Article

The Anti-Social Triad of Grievance Politics: An Integrated Model of Reactionism, Ressentiment, and Collective Narcissism

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Abstract

In this article, we undertake a comprehensive examination of reactionism, *ressentiment,* and collective narcissism, collectively termed as the "*anti-social triad of grievance politics.*" Although these constructs are conceptually distinct, they are psycholoically intricately linked. Reactionism denotes a backward-facing political orientation, *ressentiment* signifies a chronic and embittered emotional mechanism, and collective narcissism reflects a precarious and wounded psychological state. Together, they constitute a potent blend of anti-social sentiments within grievance politics, yet their interconnectedness is overlooked when they are studied in isolation. Our study pioneers in establishing original connections between reactionism, *ressentiment,* and collective narcissism, providing empirical evidence of their coexistence and interactions. We introduce a novel scale to measure reactionism and explore its associations with existing measures of *ressentiment* and collective narcissism, as well as their associations with values, authoritarianism, and populism. By elucidating the tight interplay among these phenomena, we offer valuable insights into their implications for responses to social change and the essence of democracy.

Keywords

reactionism, *ressentiment*, collective narcissism, values, emotions, grievances

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Introduction

In a seminal article bridging psychology and politics, Winnicott (1950) identified the characteristics of "the hidden anti-socials," noting their lack of a securely established sense of self and personal cohesiveness (p. 177). Expanding on Winnicott's insights, our study delves into the realm of political behavior, examining what we term *the "anti-social triad of grievance politics."* This triad encompasses three key components: reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism. Reactionism is conceptualized as a cluster political orientation, *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism that underpins reactionism, and collective narcissism as a compensatory state of mind (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021). Together, these phenomena illuminate the prevalence of grievance politics in contemporary democracies, manifested through support for populist political platforms and the adoption of victimhood-invested anti-stances (Capelos et al., 2022; Flinders & Hinterleitner, 2022).

Our objective is to develop and implement innovative empirical measures to test the interconnectedness of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism in the context of populist politics, while scrutinizing their value-laden and affective psychological attributes. Through theoretical insights and empirical illustrations, we demonstrate the value of the triad in explaining contemporary manifestations of grievance politics. This includes the fractures and resentments evident in societies worldwide, the escalating emotions such as anger, fear, indignation, hostility, rage, bitterness, frustration, and "aggrieved entitlement" (Kimmel, 2013) accompanying the ascent of populist parties and nationalist movements, and the polarizing anti-preferences frequently associated with them (Merino et al., 2020; Mishra, 2017; Sullivan, 2017).

The primary contribution of our work lies in delineating the tripartite nature of the "anti-social triad of grievance politics," comprising a political orientation (reactionism), a complex emotional mechanism (*ressentiment*), and a psychological/mental state (collective narcissism), bound in a perpetual interaction. Our article intersects with several other studies in this triple special issue, shedding light on different facets of grievance-based political phenomena. Lytkina and Reeskens' (2024, Special Issue, Part One) examination of emotions as mediators in the relationship between COVID-19 concerns and opposition to right-wing populist parties resonates with the "anti-social triad" framework by highlighting the affective dimensions underlying political behavior. Emotions, such as anger and resentment, are linked to reactionary political embittered responses, shown here to mediate political preferences in times of crises. Similarly, Elad-Strenger and Kessler's (2024, Special Issue, Part One) investigation into (mis)recognition and its impact on support for the populist right aligns with the "anti-social triad" concept, particularly in understanding the role of *ressentiment* and collective narcissism fueling support for reactionary orientations and embittered emotional responses. Furthermore, Demasi et al. (2024, Special Issue, Part Two) analysis of political rhetoric and its influence on emotional states and populist attitudes provides valuable context for understanding the communication strategies that perpetuate grievance-based politics. By examining how rhetoric can elicit feelings of injustice and resentment, study offers empirical support for the conceptual framework of the

"anti-social triad," emphasizing the interconnectedness between political discourse, emotional responses, and populist sentiments. Filsinger's (2024, Special Issue, Part Two) exploration of social isolation, anger, and populist attitudes contributes to understanding the emotional pathways through which social factors influence political preferences, complementing the "anti-social triad" perspective on the affective dimensions of grievance politics. Together, these studies provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological, emotional, and socio-political factors driving grievance-based political phenomena.

Capelos et al. (2022) defined grievance politics as "the mode of relating to politics primarily through grievances, felt as deprivation of opportunity, injustice, shame, humiliation, envy, and inefficacious anger" (p. 384). This form of contemporary politics is often oversimplified and mislabeled as "angry politics," but it contains and conceals disaffections, frustrations, and insecurities, and its analysis requires a comprehensive psychological toolkit that appreciates how citizens, individually and collectively, think, feel, and relate to political objects. Here, we synthesize recent theoretical and empirical contributions which highlight the value of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, in understanding grievance politics and its contemporary populist electoral preferences. Where piecemeal accounts would see anti-preferences and dogmatic thinking as distinct phenomena, we recognize reactionism as the orientation that consolidates anti-preferences, dogmatic thinking, and retrospective values that favor tradition and security and oppose stimulation and new experiences (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Wolfe, 1923). Where piecemeal accounts would see negative emotionality identified as anger or fear as independent emotional reactions, we recognize *ressentiment* as the emotional mechanism that transforms envy, shame, humiliation, and inefficacious anger into bitterness, vengefulness, and resentment while producing an aura of moral victimhood (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021). Where piecemeal accounts would see group identities, collective action, in-group victimhood, and outgroup hatred and blame as separate manifestations of relating to others, we see collective narcissism as the psychological/mental state that provides the social context through which *ressentimentful* reactionism is reinforced and shared in groups and collectives (Salmela & Capelos, 2021). Furthermore, we push analytical boundaries contrasting the value of the triad with authoritarianism, the stable personality structure, ideology, or ideological attitude based on conventionalism, obedience, and aggression, and the perception of the world as a dangerous place. Authoritarianism traditionally sits on the right and implies a firm and life-long outlook toward how the world should be, and has been identified as a strong predictor of right-wing populist attitudes (Duckitt, 1987; Enyedi, 2020; Feldman, 2003; Osborne et al., 2023; Sauer, 2020; Weyland, 2018).

