

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Too great to be guilty? Individuals high in collective narcissism demand closure regarding the past to attenuate collective guilt

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## Abstract

While the Holocaust is widely regarded by Germans as one of the worst human atrocities, they differ in their readiness to express collective guilt or, in contrast, in their demand to close this chapter of history. We propose that such a demand for historical closure (HC) is particularly pronounced among individuals high in collective narcissism, and is systematically related to reduced collective guilt. Across three studies ( $N = 1,383$ ), collective narcissism was significantly related to demand for HC, even when controlling for national identification and national pride. Moreover, collective narcissism was associated with reduced guilt only via demand for HC, but not via the defensive strategies of moral delegitimization of the victims or demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering. Yet collective narcissism was associated via all three defensive strategies with fewer actual donations to support Holocaust survivors. We discuss how demanding HC helps group members to shield their ingroup from its negative past, thus alleviating aversive feelings of collective guilt.

## KEYWORDS

collective guilt, collective narcissism, historical closure, historical defensiveness, ingroup positivity

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

*[...] the perpetual dealing with the past as a task of permanent atonement for the society paralyzes a nation!*

Franz Josef Strauß, 1986

*And this stupid policy of dealing with the past, it paralyzes us today even more than it did in Franz Josef Strauß' times. [...] we need a living culture of remembrance, which first and foremost brings us into contact with the great achievements of the ancestors.*

Björn Höcke, 2017

German politicians have phrased the demand for historical closure (HC) regarding the National Socialist past in ever new ways. Although there are more than 30 years between the quotes from former chancellor candidate Franz Josef Strauß (1986, as cited in Hofmann, 1986)<sup>1</sup> and today's right-wing politician Björn Höcke (2017, as cited in Nowotny, 2017)<sup>2</sup>, the core message remains the same: it is time to draw a *Schlussstrich* (thick line) between contemporary Germany and Nazi Germany. A central motivation for these calls for HC seems to be the desire to avoid collective guilt. That is a group-based emotion experienced when one's ingroup has illegitimately harmed another group

<sup>1</sup> Original German quote: "[...] die ewige Vergangenheitsbewältigung als gesellschaftliche Dauerbüßeraufgabe lähmt ein Volk!" (as cited in Hofmann, 1986)

<sup>2</sup> Original German quote: "Und diese dämliche Bewältigungspolitik, die lähmt uns heute noch viel mehr als zu Franz Josef Strauß' Zeiten. [...] wir brauchen eine lebendige Erinnerungskultur, die uns vor allen Dingen und zuallererst mit den großartigen Leistungen der Altvorderen in Berührung bringt." (as cited in Nowotny, 2017)

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(Doosje et al., 1998). Collective guilt is highly aversive and poses a major threat to the ingroup image (Branscombe et al., 1999). Particularly group members who identify strongly with their group therefore tend to engage in a variety of strategies to avoid collective guilt (Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

Demanding HC by denying the relevance of further engagement with the past may serve as a particularly powerful strategy to reduce collective guilt. By claiming that the past is now outdated, it becomes easier to morally disengage (Bandura, 1999), to distance the ingroup from the moral and practical implications of past harmful acts (Jeong & Vollhardt, 2021), or to question public representations of group history (Hilton & Liu, 2017). In this paper, we argue that collective narcissism—a form of defensive ingroup positivity (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009)—is connected to low collective guilt via demand for HC. We further argue that demand for HC is associated with collective narcissism in particular and not with all types of ingroup positivity. Moreover, we examine whether demand for HC mediates the association between collective narcissism and collective guilt, controlling additionally for two other defensive strategies as mediators: moral delegitimization of victims (Bandura, 1999; Opatow, 1990) and the demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering (Noor et al., 2012; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). We test our contentions across three studies within the context of Germans' willingness to accept collective guilt for the Holocaust.

## 2 | NARCISSISTIC INGROUP POSITIVITY AND COLLECTIVE GUILT

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a relevant part of people's sense of self is derived from the groups to which they perceive themselves as belonging. As such, group members are motivated to see their group in a positive light. The present-day social identity of groups is considerably influenced by historical events and their representation (Liu & Hilton, 2005). An instance of historical intergroup harm committed can pose a major threat to the group identity (Branscombe et al., 1999), and lead to aversive feelings of collective guilt (Doosje et al., 1998; Imhoff et al., 2013). In particular, individuals who identify strongly with their ingroup (Klein et al., 2011) tend to downplay the relevance of such a past, thereby investing considerable mental resources (Sharvit et al., 2015), to protect their social identity and minimize feelings of group-based guilt. Empirical studies support the relationship between different types of ingroup identification (in the present article more broadly referred to as *ingroup positivity*) and reduced collective guilt in various historical contexts, including Australia (McGarty et al., 2005), the Netherlands (Zebel et al., 2007), and Germany (Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006). Yet, a minimum level of group identification seems necessary to experience collective guilt (Klein et al., 2011).

We argue, like others (e.g., Marchlewska et al., 2020), that it is not ingroup positivity per se but rather an overly positive but fragile view of the ingroup that is related to defensive motivations. Expanding the concept of individual narcissism to the intergroup level, collective narcissism describes an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the ingroup's greatness but one that is fragile and demands constant

validation (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Hence, collective narcissism is associated with a strong need for constant affirmation of the overly positive ingroup image, coupled with a pronounced need to defend the ingroup against any criticism (Cichocka, 2016). In contrast with collective narcissism (i.e., narcissistic or defensive ingroup positivity),<sup>3</sup> non-narcissistic or secure ingroup positivity describes an unpretentious investment in the group which is independent of praise by others. Thus, secure ingroup positivity lacks the defensive motivation that is typical of collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013). As such, it can be expressed in a confidently held positive perception of the ingroup, including an uninflated sense of ingroup identification or pride resulting from a realistic evaluation of the ingroup's strengths (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2019). Against this backdrop, ingroup threats are expected to fuel defensive reactions, particularly in individuals high in collective narcissism but not in individuals with a non-narcissistic, secure ingroup positivity. However, it is important to note that even relatively secure types of ingroup positivity (e.g., genuine ingroup identification or pride) may contain defensive components. Thus, the effects of secure (as opposed to narcissistic) ingroup positivity should be particularly apparent when controlling for shared variance with collective narcissism, thus capturing defensive components in rather secure types of ingroup positivity (e.g., Marchlewska et al., 2020).

Research on individual narcissism suggests that narcissists in particular tend to distance themselves from memories of a self-threatening past (Marchlewska & Cichocka, 2017). Specifically, individual narcissism (but not genuine or secure self-esteem) significantly predicted third-person perspective (i.e., a distancing strategy that helps to disentangle the past from the present self; Sutin & Robins, 2008) when recalling self-threatening, shameful situations but not self-boosting situations. Although collective and individual narcissism operate on different levels (self-image vs ingroup image) and individual narcissism is not necessarily accompanied by high scores in collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2019), both concepts are marked by pronounced defensiveness and attempts to maintain a positive self-image (individual narcissism) or group-image (collective narcissism). Considering these functional similarities in defensive responses to threats (Cichocka, 2016), it seems plausible that whereas individual narcissism (but not secure self-esteem) may reinforce defensive reactions toward a shameful individual past, collective narcissism (but not secure ingroup positivity) may lead to defensive reactions toward a guilt-inducing group past. So far there has been little research that has brought together collective narcissism and collective guilt (e.g., Imhoff, 2010a). However, because the ingroup's involvement in historical wrongdoing can pose a powerful threat to the positive group image (Branscombe et al., 1999), we argue that individuals high in collective narcissism should be particularly motivated to react defensively toward reminders of the ingroup's perpetrator past, thereby alleviating feelings of collective guilt.

<sup>3</sup> For theoretical clarification, it is important to emphasize that collective narcissistic ingroup positivity is not unconditional. Individuals high in collective narcissism may also have negative attitudes toward ingroup members, for example, toward those who criticize the ingroup (e.g., Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020).

### 3 | CLOSING OFF THE PAST: THE DEMAND TO DRAW A LINE UNDER AN AVERSIVE PERPETRATOR PAST

A crucial means by which group members can shield their ingroup image is by demanding HC—the call to draw a line under the ingroup's perpetrator history (Imhoff, 2010b). Hanke et al. (2013) define HC as “an attitude toward the past and its relevance to the present and future” (p. 289). Specifically, demanding HC distances today's group members from past ingroup transgressions by negating their continued relevance and the legitimacy to further engage with them. Thus, demand for HC is not merely a call for silencing (Klar & Bilewicz, 2017) public discourse about the past. Rather, by claiming that the past is no longer relevant, demand for HC removes the basis for the need for public discussions about the past. As such, claiming HC has been conceptualized as an *emotion-regulation strategy* (Bilewicz, 2016) that may help members of former perpetrator groups to downregulate the unpleasant feeling of collective guilt (Doosje et al., 1998). This conceptualization resonates with the long-standing view of demand for HC as a central expression of *defensiveness* against the aversive feeling of guilt resulting from past ingroup perpetration (e.g., Adorno, 1955, 1963; Ahlheim & Heger, 2002; Rensmann, 1998, 2004). The relationship between endorsing HC and reduced collective guilt can be explained by several different mechanisms. Examining the specific contributions of each mechanism is beyond the scope of the present study but it is important to note that they make similar predictions.

Achieving HC may serve to subjectively push the past away. According to Wilson and Ross (2003), construals of events can shift depending on whether those events subjectively *feel* close or far away in time from the current moment. Building on this, Peetz and colleagues (2010) showed that, as the perceived distance between the present and past ingroup harmdoing increased, the acceptance of collective guilt decreased. Figueiredo et al. (2015) demonstrated that perceiving ingroup wrongdoings as temporally distant allowed individuals to downregulate ingroup-directed negative emotions and reduced the willingness to compensate the victims. Here we assess another way that time might be used to undermine collective guilt—through demanding HC. By closing off the past to the present, group members can still acknowledge the ingroup's responsibility for past wrongs, whilst shielding contemporary group members from collective guilt.

Besides allowing the perpetrator past to be shifted away in temporal space, HC can also serve to distance the ingroup symbolically from the past by denying the ongoing relevance of the misconduct committed and any continuing moral responsibility that might justify the experience of collective guilt. Zimmermann et al. (2011) differentiated between causal responsibility (i.e., acceptance that the ingroup has caused suffering) and moral responsibility (i.e., a sociomoral norm implying that the consequences of past transgressions are still important and need to be addressed). In particular, the latter type of responsibility might be challenged by demanding HC: If the past is considered irrelevant to the present (a core belief of HC), the foundation for the sociomoral norm to address this past in the present is withdrawn. Indeed, Zimmermann et al. (2011) found that the perceived relevance

of a harmful past to the present has a substantial influence on the acceptance of the ingroup's moral responsibility. Moral responsibility, in turn, has been theorized to constitute a crucial predecessor of collective guilt (Wohl et al., 2006), and was empirically found to mediate the relationship between collective guilt and victim compensation (Zimmermann et al., 2011). Imhoff et al. (2013) further demonstrated that when the past was perceived as having little relevance to the present, acceptance of collective guilt was reduced. Thus, drawing a line under the history and denying its ongoing relevance for present times may shield the ingroup against its own negative past, thereby undermining collective guilt.

