of group ability in the group failure ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.460$) and group success ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.795$) conditions.

In evaluating the same model without rivalry as a covariate, the same two-way interaction terms were significant (i.e., narcissistic admiration and group performance, $p = 0.007$; individual and group performance, $p = 0.003$) and the three-way interaction was nonsignificant ($p = 0.032$). Narcissistic admiration was related to more negative perceptions of group ability in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = 0.009$). The remaining simple slopes were nonsignificant (group success + individual success: $b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.086$; individual failure + group failure: $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.158$; individual failure + group success: $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.572$).

3.3 | Narcissism and abandonment

Specific to Hypothesis 2b, we evaluated whether narcissistic rivalry predicts greater desire to abandon the ingroup when individual performance is superior to group performance. The simple slopes are depicted in Figure 3a and b.

3.3.1 | Rivalry and abandonment

A positive effect of rivalry ($p = 0.003$) and negative effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on abandonment were qualified by a two-way interaction between rivalry and group performance ($p = 0.005$). The three-way interaction was nonsignificant ($p = 0.158$). The simple slopes analyses indicate that when the group failed, narcissistic rivalry positively predicted abandonment in response to individual success ($b = 0.83$, $SE = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), but not individual failure ($b = 0.25$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.189$). Rivalry did not predict abandonment in either of the remaining conditions (group success + individual success: $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.655$; group success + individual failure: $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.961$).

Without admiration as a covariate, the positive effect of rivalry ($p = 0.005$) and negative effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on abandonment were qualified by a two-way interaction between rivalry and group performance ($p = 0.005$). The three-way interaction was nonsignificant ($p = 0.172$). The simple slopes analyses revealed a similar pattern of relations between narcissistic rivalry and abandonment (group failure + individual success: $b = 0.79$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = 0.001$; group failure + individual failure: $b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.234$; group success + individual success: $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.818$; group success + individual failure: $b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.823$).

3.3.2 | Admiration and abandonment

A negative effect of group performance on abandonment was qualified by two-way interactions between narcissistic admiration and group performance ($p = 0.011$) as well as between group performance and individual performance ($p = 0.001$).