Traces of the "triad of grievance politics" are evident in research showing bundled reactionary anti-preferences (anti-immigration and anti-EU) predicted by retrospective values and resentful affect (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018); the *ressentimentful* character of reactionary support for political violence (Capelos et al., 2017); the devaluation of their nation by individuals with anti-political stances who desire to bring back the past and make their nation "great again" (Sullivan, 2021); the UK referendum

Leave vote predicted by collective narcissism via the perceived threat of immigrants independently of right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance, or national attachment/identification (Golec de Zavala et al., 2017), and narcissism predicting support of far-right parties in Germany (Mayer et al., 2020). Reactionary orientations often find their political expressions in populist politics (Celis et al., 2021; Droste, 2021; Kaya, 2021; Kiss, 2021; Mayer & Nguyen, 2021; Sullivan, 2021). Leaders, many of whom display narcissistic personality characteristics, capture media and public attention, and build up collective narcissism narratives, which provide a way for individuals to vent their frustrations through *ressentiment*[1] (Kazlauskaite & Salmela, 2021; Wimberly, 2018).

In our empirical analysis, we address a notable methodological gap by utilizing data from a representative survey conducted in England to develop a novel instrument for measuring reactionism. Additionally, we systematically examine the relationships between these three concepts by using established multi-item scales for *ressentiment* and collective narcissism from extant studies. Our examination extends to considering the implications of these findings for contemporary democratic politics, recognizing the inherent complexity and the challenges quantifying multifaceted psychological phenomena. Importantly, it is crucial to note that our objective in understanding what we term as "the antisocial triad of grievance politics" is not to pass judgment or moralize. Our approach is not normative: we do not assess whether reactionism, *ressentiment* and collective narcissism are inherently positive or negative. Instead, we view them and their interconnections as a puzzle necessitating thorough conceptualization, diligent investigation, and balanced interpretation.

The Political Psychology of "the Anti-Social Triad of Grievance Politics": The Key Concepts

Reactionism is a lasting and *backward looking cluster political orientation* marked by four key characteristics: it seeks a reversion of politics, it adopts a bitter outlook to political life, it is expressed as antithetical preferences, and it is driven by the urgent desire to break away from the present, seeking to reinstate—in the future—a *status quo ante*, a historically past (real or imagined) state of the world (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). In contrast to temporary, short-lived responses to specific threatening events or situations, reactionism is theorized as a *lasting and insistent orientation* to political life. Although it can be triggered by traumatic experiences, it represents a *mode of being* in the world. It is considered a *cluster orientation* because it contains cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral components. It is expressed as an anti-thesis in form of *bundled anti-preferences* that mark consistently an oppositional stance to a wide range of political issues and debates; it is felt as *ressentimentful* affect; it is driven by values such as those held in the past; and can be acted out as anomic, extreme, and violent political actions which foster intolerance towards out-groups and minorities (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Capelos et al., 2017).[2]

On *ressentiment*, we follow recent studies which define it as a *chronic compensatory emotional mechanism* constituting a response to the recurrent inability and chronic deficiency to attain and hold on to something deemed important (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017; Salmela & Capelos, 2021). We also distinguish *ressentiment* from resentment, which is generally understood as moral anger at unfairness or injustice involving the perception of the ability to act (Demertzis, 2020; Hoggett, 2018; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017; Ure, 2014). In addition, we align with studies that identify *ressentiment* as the affective driver of grievance politics, providing the breeding ground for reactionary orientations and social expressions of collective narcissism (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Salmela & Capelos, 2021) as well as demands that group pride be restored (Sullivan, 2017).

Drawing insights from psychology, psychoanalysis, and political sociology, we offer a novel account of collective narcissism as a *psychological/mental state*[3] denoting affection for a collective entity, while simultaneously concealing a deeper injury of (personal and collective[4]) ego-strength and an anxious, disintegrated self. We side with Lasch (1979) who pointedly identified the culture of narcissism as the normalized pathology of our times. Spaning across social and political life, we consider collective narcissism as the dominant *state* of political affairs, and theorize it as the social expression of ressentiment. We argue that collective narcissism coincides with ingroup victimhood which is the outcome of *ressentiment*, and suggest that collective narcissism narratives attract people who experience *ressentiment* because of the complex, deeply ambivalent, and unstable relationship of collective narcissism with the sense of how special one's group is. As such, we offer an alternative account of collective narcissism to studies that approach it as a defensive belief in ingroup greatness, an individual psychological disposition, or an expression of ingroup identification "tied to an emotional investment in an unrealistic belief about the unparalleled greatness of an ingroup" (Bocian et al., 2021; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, p. 1074; Marchlewska et al., 2018). We agree that similarly to individual-level narcissism, people can be narcissistic about their collective (vs. personal) identities and demonstrate an "exaggerated and unstable collective self-esteem" (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, p. 1074). But while collective (or otherwise known as group-based) narcissism is seen as akin to the most intense forms of collective pride (see discussion on collective hubris in Sullivan, 2014; Sullivan & Day, 2019), here we posit that collective narcissism is a precarious psychological state of mind, temporary or lasting, activated when (personal and collective) ego-strength is low, and is intrinsically linked to defensive anxieties channeled through the *ressentimentful* gaze of reactionary politics. This psychological/mental state in turn has significant consequences for citizens' political maturity and engagement in democratic politics.[5]

In our theorization, we refrain from positing a linear causal relationship among the elements of the triad. Instead, we approach reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism as interrelated components of the triad that are (re)constituted in their dynamic feedback loop, rather than as isolated phenomena occurring independently. We distinguish the triad from authoritarianism, which like reactionism, draws on security (Fromm, 1941). Whereas reactionism, especially when intertwined with *ressentiment*, tends to

incline toward passivity, authoritarianism typically aligns with a propensity for individual agency towards aggression (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Lastly, we emphasize the relevance of the triad in elucidating populist attitudes. *Populism* construed as a thin ideology (Mudde, 2007) or a political logic grounded in the people/elite dichotomy (Laclau, 2005) findings resonance within the dynamics of the anti-social triad. Populist attitudes have been approximated by preferences of people-centrism, anti-elitism, and anti-pluralism (Akkerman et al., 2014; Castanho Silva et al., 2018). In contemporary politics, populism appears to harness the retrospective gaze of reactionism particularly through promoting national pride and stimulating anxieties about security (Merino et al., 2020), but its relationship with *ressentiment* as well as collective narcissism have not been examined together. We anticipate that the triad will offer valuable insights in understanding populist attitudes. We urge caution however to avoid limiting populism to its most conspicuous contemporary expressions in Western democracies. Populist attitudes are neither consistently oriented toward the past nor are they expected to be consistently bitter and be expressed through anti-preferences. Characteristically, Salmela and von Scheve (2018) noted that left-wing populism has dissimilar emotional dynamics from right-wing populism in being characterized more by hope, joy, feelings of solidarity, and empowerment. The prime example is the Spanish Indignados movement and its successor populist party Podemos.

