

10-6-2006

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Ashley Ginter
Trinity University

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A Separate Peace Revisited: Reactions to Having Hurt an Envied Other

Ashley Ginter

**A departmental honors thesis submitted to the
Department of Psychology at Trinity University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with departmental honors**

October 6, 2006

Thesis Advisor

Chair of the Department

**Associate Vice President
For Academic Affairs**

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Abstract

This study investigated how individuals, and narcissists in particular, respond when they bring harm to someone they envy, and what they do in response to the harm that they caused. We examined how high versus low levels of responsibility for harming an envied person would affect levels of schadenfreude (i.e., pleasure at other's suffering), guilt and prosocial behavior. We expected that narcissists would display more schadenfreude, less guilt, and less prosocial behavior than nonnarcissists, even when they were made to feel responsible for the downfall of the person. Results showed a significant relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude, with narcissists experiencing more schadenfreude than less narcissistic individuals. No relationship was found between narcissism and guilt or prosocial behavior. Responsibility did not affect schadenfreude, guilt, or prosocial behavior.

Introduction

Over the years, John Knowles' renowned novel, *A Separate Peace*, has been a staple in many American high school classrooms. This book tells the story of Gene, an intellectually gifted student who becomes best friends with Phineas (aka Finny)—a popular, athletically gifted student. Gene grows jealous of Finny's natural abilities and charm and soon begins to resent and despise him. While standing on a tree limb with Finny, Gene shakes the branches, causing Finny to fall and permanently injure his leg. Although the incident is viewed by all (but Gene) to be an accident, Gene begins to feel deep guilt over his actions. He visits Finny, trying to take full blame for the accident, but is kept from doing so by the doctor, who interrupts Gene and sends Finny home. Gene continues to visit Finny, eventually training for the Olympics in Finny's place—attempting to “become a part of Phineas.”

This story illustrates the central investigation of the present study—to examine how people respond when they cause harm to those they envy, and what they do in response to the harm they have caused. Past research has demonstrated people's enjoyment of seeing envied others brought down or lowered in status—a phenomenon referred to as 'schadenfreude' (Feather & Sherman, 2002; Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003; Smith, Turner, & Garonzik, 1996). This reduction of the envied other's status, however, was often seen in one's mind, as opposed to in reality. In other words, people may derogate envied individuals or rationalize away their superiority rather than cause their actual status to change. The present study, by contrast, looked at how people respond once they have, in actuality, caused the other person harm.

A sequence of events leads to the individual's response to having caused harm to the envied other. The catalyst of this sequence is the individual encountering an upward comparison—such as Gene meeting Finny. This leads to an emotional threat—seen in Gene's envy of Finny's natural abilities and charisma—to which the individual must respond. At this point, individuals could take a number of different actions in response. For example, they could diminish the superiority of the other in their mind or choose to actually cause harm to the other person. In Gene's case, he caused real physical harm. There are two main emotional responses that individuals may experience as a result of having succeeded in their goal of harming the envied individual. The person may feel pleased about no longer having the previously envied other as an ego threat. However, he or she may also feel guilt over having caused the person harm. (Clearly, this was the response of Gene.) Finally, individuals may respond to this new emotion that they are experiencing. In Gene's case, he responded to his guilt with prosocial behavior—visiting Finny and trying to fulfill Finny's dreams for him.

Derogation of Upward Comparison Targets

Numerous studies have examined how individuals respond to superior others. When confronted by an ego-threatening upward comparison, individuals can neutralize the threat by making it less relevant to themselves, by decreasing the closeness of the other, or by bringing the superior other down (Tesser & Collins, 1988). Making the threat less relevant is often done in one's own mind while decreasing closeness or bringing the other person down can be done either through mental rationalization or behavior.

Rationalizing the threat may involve making the focus of the threat less relevant to the individual's own self-concept. This was demonstrated by Mussweiler, Gabriel, and Bodenhausen (2000) who found that when outperformed by another, individuals emphasized those aspects that made them different from the superior other. Specifically, Caucasian women, when outperformed by an Asian woman, focused more on their differing ethnic identities than their shared gender.