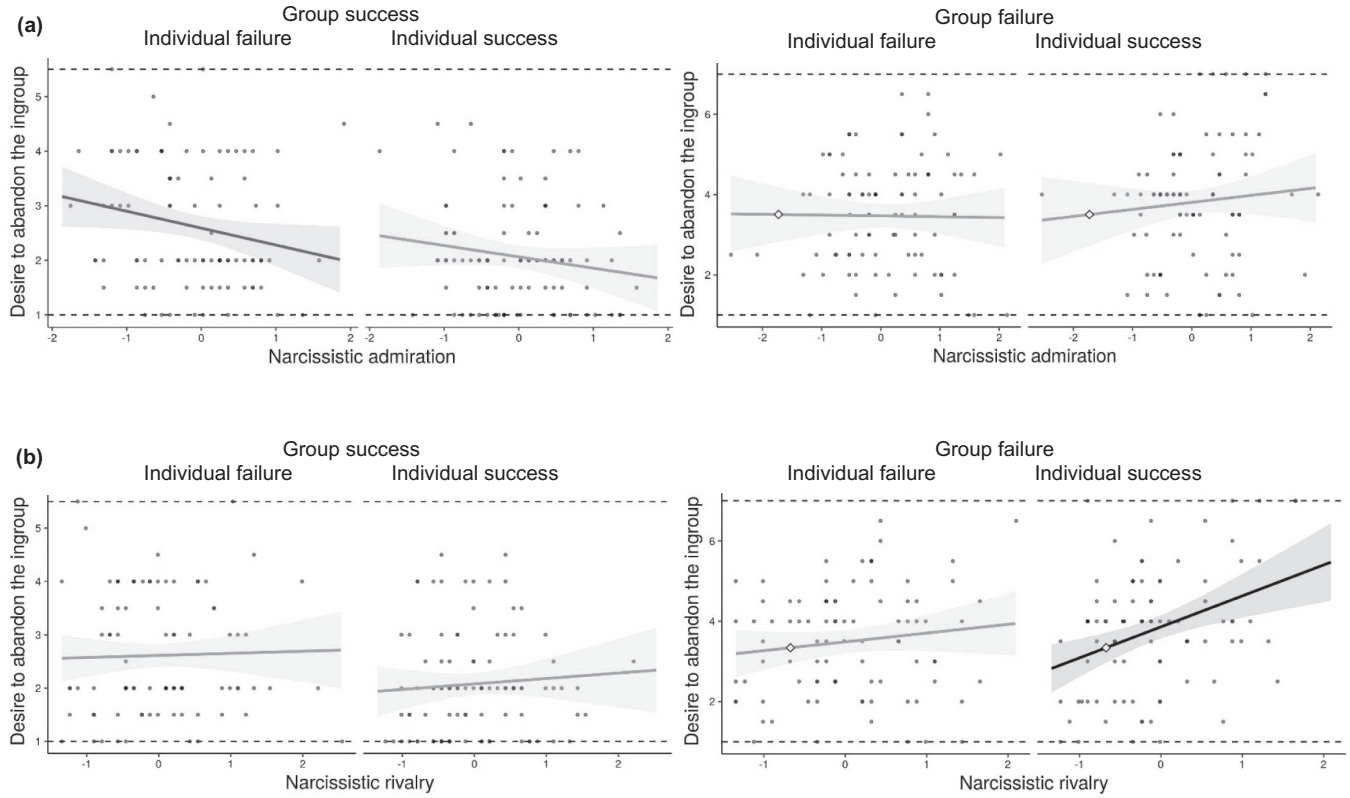

FIGURE 3 The effect of narcissistic admiration (Panel A) and narcissistic rivalry (Panel B) on desire to abandon the ingroup as a function of individual and group performance feedback

When the group failed, admiration did not predict abandonment in response to individual success ($b = 0.24$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.227$) or individual failure ($b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.928$). Similarly, when the group succeeded, admiration did not predict abandonment in response to individual success ($b = -0.26$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.081$) or individual failure ($b = -0.37$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.170$).

Without narcissistic rivalry as a covariate, there was a negative effect of group performance on abandonment ($p < 0.001$) qualified by two-way interactions between narcissistic admiration and group performance ($p = 0.012$) as well as between group performance and individual performance ($p = 0.002$). The simple slopes analyses indicated nonsignificant relations across all conditions (group failure + individual success: $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = 0.112$; group failure and individual failure: $b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.713$; group success + individual success: $b = -0.26$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.081$; group success + individual failure: $b = -0.37$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.170$).

3.4 | Narcissism and group member expulsion

Specific to Hypothesis 2c, we evaluated whether narcissistic rivalry positively predicts the desire to expel group members when individual performance is superior to group performance (i.e., lower group status and higher individual status). The simple slopes are depicted in Figure 4a and b.

3.4.1 | Rivalry and group member expulsion

A positive effect of rivalry ($p < 0.001$) and negative effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on expulsion were qualified by a three-way interaction ($p = 0.006$). When the group failed, rivalry significantly interacted with individual performance to predict expulsion ($b = 0.56$, $SE = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$). The simple slopes analyses indicate that rivalry positively predicted the desire to expel members in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 1.12$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$), but not in the group failure and individual failure condition ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.930$). In contrast, when the group succeeded, rivalry did not interact with individual performance to predict expulsion ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.537$). The association between narcissistic rivalry and expulsion was similar in magnitude and direction in the individual success ($b = 0.56$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.004$) and the individual failure ($b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.010$) conditions.