Reactionism in the Triad: A Lasting Cluster Political Orientation Marked by Retrospective Antithetical Positions

We approach reactionism as a lasting cluster political orientation that seeks a reversion of politics with a abrupt change of direction. Elaborating on this definition we note four key characteristics: (1) it is *uncompromising and urgent* in the sense that it does not wish for gradual or orderly change; (2) it seeks change toward the past, to what was once tried and familiar (restoration), instead of maintaining things as they are (conservatism), or changing them to how they can be (radicalism) and idealizes its direction toward renewing the old (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018); (3) its desire to renew the old signifies an opposition to current modes of thought and a return toward previously relevant, but now abandoned meanings and systems of cognitive organization; (4) it can be expressed as violent opposition to innovation in religion, ethics, and art, yet it can also manifest as passivity and latent support for violence. At its extreme expressions, reactionism ressembles senseless reaction, while in its milder forms, it takes on the appearance of sentimental traditionalism, collective nostalgia, or retrogressivism.

As part of the "anti-social triad," we expect reactionism to display retrospective values related to the revival of the past, denoting reluctance toward the novel and the unfamiliar. Aversion to stimulation and new experiences, and respect for security and tradition are the core values aligning with reactionism (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018). The reactionary orientation is also based on self-assured dogmatic assertions and antithetical thinking, expressed as anti-preferences (Capelos & Demertzis, 2022). Collective nostalgia rhetoric has been shown to support populist parties (Wohl et al.,

2020). We therefore anticipate a positive association with nostalgia. Because of its tight relationship with *ressentiment*, we expect reactionism to have a negative association with social trust and external political efficacy (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018).

Ressentiment *in the Triad: The Affective Driver of Reactionism*

We theorize *ressentiment* as the mechanism that consolidates the affective components of the anti-social triad. We distinguish *ressentiment* from the emotion of resentment, which is synonymous to moral anger and does not contain the powerlessness, despair, and repression of one's negative emotions that are central in *ressentiment* (Capelos et al., 2022; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017; Salmela & Capelos, 2021). Because resentment involves a sense of efficacy, it is much closer to anger than *ressentiment* (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018; Capelos et al., 2022).

Ressentiment as a chronic compensatory emotional mechanism constitutes a response to an individual's inability to attain and retain something deemed important. To expand on the complex psychological profile of *ressentiment*, we draw from Salmela and Capelos (2021). They bring together Kleinian accounts on envy and envious attacks on desired objects[6] (Klein, 1958, 1959), literature on psychic defenses (Binswanger, 1956; Carveth, 2018; Freud, 1912–1913) and extant analyses of *ressentiment* (Aeschbach, 2017; Demertzis, 2020; Nietzsche et al., 1994; Salmela & von Scheve, 2017, 2018; Scheler, 1961 [1915]; Turner, 2007; Ure, 2014) to explain how in *ressentiment* self-targeting negative emotions are transmuted internally and externally. The envy, shame, humiliation, or inefficacious anger that the individual is incapable of expressing or acting out, are turned against the self. A layered *system of psychic defenses* (higher-order defenses like regression, repression, and reaction formation, and also lower-order defenses like projection, introjection, and denial) is activated to shield an individual from painful emotions, distorting the person's self-observation. Hostile emotions against the self are transmuted into hostile emotions against others in the form of resentful hatred, while denying the value of everything the individual does not possess. *Ressentiment* is *inefficacious* toward political action, it is felt as disgust and contempt and is founded on weak social relations experienced as low social trust.

Collective Narcissism: The Anti-Social Psychological State of Populist Times

We understand collective narcissism as a psychological *state*, marked by (a) the rejection of the value of external groups, and (b) an unrealized, anxious distrust in one's own group and its fellow members. Borrowing from Salmela and Capelos (2021), we agree that collective narcissism is delivered through defenses occurring in *ressentiment* and activated in peer group interactions. "Mirroring provides recognition and reinforces the superficial 'new self' feeling pride rather than shame, satisfaction rather than disappointment, being somebody rather than nobody, counting for something rather than nothing" (Salmela & Capelos, 2021, p. 199). To outline its role in

"the anti-social triad of grievance politics," we draw parallels at its individual level equivalent. Like narcissists who fall in love with their own reflection, to evade their self-loathing, the collective narcissists fall in love with the reflection of their group, while secretly doubting its worth and deeming it worthless. The joint feature of individual and collective narcissism is fantasized superiority, blended with the nagging belief that one's (self and in-group) privilege, status, and significance are not appreciated by others. This is why, individual and collective narcissism go hand in hand with negative emotionality, lack of self-appreciation, and deficits in gratitude, compassion and social connectedness, compensated by intergroup distrust, antagonism, and conspiratorial thinking (Golec de Zavala, 2019). Importantly, collective narcissism is distinguished from national identification or in-group satisfaction, which display positive emotional profiles (Golec de Zavala, 2019). Instead, collective narcissism is compensatory for low individual and/or collective self-esteem and is experienced as frustration for what is perceived as the unacknowledged greatness of one's nation or group (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala, 2018). Empirically, we expect collective narcissism to be associated with the nostalgic imaginations of reactionism and the bitter emotionality of *ressentiment*, rather than emotionally elevated celebrations of national pride.

Methodology

We test our expectations regarding the relationships within the triad (reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism) as well as their relationship with authoritarianism and populist attitudes using data from a representative survey of English residents designed to measure political orientations and behavior. The research was conducted in line with national ethics guidelines and was approved by the ethics committee of the university of one of the authors. Fieldwork took place between June 22 and July 27, 2020. The questionnaire was designed by the authors and administered online via Qualtrics. A representative sample of 489 participants was purchased by the market research company Dynata.

The questionnaire contained a total of 140 questions. Key measures were items dedicated to the operationalization of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, core personal values,[7] discrete emotional responses to politics,[8] authoritarianism,[9] populist attitudes,[10] anti-preferences,[11] sense of national pride, nostalgia, interpersonal trust, internal and external efficacy,[12] and left–right ideological leaning (for more details, please refer to the Methodology Supplement Online Appendix).

