# Shared Reality and Consensus: The Role of Defensive and Secure In-group Positivity

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Supervisor: Dr. Aleksandra Cichocka

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Abstract

It has long been known that groups have an importance for individuals. Group members tend to evaluate their in-groups in a positive manner. Social psychology literature differentiates between defensive and secure in-group positivity in an attempt to understand their respective effects on intergroup relations. While collective narcissism reflects defensive in-group positivity, non-narcissistic in-group positivity reflects the secure part of it. Groups are also known to satisfy individual needs. This study investigates the role of the need for shared reality as a precursor motive for these two types of in-group positivity. Because shared reality closely relates to consensus, it also tests the role of collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity in predicting perceived consensus. I hypothesized that need for shared reality will predict higher collective narcissism, but not non-narcissistic in-group positivity, and consensus. I also predicted that collective narcissism will mediate the relationship between the need for shared reality and consensus. To test the proposed links, university students ($N$ = 236, 188 female, $M_{age}$ = 21.03) were asked to respond a set of questionnaires. The need for shared reality did not correlate significantly with collective narcissism or identification. Regression results indicated that non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicted perceived consensus. Collective narcissism had negative coefficients; however, it was not a significant predictor for perceived consensus. The study concludes that perceptions of consensus might be explained by non-narcissistic in-group positivity. The relationship between collective narcissism and perceived consensus requires further investigations. Finally, experimental methods or other measures should be employed to assess the need for shared reality.

*Keywords:* need for shared reality, collective narcissism, in-group positivity, consensus

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"The elephant is very like a wall"

"This wonder of an elephant is very like a spear!"

"The elephant is very like a tree"

"This marvel of an elephant is very like a fan"

…

"The elephant is very like a rope"

Saxe (1868, p. 259-260).

These lines by the poet, Saxe, might easily remind one about the classic story of the elephant and six blind men. After each man describes the elephant from their different perspective, the poem continues "Disputed loud and long, each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong, though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong" (Saxe, 1868, p. 260). At an abstract level, this poem emphasizes that there may be various truths or realities which can coexist. However, in real life settings it seems that people are not only, motivated to have their own version of reality but also, want others to verify that same reality. According to Higgins (2014) shared reality is a need that leads people to perceive consensus, i.e. something which others also hold true, and this further validates their beliefs. Take for example Scientology which originated from a therapeutic self-help book and has been accepted as a religion in the US (Green, 2006). In terms of shared reality (Higgins, 2014) it can be argued that the tenets of this book, that were adopted by Scientologists as guidelines for practices, beliefs and codes, were shared and supported by so many people that it created a mutual truism. The official Scientology website (2017) includes guidance for these tenets which can be

interpreted as the realities shared by its followers. When the popular cartoon series South Park made a satiric episode involving Scientology, Isaac Hayes, a singer in the series felt humiliated as a member of this doctrine and he left the series after 9 years of contribution (Burkeman, 2006). This is a clear example of a situation where a belief that is perceived as truth and thus held as reality by many, is considered as worthy for satire by others. Regardless of whether Scientology is a religion or not, it is a group and as such, through its tenets it provides direction and a sense of shared reality for its members. The fact that Scientology was used as a target for satire, can alone be a threat to its members' shared reality and consensus.

While the aforementioned example attracted much of the media's attention, it is plausible that there are individual differences between in-group members. For instance, there may be other in-group members who did not need shared reality and consensus to the same extent, therefore did not interpret this episode as a threat. Thus, their reactions towards perceived offences might entirely differ from other members of the same group. An alternative explanation could be that some group members did not even offended by this episode. In this case, individual differences might variate the need for shared reality which is supplied by the group. These differences can affect in-group positivity (i.e. defensive and secure), which can be thought of as positive feelings toward an in-group (Brewer, 2001), and perceptions of consensus. While the example here focuses on just one group to make the picture clearer, group-based reality has been essential for social psychology and understanding groups (Festinger, 1950; Lewin, 1965; Sherif & Sherif, 1964). Consequently, this leads us to identification processes with groups. Before focusing on collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity as forms of defensive and secure in-group positivity, I discuss different approaches toward identification and how they explain intergroup relations.

**Social identity**

After the epistemological and ontological crisis in social psychology, social identity approach has provided an anchoring perspective to the field and it has shaped how group processes are studied (Hogg & Abrams, 1998). Social identity, which is disparate from personal identity (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004), was defined as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). In this regard, social identity theory proposes that people identify themselves with the certain groups that they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Striving for a positive identity and enhanced self-esteem leads people to evaluate their own group more positively than other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Consequently, identification with the in-group and tendency to foster self-esteem results in positive group-valenced comparisons (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). These comparisons which draw boundaries between positive in-group and the outgroup further create discrimination (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Based on this theory, two corollaries were derived for the self-esteem hypothesis (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). The first corollary suggests that positive values with regard to in-group will boost self-esteem and the second puts forth that low or threatened self-esteem is responsible for the discrimination in group processes (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Notwithstanding the dispute about the conceptualization of self-esteem, studies which have investigated its role on outgroup discrimination found mixed empirical support for these corollaries (see Rubin & Hewstone, 1998 for a review).