Without narcissistic admiration as a covariate, the positive effect of rivalry ($p < 0.001$) and negative effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) on expulsion were qualified by a three-way interaction ($p = 0.006$). The simple slopes analyses revealed a similar pattern of relations between narcissistic rivalry and expulsion across the conditions (group failure + individual success; $b = 1.17$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$; group failure + individual failure: $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.952$; group success + individual success; $b = 0.60$, $SE = 0.19$, p

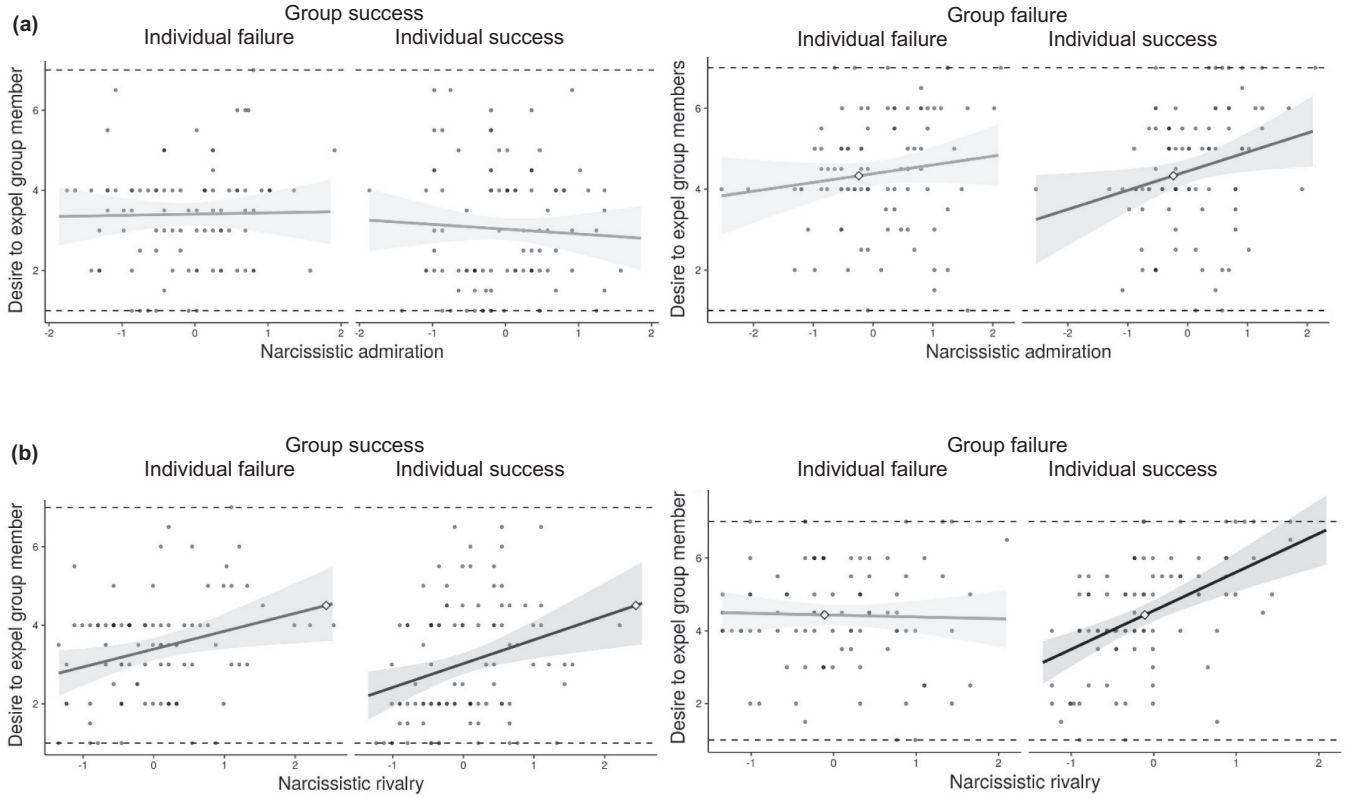

FIGURE 4 The effect of narcissistic admiration (Panel A) and narcissistic rivalry (Panel B) on desire to expel group member as a function of individual and group performance feedback

= 0.002; group success + individual failure; $b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.004$).