Reactionism Scale Construction

To date, reactionism has been approximated on the basis of value orientations, aversive emotions, and anti-preferences but has not been operationalized through a scale (Capelos et al., 2017; Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Capelos & Demertzis, 2018). Recognizing the lack of a dedicated scale for the measurement of reactionism, our article contributes a novel validated measure involving three independent samples

with data collected in the autumn of 2019 (for scale construction and sample statistics, see Online Appendix, Section A1, Tables A1–A6). The validated reactionism scale involves eight items aggregated as an average sum[13]: New ideas in religion, morals, and art are ruining us and should be resisted at all costs (R_resist); there is an urgent need to bring back and restore what we once had (R_urgent); the best political change is to go back to the way things were before (R_back); I long to live today the way we used to (R_used); social change has gone too far and needs to be reversed without delay (R_reverse); we need to restore society to the way it used to be (R_restore); the best ideas in politics are those that bring back the good old days (R_olddays); and nothing beats what is tried and true (R_true). The alpha reliability of the reactionism scale is .95 ($N=486$), with mean 5.04 and standard deviation 2.31 (0–10 scale).[14]

Ressentiment Scale. Ressentiment is a latent construct which contains self-targeting emotions such as envy, shame, and helpless/hopeless (inefficacious) anger, other-targeting emotions such as resentment, moral anger, and hatred, a sense of moral righteousness, and victimhood, as well as the dynamic process of *transvaluation* as the transformation of the values of the coveted and unattainable object and one's sense of self. Recent empirical approximations of *ressentiment* use survey questionnaires (Capelos & Demertzis, 2022; León et al.,1988, 1990) and content analysis data from interviews and blogs (Capelos et al., 2022, 2023; Sullivan, 2021). In the first attempt to measure *ressentiment*, León et al. (1988, 1990) used a 28-item scale (alpha reliability .66) tapping on feelings of pain caused by others, other-directed negative feelings like hatred and jealousy, self-directed negative feelings like inferiority and self-devaluation, the desire for superiority and power, blame, and imagined vengeance/revenge. Capelos and Demertzis (2022) shortened the León et al. scale to six items to measure sense of injustice, destiny, powerlessness, resentment, transvaluation, and victimization (alpha reliability .75) and incorporated it in the World Value Survey, Greek component (Haerpfer et al., 2022). Using similar items, Capelos et al. (2022) coded interview transcripts of "angry citizens" in the USA, and Capelos et al. (2023) and Capelos et al. (2024) coded web-content of Incel blog sites, focusing on indicators of envy, shame, anger, powerless anger, sense of injustice, destiny, transvaluation, and victimization.

One limitation of extant measures of *ressentiment* is that they are static, whereas emotional mechanisms are dynamic. Even so, recent studies demonstrated that it is possible to identify the "footprint" of *ressentiment* from its constituents: both its affective drivers and outcomes, and the act of transvaluation. These items are measurable by surveys and interviews because *ressentiment* does not offer a resolution to the grievances of the individual, who is therefore likely to fluctuate between the old and the new self and values, depending on available social reinforcement to the latter.

For comparison with extant studies, we adopted the short *ressentiment* scale from Capelos and Demertzis (2022) and added one item on victimization through deflection of responsibility.[15] Our scale taps on a sense of injustice, destiny, powerlessness, resentment, transvaluation, and victimization. This operationalization aligns with the

conceptualization of *ressentiment* in Salmela and Capelos (2021), Capelos et al. (2022) and Poellner (2004).

The *ressentiment* scale was constructed as the average of the seven items, with alpha reliability .77, mean 5.47, and standard deviation 1.62 (0–10 scale, $N=484$).

Collective Narcissism Scale

Collective narcissism has been measured by Golec de Zavala et al. (2009) with nine items, shortened from an inventory of 23 items focusing on beliefs about one's social group. For economy, we adopted the five best fitting items,[16] and asked participants to think about a *political group* they identified with the most—that they refer to as "we" or "us." Using a 1 to 7 scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) participants answered five questions about their political group[17]: (CN1) My group deserves special treatment; (CN2) I will never be satisfied until my group gets the recognition it deserves; (CN3) It really makes me angry when others criticize my group; (CN4) If my group had a major say in the world, the world would be a much better place; (CN5) Not many people seem to fully understand the importance of my group. As participants could have responded having in mind any political group they identified with the most, the collective narcissism measured here is *political collective narcissism*. The scale was constructed by taking the average of these five items. The alpha reliability for the scale was .83 with mean 4.84 and standard deviation 1.73 ($N=483$).

Analyses

First, to examine the predictive power of the triad, we regressed reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism on populist attitudes, comparing their predictive ability to authoritarianism, which is often used as a psychological determinant of the rise of populist attitudes (Enyedi, 2020; Osborne et al., 2023; Sauer, 2020; Weyland, 2018). In the mediation analysis in Table 1, we see the poor performance of authoritarianism as a nonsignificant predictor (column five), the improvement of the model when adding reactionism, *ressentiment* or collective narcissism as individual predictors (columns 2–4), and the significant improvement of the model when the triad is included (column 1, Adjusted R^2 .11). We also note the significant but negative effect of authoritarianism (−.06) in predicting populist attitudes, in contrast to the significant positive effects of reactionism (.08), *ressentiment* (.11), and collective narcissism (.09).

Although analyses like these can highlight patterns in the variance explained by the triad in contrast to authoritarianism, they do not make us any wiser about the psychological foundations of their interactions, which is our focus here. To delve deeper and engage with the psychological properties of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, we performed construct validity checks, checking their inter-relationships, their associations with authoritarianism and populist attitudes, and their psychological correlates focusing on efficacy, national pride, nostalgia, trust, ideological learning, core values, and emotions.

Table 1. Mediation Analysis of the Triad and Its Elements as Predictors of Populist Attitudes.

	Populist Attitudes (Triad and Auth/ism)	Populist Attitudes (Reactionism and Auth/ism)	Populist Attitudes (Ressentiment and Auth/ism)	Populist Attitudes (Col. Narc. and Auth/ism)	Populist Attitudes (Auth/ism)
Reactionism	.08 (.24)***	.13 (.02)***	—	—	—
Ressentiment	.11 (.03)***	—	.17 (.03)***	—	—
Col. narcissism	.09 (.03)**	—	—	.14 (.03)***	—
Authoritarianism	−.06 (.03)*	−.09 (.03)*	−.02 (.02)	−.01 (.02)	−.01 (.02)
Constant	4.72 (.22)***	5.61 (.15)***	4.93 (.20)***	5.12 (.19)***	5.80 (.15)***
Adj R^2	.11	.06	.06	.05	.00
N	482	485	483	482	485

Note. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis. All variables were rescaled 0–10, with 10 indicating the highest values on the variable.