One of the contexts that can be perceived as particularly central to the analysis of historical defensiveness and collective guilt dynamics is Germany (Rensmann, 2004). In Germany, denying the continuing relevance to further deal with the atrocities of the Third Reich has been a topic of heated public debate (Brumlik et al., 2004). Although calls for closure on German Nazi past have met with strong political opposition and were supported almost exclusively by politicians within the right-wing spectrum (Sturm, 2019), population-representative surveys show that a stable proportion of German respondents agree with the statement that Germans “should no longer talk so much about the persecution of the Jews, but finally draw a line under the past” (60% in 1991, 58% in 2008, 55% in 2013; see Bertelsmann Foundation, 2015 p. 25). This agreement was particularly high among individuals with political preferences within the right-wing populist spectrum (80%; Hilmer, 2020). As the collective narcissistic desire to maintain a positive ingroup image might be particularly prevalent within the right-wing populist spectrum (Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2021), it might be collective narcissism that drives this popularity of HC. Overall, it thus seems relevant to test whether collective narcissism is associated with enhanced demand for HC. However, we know of little empirical research that has systematically examined the specific link between individual differences in collective narcissism and demanding HC as well as further downstream consequences for collective guilt and victim compensation.

### 4 | PRESENT RESEARCH

Across three studies, we addressed the relationship between collective narcissism, the German demand to cease discussing the Holocaust, and collective guilt. Study 1 was designed to establish the basic link between collective narcissism and collective guilt via demand for HC. In Study 2, we tested whether demand for HC would mediate the relationship between collective narcissism and collective guilt, even when controlling for two additional defensive mechanisms (moral delegitimization of the victims and calling for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering). Moreover, in line with previous research (e.g., Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013), we sought to distinguish the unique effects of collective narcissism and rather secure types of ingroup positivity (genuine national identification and national pride) by accounting for their shared variance, and to manipulate the defensive reaction of collective

narcissists by introducing ingroup praise (vs criticism). Finally, Study 3 tested the proposed mediation model with regard to an ecologically valid outcome, namely donations to a social initiative that supports Holocaust victims. Pre-registrations of Study 2 and 3, anonymized data and analyses codes for all studies, and supplemental online materials (SOM) are available on our open science framework (OSF) project site accessible at <https://osf.io/d25zn/>.

#### 4.1 | A note on statistical “mediation”

Our theoretical reasoning rests on the notion that individual differences in collective narcissism reduce emotional experiences such as collective guilt via defensive mechanisms such as pushing the atrocities further back into the past. This is a unidirectional causal assumption that would lead to a clear prediction about statistical mediation. Statistical mediation is thus necessary but not sufficient for our theoretical consideration to be valid because it does not provide evidence for the assumed causal paths (Fiedler et al., 2011). We alert readers to this important caveat as the terminology of mediation (i.e., indirect or total “effects”), which we used for ease of comprehension, evokes a misunderstanding of implied causality. To be clear, our theoretical rationale implies mediation; an observed mediation does not imply that the rationale is true.

## 5 | STUDY 1

Study 1 was conducted as an initial test of the assumption that HC mediates the association between collective narcissism and acceptance of collective guilt. We hypothesized that group members should be especially likely to demand HC on the ingroup-threatening perpetrator past to the extent that they are high in collective narcissism. In line with previous research on historical defensiveness strategies in regulating collective guilt (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Imhoff et al., 2012; Swin & Miller, 1999), we also anticipated that a high demand for HC (i.e., an explication of defensiveness against a further confrontation with the perpetrator history) would be related to low levels of collective guilt.

### 5.1 | Method

#### 5.1.1 | Participants

A sample of 454 participants was recruited for an online survey on attitudes regarding German history. The study was advertised via online forums, a university mailing list, and websites providing links to participation in unpaid online surveys. Participants who were born outside Germany and raised in a family with recent migration background were excluded from analyses. The final sample thus consisted of 384 German citizens (69% of participants identified as women; 31% as men) with a mean age of  $M = 24.54$  years ( $SD = 8.54$ ; age ranging from 15 to 80).

#### 5.1.2 | Procedure and materials

Four items from the subscale on HC of the Secondary Antisemitism Scale by Imhoff (2010b) were used to measure the demand for closure regarding the Nazi era; e.g., “I am tired of hearing about the crimes against the Jews during the Holocaust over and over again”;  $\alpha = .89$ ;  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ . To assess the feeling of guilt in face of the German crimes against Jews, we used four items adapted from the Collective Guilt Acceptance Scale by Branscombe et al. (2004); e.g., “I feel guilty about the negative things the Germans did to the Jews in the past”;  $\alpha = .89$ ,  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ . Items on demand for HC and collective guilt were anchored at 1 (*fully disagree*) and 7 (*fully agree*). Finally, we included a German version of the nine-item Collective Narcissism Scale by Golec de Zavala et al. (2009); e.g., “Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of Germans”;  $\alpha = .86$ ;  $M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ . Scale anchors ranged from 1 (*fully disagree*) to 6 (*fully agree*).

### 5.2 | Results

Collective narcissism was significantly correlated with demand for HC ( $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and with collective guilt ( $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Demand for HC and collective guilt were also intercorrelated ( $r = -.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In all studies of the present paper, mediation analyses were conducted by means of path analyses using the R package “lavaan” (Rosseeel, 2012) and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals were calculated using 5,000 iterations as recommended by Preacher & Hayes (2008). The results of a simple mediation analysis of collective narcissism on collective guilt via demand for HC are reported in Table 1. In line with expectations, collective narcissism was related to claims for HC, which in turn were related to collective guilt. The indirect effect via demand for HC was also significant whereas the direct path between collective narcissism and collective guilt was not. Accompanied by a significant total effect, this pattern of results supported that the association between collective narcissism and collective guilt was fully mediated via demand for HC. In other words, individuals high in collective narcissism demanded more HC and in turn reported less collective guilt. Additional control analyses indicated that this mediation model remained stable, even when controlling for age and gender (see SOM A on our OSF project site).

### 5.3 | Discussion

The results of Study 1 were compatible with our hypothesis that Germans high in collective narcissism want to close the door on the image-threatening perpetrator past, with downstream consequences for collective guilt. These findings are in line with the perception of demanding HC as a protective strategy within the scope of historical defensiveness (Bilewicz, 2016). Furthermore, they support the long-standing assumption that demanding HC can help to regulate aversive feelings of collective guilt (Adorno, 1955; Rensmann, 1998). By linking these defensiveness dynamics to collective narcissism, the study



**TABLE 1** Results of a simple mediation analysis on collective guilt in Study 1

Predictor	Demand for HC		Collective guilt	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
Collective narcissism	0.50 (0.04)***	[0.42, 0.58]	−0.01 (0.05)	[−0.12, 0.9]
Demand for HC			−0.34 (0.06)***	[−0.46, −0.22]
Indirect effect				
via Demand for HC			−0.17 (0.04)***	[−0.24, −0.11]
Total effect			−0.18 (0.04)***	[−0.26, −0.10]

Note:  $N = 384$ ; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;  $R^2 = .28$  for demand for HC;  $R^2 = .12$  for collective guilt.

<sup>a</sup>For indirect and total effects the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals are reported (5,000 bootstrapping resamples).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

furthermore extends previous research on collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2019) and provides evidence for the so-far sparsely studied (Imhoff, 2010a) association of collective narcissism with collective emotions after historical transgressions.<sup>4</sup>

## 6 | STUDY 2

We aimed to replicate the pattern of associations found in Study 1, thereby delimiting the specific effect of demand for HC in reducing collective guilt. We therefore controlled for two other prominent defensive strategies: moral delegitimization of the victims and demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering (Bandura, 1999; Imhoff, 2010b; Noor et al., 2012; Opatow, 1990; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). The former mirrors the allegation that Jewish people perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust for dishonest, self-serving motives (Imhoff, 2010b). Thus, moral delegitimization of the victims can be seen as a strategy to question the legitimacy of the ongoing confrontation with Germany's perpetrator past by means of morally disqualifying this confrontation. The demand for recognition of the perpetrator ingroup's suffering may, on the one hand, reflect the need for moral restoration of the perpetrators, as victim status tends to be associated with higher morality than perpetration (Noor et al., 2012). On the other hand, it may reflect the desire to relegate confrontation with the suffering of the victim group to the background in favour of addressing the suffering of the perpetrator group. From this point of view, both moral delegitimization of victims and the call for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering could ultimately represent different justifications for the claim to finally close the chapter on Germany's Nazi past. Capturing the demand for HC could therefore reduce the associations of collective guilt with moral delegitimization of the victims and the demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering. Against this backdrop, we hypothesized that collective narcissism would lead to more collective guilt, mediated by demand for HC, even when controlling for potential mediating effects of moral delegitimization of the victims and calling for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering.

<sup>4</sup>We conducted another study (Study S1) with the aim of disentangling the effects of collective narcissism, ingroup attachment and glorification (Roccas et al., 2006). Indeed, only collective narcissism, but none of the other two ingroup positivity measures, was indirectly associated with collective guilt via demand for HC. However, the total effect of collective narcissism on collective guilt was not significant, potentially due to a suppressor effect caused by ingroup attachment and glorification (see SOM B for details).

We also aimed to narrow down the specific effect of collective narcissism relative to the effects of rather secure types of ingroup positivity. For this purpose, we controlled for national pride resulting from perceived strengths of the ingroup (Mussotter, 2018) and genuine national identification, reflecting the feeling of connectedness to one's ingroup (Sani et al., 2015). Although national identification and pride also include a positive evaluation of the ingroup, they are not expected to be associated with a marked need for constant affirmation of the special significance of the ingroup, as is the case with collective narcissism (Cichočka, 2016). Based on the reasoning that it is narcissistic but not secure ingroup positivity that drives defensive responses (e.g., Marchlewska et al. 2020), we tested whether demanding HC would be associated positively only with collective narcissism when controlling for the shared variance with national identification and pride.