The individual may also decrease the ego threat by decreasing the closeness between him or herself and the superior other. The most obvious form of this is putting physical distance between the two. However, this is also accomplished through increasing the superiority of the other, a phenomenon known as the genius effect. The genius effect (Alicke, 1997) maintains that by making the superior other exceptionally amazing, the individual raises him or her to a level of expertise or proficiency to the point where he or she is no longer comparable. For example, Alicke found that people exaggerated the abilities of others who beat them and Shepperd and Taylor (1999) demonstrated that individuals occasionally ascribe advantages to a target of upward comparison in order to make the two more dissimilar. In this way, if the superior person outperforms the individual, it is possible to ascribe their worse performance to a difference in advantages, rather than to a lack of ability. This is seen, for example, when a tennis player infers that his or her loss is due to the opponent's better coach, more practice time or better racket, rather than a real difference in ability.

Finally, when faced with a superior other, an individual has the option of actually decreasing the prestige of the person, or bringing that person down. This has often been demonstrated as happening in the person's mind (Gibbons & McCoy, 1991; Wills, 1981).

For example, Gibbons and McCoy found that individuals derogated upward comparison targets by rating them as less likable. Derogation of the envied other is seen, for example, when the tennis player who has lost his or her match says that the other player may be talented in tennis, but is overweight and unsociable.

While past research has often focused on the mental denigration of superior others, it is also possible for the person to be brought down in reality. Some people may choose this method more often than others. One group that has been shown to have a greater predisposition to bringing others down is narcissists. Marked by their inflated self-views, high aggression towards threatening others, and low sense of guilt and empathy (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavolic, 2004; Twenge & Campbell, 2003), narcissists make ideal targets for an investigation of the derogation of upward comparative targets. Many studies have demonstrated a tendency for narcissists to react negatively in threatening upward comparative situations. For example, Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) provided evidence that when informed that they had been outperformed on an ego-threatening task, narcissists rated the threatening individual negatively.

Responses to Having Derogated an Upward Comparison Target

Once people have succeeded in bringing harm to an envied other, they may feel satisfied. They had experienced a negative emotion (that of envy or ego threat) and they have successfully eliminated it. Indeed, people often experience schadenfreude: pleasure at the suffering of impressive others. For example, schadenfreude might be experienced in response to the top student in one's class failing a quiz or Martha Stewart being imprisoned.

Smith, Turner, and Garonzik (1996) explored the relationship between envy and schadenfreude. They studied how participants responded when a superior student—the object of envy—suffered a setback. They found that the more envy the participant had, the more schadenfreude he or she experienced. Simply disliking the student was also found to predict schadenfreude. Leach, Spears, Branscombe, and Doosje (2003) found that Dutch participants reported experiencing schadenfreude upon hearing about a German loss in soccer. The more interest the participant had in soccer and the more threatened he or she felt by Dutch inferiority, the more schadenfreude he or she experienced. They measured schadenfreude by having participants rate themselves on emotional terms, such as happiness and satisfaction. Smith, Parrott, and Diener (1999) also found that dispositional envy predicted the amount of schadenfreude participants felt after negative feedback from an advantaged other.

An alternative possible response to having caused the person harm would be guilt (instead of satisfaction). Instead of feeling happy about his or her success in eliminating the ego threat, the person has now replaced envy with guilt. It is possible that the offender who feels guilt will engage in prosocial behavior in order to relieve it (e.g., Baumeister, Heatherton, & Stillwell, 1994; Lindsey, 2005).

Some people are less likely to experience guilt than others. Those people who are most likely to experience guilt are those who also experience empathy (Ferguson, Stegge, Miller, & Olsen, 1999). Narcissists are recognized for both their lack of guilt and empathy (Watson, Grisham, Trotter, & Biderman, 1984). Watson and Morris (1991) also found that empathy negatively correlated with the exploitativeness and entitlement

dimensions of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Hall & Raskin, 1979)¹. Similarly, Montebarroci, Surcinelli, Baldaro, Trombini, and Rossi (2004) found a negative correlation between narcissism and guilt.