Table 2. Key Relationships Across the Triad, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes.

	Reactionism	*Ressentiment*	Collective Narcissism
Reactionism	1.00	.30***	.22***
Ressentiment	.30***	1.00	.32***
Collective narcissism	.22***	.32***	1.00
Authoritarianism	.54***	.05	.00
Populist attitudes	.19***	.26***	.24***

Note. Values are correlation coefficients.
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

In Table 2, we note the positive and modest correlations between reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, indicating the three scales tap on distinct but linked constructs. The correlation between reactionism and *ressentiment* is .30, between *ressentiment* and collective narcissism is .32, and between reactionism and collective narcissism is .22. All reported correlations are significant at $p < .05$. Turning to associations with neighboring concepts, the correlation between reactionism and authoritarianism was significant and positive (.54), whereas the correlation between *ressentiment* and collective narcissism, and authoritarianism were not significant. Populist attitudes were correlated with *ressentiment* (.26), suggesting the presence of *ressentimentful* affect in these preferences, and collective narcissism (.24) and reactionism (.19), relationships which were evident also in the mediation analyses in Table 1 above.

In Table 3, we conducted nomological network analyses, to evaluate the psychological expressions of the triad alongside variables used frequently to predict populist preferences, such as anti-preferences, ideological left–right leaning, pride, nostalgia,

Table 3. Psychological Correlates of the Triad, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes.

	Reactionism	*Ressentiment*	Collective Narcissism	Authoritarianism	Populist Attitudes
Anti-preferences	.47***	.05	.01	.47**	−11*
Ideology (left-right)	.38***	−.07	−.02	.40**	−.05
Pride British	.19**	−.04	−.01	.27**	.09**
Nostalgia	.22**	.16**	.14**	.10*	.06
Efficacy internal	.25**	.−22**	.07	.09	−.19**
Efficacy external	.07	−.17**	.05	.02	−.06
Trust in others	−.18**	−.35 **	−.07	−.08	−.02

Note. Values are correlation coefficients.
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

internal and external efficacy, and interpersonal trust. Starting with reactionism, its strongest correlations are with anti-preferences (.47) and right ideological leaning (.38). In this sense, it presents similarly to authoritarianism which correlates similarly with anti-preferences (.47) and right leaning ideology (.40). Where reactionism differs from authoritarianism is its positive relationship with internal efficacy (.25) and its-negative relationship with trust in others (−.18), which are both not relevant for authoritarianism. Authoritarianism on the other hand has a stronger positive relationship with national pride (27 vs. .19) but is less nostalgic (.09 vs. .22). Comparing reactionism to populist attitudes we find them being even further apart. Populist attitudes, unlike reactionism, have negative relationships with anti-preferences (−.11), and internal political efficacy (−.19), a much weaker association with pride (.09), and no significant relationship with ideology, nostalgia, external efficacy, or trust in others.

Turning to *Ressentiment*, its strongest correlations are negative with trust in others (−.35), as well as internal efficacy (−.22) and external efficacy (−.17). *Ressentiment* is weakly nostalgic (.16), sharing this property with reactionism, collective narcissism, and authoritarianism. The absence of a significant correlation between *ressentiment* and ideology supports our expectation that *ressentiment* as an affective response to politics binds to any ideology, and it is not a property of the right.

Collective narcissism presents a weak significant relationship with nostalgia (.14), but does not show links with anti-preferences, ideology, pride, efficacy, or trust in others. This suggests its political content is channeled through its associations with nostalgic political expressions like reactionism, *ressentiment*, and less so authoritarianism.

In Table 4, we focused on the core value properties of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, contrasting them to the values that correlate with authoritarianism and populist attitudes. Core values are useful benchmarks of the psychological profile of key political phenomena as they point to long-lasting and meaningful preferences, which are resistant to change. Consistent with our hypotheses and extant

Table 4. Core Values of the Triad, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes.

	Reactionism	*Ressentiment*	Collective Narcissism	Authoritarianism	Populist Attitudes
Security	.12*	−.03	.03	.25***	−.09*
Conformity	.06	−.08	.01	.20**	−.05
Tradition	.15**	.00	.12**	.24***	.00
Recognition	−.03	−.03	.06	.17***	−.04
Stimulation	−.17***	−.06	−.03	−.10*	−.04
New experiences	−.05	−.09*	.01	.08	.02
Self-direction	−.06	−.18***	−.06	.10*	−.12**
Autonomy	−.05	−.16***	−.03	.13**	−.07

Note. Values are correlation coefficients.
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

studies in the field, is our finding that reactionism correlates negatively with stimulation (−.17) and positively with security (.12) and tradition (.15). It is through this link with security and tradition that reactionism relates to authoritarianism, which has a stronger relationship with both (.25, .24), joined by the typical property of authoritarianism: conformity (.20). Authoritarianism, as expected, had weak positive correlations with the need for recognition (.17), autonomy (.13), and self-direction (.10). Their positive sign at first appears counterintuitive based on strong theoretical expectations and empirical evidence that authoritarianism subordinates values of autonomy to collective security and stability (Feldman, 2003). The sacrifice of autonomy for collective security is heightened under threat. Here, in the absence of salient threats, we interpret the desire for autonomy, blended with need for recognition, as evidence of the aggressive "take back control" expressions of authoritarian and nationalistic narratives present in discussions about Brexit, immigration, and the European Union in England at the time of data collection.

Ressentiment was expected to be less political in its value preferences, and has a negative relationship with new experiences (−.09), reflecting aversion for unknown change. The *ressentimentful* victimhood, low agency, and low capacity for action manifests through its negative relationship with self-direction (−.18) and autonomy (−.16). Collective narcissism does not have significant value correlations apart from tradition (.12), which functions as its point of contact with reactionism and authoritarianism. Populist attitudes correlate negatively to self-direction (−.122), which is the only contact point with the values of *ressentiment* and the triad. They also correlate and negatively with security (−.09), in contrast to the anxious nature of authoritarianism and reactionism.

Bringing these analyses together, in Table 5 we ran three OLS regressions with reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism as dependent variables to examine the combined impact of anti-preferences, ideology, values, national pride, nostalgia, interpersonal trust, and internal and external efficacy. This analysis allows us to

Table 5. Predictors of the Anti-Social Triad, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes.