Finally, we aimed to modify the extent of collective narcissistic defensive reactions. Prior research indicated that under ingroup praise (vs criticism), the association between collective narcissism and defensive reactions was significantly reduced (Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). In other words, praise seemed to buffer the extent of collective narcissistic defensiveness. Hence, we hypothesized that ingroup praise would function as a moderator to the extent that individuals high in collective narcissism demand less HC when confronted with ingroup praise (vs criticism). As we expected this interaction effect to be specific to collective narcissism and not primarily driven by variance components that overlap with the other ingroup positivity measures, we hypothesized that we would find a significant interaction of condition and collective narcissism even when controlling for the two-way interactions of condition and national identification as well as national pride. For exploratory purposes, we included a control group to see whether praise could be a buffer even in relation to a neutral condition.

## 6.1 | Method

### 6.1.1 | Participants

Golec de Zavala, Cichočka and Iskra-Golec (2013) found a local effect size of Cohen's  $f^2 = 0.03$  for the interaction effect of praise/criticism and collective narcissism on defensive intergroup hostility (see  $\Delta R^2$  for the two-way interaction in their Study 1; in their paper, in Study 1 the

smallest  $\Delta R^2$  for two-way interactions of condition and collective narcissism was found). A power analysis in G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that 258 participants were required to achieve a power of 80% for this interaction effect. As we also had a control group, we aimed to reach a total sample of  $N = 380$ . Due to a very fast online response rate, however, the survey was completed by 698 participants within the pre-registered time period for data collection. However, even when performing all analyses using only the first 380 participants, the results did not differ in statistical inferences from the present results.

The study was advertised as a study on attitudes toward German history via various social media forums and a university mailing list. In line with the pre-registered exclusion criteria, participants who indicated that they clicked randomly ( $n = 14$ ), outliers of extremely fast termination (relative speed index  $> 2.0$ ; Leiner, 2019;  $n = 8$ ), Jewish participants ( $n = 3$ ), as well as participants who spoke any other language than German at home, or participants who indicated that they were refugees ( $n = 78$ ) were excluded from analyses. The final sample thus comprised 595 participants (61% of participants identified as women, 38% as men, and 1% as gender diverse) with a mean age of  $M = 37.98$  years ( $SD = 15.37$ , age ranging from 18 to 88).

### 6.1.2 | Procedure and materials

We first assessed collective narcissism (same measure as that used in Study 1), genuine national identification (measured with four items by Sani et al. 2015; e.g., “I feel a sense of belonging to my country”), and national pride (captured with six items by Mussotter, 2018; e.g., “How proud are you of the social system in Germany?”). Subsequently, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three priming articles, followed by the manipulation checks. In the praise condition ( $n = 205$ ), participants read an article that emphasized Germany’s exemplary way of dealing with the Nazi past. Perceived success in dealing with the perpetrator past might highlight the ingroup’s moral growth in the aftermath of former transgressions and was found to enhance perceived ingroup morality (Kazarovytska et al., 2022). Conversely, in the criticism condition ( $n = 170$ ), Germany’s way of dealing with the past was introduced as deficient. A third group of participants ( $n = 220$ ) was assigned to a neutral condition including an article about an indigenous people (see our OSF project site for full articles). Two items were used to check manipulation efficacy: “The opinion about Germany in the presented newspaper article was ...” and “What feelings did the article you read trigger in you?” (1 = *very negative* to 5 = *very positive*).

Next, participants were directed to measures of defensive mechanisms, captured by different subscales of Imhoff’s (2010b) Secondary Antisemitism Scale. Demand for HC was measured by the five-items subscale on HC, moral delegitimization of the victims was measured by the four-items subscale on Instrumentalization of Remembrance (e.g., “The Jews exploit the memory of the Holocaust for their own benefit”), and demand for recognition of the perpetrator group’s suffering was measured by the three-items Generalization of The Victims subscale (e.g., “The Germans also had to suffer a lot during the Second World War”). Finally, collective guilt was measured by means of two items adapted from Study 1. Except for collective narcissism and national

identification (which ranged from 1 = *fully disagree* to 7 = *fully agree*) all other items had to be answered on a five-point Likert-scale anchored at 1 = *fully disagree/not proud at all* to 5 = *fully agree/very proud*. For exploratory purposes, we also measured Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), political orientation, and support for refugees.

## 6.2 | Results

### 6.2.1 | Descriptive statistics, mean differences, correlations, and manipulation check

Significant mean differences in the manipulation check questions confirmed that in the ingroup criticism condition ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), the opinion given about Germany was perceived to be less favourable than in the praise condition ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ),  $t(371) = 19.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.05$ . Moreover, participants felt less positive after reading the criticism article ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) in comparison with the praise article ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ )  $t(367) = 10.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.24$ . Further descriptive statistics, tests of mean differences, and correlations are given in Table 2. Except for the aforementioned differences in the manipulation check, there were no further significant group differences.

### 6.2.2 | Moderation analyses on demand for HC

To test our hypothesis that demand for HC is positively associated with collective narcissism, even when controlling for genuine national identification, and national pride, potentially moderated by ingroup praise, we performed a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Table 3). Collective narcissism, national identification, and national pride were centered prior to analyses, and the condition was dummy coded (two dummy-coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category). In line with our hypotheses, collective narcissism was significantly positively related to demand for HC, even when including national identification and pride (see Model 1). However, contrary to our hypotheses, there were no significant interaction effects with conditions (Model 2).

### 6.2.3 | Multiple mediation analyses on collective guilt

In a first step, we conducted a multiple mediation analysis, specifying collective narcissism as predictor, the defensive mechanisms (demand for HC, moral delegitimization, and perpetrator suffering) as mediators, and collective guilt as the outcome variable (Model 1). In a second step, we added national identification, national pride (both centered) and the two dummy-coded condition variables (criticism as reference category) as predictors (Model 2). In a third step, we also included the two-way interactions of ingroup positivity measures and conditions as predictors (Model 3). None of the interaction terms was significantly related to any of the defensive mechanisms or collective guilt (see SOM C for the results of Model 3).

**TABLE 2** Descriptive statistics, F-statistics of one-way ANOVAs, zero-order correlations, and reliabilities for variables in Study 2

Variables	Across Conditions		Control		Criticism		Praise		F(2, 592)	$\alpha$	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD								
(1) Collective narcissism	2.73	1.18	2.72	1.09	2.69	1.23	2.76	1.24	0.16	.88	-	-	-	-	-	-
(2) National identification	4.91	1.07	4.93	1.11	4.88	1.11	4.91	0.99	0.12	.82	.33***	-	-	-	-	-
(3) National pride	2.98	0.64	3.02	0.60	2.93	0.68	2.98	0.65	0.96	.58	.41***	.44***	-	-	-	-
(4) Demand for HC	2.20	1.24	2.19	1.22	2.27	1.31	2.16	1.20	0.36	.94	.64***	.21***	.20***	-	-	-
(5) Moral delegitimization	2.04	1.13	2.01	1.15	2.13	1.22	1.98	1.03	0.90	.92	.60***	.21***	.19***	.77***	-	-
(6) Perpetrator suffering	2.66	1.09	2.66	1.11	2.71	1.16	2.63	1.01	0.23	.82	.64***	.26***	.23***	.77***	.73***	-
(7) Collective guilt	2.26	1.20	2.29	1.23	2.30	1.22	2.18	1.13	0.58	.83	-.33***	-.11**	-.11**	-.50***	-.39***	-.43***

Note:  $N = 595$ .

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 3** Hierarchical multiple regression analyses on demand for HC in Study 2

Variable	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
<b>Model 1</b>				.41	.41
Constant	11.42*** (0.37)	[10.70, 12.14]	.07		
Collective narcissism	0.39*** (0.02)	[0.35, 0.43]	.66		
National identification	0.04 (0.05)	[-0.06, 0.14]	.03		
National pride	-0.13* (0.06)	[-0.24, -0.01]	-.08		
Condition: Praise <sup>a</sup>	-0.74 (0.49)	[-1.71, 0.24]	-.12		
Condition: Control <sup>a</sup>	-0.45 (0.49)	[-1.40, 0.51]	-.07		
<b>Model 2</b>				.41	.00
Constant	11.39*** (0.37)	[10.67, 12.11]	.06		
Collective narcissism	0.43*** (0.04)	[0.36, 0.50]	.74		
National identification	0.07 (0.10)	[-0.12, 0.26]	.05		
National pride	-0.27* (0.11)	[-0.48, -0.06]	-.17		
Condition: Praise <sup>a</sup>	-0.70 (0.50)	[-1.67, 0.27]	-.11		
Condition: Control <sup>a</sup>	-0.43 (0.49)	[-1.39, 0.53]	-.07		
Praise <sup>a</sup> × Collective narcissism	-0.06 (0.05)	[-0.16, 0.04]	-.10		
Control <sup>a</sup> × Collective narcissism	-0.07 (0.05)	[-0.17, 0.04]	-.12		
Praise <sup>a</sup> × National identification	-0.11 (0.13)	[-0.37, 0.16]	-.07		
Control <sup>a</sup> × National identification	-0.00 (0.13)	[-0.25, 0.24]	-.00		
Praise <sup>a</sup> × National pride	0.25 (0.14)	[-0.04, 0.53]	.15		
Control <sup>a</sup> × National pride	0.18 (0.15)	[-0.11, 0.48]	.11		

Note:  $N = 595$ ; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>Condition was dummy coded (two dummy coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

In Model 1 and 2 (Table 4, Figure 1), collective narcissism was positively associated with all three defensive mechanisms, but only via demand for HC indirectly related to collective guilt (significant indirect and total indirect effects). Significant total effects in absence of significant direct effects of collective narcissism on collective guilt in both models supported the assumption that individuals high in collective

narcissism expressed less collective guilt, fully mediated via demand for HC. Model 2 moreover revealed that, in contrast with collective narcissism, national pride was *negatively* associated with demand for HC and moral delegitimization. Furthermore, national pride was indirectly positively associated with collective guilt via demand for HC. Yet, the focal total effect of national pride was not significant, suggesting