On the other hand, Brewer (1979; 1999) suggests that positive identification with the in-group does not necessitate hostility toward outgroups. In a similar vein, researchers distinguish between different types of identification in order to understand the components that may moderate discrimination or hostility within in intergroup

contexts. Accordingly, empirical findings proposed secure and insecure dimensions (Jackson & Smith, 1999), nationalism and patriotism (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989) as different aspects of in-group identification. Despite that nationalism and patriotism are positively correlated, they have each been associated with distinct features of positive in-group identification. (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). Research findings indicated that nationalism, rather than patriotism, predicted negative attitudes and aggressiveness toward outgroups (de Fiqueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001). Also, while insecure identification was related to more positive evaluations of the in-group and higher in-group bias, secure identification was associated with more intergroup tolerance (Jackson & Smith, 1999). These results posit that in-group positivity per se might not always lead to discrimination or hostility to outgroups and investigating how people construe their social identity can be informative when understanding intergroup relations.

**Collective narcissism**

The present study focuses on another distinction, narcissistic and non-narcissistic in-group positivity, which follows the latter approach, and examines the role of the need for shared reality as an antecedent, and their effects on consensus perceptions. In-group positivity refers to positive feelings toward an in-group that is not based on outgroup comparison (Brewer, 2001). The concept of collective narcissism which was inspired by individual psychology aims to distinguish in-group positivity (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009) in terms of secure and defensive dimensions (Cichocka, 2016). It was suggested that if it is possible to observe narcissism at a personal level, it might be also seen at collective levels in the idealization of the in-group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Therefore, it was proposed that collective narcissism posits one’s investment in the exaggerated and unrealistic in-

group image (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Because this inflated in-group image is unstable and vulnerable, it needs verification from the other groups (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). In other words, while collective narcissists believe in their groups' prominent position, this entitled position constantly needs to be approved by other groups in order to be maintained. It was revealed that collective narcissists evaluated their in-group positively on explicit measures; however, on the implicit measures they did not associate positive feelings with the symbols which represent in-group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Study 4). This gap between implicit and explicit perceptions about the in-group might actually suggest low group evaluation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) or scepticism about in-group's grandiose image (Cichocka, 2016). Consequently, it was argued that due to such internal ambivalent feelings about the in-group, collective narcissists are hypersensitive to any cues or perceptions which may denigrate the in-group's image (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013).

While high and unstable personal self-esteem predicted aggressiveness in interpersonal relationships in case of ego threats (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000), collective narcissism was found to be a strong predictor of defensiveness and hostility in intergroup processes (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). For example, after the proposition of building a wall between Mexico and the US border that might obstruct immigration to the US, Mexican students who had higher scores in collective narcissism perceived this idea as an insult to their country, and they indicated that they support boycotting the US market (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Study 5). In another study, American participants read a piece of opinion (criticism vs. praise) which was allegedly written by a British student (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Study 1). In the criticism condition, collective narcissism predicted hostile behavioural intentions toward the outgroup (British) which was perceived as undermining the in-

group's image (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). In a Polish sample, collective narcissism predicted negative evaluations toward Jews and Germans which are typically seen as threatening outgroups in the historical context (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Study 1 and Study 3). Moreover, it was revealed that narcissistic attachment in terms of university membership also predicted a similar patterns of results when the in-group was perceived to be under the threat of an outgroup (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Study 5; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013; Study 3).

**Non-narcissistic in-group positivity**

Theoretical explanations and the empirical findings mentioned heretofore focused on collective narcissism which might be interpreted as the dark side of in-group positivity that fosters outgroup hostility and derogation (Golec de Zavala, 2011). Notwithstanding the destructive consequences of collective narcissism in terms of threat, in their later studies, Golec de Zavala, Cichocka and Bilewicz (2013) proposed non-narcissistic in-group positivity as the secure counterpart of in-group positivity. In that sense, non-narcissistic in-group positivity taps into one's genuinely positive feelings about their in-group which does not require external recognition (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). Both collective narcissism and non-narcissistic components captures in-group positivity (Cichocka, 2016). However, they suppress each other's effects in terms of outgroup derogation (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). When the variance that is associated with collective narcissism is covaried out from the instruments which typically assess in-group identification, the remaining part is considered as non-narcissistic in-group positivity (Cichocka, Marchlewska, Golec de Zavala, & Olechowski, 2016).

Once the effect of collective narcissism was controlled for, non-narcissistic in-group positivity was found to predict more tolerance and trust toward outgroups. With

regard to national identification, non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicted more positive feelings toward outgroups (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Study 2 and Study 3). Non-narcissistic in-group positivity did not predict outgroup derogation or defensiveness in case of in-group criticism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). For example, following the Smolenk plane crash which caused the death of almost one hundred Polish high officials and started conspiracies claiming that Russia was involved in the accident, non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicted less endorsement in Russian conspiracy beliefs (Cichocka et al., 2016). Considering these empirical findings, it was suggested that the non-narcissistic dimension of in-group positivity is a secure attachment with the group (Cichocka, 2016) and it further allows in-group members to also appreciate outgroups (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). While collective narcissism predicts derogation and hostility towards outgroups which undermine in-group's image, non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicts more constructive approach in terms of perceived threat (Cichocka, 2016).

**In-group positivity and need for shared reality**

The literature that was discussed so far, illustrated that collective narcissism (defensive) and non-narcissistic (secure) dimensions of in-group positivity result in quite distinct reactions to outgroups. Yet, the question of what might be the motivations that underpin them remains. It was proposed that groups can satisfy certain basic needs of people. Group membership provides feelings of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), reduces uncertainty (Hogg, 2000) and maintains self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997). Cichocka and colleagues (in press) found that personal control plays an important role in determining in-group positivity. In their studies, it was shown that while low personal control (manipulated or self-rated) boosted collective narcissism, feelings of high personal control gave a rise to non-

narcissistic in-group positivity. Therefore, Cichocka et al. (in press) suggest that collective narcissism might be a short-lasting compensatory function for personal control needs. On the other hand, non-narcissistic in-group positivity which is driven by high personal control might posit genuine collective concerns (Cichocka et al., in press).