Present Study

In past studies, one of the key elements in the examination of schadenfreude is that the person has had no role in the downfall of the envied other (Leach et al., 2003). However, a response of happiness versus guilt would likely vary depending on whether the person had played a large or small role in causing the misfortune—an aspect that has never before been investigated. The present study examined how the influence of playing a large or small role in bringing down a superior other affected participants' ability to experience schadenfreude versus guilt. We expected that playing a significant role in the misfortune of the other would lead to less schadenfreude and more guilt, primarily for those who are low in narcissism. Narcissists, we predicted, would feel a higher level of schadenfreude and less guilt than would nonnarcissists, despite their role in the downfall.

One of the key goals of this study was to examine the relationship of narcissism to schadenfreude. No previous research has examined the relationship between these factors. Past research has shown that narcissists experience less empathy and aggression more towards superior others than do less narcissistic individuals. Therefore, we predicted that narcissists would experience more schadenfreude and less guilt after bringing harm to the applicant than non-narcissists. We also expected narcissists to have

¹ The NPI is a 40-item measurement that can be subdivided into seven subscales; Authority, Exhibitionism, Superiority, Vanity, Exploitativeness, Entitlement, and Self-Sufficiency (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

lower levels of prosocial behavior in response to having caused harm than non-narcissists, due to their lower guilt.

The study presented participants with an exceptional job applicant and gave them an opportunity to evaluate the applicant. Depending on experiment condition, the participants were told that their decisions would be very influential or not on this applicant's chances of being hired. The participants were then informed that their rating of the applicant was negative in comparison with other evaluations, and would likely hurt the applicant's ability to get the job. We examined their levels of schadenfreude and guilt after they had learned of their harmful effect on the applicant. Finally, we gave them the opportunity to rate the applicant again and tested subsequent prosocial behavior indicated by way of an enhanced evaluation of the applicant.

Method

Participants

The participants consisted of 66 female undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course. The upward comparison target in our study was female, and we chose to run only female participants because male participants could not easily be recruited and we wanted to use a same-sex comparison target. The total number of participants does not include fourteen participants who were eliminated from analyses. Four of these 14 participants were eliminated either because of computer malfunctions or because they reported to the experimenter that they had misunderstood instructions. Five participants were eliminated because they correctly guessed the hypothesis of the study. Five participants were eliminated for scoring the applicant so highly that their evaluation could not conceivably have negatively affected the applicant. (On a scale of 0-100, all

scores at 90 and above were eliminated.) Students received class credit for their participation in the study.

Materials and Procedure

First Questionnaire. Participants first filled out a questionnaire, which examined the participant's levels of narcissism and self-esteem using the NPI ($M= 15.65$, $SD= 7.53$; Cronbach's $\alpha= .87$) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($M= 52.35$, $SD= 9.65$; Cronbach's $\alpha= .85$; RSE; Rosenberg, 1965).

Cover Story. Once participants had completed the first questionnaire, the cover story was explained. They were informed that each psychology lab at their university had one student lab manager—a competitive and prestigious position—and a number of lab assistants. These positions, the experimenter explained, are open to psychology majors who apply for them. In the previous year, this particular lab had ostensibly run a study during the time that they were hiring students. The study had looked at the influence of different factors on evaluations of applicants. Because the study was a success, a new study was being conducted again this year. Participants were told that this year's study was designed to test how people form first impressions based on descriptive information. The second purpose of the study was ostensibly to make better hiring decisions by using the educated evaluations of students. The experimenter explained that the participants were going to evaluate one of the applicants for the job and that their evaluations would later be taken into consideration during the hiring process because the participants had not met the applicant and were, therefore, theoretically less biased.