3.4.2 | Admiration and group member expulsion

There was a significant negative effect of group performance ($p < 0.001$) but none of the interaction terms were significant. Nonetheless, admiration was positively related to group member expulsion in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = 0.009$). The relation between admiration and group member expulsion was nonsignificant in the remaining conditions (group failure + individual failure: $b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.265$; group success + individual success: $b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = 0.626$; group success + individual failure: $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.787$).

Without rivalry as a covariate, there was still a significant negative effect of group performance ($p = 0.003$) and no significant interaction terms. Consistent with the previous analysis, admiration was positively related to group member expulsion in the group failure and individual success condition ($b = 0.62$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = 0.001$), but not in the remaining conditions (group failure + individual failure: $b = 0.30$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.095$; group success + individual success: $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = 0.906$; group success + individual failure: $b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.259$).

3.5 | Supplementary analyses

We conducted the same analyses including self-esteem and perfectionism as additional covariates. The conditional effects of narcissism changed only minimally. For the key findings: when the group succeeded, admiration positively predicted social identity in response to group success across both conditions (individual success: $b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.013$; individual failure: $b = 0.49$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.002$). When the group failed but the individual succeeded, rivalry predicted more negative perceptions of ingroup ability ($b = 0.83$, $SE = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), greater desire to abandon the group ($b = 0.68$, $SE = 0.24$, $p = 0.005$), and greater desire to expel group members ($b = 1.00$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$).

In addition, given that admiration positively predicted pre-task social identity, we conducted the analyses with pre-task social identity and the other dimension of narcissism as covariates. Similar to the main analysis, there was a two-way interaction between admiration and group performance ($p < 0.001$) in predicting social identity and the three-way interaction was nonsignificant. However, when the group succeeded, admiration was no longer related to social identity in both individual performance conditions (individual success: $b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.103$; individual failure: $b = 0.12$, $SE = -2.04$, $p = 0.244$). When the group failed, admiration was negatively associated with social identity in response to

individual failure ($b = -0.30$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.004$) but was not significantly associated with social identity in response to individual success ($b = -0.25$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.042$). For the other criterion variables, the conditional effects of narcissism changed only minimally. For the key findings: when the group failed but the individual succeeded, rivalry predicted more negative perceptions of ingroup ability ($b = 0.72$, $SE = 0.24$, $p = 0.002$), greater desire to abandon the group ($b = 0.71$, $SE = 0.24$, $p = 0.003$), and greater desire to expel group members ($b = 1.08$, $SE = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$).

4 | DISCUSSION

Narcissists can exert substantial influence in social groups (see Sedikides & Campbell, 2017). The extent to which individual group members identify with and are loyal to groups, moreover, can have significant consequences for groups (Dess & Shaw, 2001). As the prevalence of teams and work groups in organizations has risen over the past several decades (e.g., Kozlowski & Bell, 2013), so too has scholarly interest in the factors that affect group identification and loyalty. We identify boundaries to narcissists' positive perceptions of ingroups and identify conditions when narcissists may devalue ingroups and seek to abandon them. In doing so, we generate novel evidence for the usefulness of the NARC. We identify differential effects of narcissistic admiration and rivalry, related to self-enhancement and self-protection, on ingroup affiliation and devaluation. Although admiration and rivalry are modestly correlated in the current sample ($r = 0.28$), it is notable that the pattern of results is quite similar when controlling for the other dimensions of narcissism (i.e., residual relations; Vize, Collison, Miller, & Lynam, 2018) and with only the focal predictor in the model. An exception is that the positive association between admiration and social identity was somewhat stronger when including narcissistic rivalry in the model. This suggests there may be a potential suppression effect. Overall, though, whereas the self-enhancement strategies reflected in narcissistic admiration may contribute to greater ingroup affiliation (i.e., social identity strength), the self-protection strategies reflected in narcissistic rivalry may contribute to group distancing and devaluation (i.e., more negative views of group ability, abandonment, and expulsion).