Further it was also proposed that other individual needs (i.e. epistemic or relational) might reflect a similar pattern (Cichocka et al., in press). Hence, the present study examines the need for shared reality as another potential antecedent for defensive and secure in-group positivity. Shared reality theory which was proposed by Hardin and Higgins (1996) postulates that people desire to have a common understanding or build a sense of shared reality with other people. In that sense, shared reality which is obtained via social verification can be perceived as the objective reality and in turn, allow people to satisfy their epistemic (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) and social-relational needs (Higgins, 2016). As far as epistemic motives are concerned, achieving a sense of shared reality - along with providing a predictable environment- portrays any experience or belief as reliable and valid (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Social-relational function posits that striving for kinship and affiliation with other people motivates building a shared reality (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009). Higgins and Rholes (1978) presented participants a narrative describing a target person in a vague manner (i.e. the target could be labelled by the participants with either a positive or negative adjective). After reading the description, participants' task was to describe the target to an audience who supposedly liked or disliked the target. The results demonstrated that participants' description of the target was tuned in line with the given attitudes of audience. Moreover, after a two weeks follow-up, it was found that participant's memory was distorted due to their descriptions and this phenomenon was named as "saying-is-believing" effect (Higgins & Rholes, 1978). This effect was replicated in a series of

shared reality studies which usually consider communication as a tool for establishing it (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Groll, 2005; Echterhoff, Higgins, Kopietz, & Groll, 2008). Consequently, Higgins (2016) argued that regardless of the actual target, memory distortions posit the consistency within the established shared reality.

While the explanations of shared reality theory mostly focused on social cognition on the individual level, Echterhoff and colleagues (2005, Study 2) showed that when communicating with an in-group member, participants' memory was distorted more. This can be interpreted as establishing a greater amount of shared reality between in-group members. Furthermore, it was proposed that people differ in their need for shared reality and this difference was suggested to link with ideological beliefs and system justification (Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2007). Relational needs which were operationalized as need for shared reality associated positively with system justification and predicted less support for movements that challenge the existing system (Hennes, Nam, Stern, & Jost, 2012). In terms of ideologies, participants who scored high in conservatism, rather than liberalism, had a higher need to share reality but this need was only limited to fellow conservatives (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2014; Study 1 and Study 2). However, when conservative participants' relational needs with the group were diminished by means of manipulation, their need for shared reality also decreased (Stern et al., 2014; Study 4). These findings indicate that despite a sense of shared reality being desirable (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), the extent to which it is desired may vary for individuals. This can result in different judgments, for example whether they support system challenging or maintaining movements.

Accordingly, existing findings point towards the potential for the need for shared reality to motivate defensive and secure in-group positivity. As described above, collective narcissism is associated with being suspicious about in-group's image

(Cichocka, 2016) and by definition, it emphasizes the external recognition of the group (Golec de Zavala et al. 2009). Collective narcissism studies mainly focus on verification from the outgroups by manipulating it in terms of criticism or praise (Golec de Zavala, Peker, Guerra, & Baran, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2013). Studies which investigate intergroup processes posit that in the absence of confirmation, collective narcissism predicts hostile intentions toward outgroups (for a review, see Cichocka, 2016). Also, collective narcissism correlated positively with right wing authoritarianism which implies people's desire for group cohesion (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Thus, heightened need for shared reality might be linked to collective narcissism. On the other hand, non-narcissistic in-group positivity is characterized as secure and free off other groups' approval (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). This secure in-group positivity was proposed to be resistant to the negative opinions of the outgroups (Cichocka, 2016). Therefore, diminished needs for shared reality are thought to be associated with non-narcissistic in-group positivity due to its tolerant and resistant nature. Furthermore, Jackson and Smith (1999) found the opposite effects of different types of identification on the intergroup dependency. Secure identification, as compared to insecure identification, was related to lower perceived dependency on the group. To put it differently, in the absence of secure identification groups were seen as a continuum of the self (Jackson & Smith, 1999). Indeed, Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) also mentioned the possibility of same characteristics for collective narcissism. Hence this might be an indirect support for the varying relational needs between group members. As a result, it is suggested that high epistemic and relational needs which will posit higher need for shared reality can in turn, motivate collective narcissism. On the contrary, non-narcissistic in-group positivity is expected to be stem from low needs for shared reality.

**Consensus**

This study also tests the role of defensive and secure in-group positivity on perceived consensus –a concept closely linked to shared reality. Prior to elaborating on this link, an examination of preliminary findings on consensus seems fitting (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). In a series of studies, university students were asked to read stories which described a situation that required to make a decision and they were presented with two choices to respond. After reading these stories students indicated their answer and estimated the percentage of students that they thought would choose the same option. It was found that participants perceived their own decision to be the more common one, and they also perceived the other option to be inappropriate. Consequently, this tendency to estimate similarity based on the self-referenced judgments was defined as the false consensus effect (Ross et al., 1977) or social projection (Mullen & Hu, 1988). As such, false consensus herein operates similarly to the need for shared reality wherein individuals seek consensus by means of establishing a sense of shared reality (Higgins, 2014).