	Reactionism	*Ressentiment*	Collective Narcissism	Authoritarianism	Populist Attitudes
Anti-preferences	.52 (.06)***	.03 (.05)	.01 (.06)	.43 (.06)***	−.08 (.03)*
Ideology (left/right)	.33 (.08)***	−.12 (.06)⁺	−.12 (.08)	.34 (.07)***	−.01 (.04)
Stimulation	−.07 (.03)*	−.01 (.03)	−.01 (.03)	−.01 (.03)	−.02 (.02)
Security	.01 (.03)	−.03 (.03)	−.02 (.03)	.11 (.03)***	−.05 (.02)*
Tradition	.02 (.04)	−.01 (.03)	.09 (.03)**	.04 (.03)	.03 (.02)⁺
National pride	.11 (.06)⁺	.04 (.05)	−.03 (.05)	.23 (.05) ***	.07 (.03)*
Nostalgia	.24 (.08)**	.18 (.06)**	.18 (.07)**	.00 (.07)	.03 (.04)
Trust interpersonal	−.27 (.08) ***	−.44 (.06)***	−.09 (.07)	−.10 (.07)	−.03 (.04)
Efficacy internal	.27 (.05)***	.17 (.04)***	.07 (.05)	.08 (.05)⁺	.10 (.03)***
Efficacy external	.09 (.06)	−.08 (.05)⁺	.10 (.05)⁺	−.04 (.05)	−.05 (.03)
Constant	−.41 (.61)	6.51 (.48)***	4.29 (.56)***	.69 (.56)	5.80 (.33)***
Adj R^2	.36	.08	.03	.33	.06
N	483	483	482	483	483

Note. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in parenthesis. All variables were rescaled to 0–10, with 10 indicating the highest values on the variable.
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, +$p < .1$.

test the predictors of the triad, and compare them to the predictors of authoritarianism and populist attitudes.

In Table 5, we find theoretically consistent relationships. The stronger predictor for reactionism is anti-preferences (.52), and ideology leaning to the right (.33), followed by internal political efficacy (.27), lack of interpersonal trust (−.27), nostalgia (.24), and national pride (.11). We also noticed the negative effects of stimulation (−.07) mapping out the socially precarious essence of the reactionary orientation. The strongest predictors of *ressentiment* were low interpersonal trust (−.44), nostalgia (.18), internal efficacy (.17), and declining external efficacy (−.08). Its ideological leaning to the left (−.12) shows that the passive bitterness and victimhood of *ressentiment* transcends the ideological borders of the right. Collective narcissism is mainly driven by nostalgia (.18), tradition (.09), and a positive relationship with external political efficacy (.10), aligned with the belief that "the British Parliament takes the concerns of persons like me into consideration".

These findings point to interesting dynamics. The aversion of the reactionary orientation for stimulation (−.07) which is a proxy for independent thinking and action, dovetails the external inefficacy of *ressentiment* (−.08). This corresponds with what we know about *ressentiment* in both philosophical and empirical research. *Ressentiment* is a form of passive aggressiveness emerging from perceived incapacity to change states of affairs that produce negative emotions, which a person in *ressentiment* attempts to resolve by changing the meaning of the painful situation in a manner that does not call for action. However, this change of meaning is argued to remain incomplete (Capelos & Demertzis, 2018, 2022; Capelos et al., 2022; Salmela & Capelos, 2021). The sense of internal efficacy in *ressentiment* that one understands the political

Table 6. The Affective Content of the Anti-Social Triad, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes.

	Reactionism	*Ressentiment*	Collective Narcissism	Authoritarianism	Populist Attitudes
Happiness	.01	−.21**	−.01	.06	.08
Hope	.03	−.18**	.04	.03	.12*
Enthusiasm	−.00	−.17**	.05	.05	.12**
Pride	.11**	−.02	.13**	.06	.12*
Guilt	.04	.28**	.13**	−.23**	.10*
Shame	.09*	.28**	.18**	−.20**	.02
Envy	.18**	.41**	.22**	−.16**	.06
Anxiety	.04	.42**	.13**	−.14**	.09*
Despair	.13*	.41**	.16**	−.10*	.10*
Sadness	.09	.40**	.14**	−.08	.06
Anger	.17**	.37**	.16**	−.10*	.13**
Disgust	.21**	.37**	.25**	−.07	.11*
Contempt	.22**	.35**	.23**	−.10*	.16**

Note. Values are correlation coefficients.
***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

system (.17) does not overcome the sense of helplessness and powerlessness in imparting political change. Interesting also is what is not there: the absence of a significant relationship between *ressentiment* and anti-preferences suggests this emotional mechanism is not driven by political issue considerations. What is more, the bitterness and indignation of *ressentiment* does not inspire love for the nation.

Collective narcissism, the mental state we theorized as the outcome of *ressentimentful* transvaluation, displays a sense of external efficacy in the belief that it deserves the attention of the parliament. This points to the significance of charismatic leaders for stimulating action through group mobilization among voters in this mental state. The significant effect of values of tradition suggests collective narcissism aligns with visions of an idealized community in the past. Although it is not necessarily retrospective, in countries in which reactionist politicians have been recently successful, such as the UK, the USA, Russia, Poland, and Hungary, the role of collective narcissism has been demonstrated by studies noting that the imaginable grandness of the collective lies primarily in the past (Lantos & Forgas, 2021; Lipinski & Szabo, 2022; Marchlewska et al., 2018; Sharafutdinova, 2020; Sullivan, 2021; Wimberly, 2018).

How Emotionality Indicators can Separate the Triad from Other Concepts

The affective content of grievance politics has been the subject of extensive theoretical and empirical investigation. The analysis presented in Table 6 shows the distinct

affective profiles of reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism, as well as the affective links between the triad. It also highlights their distinctions from authoritarianism and populist attitudes, which are frequently used as proxies for understanding grievance politics.

Ressentiment is the most affectively loaded concept and correlates with all discrete emotion measures (apart from pride), and mostly with anxiety (.42), envy (.42), despair (.41), sadness (.40), anger and disgust (.37), and contempt (.35). Noteworthy are also the negative associations of *ressentiment* with happiness (−.21), hope (−.18), and enthusiasm (−.17). The bitter and grievance-laden content of *ressentiment* is not surprising and verifies the complex affective profile of this mechanism.

Reactionism presents a much more concentrated affective range around aversive emotions and shows no significant relationship with positive emotionality. It correlates weakly with disgust (.21), contempt (.22), and anger (.17), and links with envy (.18), despair (.13), and shame (.09), taking on some of the bitter and vengeful emotionality of *ressentiment*.

