

A Self-Paced Study Guide for
the Presbytery of East Iowa

WEEK THIRTEEN - Theme for the Week

Caught in an Illusion

Readings from *Caste*

Ch. 19 – *The Euphoria of Hate*

Ch. 20 – The Inevitable Narcissism of Caste

Ch. 21 – The German Girl with the Dar, Wavy Hair

Scripture

2 Timothy 3:2-5

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

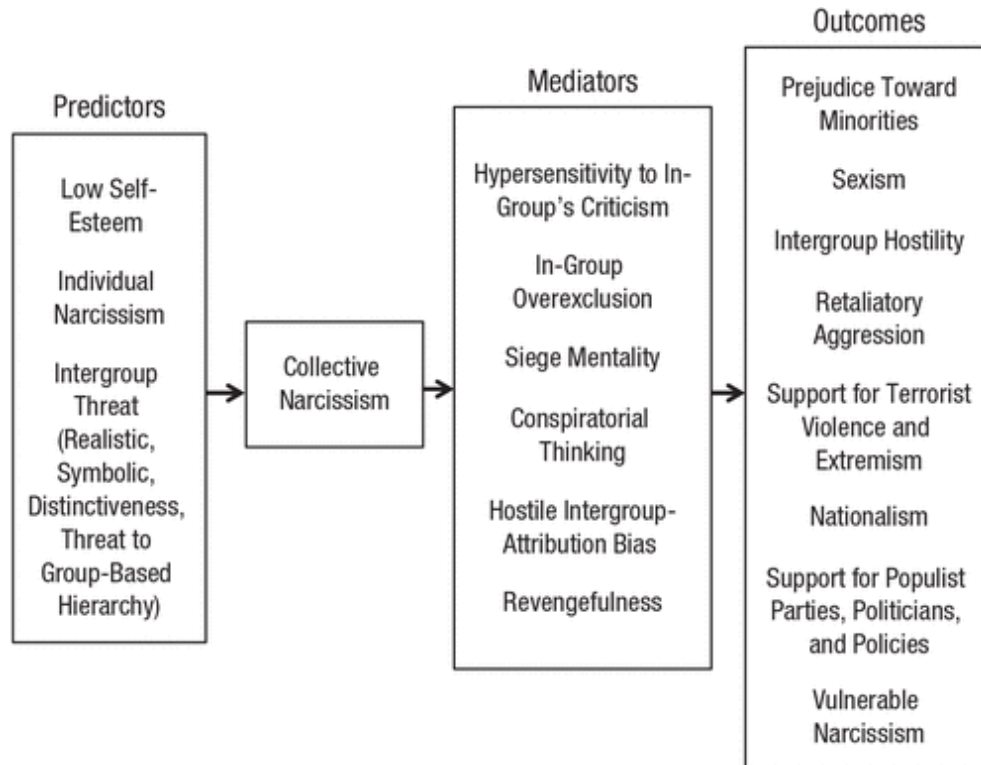
Genesis 1:27

So God created humans in his own image, in the image of God he created them. . . .

Question for Reflection

In your journal or in your discussion group, discuss the following question:

Reflect carefully on this chart that diagrams groups narcissism



Erich Fromm wrote about how group narcissism – membership in a larger group determines self-worth, hatred of others, and belief in one's own self-importance – leads to fascism. How has that played out in America in the last few decades?

Action Steps

Here are five techniques that groups use to achieve domination:

1. **Making invisible:** silencing and marginalizing people by ignoring them. It includes for instance reformulating a colleague's idea as one's own, taking the floor when it is another one's turn to speak or not paying attention (e.g. by talking, browsing through papers or checking e-mails) while someone else is speaking.
2. **Ridicule:** portraying someone else's arguments in a ridiculing way, or commenting on someone's appearance.
3. **Withholding information:** sharing information among an inner circle, without telling everyone concerned. For instance making decisions not at the board meeting where everyone is present, but in a small group at the bar afterwards.
4. **Double bind:** putting people in a situation in which they will be belittled and penalized whichever alternative they choose or regardless of how they act. For example, when a person does a thorough job at work, there are complaints for being too slow. Yet, when the work is done more quickly, there is criticism for being sloppy.
5. **Blaming and shaming:** embarrassing someone, or insinuating that they are themselves to blame for their position.

And here are some tools to respond to the use of these techniques:

1. **Look around you** and make sure that everyone is truly seen and heard. Use your own power and agency to provide visibility to those who are silenced or marginalized.
 2. **Listen carefully** for comments that ridicule others, and speak up to urge civility
 3. **Ask questions** in a civil way to ensure that all stakeholders have appropriate information.
 4. **Work to establish common standards** that apply to everyone in the same way and invite everyone who will be subject to these standards to collaborate in creating them.
 5. **Establish group norms and values** that respect everyone's dignity and "call in" those who engage in blaming and shaming,
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