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, narcissistic admiration predicted greater social identity strength when the ingroup succeeded—regardless of whether personal performance was positive or negative. In contrast, admiration was unrelated to social identity strength when the group failed. An important caveat is that admiration predicted greater social identity strength prior to the performance feedback manipulation. Admiration is hypothesized to be most active in response to opportunities for self-promotion. Narcissists may be predisposed to view ingroups positively, a tendency our virtual interactions and group-naming exercise may have encouraged. Narcissistic admiration may thus encourage self-enhancement through ingroup bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), even when no group outcomes have occurred. Together, the pattern of findings suggests that admiration may encourage ingroup identification under relatively neutral conditions, which may continue when groups perform well but not when they perform poorly. This pattern of results aligns with research suggesting that narcissistic admiration orients individuals to attend to and capitalize on the positive aspects of social situations (Hepper et al., 2010; Lange, Crusius, & Hagemeyer, 2016; Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018). These findings also provide a novel perspective on how narcissists might preserve their grandiose self-images when surrounded by high-achieving ingroup members (Jonkmann et al., 2012). That is, narcissists may integrate their successes into their own self-concept by identifying more with the ingroup. It should be noted that affiliating with high-status groups provides similar psychological benefits as attaining a high social rank within a group (Ellemers & Barreto, 2001). Thus, the finding that narcissistic admiration is positively linked to affiliation with high-status (i.e., successful) groups is consistent with recent research indicating that narcissists are highly concerned with acquiring status (e.g., Zeigler-Hill et al., 2018).

Consistent with Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c, narcissistic rivalry predicted more negative perceptions of ingroup members and a desire to disrupt group membership (by abandoning the group or expelling group members) when the group failed, particularly when the individual succeeded. Narcissistic rivalry has been linked to negative evaluations of acquaintances (Lange et al., 2016), romantic partners (Wurst et al., 2017; Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018), and others in a novel social interaction task (Back et al., 2013). However, our findings are the first to suggest that rivalry is positively related to the desire to abandon ingroups and expel ingroup members. Notably, rivalry did not predict distancing when feedback was wholly negative (i.e., ingroup and individual failure). Devaluing the ingroup in this case may, in some sense, imply devaluing oneself. Additionally, the combination of individual success and group failure may be especially likely to trigger the self-protection processes underlying narcissistic rivalry because individual success reinforces positive self-views, whereas group failure threatens such views (Back et al., 2013).

The findings for rivalry highlight a novel self-esteem maintenance strategy associated with narcissism. Considering that maintaining stable intragroup relations depends on the collective investment of individual members (Arrow & McGrath, 1995; Van Vugt & Hart, 2004), those higher in narcissistic rivalry may disrupt group dynamics because they are less likely to remain with groups that do not align with their self-esteem needs. Given that narcissists are prone to aggress toward others in response to self-threats (Bird, Carré, Knack,

& Arnocky, 2016; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), future research could explore whether narcissistic rivalry predicts more antagonistic self-protection strategies aimed at ingroup members (e.g., hostility and incivility toward co-workers in an organization) in contexts where they cannot disband or exit from a group that threatens their grandiose self.

Despite finding support for our hypotheses, the pattern of results runs somewhat counter to the idea that narcissists covet opportunities to outperform others and demonstrate their personal prowess (Roberts, Woodman, & Sedikides, 2018). One might expect narcissists to revel in the fact that they are the top performer in a group. Why then would individuals high in rivalry want to leave a group that affords downward social comparisons? Our study focused on small teams: perhaps outperforming a handful of group members does not carry the same weight as being a star performer in a large organization. Our design also provided feedback that was only highly positive or negative. More nuanced feedback might reveal that narcissists prefer to affiliate with high-status groups in which they are nevertheless positively distinguished.