It is proposed that groups help people to establish a sense of reality through which they can confirm their perceptions (Festinger, 1950; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Although communication and social interaction are important tools in creating shared reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), it is impossible for group members to be absolutely aware of others' thought processes (Stern et al., 2014). The subjective group dynamics model suggests that although members of a group do not have any interactions with each other, they still want to maintain the in-group coherence in order to verify their version of reality (Marques, Abrams, Paez, & Martinez-Taboada, 1998). In a similar vein, Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti and de Grada (2006) stated that the shared reality which is provided by a group should be observed in group consensus, wherein group

members will perceive their beliefs to be shared with those of other members. In a meta-analysis, Robbins and Krueger (2005) showed that perceived consensus and similarity were more likely to occur when people judged in-group members. Similarly, participants from Japan estimated higher consensual beliefs about patriotism and nationalism when they evaluated their in-group; however, this effect was not significant for the outgroup (Karasawa, 2003). More relevant to the present study, Stern et al (2014) found that when need for shared reality was high, participants' perceptions about in-group consensus also increased. However, when relational needs were reduced, perceived in-group consensus was found to decrease (Stern et al., 2014; Study 3).

Research, at times, equated the term consensus with perceptions of a homogeneous in-group that provides coherent group beliefs and describes group-based reality (Kruglanski, Shah, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2002). In a series of studies, the need for shared reality was operationalized as high need for cognitive closure which refers to being intolerant to ambiguity and seeking concrete answers (Kruglanski et al., 2002). It was found that when the participants had a stronger need for cognitive closure (shared reality), they preferred more homogeneous groups and indicated more positive feelings toward these groups (Kruglanski et al., 2002). Across three samples, self-reported high cognitive closure predicted more positive evaluation of the in-group; however direction of the relationship reversed for the outgroups (Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998; Study 1). Furthermore, implementing an experimental design it was revealed that high cognitive closure increased in-group identification and resulted in refusing outgroup members' thoughts (Shah et al., 1998; Study 2 and Study 3). As a result, it was suggested that primarily in-groups which fulfil shared reality needs might cause derogation in order to preserve this reality (Shah et al., 1998).

These results suggest that varying needs for shared reality might result in different evaluations of in-groups and out-groups. Given the existing theoretical and empirical propositions, if collective narcissism is motivated by high need for shared reality, it is expected to be linked to higher perceptions of consensus. Due to its positive relationship with group cohesiveness and concerns about in-group image, collective narcissism is expected to predict higher perceptions of consensus within the group. The association of collective narcissism with rejection of any perceptions that undermine the image of the in-group (Cichocka, 2016) is also in line with suggestions by Shah and colleagues (1998) as outlined in the former paragraph. Furthermore, McGregor, Nail, Marigold and Kang (2005) focused on personal self-esteem and found that participants with defensive self-esteem estimated higher perceptions of consensus on the irrelevant social topics when they were exposed to threats. This provides indirect support for the predicted positive relationship between collective narcissism and consensus. Conversely, if non-narcissistic in-group positivity stems from a low need for shared reality, it is expected to associate with perceiving low levels of consensus within the group. Moreover, Jackson and Smith (1999) showed that secure identification declined perceiving in-group as homogeneous; however, insecure identification fostered beliefs in the homogenous in-group. Therefore, this can be also used as support for the expected relationships for in-group consensus.

**The present study and hypotheses**

This study aims to investigate the role of social cognition when understanding collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity. Except from the research of Cichocka et al. (2016), collective narcissism studies mostly focus on intergroup processes. The present study additionally considers participants' perceptions about groups as examining consensus. Thus, through combining group processes and social

cognition, this study aims to expand the literature in both domains. While collective narcissism needs verification of the beliefs about the group, non-narcissistic in-group positivity does not need approval from other groups (Cichocka, 2016). It is well established that collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicts different outcomes when an outgroup is perceived to undermine in-group's image (Cichocka et al., 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala et al., 2016). Personal control was found to be a determinant for these defensive and secure types of the in-group positivity (Cichocka et al., in press). The present study suggests that the need for shared reality is another plausible motivation for these two counterparts of in-group positivity. Although this is considered as a basic need which mitigates epistemic and social-relational needs (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), people are proposed to differ in this need (Kruglanski et al., 2006). Derived from the theoretical explanations and the empirical findings it is hypothesized that need for shared reality (IV) will predict higher collective narcissism (DV1), but not non-narcissistic in-group positivity (DV2), and higher perceived in-group consensus (DV3). It is also predicted that collective narcissism will mediate the relationship between the need for shared reality and perceptions of in-group consensus. In-group and outgroup identification will be defined in relation to nationality.

## Method

### Participants and procedure

A correlational design was implemented in order to test the proposed hypotheses. Participants were recruited from the Research Participation Scheme at the University of Kent, ostensibly for a study which explored evaluations about the world. Participants were asked to answer questionnaires and they were given one course credit in exchange. Twenty seven participants were excluded who did not fully complete the

survey. Because the present study focused on the national identification, participants were asked to indicate their nationalities (160 British, 76 from other nations) as for demographic information. The final analyses consisted of 236 participants (188 female, 45 male, 3 other), aged between 18 and 53 ($M$= 21.03, $SD$= 4.97). All participants completed a set of measures that are listed below. Identification scales were presented randomly. Once the survey was completed, participants were debriefed in writing. Ethical approval, informed consent, study information and debrief are all included in Appendix A.