Turning to collective narcissism, its affective loading is primarily negative, apart from a weak positive correlation with feeling proud (.13). Its stronger correlations are with disgust (.25), contempt (.23), and envy (.22). Its association with pride aligns it with reactionism and populist attitudes, a connection that is frequently highlighted in the literature. Its stronger association with guilt, shame, and envy, as well as anxiety, and sadness, serve as its connection to *ressentiment*, highlighting its distinct emotional content from authoritarianism.

What we also found interesting in this analysis of emotionality is the very markedly different affective profile of authoritarianism, in contrast to reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism. Although authoritarianism is not happy, hopeful, or enthusiastic, it presents a negative relationship with aversive and bitter emotionality. It shows has a negative correlation with guilt (−.23), shame (−.20), and envy (−.16). Its relationship with anxious emotions is also negative: it has a weak negative correlation with anxiety (−.14) and despair (−.10), and an equally weak negative relationship with the reproaching emotions that characterize *ressentiment* like anger (−.10), and contempt (−.10). Conversely, populist attitudes exhibit the most positive correlations with hope, enthusiasm, and pride (.12). This positive affectivity is juxtaposed with weak correlations with aversive emotions such as contempt (.16), anger (.13), and disgust (.11), guilt (.10), and anxiety-laced despair (.10).

Discussion: Key Findings, Limitations and Extensions

In our study, we delved into the intricate conceptual and empirical interconnections among reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism. We emphasised their differences from authoritarianism and underscored their combined explanatory power in understanding populist attitudes. We conceptualized reactionism as an enduring orientation characterized by a backward-looking perspective, where individuals seek solace in what feels like a familiar and non-threatening past. *Ressentiment* was understood as an emotional mechanism arising from envy, inefficacious anger or shame, stemming from

the inability to become what one desires, when one lacks the psychic strength to acknowledge what one is, or to strive for what one wants to be. Lastly, collective narcissism was defined as a universal psychological/mental state, marked by the immersion in a fantasy realm offering affirmation and adulation, in contrast to experiences of disdain or neglect.

We utilized survey data to operationalize and evaluate the performance of a novel 8-item reactionism scale, along with shortened versions of *ressentiment* and collective narcissism scales drawn from existing research. Our analysis centered on examining the empirical connections within what we term "the anti-social triad," as well as examining its psychological manifestations. Our findings confirmed theoretical expectations, demonstrating that reactionism is associated with anti-preferences, values of tradition, security, and opposition to stimulation, low efficacy, and distrust. Additionally, in the English context, we observed a correlation between reactionism and right-wing ideological leanings. Furthermore, *ressentiment* was marked by bitter emotions such as envy, shame, and anger, revealing its intrinsic political ineffectiveness through its negative association with external efficacy. Lastly, we uncovered connections between collective narcissism, the nostalgic tendencies of reactionism, and the embittered emotionality of *ressentiment*.

Empirically, the operationalization of such complex psychological processes poses a significant challenge. Recognizing the complexities inherent in operationalizing reactionism, we considerable effort to navigating its theoretical intricacies. Although we approached our task with caution and acknowledge the value of the novel scale we developed, we remain cognizant of the inherent limitations in fully capturing the essence of reactionism, *ressentiment,* and collective narcissism, through empirical measurement. It is evident that these constructs possess nuanced dimensions that may not be fully encapsulated by quantitative methods, thereby posing an ongoing challenge for scholars who focus on their empirical understanding.

Concerns regarding the measurement of *ressentiment* persist when relying on static survey data. The dynamic transvaluation process inherent in *ressentiment* can be witnessed in the shifts of self-images from negative to positive, and in the changes of core desires and values. To address these complexities, future research could employ longitudinal analyses, experimental studies, and qualitative designs, allowing for over-time comparisons. Such approaches can examine patterns of change and explore whether identities associated with self-targeting negative emotions in *ressentiment* become precarious, whereas other identities linked to positive self-views (nationality, religion, gender) and their associated values become more attractive and salient (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). These social identities are emphasized in the cultural backlash approach to populism (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Although our study highlights the intricate affective content of ressentiment, further insights can be gained through interviews, focus groups, and narrative analyses, shedding light on the affective richness of *ressentimentful* reactions and their collective expressions (Sullivan, 2021; Capelos et al., 2021). Although reactionism, *ressentiment*, and collective narcissism have traditionally been treated as distinct phenomena in the literature, they are intricately intertwined. This interconnectedness forms the basis of our conceptualization of these constructs as a triad, operating within a perpetual feedback loop. However, we

emphasize that our intention is not to advocate for, or empirically test, a specific order of causal relations within this triad.

Conclusion: Democracy in the Era of Grievance Politics

In contextualizing our findings within the broader sociopolitical landscape, we acknowledge that the anti-social triad of grievance politics emerges as a response to profound frustrations and suffering, resulting from social abandonment, maltreatment, humiliation, and injustice. As Winnicott (1950) observed, psychological and sociopolitical realities are intimately intertwined and can be distorted or denied in response to mental pain. Depersonalization, the psychological tactic of viewing others as automata, robots, devoid of feelings or ideas, often emerges as a means of preserving security and mitigating pain (Salmela & Capelos, 2021). This phenomenon is frequently evident in conspiracy theories such as QAnon's assertions about celebrities being robots (Thompson, 2021) and anti-feminist Incel narratives within the manosphere (Capelos et al., 2023; Capelos et al., 2024). These examples underscore an inability to reconcile the complexities of reality, leading to dichotomous perceptions of others seen as "all-good" and "all-bad" entities. Beneath this inability could lie profound anxiety, heightened stress, and frustration, often manifesting as aggression toward those perceived as "unfamiliar others." Studies indicate that individuals exhibiting collective narcissism tend to form superficial bonds with like-minded peers (Gronfeldt et al., 2023), suggesting a tendency toward in-group superficiality and outgroup depersonalization among reactionaries in *ressentiment*. This hypothesis warrants further exploration to deepen our understanding of these complex phenomena.

We propose that the psychological dynamics encapsulated within the anti-social triad offer insights into the spiteful and malevolent polarization prevalent in populist states (Mason, 2018). When our experience of the world can no longer be shared beyond our peers, we "live in a world of our own" where "the others" are depersonalized, and the contact with reality is low (Laing, 1959, p. 43). According to Winnicott (1950, p. 185), "anti-socials find a prosocial tendency by active fighting." Our analysis suggests that the apparent contradiction in their behavior can be explained by the psychological dynamics within the triad: individuals experiencing *ressentiment* find solace and euphoria through the communal sharing of their bitter emotions during crises. This compensatory function of social sharing is evident in the analysis of Incel narratives within the manosphere (Capelos et al., 2023; Capelos et al., 2024). Thus, the schadenfreude displayed by those inhabiting anti-social spaces—both online and offline—as they express joy, elation, and glee amidst crises and conflicts, may reflect a latent prosocial tendency facilitated by their interactions with peers, rather than stemming from a purported "need for chaos" (Petersen et al., 2020).