TABLE 4 Results of a multiple mediation analysis on collective guilt in Study 2

Predictor	Demand for HC		Perpetrator suffering		Moral delegitimization		Collective guilt	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
<b>Model 1</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.37 (0.02)***	[0.34, 0.41]	0.20 (0.01)***	[0.18, 0.22]	0.25 (0.01)***	[0.23, 0.28]	0.01 (0.01)	[-0.02, 0.03]
Demand for HC							-0.17 (0.02)***	[-0.21, -0.14]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.09 (0.03)**	[-0.16, -0.02]
Moral delegitimization							0.01 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.06]
Indirect effects								
via Demand for HC							-0.06 (0.01)***	[-0.08, -0.05]
via Perpetrator suffering							-0.02 (0.01)	[-0.04, 0.00]
via Moral delegitimization							0.00 (0.01)	[-0.01, 0.02]
Total indirect effect							-0.08 (0.01)***	[-0.09, -0.07]
Total effect							-0.07 (0.01)***	[-0.09, -0.06]
<b>Model 2</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.39 (0.02)***	[0.35, 0.43]	0.20 (0.01)***	[0.18, 0.22]	0.26 (0.02)***	[0.23, 0.29]	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.02, 0.04]
National identification	0.04 (0.05)	[-0.06, 0.14]	0.06 (0.03)**	[0.01, 0.11]	0.05 (0.04)	[-0.03, 0.12]	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.05]
National pride	-0.13 (0.06)*	[-0.42, -0.01]	-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.11, 0.01]	-0.09 (0.05)*	[-0.18, -0.00]	-0.01 (0.03)	[-0.06, 0.04]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>	-0.74 (0.49)	[-1.70, 0.23]	-0.34 (0.26)	[-0.85, 0.17]	-0.76* (0.37)	[-1.50, -0.03]	-0.33 (0.21)	[-0.75, 0.09]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>	-0.45 (0.48)	[-1.40, 0.50]	-0.18 (0.26)	[-0.68, 0.33]	-0.47 (0.37)	[-1.19, 0.25]	-0.08 (0.21)	[-0.49, 0.34]
Demand for HC							-0.17 (0.02)***	[-0.21, -0.14]

(Continues)



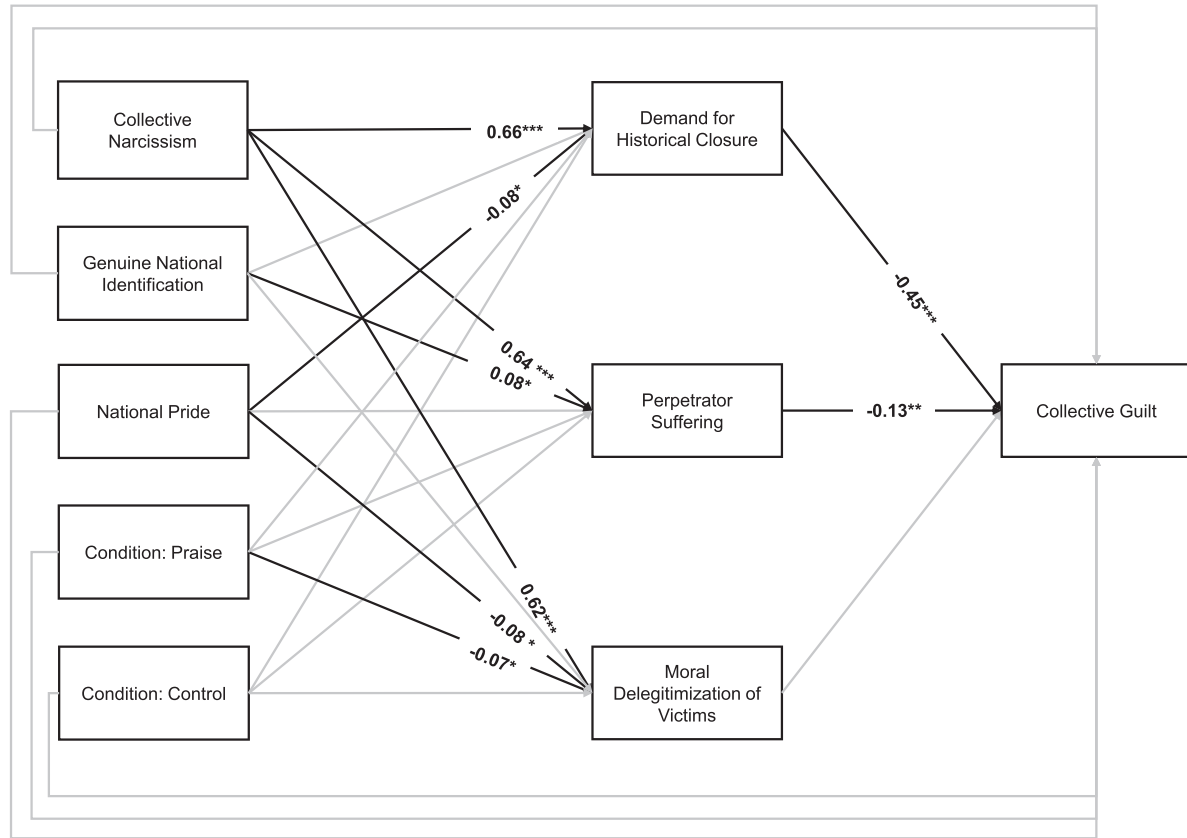
TABLE 4 (Continued)

Predictor	Demand for HC		Perpetrator suffering		Moral delegitimization		Collective guilt	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.09 (0.03)*	[-0.16, -0.02]
Moral delegitimization							0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.06]
Indirect effects								
Collective narcissism								
via Demand for HC							-0.07 (0.01)***	[-0.09, -0.05]
via Perpetrator suffering							-0.02 (0.01)	[-0.04, 0.00]
Total indirect effect							-0.08 (0.01)***	[-0.10, -0.07]
National identification								
via Perpetrator suffering							-0.01 (0.00)	[-0.02, 0.00]
Total indirect effect							-0.01 (0.00)	[-0.05, 0.02]
National pride								
via Demand for HC							0.02 (0.01)*	[0.00, 0.04]
Total indirect effect							0.03 (0.01)*	[0.00, 0.05]
Total effects								
Collective narcissism							-0.08 (0.01)***	[-0.09, -0.06]
National pride							0.02 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.08]

Note:  $N = 595$ ; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .41$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for demand for HC;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .41$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for perpetrator suffering;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .36$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for moral delegitimization;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .23$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for collective guilt.

<sup>a</sup>For indirect and total effects the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals are reported (5,000 bootstrapping resamples).

<sup>b</sup>Condition was dummy-coded (two dummy-coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category).  
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**FIGURE 1** Significant standardized path coefficients (completely standardized solution) of Model 2 on collective guilt in Study 2

Note:  $N = 595$ . \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

that national pride was overall not substantially related to guilt. Finally, the praise condition reduced moral delegitimization in comparison with the control condition. Multicollinearity diagnostics did not identify any problems in any of the models: All variance inflation factors (VIFs) were below 2.94 and all tolerances were above .35.

### 6.2.4 | Additional analyses in SOM

The presented analyses differ slightly from the pre-registered analyses that proposed to calculate the moderation models without the control group and to use a combined index of collective guilt and reparation intentions as the main outcome variable. However, during the review process we reached the conclusion that including the control group and focusing on collective guilt only (see SOM D for factor analyses) would be conceptually clearer. The pre-registered moderation (SOM E.1) and mediation models (SOM E.2) did not differ in statistical interference from the present results.

We also report an additional mediation model excluding national pride (to control for suppressor effects; SOM F.1), as well as an extended mediation model accounting for age, gender, RWA, and political orientation (to rule out the possibility that the association between collective narcissism and demanding HC was spurious and driven merely by an overlap with political ideology; SOM F.2). In both

of these control models, the association between collective narcissism and collective guilt via demand for HC remained stable. Finally, we tested our mediation model with regard to prosociality toward a group not related to the German perpetrator past (i.e., refugees; SOM G).

### 6.3 | Discussion

Study 2 replicated our finding that individuals with an overly positive but fragile view of their national group (i.e., collective narcissism) were more prone to demand HC and reported less collective guilt. Moreover, in line with our predictions, collective narcissism was indirectly related to collective guilt only via demanding HC but not via moral delegitimization of the victims and demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering (e.g., Bandura, 1999; Noor et al., 2012; Opatow, 1990). These results provide initial evidence for the particular importance of claims for HC, compared to certain other prominent strategies of historical defensiveness (Bilewicz, 2016), for the reduction of collective guilt among individuals high in collective narcissism.

While collective narcissism was positively associated with claims for HC, the association between national identification and demand for HC was reduced to non-significant, and the relationship between national pride and HC turned even significantly negative when accounting for

the shared variance with collective narcissism. The latter result is consistent with literature indicating that previously positive associations between secure ingroup positivity and defensive responses can reverse when controlling for the defensive component captured by collective narcissism (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019; Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Bilewicz, 2013). National pride was also indirectly positively associated with collective guilt when controlling for collective narcissism. However, the focal total effect of national pride on collective guilt was not significant. This suggests that national pride is less relevant than collective narcissism in explaining collective guilt for the ingroup's perpetrator past.

Contrary to our expectations, and deviating from findings on defensive intergroup hostility (Golec de Zavala, Cichočka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013), ingroup praise (vs criticism) could not attenuate the defensive potential of collective narcissism. Instead, praise led to less moral delegitimization than criticism, independent of the level of collective narcissism. The other defensive mechanisms were not affected by condition. This suggests that criticism of the ingroup's dealing with historical transgressions may elicit the specific defensive reaction of morally downgrading the victims of those transgressions, irrespective of the level of collective narcissism.

One explanation for the lack of an interaction effect could be that the manipulation was not strong enough to induce sufficient ingroup praise. Although the manipulation check was significant, it is important to note that both conditions were related to Germany's dealing with the Nazi past. Thus, both conditions made the Nazi crimes salient, or in other words, contained an implicit ingroup critique. Individuals high in collective narcissism are constantly looking for signs of insufficient appreciation of the ingroup (Golec de Zavala & Schatz, 2012). Accordingly, they might have been sensitive to this criticism, which ultimately may have collapsed a potential buffering effect of praise. Moreover, the confounding of the manipulation with the topic that HC is about, namely the German perpetrator past, may also have been responsible for the insignificant moderation effect. Hence, the next study introduced a praise condition that was not connected to the German Nazi past.

## 7 | STUDY 3

Study 3 aimed to replicate the previous findings and to extend them beyond self-reported collective guilt. We therefore introduced a real-world behavioural measure of willingness to compensate Holocaust victims: donations to a social organization that supports Holocaust survivors and their families. A resource-allocation task represents a situation that people might encounter outside a laboratory setting, thus enhancing the ecological validity of the present research. Study 3 also introduced an arguably more powerful manipulation of ingroup praise, which was unrelated to the context of the Nazi era. This manipulation was based on the *Best Countries Report* of 2016 (Wharton University of Pennsylvania, 2016), which praised Germany on numerous social and political levels, including Germany's economic success and mediating role in international conflicts. Like in Study 2, we hypothesized that ingroup praise would function as a moderator to the extent that indi-

viduals high in collective narcissism express less demand for HC when confronted with ingroup praise (vs criticism). Replicating Study 2, we included national identification and national pride in a complementary fashion to collective narcissism, expecting that only collective narcissism would significantly interact with the experimental condition. Similar to Study 2, we also controlled for potential mediating effects of moral delegitimization of the victims and demand for recognition of the perpetrator group's suffering.