In evaluating our main hypotheses, we also tested how admiration and rivalry relate to outcomes for which we had no a priori hypotheses. Specifically, we examined how admiration relates to ingroup distancing and devaluation, and how rivalry relates to social identity strength. How narcissistic admiration related to negative perceptions of ingroup ability and abandonment varied as a function of group performance; admiration predicted more negative perceptions of ability and desire to abandon the group when the group failed, but less negative perceptions and willingness to abandon the group when the group succeeded. Though the simple slopes were not statistically significant, this pattern may reflect narcissists' general inclination to maintain self-esteem (Hepper et al., 2010). In addition, rivalry predicted reduced social identity strength when the individual succeeded and the group failed. Despite some overlap in how admiration and rivalry affected group affiliation (and distancing), our findings contribute to the growing literature showing distinct consequences associated with the rivalry and admiration components of narcissism (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015; Zeigler-Hill & Trombly, 2018).

Moving forward, a promising line of inquiry would be to build upon recent work on the behavioral dynamics of narcissism (Leckelt et al., 2015) by considering the ways in which affiliation and devaluation tendencies are related to such interpersonal processes. Researchers could evaluate whether individuals high in narcissistic admiration are able to elevate their ingroup status, in part, by their affiliative tendencies empowering social assertiveness under relatively neutral group conditions (e.g., initial group formation, absence of group failures). Likewise, researchers could evaluate whether the extent to which individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are viewed less favorably is due to their devaluation tendencies promoting an increasingly antagonistic interpersonal style over time.

As with any study, ours had some limitations. One is the extent to which we can claim that narcissism is causally affecting the outcome measures. We did not manipulate narcissism levels with our experimental paradigm and thus it is possible that confounding influences may account for the theorized effects of narcissism on social identity, perceptions of group ability, desire to abandon the group, and willingness to expel an existing member. A second is the artificial nature of contrived groups. Using a virtually mediated group decision-making task enables stronger causal inferences pertaining to the role of performance feedback, and our premeasure of social identity suggests our group-priming procedure was effective (i.e., participants generally felt they were part of a team). Nevertheless, the ecological validity of the task should be considered when generalizing these findings to other settings. The transient nature of the task may also limit the generalizability of our findings. It is not clear how narcissism might affect group affiliation in response to more sustained success (or failure) as a group and as an individual within a group. It is also important to test these processes in a broader sample of individuals, including more than undergraduates. As the hypotheses were not preregistered and we fell slightly short of the targeted sample size due to the number of excluded participants, conducting a close replication of these findings with an independent sample would be beneficial.

Moving forward, our findings could be extended by examining whether narcissists deliberately seek to join groups that complement their self-presentation goals. Although we did not examine group-entry decisions in the current study, it is possible that narcissists may attempt to shore up their grandiose self views by strategically aligning themselves with high-status groups. Given that narcissists strive to positively distinguish themselves as a way to demonstrate their superiority over others, it would be insightful to disentangle how narcissists weigh the value of joining social and work groups that afford high status against the potential challenges of acquiring higher status within such groups.

Finally, future research could explore how leaders' personnel decisions are jointly shaped by narcissism and performance. More narcissistic leaders are less inclined to develop close relationships with subordinates (Sedikides, Hoorens, & Dufner, 2015) and fervently promote their personal vision (Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010). Our results raise the possibility that leaders higher in narcissistic rivalry may be quick to fire or admonish employees whose performance might reflect poorly on their own. In contrast, our results also suggest that leaders higher in narcissistic admiration may eagerly embrace organizational successes, which may galvanize group loyalty (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

Overall, the current research provides insight into how narcissistic admiration promotes self-enhancing ingroup affiliation (i.e., in response to group success and perhaps more neutral conditions), and narcissistic rivalry promotes self-protecting ingroup distancing and devaluation (i.e., when group performance reflects poorly on one's individual performance). Narcissists may thus be prone to both affiliate and distance themselves more from ingroups to suit their self-esteem maintenance goals.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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