Experiment Conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to either the high responsibility or low responsibility conditions. In the high responsibility condition,

participants learned that they were one of only two participants whose evaluations would be considered in hiring the applicant. In the low responsibility condition, participants were told that they were just one of thirty participants whose evaluations would be considered. This allowed us to manipulate the level of responsibility participants felt they had over the applicant's likelihood of being hired. In other words, the participant was told that she was going to have either a very influential effect or a less important effect on the applicant.

Lab Manager Evaluation. Once the premise of the study had been explained, the participant was given an application and recommendation letter of an applicant to review (See Appendixes A and B for full set of materials). The application had been filled out before the experiment began, allegedly by the applicant. The application consisted of 19 responses to questions that inquired about such things as the student's academic performance, athletic ability, and leadership skills. The answers to the application questions revealed that the applicant excelled in all three of these domains. A photocopy of a fake student identification card was also attached to the application in order to present the applicant as an attractive female. The applicant was made attractive and athletic in order to prevent the participants from decreasing the threat of the applicant by concluding that she was a stereotypical "nerd." The recommendation letter, supposedly written by a psychology professor, was positive except for one brief criticism of the applicant's sensitivity in leading people. The participant was also given an audio recording of an interview with the applicant, which was a one-minute audio clip from an interview with the applicant that presented the applicant as self-assured and successful, although a bit arrogant. We included an audio clip as part of the evaluation in order to

give participants an ambiguous source of information about the applicant that they could interpret in different ways. This, along with making the applicant slightly arrogant and including a critique in the recommendation letter, was done in order to avoid ceiling effects in the evaluations of the applicant. It was expected that less narcissistic individuals would rate the applicant more positively, despite the arrogance, while narcissists would use the applicants' arrogance as an excuse to negatively rate her.

After taking a few moments to review the application, read the recommendation letter, and listen to the interview clip, the participant completed an evaluation of the applicant (See Appendix C). This evaluation allowed the participant to rate the applicant on 13 different positive characteristics such as kindness, patience, and dependability. At the end of the evaluation, participants were asked two questions regarding whether the professor should hire the applicant and whether the participant would hire the applicant. These two questions were answered on a 100-point scale (participants were told that 50 and above was a positive evaluation and 70 represented “outstanding”) and were explained to be the most influential questions on the evaluation. The endpoints on the 100-point scale were not defined in order to avoid ceiling effects in participant evaluations. The score of 70 was defined as “outstanding” to give participants more freedom in what scores could be viewed as positive versus exceptionally positive, and to avoid having participants view the 100-point scale as a standard grading range, such as 90-100 being an A. In this way, we could make participants believe that their evaluation of the applicant was average in comparison to other evaluations and, as a result, harmful.

Second Questionnaire. Once the lab manager evaluation was completed, the applicant filled out a second questionnaire (See Appendix D). This questionnaire was

explained to have no influence on the applicant's chances of being hired—it was simply being used to further investigate the participant's views of the applicant. The questionnaire examined how much the participant liked the applicant, felt threatened by the applicant, and felt envious of the applicant. The questionnaire also gauged the participant's levels of guilt, responsibility and schadenfreude.

Halfway through the questionnaire, participants were informed that, in comparison to other evaluations by past students, they had given the applicant a negative evaluation. Those applicants who were hired last year (they were told) received an average score of 96 out of 100 on these two questions. Participants who had given the applicant a score lower than 96, therefore, could conclude that their score, in comparison, was negative and could cause the applicant to lose the job. Following this, a questionnaire again recorded participants' emotional states, such as feelings of happiness, guilt, and responsibility.

Lab Assistant Evaluation. Finally, the participant filled out a second evaluation of the applicant, this time for the position of lab assistant (See Appendix E). This evaluation was almost identical to the first one, consisting of 46 questions that allowed the participant to rate the applicant on a number of different qualities, and ended with two questions about whether or not the applicant should be hired. These questions were presented as being the most influential part of their evaluation. This evaluation would be used (they were told) if the applicant did not have a high enough score to qualify for lab manager. It was (in reality) compared to the first evaluation to see if the applicant had changed her view of the applicant due to guilt at giving her a negative evaluation.