## 7.1 | Method

### 7.1.1 | Participants

Based on the same power considerations as in Study 2, we needed 380 participants to detect an interaction effect of condition and collective narcissism. We knew from Study 2 that we could expect a considerable dropout due to our exclusion criteria, so we aimed for a total of  $N = 430$  participants to rebalance for the dropout. A sample of 438 participants was recruited for a study on political issues in Germany via various social media platforms and a website hosting links to unpaid online surveys. The participants had the chance to take part in a raffle of 10 online vouchers worth 20 euros. According to our pre-registered exclusion criteria, 34 participants were excluded from the analyses:  $n = 4$  stated that they clicked at random;  $n = 6$  were excluded due to extremely fast termination of the study (relative speed index  $> 2.0$ ; Leiner, 2019);  $n = 2$  were Jewish; and  $n = 22$  indicated that they spoke a language other than German at home or that they were refugees. This resulted in a final sample of 404 participants with a mean age of  $M = 34.61$  years ( $SD = 14.88$ , age ranging from 17 to 99). There were more respondents who identified as women (64%) than as men (35%) or as gender diverse (1%).

### 7.1.2 | Procedure and materials

First, collective narcissism, national identification, and national pride were assessed. Participants were subsequently randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. The experimental conditions were based on slightly modified real newspaper articles about the *Best Countries Reports 2016* and *2017*, conducted by the News & World Report, BAV Consulting and the University of Pennsylvania (see Wharton University of Pennsylvania, 2016, 2017). These reports evaluated 60 to 80 countries across a wide range of criteria including global power, economic influence, and quality of life. In 2016, Germany was ranked as "the best country in the world" but in 2017 Germany dropped to fourth place. Participants in the *praise* condition ( $n = 130$ ) thus read an article on the Best Countries Report of 2016, which highlighted Germany's global magnificence. Participants in the *criticism* condition ( $n = 134$ ) read an article on the report of 2017, which focused on Germany's loss of power and global reputation. In the control condition ( $n = 140$ ), participants read a neutral report about the lives of an indigenous people (full articles are available on our OSF project site). After reading the article and answering the manipulation check (same

as in Study 2 but this time feelings were measured also in the control condition), all participants completed items on the three defensive mechanisms, demand for HC, moral delegitimization and perpetrator suffering. To hide the purpose of the study, these were presented in a randomized order, mixed with several filler items relating to the social shaping of the future (e.g., "Innovations play a major role in the future of Germany").

Afterwards participants were informed that before the last demographic questions were asked they would have the opportunity to participate in a raffle (10 times 20 euros), of which an amount could be donated to one of four social organizations (all four currently active in Germany). The goals and activities of each of the following four organizations were presented in short texts in randomized order: *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste* (which supports Holocaust victims and their families and promotes education on the Shoah), *Bund der Kriegsblinden Deutschlands e.V.* (which supports German people blinded by war), *Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe e.V.* (which supports mentally disabled people in Germany), *Seelefon* (which offers culturally sensitive advice and support for refugees). Participants were asked to indicate explicitly how much money they want to donate to each of the four organizations and how much money they would like to keep for themselves in case they win, each on a scale from 0 to 20 euros. Donations were encouraged by informing the participants that each euro donated will be doubled by the institution of the investigators. The percentage share of donations to the social organization that supports Holocaust survivors was used as the main dependent variable. Finally, participants were directed to the sociodemographic section. This section also included the items on collective guilt.

The two manipulation check items, measures of collective narcissism, national identification, national pride, demand for HC, moral delegitimization, perpetrator suffering and collective guilt were the same as those used in Study 2. All items ranged from 1 (*fully disagree/not proud at all*) to 7 (*fully agree/very proud*). For exploratory purposes, we also assessed RWA, political orientation, Social dominance orientation (SDO), national attachment, glorification, as well as anticipated emotional distress and intentions to contact Jewish or Muslim people.

## 7.2 | Results

### 7.2.1 | Descriptive statistics, mean differences, correlations, and manipulation check

The manipulation check indicated that, in the criticism condition ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ), the opinion expressed about Germany was rated significantly less positive than in the praise condition ( $M = 6.43$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ),  $t(261) = 21.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.67$ . In terms of feelings that the article triggered, an ANOVA and Bonferroni-Holm corrected post-hoc tests indicated that the criticism article elicited significantly fewer positive feelings ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) than the praise article ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ),  $F(2,401) = 43.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $t(242) = 5.50$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.68$ , and the control article ( $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(269) = 9.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.19$ . The control article also triggered significantly more positive

feelings than the praise article,  $t(260) = 3.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.41$ . Further descriptive statistics, mean differences, and intercorrelations among study variables are given in Table 5.

### 7.2.2 | Moderation analyses on demand for HC

In a similar way as in Study 2, we performed a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Table 6). Out of the three ingroup positivity measures, collective narcissism was the only one significantly positively related to demand for HC (see Model 1). However, contrary to our predictions, there was no significant interaction effect of collective narcissism with the praise condition (Model 2). The only significant interaction effect was found for collective narcissism and the control condition.

### 7.2.3 | Multiple mediation analyses on donations in support of Holocaust victims

In the first step, we conducted a multiple mediation analysis of collective narcissism on percentage of money donated in support of Holocaust victims via all three defensive mechanisms (Model 1). In the second step, we added the two other types of ingroup positivity (centered) and the dummy-coded condition variables (criticism as reference category) as further predictors (Model 2). In line with the pre-registration, participants who kept the entire 20 euros for themselves were not included in the corresponding analyses, which resulted in a sample of  $N = 321$ . A third model also included the two-way interactions between experimental conditions and the three types of ingroup positivity as predictors (Model 3). However, none of the interactions was significantly related to any of the defensive mechanisms or donations (see SOM H for the results of Model 3).

In Models 1 and 2 (Table 7, Figure 2), collective narcissism was positively related to the three defensive mechanisms. Yet, none of the three defensive mechanisms was significantly related to donations. Thus, while all three mechanisms were significantly negatively associated with donations in support of Holocaust victims when looking at zero-order correlations (see Table 5), none of them remained significantly associated with donations when controlling for their shared variance in the multiple mediation model. Accordingly, there were no significant focal indirect effects. However, the total indirect effect via all three defensive mechanisms and the total effect of collective narcissism on donations were significant in both models. The direct effect was not significant in either model, suggesting that collective narcissism in both models was related to donations fully mediated via all three defensive mechanisms.

Model 2 further revealed that the praise condition significantly enhanced claims for HC and the moral delegitimization of the victims in comparison with the criticism condition. The control condition also significantly enhanced claims for HC compared to the criticism condition. Yet, none of the two conditions had indirect or total indirect effects on donations. However, the control condition had a significant negative direct and total effect on donations, suggesting that the

**TABLE 5** Descriptive statistics, F-statistics of one-way analyses of variance, zero-order correlations, and reliabilities for variables in Study 3

Variables	Across conditions		Control		Criticism		Praise		F(2, 401),		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F(2, 318) <sup>a</sup>	α											
(1) Collective narcissism	2.51	0.99	2.62	1.03	2.45	1.05	2.46	0.90	1.17	.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(2) National identification	4.45	1.26	4.68	1.21	4.20	1.25	4.47	1.28	5.29**	.87	.38***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(3) National pride	3.43	0.99	3.55	0.95	3.39	1.01	3.33	0.99	1.76	.71	.38***	.54***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(4) Demand for HC	2.83	1.62	3.03	1.73	2.49	1.46	2.96	1.63	4.43*	.86	.60***	.24***	.18***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(5) Moral delegitimization	2.29	1.48	2.41	1.55	2.09	1.35	2.38	1.51	1.97	.91	.55***	.23***	.20***	.83***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(6) Perpetrator suffering	3.03	1.48	3.19	1.54	2.83	1.44	3.08	1.43	2.10	.82	.60***	.25***	.23***	.80***	.77***	-	-	-	-	-	-
(7) Collective guilt	2.89	1.95	2.52	1.91	3.37	1.04	2.80	1.80	6.89**	.93	-.21***	-.12*	.00	-.43***	-.38***	-.37***	-	-	-	-	-
Donations																					
(8) Holocaust victims <sup>b</sup>	17.19	21.75	13.20	18.90	21.20	24.30	17.20	21.40	3.58*	-	-.16**	-.04	-.03	-.24***	-.23***	.17**	-	-	-	-	-
(9) War-blinded people <sup>a</sup>	13.27	22.09	14.50	24.10	13.40	22.40	11.90	19.60	0.41	-	.37***	.11*	.13*	.27***	.22***	.27***	-.03	-	-	-	-
(10) Disabled people <sup>a</sup>	40.97	36.23	47.90	38.10	35.60	35.10	39.10	34.50	3.34*	-	.08	.14*	.04	.24***	.22***	.18***	-.25***	-.44***	-.37***	-	-
(11) Refugees <sup>a</sup>	28.56	30.35	24.20	29.10	29.70	29.80	31.80	31.90	1.82	-	-.25***	-.22***	-.12*	-.31***	-.26***	-.24***	.20***	-.14*	-.24***	-.61***	-

Note: N = 404; Bonferroni-Holm corrected post hoc tests indicated significant differences between the criticism and control group in national identification,  $t(270) = 3.29, p = .004, d = .40$ , demand for HC,  $t(267) = 2.76, p = .019, d = .33$ , collective guilt,  $t(269) = -3.54, p < .001, d = .43$ , donations to support Holocaust victims,  $t(194) = -2.64, p = .024, d = .36$ , and donations to support disabled people  $t(211) = -2.45, p = .039, d = .34$ . Furthermore, the criticism and praise group differed significantly in demand for HC,  $t(257) = -2.48, p = .035, d = .31$ , and collective guilt,  $t(260) = 2.42, p = .032, d = .30$ .

<sup>a</sup> Donations are given as a percentage of donations to the respective social organization. People who did not donate any money were excluded from analyses on donations, resulting in a sample size of N = 321 for respective analyses.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**TABLE 6** Hierarchical multiple regression analyses on demand for HC in Study 3

Variable	B(SE)	95% CI [LL, UL]	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
<b>Model 1</b>				.36	.36
Constant	12.80*** (0.56)	[11.69, 13.91]	-.17		
Collective narcissism	0.55*** (0.04)	[0.47, 0.62]	.60		
National identification	0.04 (0.08)	[-0.11, 0.20]	.03		
National pride	-0.08 (0.07)	[-0.21, 0.05]	-.06		
Condition: Praise <sup>a</sup>	2.21** (0.80)	[0.63, 3.79]	.27		
Condition: Control <sup>a</sup>	1.84* (0.79)	[0.28, 3.40]	.23		
<b>Model 2</b>				.37	.01
Constant	12.67*** (0.57)	[11.54, 13.79]	-.18		
Collective narcissism	0.46*** (0.06)	[0.33, 0.58]	.50		
National identification	-0.06 (0.14)	[-0.34, 0.23]	-.03		
National pride	0.02 (0.12)	[-0.21, 0.25]	.02		
Condition: Praise <sup>a</sup>	2.34** (0.81)	[0.75, 3.93]	.29		
Condition: Control <sup>a</sup>	1.83* (0.80)	[0.26, 3.40]	.23		
Praise <sup>a</sup> x Collective narcissism	0.07 (0.10)	[-0.13, 0.27]	.08		
Control <sup>a</sup> x Collective narcissism	0.21* (0.09)	[0.03, 0.39]	.23		
Praise <sup>a</sup> x National Identification	0.05 (0.20)	[-0.34, 0.44]	.03		
Control <sup>a</sup> x National Identification	0.24 (0.20)	[-0.14, 0.63]	.15		
Praise <sup>a</sup> x National pride	-0.09 (0.16)	[-0.41, 0.23]	-.07		
Control <sup>a</sup> x National pride	-0.24 (0.17)	[-0.57, 0.08]	-.18		

Note: N = 404; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

<sup>a</sup>Condition was dummy-coded (two dummy-coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

control condition reduced donations, independent of the three defensive mechanisms.