**Measures**

***Need for Shared Reality.*** To determine participants' relational needs and strive to share similar viewpoints with others the Need to Share Reality Scale was used (Hennes et al., 2012). The scale includes three items: "I prefer to have my unique understanding of the world", "I don't like viewing the world in the same way as everyone around me does" and "I do not find it necessary to agree about how the world works with others who generally have similar beliefs as me". Participants responded to the items from 1= *completely disagree* to 7= *completely agree* and all of the responses were reverse coded before analyses (α= .64, $M$= 3.03, $SD$= 0.98; Appendix B).

***Collective Narcissism.*** Narcissistic in-group positivity was measured using the Collective Narcissism Scale with reference to the national group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This scale indicates 9 items which participants respond from 1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree* (α= .87, $M$= 3.17, $SD$= 1.15). The sample items are "My nation deserves special treatment" and "It really makes me angry when others criticize my nation" (Appendix C).

***Identification.*** In-group identification was measured using Three-Factor Identity Scale (Cameron, 2004) with respect to national group. The scale includes affect ("In

general, I'm glad to be a member of my nation"), centrality ("I often think about the fact that I am a member of my nation"), and ties ("I feel strong ties to other members of my nation") subscales which together form 12 items. Participants responses were coded from 1= *strongly disagree* to 7= *strongly agree* (α= .85, *M*= 4.21, *SD*= 0.92; Appendix D)

***Consensus.*** Perceived consensus was measured using three items which are modified from Stern et al. (2014; Appendix E). Participants used a slider scale ranging from 0 to 100 to indicate their estimations of other participants' answers for national identification measures. The first item was used to assess perceived in-group consensus ("What percent of participants of your nationality responded similarly to the questions about nationality as you did?", *M* = 49.86, *SD* = 22.39), the second one tapped into general consensus ("What percent of participants overall responded similarly to the questions about nationality as you did?, *M* = 46.94 *SD* = 20.57), and the last one measured outgroup consensus ("What percent of participants of nationalities different to yours responded to the questions about nationality similarly to one another?", *M* = 49.90, *SD* = 21.19).

## Results

### Relationships between the variables

Because the data was collected both from British and international students, differences between populations were examined prior to further analyses. British participants scored lower in collective narcissism (*M* = 2.89, *SD* = 1.05) than the other nationalities (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.12), $t(234) = -5.95$, $p < .001$. Also, identification scores of British participants were lower (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 0.80) when compared to the other participants (*M* = 4.59 *SD* = 0.12), $t(234) = -4.61$ $p < .001$. Scores did not differ for any

other scales and the separate analysis yielded the same results. Thus further analyses were conducted including all the participants.

To investigate the relationship between the variables, a correlation analysis was conducted (Table 1). Collective narcissism and in-group identification had a moderate and positive correlation. Need for shared reality, collective narcissism and identification correlated positively and significantly with perceived in-group and generalized consensus. This relationship was small for need for shared reality, close to medium and large respectively for collective narcissism and identification. As for perceived outgroup consensus, the relationship was only significant for identification. Need for shared reality did not correlate with collective narcissism, $r$ (236) = .02, $p > .05$ or identification $r$ (236) = .04, $p > .05$.

Table 1.

*Correlations between all the variables*

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Need for shared reality | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2. Collective narcissism | .02 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 3. Identification | .04 | .55** | 1 | - | - | - |
| 4. In-group consensus | .16* | .21** | .44** | 1 | - | - |
| 5. Generalized consensus | .19** | .20** | .44** | .64** | 1 | - |
| 6. Outgroup consensus | .04 | -.01 | .14* | .34** | .41** | 1 |

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$; $N = 236$

**Collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity as predictors of perceived consensus**

Regression analyses were conducted in order to examine the unique contributions of collective narcissism and non-narcissistic identification on the perceived consensus. In the first model, collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity were used as predictors and in-group consensus was the outcome variable (Table 2). The model was overall significant $F$ (2, 235) = 27. 73, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .19$. The results showed that non-narcissistic in-group positivity positively predicted the perceived in-group consensus. The direction of this relationship was negative for collective narcissism; however, it was non-significant.

Table 2.

*Collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity as predictors of in-group consensus*

| | Model 1 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Collective narcissism | -0.74 | 1.37 | -.04 |
| Non-narcissistic in-group positivity | 11.16** | 1.71 | .46 |
| $R^2$ | .19 | | |
| *F* | 27.73** | | |

DV: In-group consensus, $N$= 235, $p < .001$

In the second model, collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity were again used as the predictors again but the outcome variable was outgroup consensus (Table 3). The model was overall significant $F$ (2, 235) = 3.33, $p$ = .04, $R^2$ = .03. Non-narcissistic in-group positivity positively predicted the perceived outgroup consensus.

Collective narcissism negatively related to the perceived outgroup consensus but it was not a significant predictor.

Table 3.

*Collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity as predictors of outgroup consensus*

| | Model 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Collective narcissism | -2.10 | 1.42 | -.11 |
| Non-narcissistic in-group positivity | 4.58* | 1.78 | .20 |
| $R^2$ | .03 | | |
| *F* | 3.33* | | |

DV: Outgroup consensus, *N*= 235, $p < .05$

In the third model, the same variables were included as predictors but the outcome variable was perceived generalized consensus (Table 4). The model was overall significant $F$ (2, 235) = 29.09, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 20$. Similarly to the other analyses, non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicted perceived generalized consensus. The direction of the relationship was negative for collective narcissism but it was non-significant.