Prosocial behavior was operationally defined as the difference between the second evaluations' scores and the first evaluations' scores.

Operational Definitions. A measure of overall envy of the applicant was created by combining participants' self-reported envy of the applicant both before and after learning of their negative effect on the applicant (Cronbach's alpha= .69). Schadenfreude was operationally defined as a combination of four measurements. These measurements consisted of participants' self-reported levels of feeling "happy," "good," "satisfied," and "sad" and were taken directly after participants learned of their negative effect on the applicant (Cronbach's alpha= .73).

Summary of Design. The primary between-subjects factors were responsibility and narcissism² and the main dependent variables were reported levels of schadenfreude, envy, and guilt, and the evaluation scores. We predicted that narcissists would experience more schadenfreude, more envy, and less guilt than less narcissistic individuals, regardless of their level of responsibility. Less narcissistic individuals, in contrast, were expected to be highly influenced by the responsibility manipulation. As opposed to narcissists, they should experience a moderate amount of schadenfreude and less guilt when low in responsibility, but their schadenfreude would be replaced by guilt when they were in the high responsibility condition.

² The "narcissists" examined in this study are narcissistic according to the Narcissism Personality Inventory. In other words, they had relatively high levels of narcissism compared with other participants sampled. Clearly the narcissists we studied are found in a normal population and are not likely to have symptoms as extreme as those shown by individuals with narcissistic personality disorder.

Results

Manipulation Checks

A manipulation check verified that most participants remembered that hired applicants from the year before had received an average score of 96, with 57 of the 66 participants (86%) remembering the exact score. Participants' recall of their own evaluation scores was also strongly correlated with the actual scores that they gave the applicant, $r(64) = .69, p < .001$. Although only 27 of the 66 participants (41%) remembered their score exactly, 50 of the 66 participants' estimates of their own evaluation scores were only five or fewer away from their actual score ($M_{diff} = 4.07, SD = 10.47$).

Those participants in the high responsibility condition reported feeling slightly more responsibility ($M = 4.84, SD = 2.07$) than participants in the low responsibility condition ($M = 4.17, SD = 2.74$), but this difference was not statistically significant, $t(64) = 1.11, ns$. This suggests that either participants did not take note of how many other participants were evaluating the applicant besides them, or that they did but another factor determined the extent to which they felt personal responsibility.

An examination of the means for the NPI revealed an unequal distribution of narcissists between the two responsibility conditions. Although participants were randomly assigned to conditions, by chance somewhat higher levels of narcissism were found in the high responsibility condition ($M = 17.06, SD = 7.55$), compared with the low responsibility condition ($M = 14.40, SD = 7.41$), $t(64) = 1.71, p = .09$.

Effects of Responsibility Manipulation

We hypothesized that participants' level of responsibility for the applicant's reduced likelihood of being hired for the job would affect participants' levels of schadenfreude, their prosocial behavior, and their reported guilt. However, we found no evidence to support this. A 2 (responsibility: high or low) x 2 (narcissism: high or low) ANOVA³ was conducted for each of the dependent variables. The responsibility manipulation did not significantly affect any of the dependent variables, either by itself or as part of an interaction. Covarying out self-esteem did not change these findings. As a result, none of the following analyses described will involve the responsibility manipulation.

Schadenfreude

One of the key goals of this study was to examine the extent to which narcissists felt schadenfreude. A correlational analysis revealed a significant relationship between narcissism and schadenfreude, with narcissists experiencing more schadenfreude than those lower in narcissism, $r(64) = .29, p = .02$. This effect existed even when covarying out self-esteem, confirming that it was narcissism, and not self-esteem, which was responsible for this effect. This finding supports our hypothesis that narcissists experience more schadenfreude at the setbacks of others than less narcissistic individuals. Self-esteem alone was not significantly related to schadenfreude, $r(64) = .15, p = .22$.

We expected that those participants with less guilt and more envy of the applicant would experience more schadenfreude. These predictions were generally supported. Participants who felt more schadenfreude also felt more envy of the participant, $r(64) =$

³ ANOVAs used to examine interactions used a median split for narcissism. When interactions were not examined, as with correlational analyses, no median split was used.