In conclusion, we caution against attributing populism as the sole origin of grievance politics. When political projects like Trumpism in the United States, or Orbanism in Hungary, become emotional movements based on a blend of personalization and personification, combined with conspiratorial thinking, anti-establishment sentiment, and affective polarization (Hochschild, 2016; Mason, 2018; Nai et al., 2019), they tap

into fundamental needs and grievances of the populace. Political strategies and policies that neglect, or exploit, these frustrations encompassed within the anti-social triad of grievance politics risk exacerbating depersonalization, unrelatedness, and antisocial tendencies, fostering a culture of vengeance which promotes the targeting of vulnerable groups. To foster healthier political discourse and societal well-being, it is imperative to implement socially responsible and emotionally attuned policies that acknowledge and address political grievances. This approach empowers individuals and communities to mature politically, engage in constructive dialogue and seek solutions that benefit society as a whole.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. *Ressentiment* has been identified as a symptom of the culture of narcissism, linked also to cynicism. For an in-depth discussion see Lasch (1979) and Demertzis (2020).
2. Reactionism has also been discussed by political theorists and historians through the narratives of reactionary leaders (see Hirschman, 1991; King, 2012; Lilla, 2016; Robin, 2011; Shorten, 2019).
3. Our understanding of (collective) narcissism as a state draws from Klein's (1952) theorization of narcissism in the context of "object relations" as a psychological *state*, which can be temporary or long-lasting, involves the love of an internalized "idealized" object, and conceals anxiety and self-disintegration. Kleinian theory sees infantile primary narcissism as a basic psychic configuration, and indeed a normal developmental stage of all individuals, thus universal. Lasch moves from primary to secondary narcissism and explains how it presents in political and social life when it is collectivized. Linked to sociopolitical conditions, secondary narcissism is seen as the starting point for political malaise. Lasch (1969) met Kleinian theory when he noted that narcissism, by repressing and concealing shame, is much closer to (concealed) self-punishment than self-love.

4. Here, we make a distinction between personal ego-strength (experienced by an individual) and collective ego-strength (experienced by an individual as a group member). Low personal ego-strength can be experienced by an individual that has low self-esteem and low sense of self-worth, whereas low collective ego-strength corresponds to the low collective self-esteem experienced when one's group is perceived as devalued, mistreated, and undermined (e.g., the UK Brexit voters, feeling devalued and mistreated by the EU).

5. See also Lasswell (1977) and Sniderman (1975) for elaborations on how democratic character linked to secure feelings or self-worth translates to democratic politics.

6. Although the discussion of envy as an affective elicitor of *ressentiment* is certainly useful for the readers here, we also clarify that *ressentiment* as an emotional mechanism is not reducible to envy. *Ressentiment* can also originate from inefficacious anger, humiliation, or shame, and it delivers transvaluation through complex psychic defenses. It is more than an envious attack on the object; it constitutes a mechanism by which the value of the object is revised, and the value of the self is also changed, from efficacious to a morally righteous victim.

7. Eight value items (security, conformity, tradition, recognition, stimulation, new experiences, self-direction, and autonomy) are from Schwartz (2006) Portrait Values Questionnaire. For more details, refer to Online Appendix, Section A4.

8. We measured 13 discrete emotion items: happiness, hope, enthusiasm, personal pride, guilt, shame, envy, anxiety, despair, sadness, anger, disgust, and contempt.

9. We used 4 of the 6-item Very Short Authoritarianism scale developed by Bizumic and Duckitt (2018), which abbreviates the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale proposed by Altemeyer (1988). The alpha reliability coefficient is .75 ($N = 486$). For more details, refer to Online Appendix, Section A5.

10. We used the 9-item version of the populist attitude scale developed by Castanho Silva and colleagues (2018) with alpha reliability coefficient .38 ($N = 486$). For more details, refer to Online Appendix, Section A6.

11. Anti-preferences were measured by five items: anti-EU, anti-migration, anti-science, anti-globalization, and climate change denial. The anti-preferences scale alpha reliability was .53 ($N = 493$). For details, refer to Online Appendix, Section A7.

12. Internal political efficacy measured agreement with "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" (reversed); external political efficacy measured agreement with "The British Parliament takes the concerns of persons like me into consideration."

13. For scholars who seek a parsimonious measure, we propose a condensed, three-item version of the Reactionism scale created with the best scale predictors: R_used: I long to live today the way we used to; R_restore: We need to restore society to the way it used to be; R_olddays: The best ideas in politics are those that bring back the good old days. The alpha reliability of the Reactionism Mini scale is .86. For all analyses here, we use the eight-item reactionism scale with alpha reliability .95.

14. For more details on scale construction tests (inter-item correlations, item reduction, internal coherence, and performance), please refer to Online Appendix, Section A1.

15. The items are: (Res1) There are people who live a better-off life than me despite having made less of an effort (resentment); (Res2) There are many "Mr. Nobodies" who look like great men. (transvaluation); (Res3) I often think that people abuse my kindness (victimization*)*; (Res4) I have been often unjustly accused of things that have not been my fault (victimization through deflection of responsibility, *new item*); (Res5) I often think that

people are disrespectful towards me (powerlessness*)*; (Res6) When things turn out badly, I sometimes ask myself "why me" (injustice); (Res7) I believe that my hopes and dreams will never come true (destiny*)*; (All items ranged from 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. Inter-item correlations (refer to Online Appendix, Section A2, Table A7) do not rise above .58. The reliability statistic did not improve by deleting any of the items.

16. The remaining items were: (1) I wish other groups would more quickly recognize the authority of my group; (2). I insist upon my group getting the respect that is due to it; (3) I do not get upset when people do not notice the achievements of my group (reversed); and (4) the true worth of my group is often misunderstood (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). For more details, see Online Appendix, Section A3.

17. Collective narcissism is often measured in reference to one's national group and is referred to as *national collective narcissism*. Our measure of collective narcissism is content-free, departing from nation or ethnic group approximations. The content-free measure offers participants the opportunity to select the content of their answer by choosing their political group's referent point and to avoid conflating collective narcissism with nation-centric orientations. For a discussion and measures of national and partisan collective narcissism, see Bocian et al. (2021).

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