Table 4.

*Collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity as predictors of generalized consensus*

| | Model 3 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | *B* | *SE B* | *β* |
| Collective narcissism | -1.04 | 1.25 | -.06 |
| Non-narcissistic in-group positivity | 10.65** | 1.57 | .48 |
| $R^2$ | .20 | | |
| *F* | 29.09** | | |

DV: Generalized consensus, $N$= 235, $p < .001$

Kenny (2016) suggested that the independent variable should correlate with the mediator variables in order for a mediation analysis to be performed. Given that the relationship between need for shared reality and the proposed mediators did not fit this criterion, mediation analyses were not performed.

**Discussion**

This study investigated the need for shared reality as an antecedent of collective narcissism and non-narcissistic in-group positivity. It also tested the predictive roles of these two dimensions of in-group positivity on perceived consensus. In this section, I discuss and evaluate results of the present study within the scope of literature.

Statistical analysis showed that the need for shared reality did not correlate with collective narcissism and in-group identification. While findings did not validate the original hypotheses, it is suggested that the reason for the outcome of results may be related to the scale employed. Given the fact that the need for shared reality scale did not anchor a particular group that participants can relate to might be responsible for

non-significant relationships. Hardin and Higgins (1996) suggested that people desire to share reality with the significant others. Thus, making the in-group bonds more salient or manipulating this need in line with Stern et al. (2014) might give more accurate results about the proposed links. Collective narcissism, which is an extension of the self to the group, needs social verification (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Therefore, it was expected that collective narcissism, rather than non-narcissistic in-group positivity might be more highly associated with relational needs that are satisfied by the in-group. Studies that focus on the individual psychology propose that attachment patterns influence people's evaluations about themselves and interpretations about the world (Bowlby, 1973; Mikulincer, Gillath, & Shaver, 2002). Personal narcissism was linked with avoidant (Meyer & Pilkonis, 2011) and dismissive attachment styles (Gjerde, Onishi, & Carlson, 2004). Accordingly, given such findings, future research should attempt to investigate differences in attachment styles when understanding defensive and secure in-group positivity in terms of shared reality and relational needs with the group. In addition, when participants were exposed to worldview threats, dismissive attachment style was associated with lower needs for closeness with significant others (Hart, Shaver, & Goldenberg, 2005). Hence, threat also seems to be an important factor which should be included and manipulated in future studies.

Despite its use to explain intergroup contexts (Stern et al., 2014, Kruglanski et al., 2002; Kruglanski et al., 2006), shared reality theory mostly emphasizes the development of social cognition of the individual (Higgins, 2014). The studies which investigate shared reality, usually implemented saying-is-believing paradigm to confirm the existence of this need and the ways in which it is established (Echterhoff et al., 2005; Echterhoff et al., 2008). However, while the theory itself makes reference to social relational and epistemic motives (Higgins, 2016), the current study borrows its

measure from Hennes and colleagues (2012); a measure that accounts for relational needs. Therefore, future studies should employ measures that asses both epistemic and social relational needs. Kruglanski and colleagues (2002) examined epistemic needs in relation to shared reality. Yet, this was done in isolation and so, can also not adequately account for both aspects. Alternatively, another social cognition theory that refers to shared beliefs at the societal level (Bar-Tal, 2000) might be more effective in explaining shared reality and its effects on the perceptions of consensus when investigating groups.

Furthermore, it was suggested that participants may have interpreted the items on the shared reality scale as questions regarding individualism rather than the need for shared reality within a group. Especially, the phrasing of the first two items ("I prefer to have my unique understanding of the world", "I don't like viewing the world in the same way as everyone around me does") could have been misunderstood as tapping into individualism. The scale was reported to have a Cronbach alpha of .67 and this value lowered to .64 in this sample. According to George and Mallery (2003) likert scales should satisfy a minimum reliability score of .70 to be considered as acceptable. Therefore, issues with the scale's reliability may have contributed to the outcome of results. Additionally, Kruglanski and colleagues (2006) suggested that shared reality provided by the group should be inferred from consensus. Even though, shared reality correlated with perceived in-group and generalized consensus beliefs, this relationship was qualified by a small effect size (Cohen, 1992). The relative effect size may also be a support for the scale's reduced reliability.

Previous studies found that people tend to perceive in-group members in a way more similar to themselves (Robbins & Krueger, 2005; Kruglanski et al., 2002). In the present study when the effect of collective narcissism was controlled for, the influence of non-narcissistic in-group positivity predicted a similar pattern. Non-narcissistic

identification predicted more consensual beliefs within the group and these beliefs seemed to be generalized. Although the results contradicted with the hypotheses, entitativity which posits if a group is a meaningful concept for the individuals (Correl & Park, 2005; Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000) might have a role in the relationship between non-narcissistic in-group positivity and perceived consensus. It was suggested that perceiving the in-group as more entitative results in greater perceptions of consensus and homogeneity (Correl & Park, 2005). Possibly, non-narcissistic in-group positivity might associate with perceiving the in-group more entitative, which in return, might have increased consensual beliefs. Moreover, in terms of intergroup processes, Yzerbyt et al. (2000) proposed that entitative groups provide self-efficacy for individuals, without necessitating engagement in outgroup hostility. Bearing in mind that non-narcissistic in-group positivity is tolerant and immune to threats toward in-group's image (Cichocka, 2016), future studies should investigate the effect of perceptions of entitativity on consensus beliefs and secure in-group positivity.