## 7.2.4 | Multiple mediation analyses on collective guilt

Replicating Study 2, we conducted a multiple mediation analysis specifying collective guilt as the outcome variable (Table 8, Figure 3). Whether controlling for national identification and pride (Model 2) or not (Model 1), collective narcissism was positively associated with all three defensive mechanisms. However, only demand for HC fully mediated the relationship between collective narcissism and collective guilt. In contrast to collective narcissism, national pride was *directly positively* related to collective guilt. Yet, the focal total effect of national pride on collective guilt was not significant.

Model 2 further indicated a direct negative effect of the control condition on collective guilt, and a positive relationship between demand for HC and the praise as well as the control condition. Significant focal indirect, total indirect, and total effects for both conditions suggested that the relationship between the praise condition and collective guilt was fully mediated via demand for HC, whereas the relationship between the control condition and collective guilt was partially mediated via demand for HC. Adding the two-way interactions

of ingroup positivity measures and conditions (Model 3), moreover, revealed a significant interaction of collective narcissism and control condition on demand for HC,  $B(SE) = 0.21(0.10)$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.40],  $p = .039$ , with a stronger association between collective narcissism and demand for HC in the control condition,  $B(SE) = 0.64(0.06)$ ,  $\beta = 0.70$ , 95% CI [0.40, 0.87],  $p < .001$  than in the criticism condition,  $B(SE) = 0.47(0.05)$ ,  $\beta = 0.52$ , 95% CI [0.38, 0.56],  $p < .001$  (see also results of regression analyses in Table 6, which revealed the same interaction effect). This was the only significant interaction effect found in Model 3 (see SOM I for full results of Model 3). This suggests that the praise and control conditions overall elicited more demand for HC than the criticism condition, with particularly strong reinforcement of demand for HC among individuals in the control condition who were high in collective narcissism. However, neither the indirect effect via endorsing HC nor the total effect of this interaction term on collective guilt was significant. Multicollinearity diagnostics did not reveal any problems in any model (all VIFs < 3.37; all tolerances > 0.30).

## 7.2.5 | Additional analyses in SOM

The pre-registered moderation analysis, which did not differ in statistical interference from the present results, is reported in SOM J. To extend the scope of the present research, we ran an additional

**TABLE 7** Results of a multiple mediation analysis on donations in support of Holocaust victims in Study 3

Predictor	Demand for HC		Perpetrator suffering		Moral delegitimization		Donations (Holocaust victims)	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
<b>Model 1</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.49 (0.04)***	[0.41, 0.56]	0.28 (0.02)***	[0.23, 0.32]	0.32 (0.03)***	[0.27, 0.38]	0.01 (0.20)	[-0.39, 0.41]
Demand for HC							-0.34 (0.19)	[-0.72, 0.04]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.47 (0.35)	[-1.15, 0.21]
Moral delegitimization							-0.38 (0.25)	[-0.78, 0.21]
Indirect effects								
via Demand for HC							-0.17 (0.18)	[-0.51, 0.22]
via Perpetrator suffering							-0.13 (0.15)	[-0.45, 0.14]
via Moral delegitimization							-0.09 (0.12)	[-0.31, 0.13]
Total indirect effect							-0.39 (0.10)***	[-0.59, -0.21]
Total effect							-0.37 (0.10)***	[-0.59, -0.18]
<b>Model 2</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.51 (0.04)***	[0.42, 0.59]	0.27 (0.02)***	[0.23, 0.32]	0.33 (0.03)***	[0.26, 0.39]	-0.07 (0.22)	[-0.49, 0.35]
National identification	0.08 (0.08)	[-0.09, 0.24]	0.00 (0.05)	[-0.08, 0.10]	0.05 (0.06)	[-0.07, 0.18]	0.13 (0.29)	[-0.43, 0.69]
National pride	-0.13 (0.07)	[-0.27, 0.01]	-0.00 (0.04)	[-0.08, 0.08]	-0.05 (0.06)	[-0.15, -0.06]	0.14 (0.25)	[-0.35, 0.63]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>	2.39 (0.83)**	[0.77, 4.01]	0.64 (0.47)	[-0.28, 1.55]	1.27* (0.64)	[0.03, 2.52]	-2.57 (2.95)	[-8.35, 3.21]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>	2.05 (0.83)*	[0.42, 3.67]	0.88 (0.47)	[-0.03, 1.80]	0.87 (0.64)	[-0.38, 1.12]	-6.60 (2.94)*	[-12.35, -0.84]
Demand for HC							-0.26 (0.19)	[-0.64, 0.12]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.44 (0.35)	[-1.12, 0.23]
Moral delegitimization							-0.33 (0.25)	[-0.82, 0.17]
Indirect effects								
Collective narcissism								
Total indirect effect							-0.40 (0.11)***	[-0.56, -0.18]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>								
Total indirect effect							-1.33 (0.78)	[-3.08, 0.06]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>								
Total indirect effect							-1.21 (0.72)	[-2.76, 0.03]
Total effects								
Collective narcissism							-0.43 (0.13)***	[-0.69, -0.18]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>							-3.89 (3.16)	[-10.26, 2.27]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>							-7.81 (3.09)*	[-13.90, -1.73]

Note:  $N = 321$ ; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .35$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .03$  for demand for HC;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .35$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for perpetrator suffering;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .29$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for moral delegitimization;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .04$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .02$  for donations in support of Holocaust victims.

<sup>a</sup>For indirect and total effects the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals are reported (5,000 bootstrapping resamples).

<sup>b</sup>Condition was dummy-coded (two dummy-coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

mediation analysis on collective guilt specifying ingroup attachment, glorification, RWA, SDO and political orientation as additional predictors. The results indicated that only collective narcissism but no other type of ingroup positivity (national identification, pride, attachment, or glorification) was significantly related to claims for HC. The focal total effect of collective narcissism on guilt was reduced to non-significant

in this extended model (SOM K). We also calculated additional chain models indicating that demanding HC fully mediated the association between the other two defensive strategies and collective guilt (SOM L). Finally, we explored the relationships between collective narcissism, and two additional variables that were found to be associated with collective guilt, namely anticipated emotional distress in imagined contact

TABLE 8 Results of a multiple mediation analysis on collective guilt in Study 3

Predictor	Demand for HC		Perpetrator suffering		Moral delegitimization		Collective guilt	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
<b>Model 1</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.54 (0.04)***	[0.47, 0.61]	0.30 (0.02)***	[0.26, 0.34]	0.36 (0.03)***	[0.31, 0.42]	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.10]
Demand for HC							-0.17 (0.03)***	[-0.23, -0.12]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.06 (0.05)	[-0.16, 0.04]
Moral delegitimization							-0.05 (0.04)	[-0.12, 0.02]
<b>Indirect effects</b>								
via Demand for HC							-0.09 (0.02)***	[-0.14, -0.05]
via Perpetrator suffering							-0.02 (0.02)	[-0.06, 0.02]
via Moral delegitimization							-0.02 (0.02)	[-0.06, 0.02]
Total indirect effect							-0.13 (0.02)***	[-0.13, -0.06]
Total effect							-0.08 (0.12)*	[-0.14, -0.02]
<b>Model 2</b>								
Collective narcissism	0.55 (0.04)***	[0.47, 0.62]	0.30 (0.02)***	[0.25, 0.34]	0.36 (0.03)***	[0.30, 0.42]	0.03 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.09]
National identification	0.04 (0.08)	[-0.11, 0.20]	0.01 (0.04)	[-0.07, 0.10]	0.04 (0.06)	[-0.08, 0.16]	-0.06 (0.04)	[-0.14, 0.02]
National pride	-0.08 (0.07)	[-0.21, 0.05]	-0.00 (0.04)	[-0.07, 0.07]	-0.03 (0.05)	[-0.13, 0.07]	0.08 (0.04)*	[0.01, 0.15]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>	2.21 (0.80)**	[0.64, 3.77]	0.69 (0.44)	[-0.17, 1.55]	1.06 (0.61)	[-0.14, 2.25]	-0.57 (0.43)	[-1.42, 0.28]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>	1.84 (0.79)*	[0.30, 3.38]	0.61 (0.43)	[-0.24, 1.45]	0.70 (0.60)	[-0.48, 1.88]	-1.14 (0.43)**	[-1.97, 0.30]
Demand for HC							-0.16 (0.03)***	[-0.21, -0.14]
Perpetrator suffering							-0.07 (0.05)	[-0.16, -0.03]
Moral delegitimization							-0.06 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.01]

(Continues)