.34, $p = .01$, and marginally less guilt after learning of their negative effect on the applicant, $r(64) = -.21$, $p = .09$.

Evaluation Scores

We predicted that narcissists would evaluate applicants more negatively than less narcissistic individuals, but found no support for this prediction. Narcissists were actually slightly more likely to recommend hiring the applicant, $r(64) = .22$, $p = .07$. Although not significant, this relationship was in the opposite direction than was expected. Narcissists were slightly more likely to evaluate the applicant more positively for the lab manager position, $r(64) = .21$, $p = .10$. This relationship was even stronger when isolating two components of the NPI. Applicant evaluations were positively correlated with the subscales of superiority, $r(64) = .33$, $p = .01$, and vanity, $r(64) = .37$, $p = .002$.

A similar trend was found for the second evaluation of the applicant (for the position of lab assistant). Although narcissism in general was not significantly related to a more positive evaluation on the second evaluation, $r(64) = .15$, $p = .24$, the same sub-components of the NPI were significantly related to giving a more positive evaluation. Specifically, evaluations for the second evaluation (for the lab assistant position) were positively related to the subscales of superiority, $r(64) = .32$, $p = .01$, and vanity, $r(64) = .33$, $p = .01$. As before, these findings were not in the expected direction. The relationships between the subscales of superiority and vanity and both evaluations existed even when covarying for self-esteem.

Narcissism was expected to be negatively related to prosocial behavior. In other words, narcissists were expected to exhibit smaller increases in their evaluation scores

from the first evaluation to the second compared with participants lower in narcissism. A 2 (narcissism: high or low) x 2 (evaluation scores: pre and post) mixed-design ANOVA found no statistically reliable relationship between narcissism and prosocial behavior, $F(1,64)= 2.03, p= .16$. This relationship was not changed when covarying for guilt, although a moderate relationship was found between prosocial behavior and guilt, $r(64)= .24, p= .06$. Overall, participants rated the applicant more positively on the second evaluation for lab assistant, ($M= 83.37, SD= 15.52$), than on the first evaluation for lab manager ($M= 73.72, SD= 12.76$), $F(1,64)= 53.07, p < .001$. This indicates that either participants, narcissists and nonnarcissists alike, exhibited prosocial behavior after learning of their negative impact on the applicant, or they rated the applicant more positively due to the differences between the position of lab manager and lab assistant.

Interestingly, despite their more positive evaluations of the applicant, narcissists were more likely than nonnarcissists to indicate belief in their superiority over the applicant, $r(64)= .35, p= .004$. This finding is consistent with past research indicating that narcissists are arrogant.

Guilt and Envy

Past research has found that narcissists are less prone to guilt. Narcissism was negatively, though not significantly, correlated with guilt levels before participants found out about their negative effect on the applicant, $r(64)= -.21, p= .09$. Covarying for self-esteem eliminated this effect, $r(63)= .004, ns$. Narcissism was also negatively correlated with guilt levels after participants learned of their negative effect on the applicant, although this relationship was less powerful, $r(64)= -.13, p= .30$. Covarying for self-esteem again made this relationship less powerful and even changed the direction of the

effect, $r(63) = .08$, *ns*. A 2 (narcissism: high or low) x 2 (guilt: pre and post) mixed-design ANOVA revealed a significant increase in guilt levels for all participants from before ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 2.10$) to after ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 2.35$) learning of their negative effect on the applicant, $F(1,64) = 24.88$, $p < .001$. The magnitude of change for guilt was no different for high or low narcissists, $F(1, 64) = 0.13$, *ns*.