Although Stern et al. (2014) and Karasawa (2003) showed that the consensus effect was limited to in-group members, the present study's findings added that non-narcissistic in-group positivity also positively predicted perceived outgroup consensus. Participants indicated that people from other nationalities might have, to a certain extent, responded to the questionnaires in a similar manner. The reason for this might be linked to the sample approached in this study. Particularly, the sample consisted of undergraduate students at University of Kent which is a diverse and multicultural institution. Hence, prior contact with various outgroups on the basis of national identification could have affected the outcome of the results. There are studies which showed that social contact increased perspective taking, i.e. understanding the viewpoint of the other groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) and perceptions of outgroup

variability (Turner, Crisp, & Lambert, 2007; Voci & Hewstone, 2003). Therefore, participants' prior contact might have a role in the relationship between non-narcissistic in-group positivity and perceived out-group consensus beliefs. Future studies which control for intergroup contact might be more informative about the nature of this relationship.

The direction of the relationship between collective narcissism and consensus beliefs was negative when it was controlled for the identification. However it was not a significant predictor for none of the consensus perceptions. To our knowledge, there are no studies to date that have specifically investigated the role of defensive in-group positivity on consensus. On the individual level, it was found that participants with defensive self-esteem used consensus as a compensatory mechanism when they were exposed to threat (McGregor et al., 2005). The negative and non-significant results might suggest that increased estimations of consensus might be limited to perceptions of threat. On the group level, Jackson and Smith (1999) found that insecure identification predicted perceptions of a more homogeneous in-group. While the prediction of this study was in line with the previous findings, conceptualizations of insecure identification and collective narcissism did not precisely tap on the same constructs (cf. Jackson & Smith, 1999; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). It was expected that collective narcissism as a defensive dimension of in-group positivity would predict higher perceived consensus because it related positively to right wing authoritarianism which posits one's adherence to group norms and cohesion (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). However, it was also revealed that collective narcissism was associated with ambivalent attitudes toward the in-group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This doubt about the in-group might have had a negative impact on perceived consensus beliefs. Therefore,

collective narcissism as marked by defensive in-group positivity might indicate lesser consensus perceptions.

Alternatively, it is also plausible that people high in collective narcissism justify the lack of consensus within the in-group due to perceptions of themselves being more highly representative of the group as compared to others. Due to their perceptions about them being the "unique" members of the in-group, they may think that other members cannot think or feel about the in-group as they do. Because the findings of the present study were not significant and literature findings did not give a clear clue about how collective narcissism influence group-based cognitions, this relationship needs further investigation.

The current study did not focus on the outgroup hostility; however, it was revealed that manipulated consensual affirmation about the in-group increased favourable attitudes toward out-groups (McGregor, Haji, & Khan, 2008; Study 2; Villicana, Rivera, & Garcia, 2017; Study 3). Although perceived in-group homogeneity -as an indicator of consensus beliefs- was found to decrease liking outgroups (Kruglanski et al., 2002), studies that examine defensive and secure in-group positivity found that the latter dimension was more constructive toward outgroups (Cichocka, 2016). Despite findings of this study not being significant, considering the findings mentioned above, defensive nature of collective narcissism might be a result of lack of perceived consensus.

Using university students as participants and implementing a correlational design are the weak parts of this study. Peterson (2001) suggested that students collecting the data from university students can cause obtaining homogeneous responses and it might minimize or mask the existing relationships. For example, in this study, participants' scores of collective narcissism ($M$= 3.17) and need for shared reality

scores ($M$= 3.03) was lower than the mid-point of the scales. In this case, it is plausible to think that the participants as undergraduate psychology students might have given the homogeneous and low end answers for the collective narcissism and need for shared reality scales. Hence, conducting the research with a different adult sample might provide more heterogeneous responses which might be more explanatory about the relationships between the proposed variables. Furthermore, the correlational design of the study restricts to drive causal relationships.

**Conclusion**

In summation, the current study is one of the early attempts after Cichocka et al (in press) which proposes motivations for defensive and secure in-group positivity. It aimed to use social cognition in order to understand defensive and secure in-group positivity, and expand its literature beyond outgroup derogation. However, the data showed that there was a lack of relationship between these variables. Hence, considering the possible explanations in the discussion, this need should be operationalized and examined more carefully.

In terms of relationship between in-group positivity and consensus beliefs, the data suggested an opposite trend unlike the proposed hypothesis. The findings of this research suggested that the relationship between non-narcissistic in-group positivity, collective narcissism and consensus beliefs might be more complicated than the apparent links. The role of defensive and secure in-group positivity in explaining perceptions about in-group (i.e. consensus) is relatively understudied. Besides the possible explanations and suggestions earlier, further studies that include group entitativity or threat are needed to understand this relationship clearly. Lastly, consensual beliefs or in-group homogeneity may also have some positive effects on the intergroup relations and this possibility should be tested in later studies.

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# Appendix A

Below is the email received from the ethics committee which approves the current study.

**Ethical approval**

Date: 11.29.2016

Your application: "An Investigation on the Social World Evaluations" has been fully approved by the review committee panel with an Ethics ID of 201614804443604189. The application will expire and may require renewing at this date: 29-11-18.