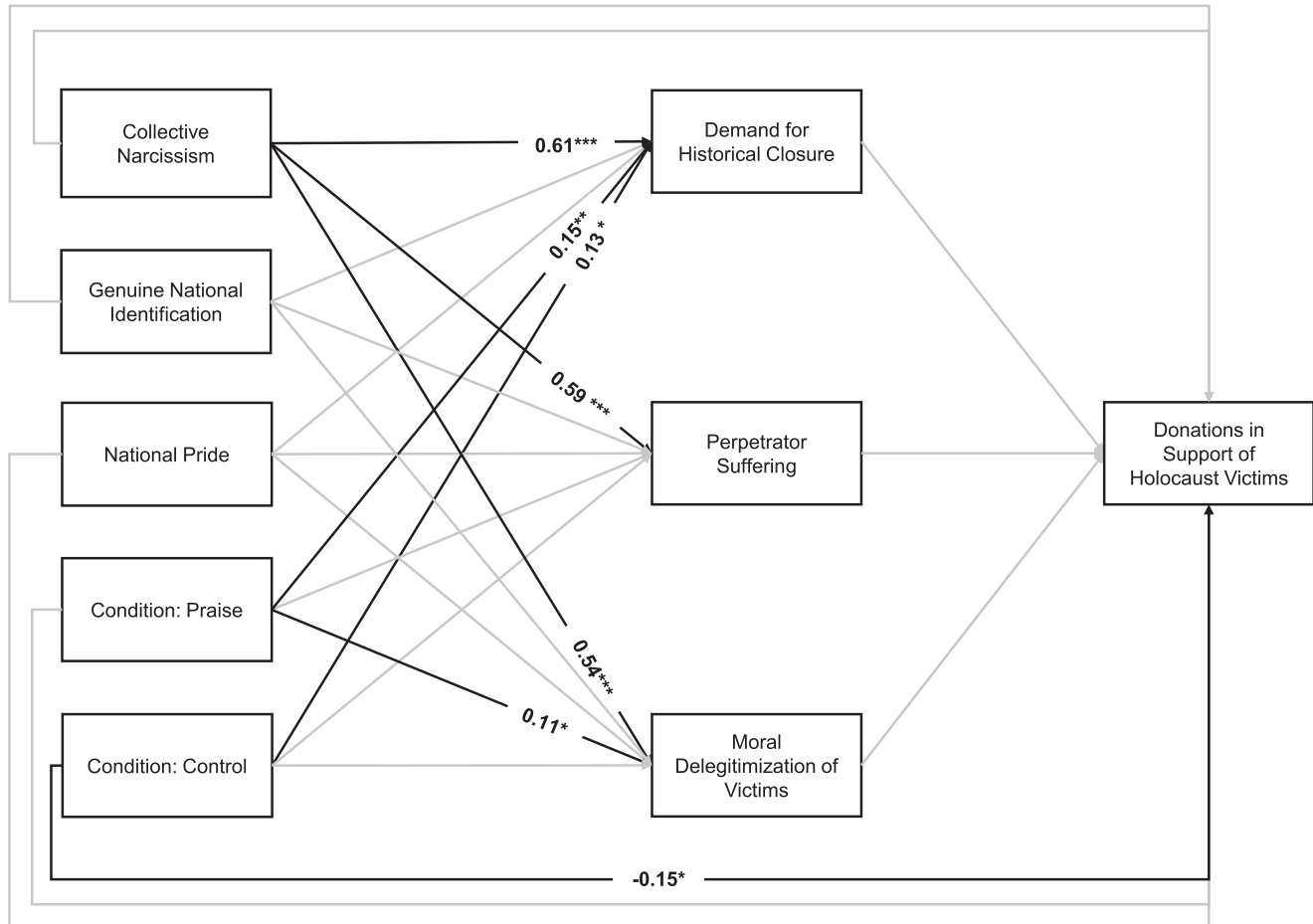
TABLE 8 (Continued)

Predictor	Demand for HC		Perpetrator suffering		Moral delegitimization		Collective guilt	
	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]	B(SE)	95% CI <sup>a</sup> [LL, UL]
Indirect effects								
Collective narcissism								
via Demand for HC							-0.09 (0.02)***	[-0.13, -0.04]
Total indirect effect							-0.13 (0.02)***	[-0.16, -0.10]
Condition: praise <sup>b</sup>								
via Demand for HC							-0.34 (0.15)*	[-0.73, -0.11]
Total indirect effect							-0.45 (0.18)*	[-0.84, -0.12]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>								
via Demand for HC							-0.29 (0.14)*	[-0.62, -0.06]
Total indirect effect							-0.37 (0.17)*	[-0.70, -0.02]
Total effects								
Collective narcissism							-0.10 (0.02)***	[-0.14, -0.06]
National pride							-0.04 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.10]
Condition: Praise <sup>b</sup>							-1.02 (0.46)*	[-1.93, -0.13]
Condition: Control <sup>b</sup>							-1.50 (0.48)**	[-2.47, -0.59]

Note: N = 404; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .35$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .02$  for demand for HC;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .36$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for perpetrator suffering;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .30$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .01$  for moral delegitimization;  $R^2_{\text{Model 1}} = .15$ ,  $\Delta R^2_{\text{Model 2}} = .02$  for collective guilt.

<sup>a</sup>For indirect and total effects the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals are reported (5,000 bootstrapping resamples).

<sup>b</sup>Condition was dummy-coded (two dummy-coded variables, praise vs criticism, control vs criticism as reference category).  
\* $d < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**FIGURE 2** Significant standardized path coefficients (completely standardized solution) of Model 2 on donations in support of Holocaust victims in Study 3

Note:  $N = 321$ . \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

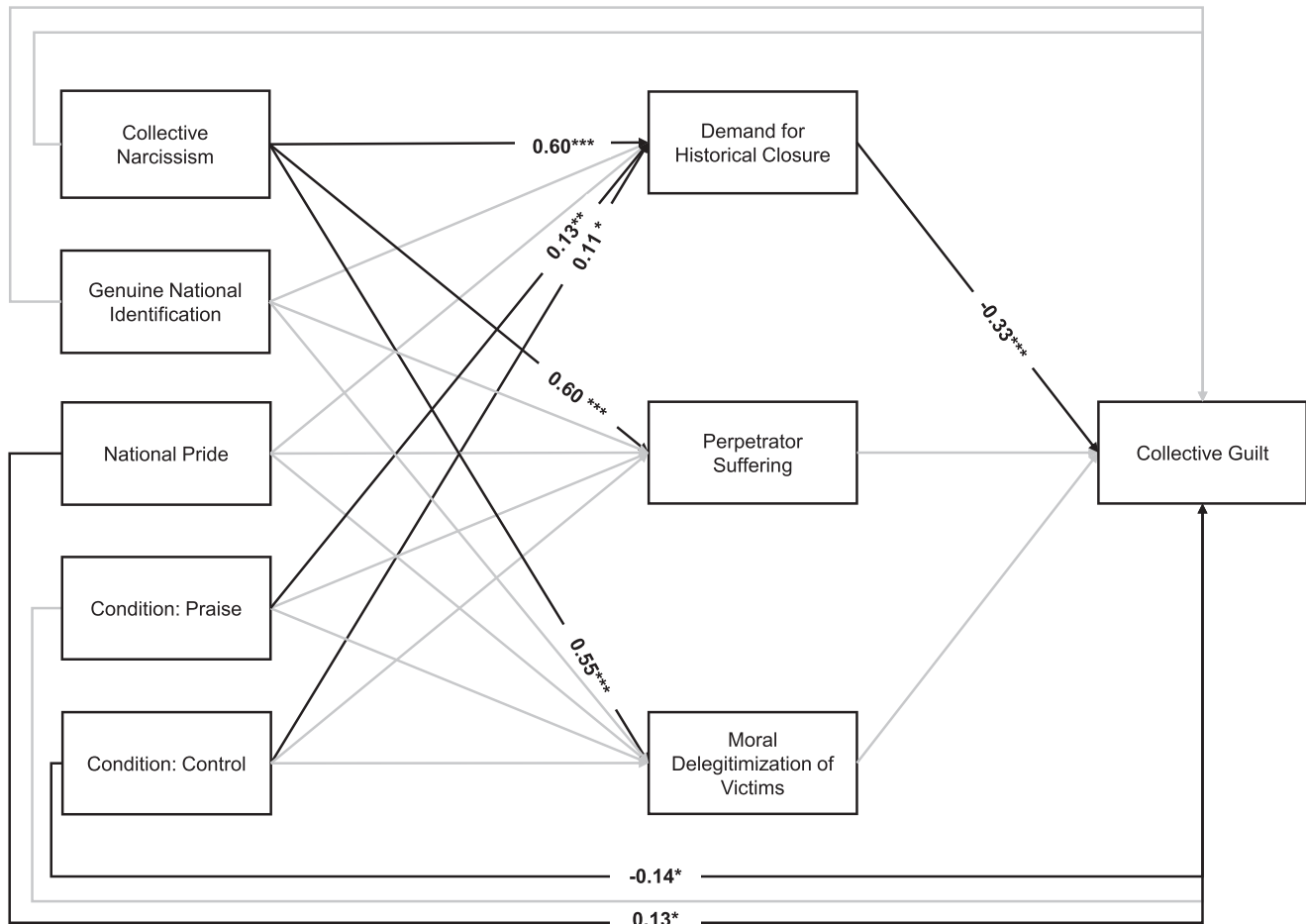
with members of the victim group and intentions to get in contact with the victim group (Imhoff et al., 2012, see SOM M).

### 7.3 | Discussion

Congruent with the results of Study 2, collective narcissism was significantly negatively related to collective guilt, fully mediated via the demand for HC, thereby surpassing two types of rather secure ingroup positivity, genuine national identification and national pride (Cichocka, 2016), and two other prominent defensive mechanisms, moral delegitimization of the victims, and demand for recognition of the perpetrator ingroup's suffering (Bandura, 1999; Noor et al., 2012; Opatow, 1990). These findings extend previous results on the pronounced defensive motivation in collective narcissism compared to secure types of ingroup positivity (e.g., Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013) to the areas of historical defensiveness and collective guilt. Furthermore, they substantiate the previously scarcely examined particular importance of demanding HC for the reduction of collective guilt among individuals high in collective narcissism (Imhoff, 2010a).

We also found a significant negative relationship between collective narcissism and donations in support of Holocaust victims. This result is particularly important because it indicates that defensive reactions of individuals high in collective narcissism are reflected in real-world behaviour, such as the allocation of donations. However, contrary to our expectations, the indirect association between collective narcissism and donations in support of Holocaust victims was not mediated only via demand for HC, but via all three defensive mechanisms, demand for HC, moral delegitimization, and perpetrator suffering. Even though it has not been formally proven to be problematic, multicollinearity between the defensive mechanisms might explain the lack of unique indirect effects in presence of a significant total indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Potentially, the three defensive mechanisms had more overlap in the variance they explained in monetary donations than in collective guilt. Thus, none of the focal indirect effects might have been strong enough to be adequately disentangled from the others in the model addressing donations. This could be because real-world behaviour (e.g., donations) is a less precise measure of one construct alone (e.g., collective guilt) but may simultaneously measure several different constructs. For instance,





**FIGURE 3** Significant standardized path coefficients (completely standardized solution) of Model 2 on collective guilt in Study 3

Note:  $N = 404$ . \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

rejecting donations to a social organization that supports Holocaust survivors may reflect not only variance in collective guilt but also a general lack of sympathy for Jewish people or for German people engaged in Holocaust education, thereby perpetuating the confrontation with the image-threatening perpetrator past. These attitudes, in turn, may have been related not only to demand for HC but also to moral delegitimization of the victims and demand for recognition of the perpetrator ingroup's suffering.

Contrary to our expectations, even extensive ingroup praise could not buffer the association between collective narcissism and demanding HC. Instead, the praise condition reduced collective guilt in comparison with the criticism condition, fully mediated via demand for HC, but irrespective of collective narcissism. The control condition also had a main effect on collective guilt and furthermore reduced donations in support of Holocaust victims relative to the criticism condition, the latter partly mediated via demand for HC. Although it was not expected in the present study, the finding that criticism decreases demand for HC, with downstream consequences for collective guilt, is consistent with previous research indicating that ingroup criticism can reduce the perceived moral entitlement to blatantly express support

for HC (Kazarovytska et al., 2022). The direct negative effect of the control condition relative to the criticism condition on collective guilt and donations in support of Holocaust victims mirrors previous findings (Gausel et al., 2012) showing that perceived ingroup defects can lead group members to engage in reparative behaviour.

## 8 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The past can act as a heavy weight on a group. It is thus not surprising that members of historical perpetrator groups would want to take action to remove this weight and associated feelings of guilt. Across three studies, we showed that some group members do so by closing the book on negative ingroup history. In closing the book, there is no denial that past harms were committed but rather a belief that a line should be placed under history. Cumulative evidence was provided to support the previously scarcely explored hypothesis that collective narcissism is related to higher levels of demand for HC and reduced collective guilt within the context of the Holocaust.

Collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009) was indirectly related to collective guilt via the demand for HC. This indirect associ-

ation remained significant, even when controlling for potential indirect paths via the two defensive strategies moral delegitimization of the victims (Bandura, 1999; Opatow, 1990) and desire for recognition of the perpetrator ingroup's suffering (Noor et al., 2012; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). From an emotion-regulation perspective (Bilewicz, 2016) one could assume that any defensive strategy that serves to reduce the ingroup's agency for past wrongdoings might reduce collective guilt. However, the uniqueness of the indirect effect between collective narcissism and collective guilt via demanding HC suggests that the need to mitigate collective guilt among individuals high in collective narcissism may be most clearly satisfied by endorsing HC. However, with respect to more complex behaviours, such as donating money to support Holocaust victims, the unique indirect path via demand for HC faded but spread to all three defensive mechanisms. We assume here a multicollinearity effect of the three defensive mechanisms, rooted in the assumption that donating money to support Holocaust survivors has more complex motives than collective guilt. This assumption is also substantiated by the finding that collective narcissism explained more variance in collective guilt (medium effect sizes) than in donation behaviour (small effect size according to the conventions of Cohen, 1988).

Across all three studies, demand for HC was particularly strong among individuals high in collective narcissism (large effect sizes according to the conventions of Cohen, 1988). The addition of further measures of ingroup positivity as predictors contributed only marginally to an increase in explained variance in demand for HC. While the association between genuine national identification and demand for HC was reduced to non-significant when partialling out the common variance with collective narcissism and national pride (Studies 2 and 3), the association between national pride and claims for HC even turned significantly negative (Study 2). The latter findings fit prior research that pulled apart the opposite effects of secure and narcissistic ingroup positivity on ingroup image defence (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Bilewicz, 2013), including the opposite effects of secure ingroup satisfaction and collective narcissism on defensiveness regarding confrontation with the ingroup's historical transgressions (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019). We obtained such opposing effects only for national pride but not for national identification. This fits previous research indicating that the interplay of mutual suppression with collective narcissism on defensive responses may be more pronounced for certain types of secure ingroup positivity than for others (see e.g., Marchlewska et al., 2020 for divergent suppression effects of group-based self-definition and self-investment). Consistent with the assumption of Golec de Zavala, Cichocka and Bilewicz (2013), we reason that different measures of secure ingroup positivity capture different aspects of the overlap with narcissistic ingroup positivity, which can lead to a reduction in defensive reactions or the enhancement of collective guilt for some types of secure ingroup positivity and small or even null relations to defensive responses and collective guilt for other types.

Our findings further extend the research on ingroup image defence to the area of attitudes toward the ingroup's harmful past. Prior research indicated that individuals high in collective narcissism discredit movies and books pointing to past wrongdoings of the ingroup (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019) just as they discredit other sources of

ingroup criticism (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). The present research revealed that individuals high in collective narcissism also tend to distance from the negative past itself by denying its relevance to the present and the legitimacy to further engage with it. These results show a parallel to individual narcissists, who are also prone to distance themselves from self-threatening memories (Marchlewska & Cichocka, 2017). Specific to the German sample, the present research is among the first to provide evidence for the longstanding assumption that demanding HC is related to a narcissistic idealization of the German group—especially “among those who cannot cope with national guilt and therefore seek to defend their main source of collective narcissistic gratification” (Rensmann, 2017, p. 23).

We found no support for mitigation of the defensive reactions in individuals high in collective narcissism by experimentally inserting praise of the ingroup's achievements in dealing with past wrongdoing (Study 2) or praise of the ingroup on a global scale (Study 3). However, in Study 3, both the ingroup praise and control condition increased demand for HC and reduced collective guilt compared to the criticism condition. The control condition moreover also increasing actual donations in support of Holocaust victims. These findings are consistent with prior research indicating the prosocial potential of ingroup criticism (Gausel et al., 2012). That these group differences were found only in Study 3, but not in Study 2, suggests that quite extensive ingroup critique may be required to cause effects on support for HC, collective guilt, and donation behaviour.

The lack of an interaction of collective narcissism and ingroup praise deviates from prior findings on defensive intergroup hostility showing that ingroup praise can buffer the defensiveness of individuals high in collective narcissism toward criticizing outgroups (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013). However, it is in line with the findings of Čehajić-Clancy et al. (2011), who also failed to increase collective guilt and support for reparations of intergroup harm done by affirming the ingroup. The authors reasoned that reinforcing a positive image of the ingroup through affirmation may cause the ingroup's misbehaviour to be perceived as even more self-threatening, which may make endorsement of collective guilt or reparative action more difficult.

Another explanation for the deviation from previous findings in the area of collective narcissistic outgroup defensiveness (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, & Iskra-Golec, 2013) could be the difference in the context of the criticism (different vs same group context as a source of the criticism) and the extent to which the defensive response can reduce the threatening effect of the criticism. Discrediting an ingroup-criticizing outgroup may call into question the credibility of that criticism but asserting HC may not mitigate criticism of current ingroup dynamics, such as a loss of global reputation. Future research might test such moderating effects of the criticism context as well as the content fit of criticism and defensive response.

Finally, individuals high in collective narcissism are concerned, on the one hand, with upholding a positive image of their group for the outside world (Cisłak, Cichocka, et al., 2021); on the other hand, they might have (unacknowledged) doubts about the ingroup's greatness (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009), which may motivate them to defend

a positive image of the ingroup for themselves. A history marked by tremendous intergroup transgressions might be particularly threatening (Branscombe et al., 1999)—not only to their outside image but also to their own shaky beliefs about the ingroup's greatness. Potentially, the threat resulting from reminders of these transgressions could be too strong to be offset by ingroup praise.

## 8.1 | Limitations and directions for further research

One of the major limitations of the present studies is that the results are purely correlational, as the defensive response in collective narcissists could not be manipulated experimentally. Thus, the emotion-regulatory function of the demand for HC among individuals high in collective narcissism still has to be tested in experimental or longitudinal studies. A second central limitation of our research is that it was conducted only in the context of the German Nazi past. An interesting avenue for future studies could be to identify whether the striking connection between demanding HC and collective guilt can be replicated in other contexts involving historical perpetration. For instance, Jung (2009) argued that the demand to draw a line under the past—and thus remove any accountability for past violations against Indigenous peoples—represents one of the main drivers of the Canadian government's use of transitional justice measures. Efforts to achieve closure have also been identified with regard to the history of slavery and colonialism in the United States and Britain (Adi, 2012; Neiman, 2019), the crimes committed during the legacy of the Soviet regime (Khazanov & Payne, 2008), or the war crimes of imperial Japan (Liu & Atsumi, 2008). Although in these contexts, the demand for HC has been *discussed* as an important strategy for maintaining ingroup positivity and delimiting collective guilt, little research has been devoted to *examining* this assumption empirically.

Another limitation concerns our measure of secure national identification, which tapped mainly into the *solidarity* aspect referring belongingness and similarity with ingroup members. Accordingly, other components of identification, such as centrality and satisfaction (Leach et al., 2008) were not captured. Thus, our measurement might not represent national identification in its entirety. However, it should be noted that these three components of self-investment are highly intercorrelated, and the concept of ingroup identification appeared to be so homogeneous that it could even be measured by a single item (Postmes et al., 2013).

Future research could seek to analyse in more detail the different components of demand for HC. It is conceivable that demanding HC includes not only defensive components (i.e., the desire to close the chapter on a threatening past) but also rather genuine components (i.e., a general perception that the past is not relevant for the present). Research on the past time perspective indicates that individuals may vary in the extent they prefer to engage with the past (Karniol & Ross, 1996). This idea might be transferred to the group level. Yet, Bilewicz (2016) identified focusing on the present and the future as another

emotion-regulation strategy within the framework of historical defensiveness. Thus, it seems particularly relevant to empirically differentiate between an authentic focus on the ingroup's presence and simply another—potentially socially acceptable—expression of defensiveness against the engagement with the ingroup's historical wrongdoings.

Finally, future research might examine how the degree to which people endorse HC is related to further intergroup and ingroup dynamics. In fact, demanding HC has been identified as a core element of secondary antisemitism (Imhoff, 2010b). Secondary antisemitism, in turn, is intimately associated with a conspiracy mentality (Imhoff & Bruder, 2014) that is also related to collective narcissism (e.g., Cichocka et al., 2015; Cisiak, Marchlewska, et al., 2021). In this vein, the officially promoted relevance of dealing with the Nazi past, which is opposed to a HC, could be perceived as driven by hostile forces (or even the victim group itself; Imhoff, 2020), aiming at undermining the ingroups self-confidence. Further research may thus strive to analyse the interplay of these ingroup and intergroup attitudes and the demand for HC.

## 8.2 | Conclusion

As early as 1959, Adorno suspected that the Germans' efforts to "come to terms with the past" were not intended to face the atrocities of the past but to "close the books on the past and, if possible, even remove it from memory" (Adorno, 1999; p. 89). More than 60 years later, the debate about a *Schlussstrich* has not lost any of its explosiveness. It is not the factuality of the era of National Socialism that is called into question but the relevance of a social and political confrontation with this past in the present time. The present research sheds light on relevant ingroup-related attitudes associated with the demand for a HC. When achieved, collective guilt for harms committed by the ingroup can be circumvented. Group members who do not accept collective guilt for past acts are unlikely to attempt to repair wrongs committed—a significant barrier to intergroup reconciliation.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### ETHICS STATEMENT

The manuscript adheres to ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct as well as national ethics guidelines.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Anonymized data from studies 1–3 is published on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/d25zn/>.

### TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

Pre-registrations, analyses codes, and materials are published on the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/d25zn/>.

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