Comments in relation to your application at any time via the link below:

Supervisory approval feedback

I approve

You can view your application at any time via the link below:

https://psych-ethics.kent.ac.uk/application/view/4189

Psychology Ethics team

**Study Information**

School of Psychology
Keynes College
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NP

## Study Information Sheet

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title of Project:** | An Investigation on the Social World Evaluations | **Ethics Approval Number:** | 201614804443604189 |

**Aims of the Study:** This study is designed to learn about your opinions about the social world.

**Eligibility Requirements:** Students who are 18 or above 18 are invited to participate in this study.

**What you will need to do and time commitment:** If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete several questionnaires during this study. The study will take around 10 minutes.

**Risks/Discomforts involved in participating:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part. If you do not wish to take part you do not have to give a reason. Similarly, if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw any time during the study if you change your mind. The study is not expected to produce any discomfort for the participants.

**Confidentiality of your data**: Participation in this study guarantees confidentiality of the information you provide in line with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Only researchers involved in the study and, if required, the body funding will be authorized to access the data. We will not ask you to write your name on study materials. Once the data is analyzed a report of the findings may be submitted for publication. Only broad trends will be reported and it will not be possible to identify any individual. A summary of the results will be available from the researcher on request.

**Details of any payments/RPS credits (*must be approved by ethics committee)***

Remember that participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Even after you agree to participate and begin the study, you are still free to withdraw at any time and for any reason. You will get 1 credit if you successfully complete the study.

If you would like a copy of this consent form to keep, please ask the researcher. If you have any complaints or concerns about this research, you can direct these, in writing, to the Chair of the Psychology Research Ethics Committee by email at: psychethics@kent.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can contact us by post at: Ethics Committee Chair, School of Psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NP.

**Informed Consent**

School of Psychology
Keynes College
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NP

## RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT FORM

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title of Project:** | An Investigation on the Social World Evaluations | **Ethics Approval Number:** | 201614804443604189 |

Please read the following statements and, if you agree, initial the corresponding box to confirm agreement:

| | Initials |
|---|---|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. | |
| I understand that my data will be treated confidentially and any publication resulting from this work will report only data that does **not** identify me. | |
| I freely agree to participate in this study. | |

If you would like a copy of this consent form to keep, please ask the researcher. If you have any complaints or concerns about this research, you can direct these, in writing, to the Chair of the Psychology Research Ethics Committee by email at: psychethics@kent.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can contact us by post at: Ethics Committee Chair, School of Psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NP.

Signatures:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant (block capitals) | Date | Signature |
| Researcher (block capitals) | 28-11-2016<br>Date | Signature |

**Debrief**

This study aims to determine how the need for shared reality is linked to different types of in-group identification and perceived consensus within a group.It is known that people need to have a sense of shared reality with the other members of their social groups. Having a sense of shared reality leads people to believe that other members of the group think in the same way as they do. This concept is defined as consensus. People may both differ in terms of their need for shared reality and their identifications with groups. We will examine whether specific identifications (narcissistic vs. non-narcissistic) with the groups may be differently associated with the need for shared reality and result in having different opinions about perceived consensus. For this this study, national groups are chosen as groups with which people usually identify themselves. First, you answered the questions about need for shared reality. Second, identification types with groups were assessed with two different questionnaires which you answered randomly. In order to learn your opinions about consensus we asked you to make an estimation about other participants answers at the end of the study.
Please contact researcher if you have further questions about this study:
ie51@kent.ac.uk
Thank you for your co-operation

**Demographics**

1. How old are you?

_____

2. What is your gender?

_____

3. Where were you born?

_____

4. What is your nationality?

_____

Appendix B

**Shared Reality Scale**

Please indicate to what extent the following questions apply to you.

1-completely disagree

2-disagree

3-somewhat disagree

4-neither agree nor disagree

5-somewhat agree

6-agree

7-completely agree

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I prefer to have my own unique understanding of the world. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I don't like viewing the world in the same way as everyone around me does. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I do not find it necessary to agree about how the world works with others who generally have similar beliefs as me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix C

**Collective Narcissism Scale**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement

1-totally disagree

2-disagree

3-somewhat disagree

4-neither agree nor disagree

5-somewhat agree

6-agree

7-totally agree

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I wish other nations would more quickly recognize authority of my nation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| My nation deserves special treatment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I will never be satisfied until my nation gets all it deserves. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I insist upon my nation getting the respect that is due to it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| It really makes me angry when others criticize my nation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| If my nation had a major say in the world, the world would be a much better place. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I do not get upset when people do not notice achievements of my nation.* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my nation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| The true worth of my nation is often misunderstood. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix D

**Three-Factor Identity Scale**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1-strongly disagree

2-disagree

3-somewhat disagree

4-neither agree nor disagree

5-somewhat agree

6-agree

7-strongly agree

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have a lot in common with other members of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I feel strong ties to other members of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I find it difficult to form a bond with other members of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other members of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I often think about the fact that I am a member of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Overall, being a member of my national group has very little to do with how I feel about myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| In general, being a member of my national group is an important part of my self-image | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| The fact that I am a member of my national group rarely enters my mind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| In general, I'm glad to be a member of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I often regret that I am a member of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I don't feel good about being a member of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a member of my national group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix E

**Perceived Consensus Scale**

(Note that participants used a slider when indicating their answers)

Now we would like you to estimate how other participants of this study might have responded to the questions about nationality.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What percent of participants of your nationality responded similarly to the questions about nationality as you did? | | | | | | | | | |
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 100% |
| 2.What percent of participants overall responded similarly to the questions about nationality as you did? | | | | | | | | | |
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 100% |
| 3.What percent of participants of nationalities different to yours responded to the questions about nationality similarly to one another? | | | | | | | | | |
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 100% |