Self-esteem, however, was negatively correlated with levels of guilt both before, $r(64) = -.41$, $p = .001$, and after, $r(64) = -.37$, $p = .003$, participants learned of their negative effect on the applicant. These effects were fundamentally unchanged when narcissism was covaried. A 2 (self-esteem: high or low) x 2 (guilt: pre and post) mixed-design ANOVA revealed that, overall, participants showed more guilt after learning of their negative effect on the applicant than before, $F(1,64) = 25.13$, $p < .001$. The magnitude of guilt change, however, was unrelated to self-esteem, $F(1,64) = 0.31$, *ns*. Covarying for narcissism also did not significantly change the relationship between narcissism and guilt either before or after participants learned of their negative effect. This suggests a stronger relationship between self-esteem and guilt than narcissism and guilt.

Narcissism was related to dispositional envy, $r(64) = -.31$, $p = .01$, with narcissists reporting fewer experiences of envy in their everyday lives. Narcissism was not, however, correlated with envy of the applicant, $r(64) = -.02$, *ns*. Overall, envy of the applicant was positively related to higher levels of guilt both before participants learned of their negative impact on the applicant, $r(64) = .57$, $p < .001$, and afterwards, $r(64) = .30$, $p = .01$. This finding suggests that being more envious of the applicant is related to a higher level of guilt in general, even before one is informed of their negative effect on another person. See Table 1 for a summary of relevant results.

Table 1

Summary of Results

Dependent Variables	Low Narcissism	High Narcissism	Correlation
Schadenfreude	$M= 3.82$ $SD= 1.39$	$M= 4.67$ $SD= 1.70$	$r(64)= .29,$ $p= .02$
Guilt	$M= 4.60$ $SD= 2.63$	$M= 4.48$ $SD= 2.03$	$r(64)= -.13,$ $p= .30$
Envy of Applicant	$M= 4.10$ $SD= 1.97$	$M= 4.15$ $SD= 1.77$	$r(64)= -.02,$ $p= .90$
Dispositional Envy	$M= 29.57$ $SD= 11.90$	$M= 23.16$ $SD= 9.98$	$r(64)= -.31,$ $p= .01$
Evaluation Scores	$M= 71.89$ $SD= 13.00$	$M= 75.79$ $SD= 12.36$	$r(64)= .21,$ $p= .10$
Prosocial Behavior	$M= 9.01$ $SD= 11.70$	$M= 10.37$ $SD= 9.65$	$r(64)= -.04,$ $p= .78$
Belief in Superiority	$M= 2.77$ $SD= 1.54$	$M= 3.52$ $SD= 1.98$	$r(64)= .35,$ $p= .004$

Note. A median split of narcissism was used for the means and standard deviations. The correlations did not use a median split for narcissism.

Additional analyses revealed that envy was related to reported suspicion of the study. The debriefing of participants revealed that some participants reported suspicion of the study's authenticity. A variable was created based on debriefing responses and comments that ranked participants on their level of suspicion (No Suspicion [$n= 28$], Low Suspicion [$n= 28$], High Suspicion [$n= 15$]). Note that the High Suspicion category excludes the five participants described earlier who correctly guessed the purpose of the study and thus were excluded from all analyses. For example, if the participant hypothesized that a key element of the study was whether or not he or she would feel happy about seeing such an impressive applicant fail and change their evaluations as a result, we eliminated that participant from all analyses. If the participant was suspicious that the applicant had been created but was not certain, we did not eliminate her, but instead placed her in the High Suspicion category. Suspicion was positively correlated with initial envy of the applicant, $r(64)= .34, p= .01$, and did not depend on narcissism or self-esteem. This suggests that envy of the applicant motivated participants' disbelief in such an outstanding applicant's existence, perhaps to protect themselves from ego threat.

Discussion

One of the main hypotheses of this study was that narcissists would experience more schadenfreude than less narcissistic individuals. The results of this study support this hypothesis. Narcissists reported significantly more schadenfreude than less narcissistic individuals after learning that they had negatively affected the applicant. This effect was not related to self-esteem, which suggests that it is narcissism, and not self-esteem, which drives this relationship.

There were no main effects or interactions involving the manipulation of the responsibility the participant had for the applicant not getting the job. This may indicate that being very influential in the downfall of the envied other makes no difference in one's levels of schadenfreude or guilt, or this may just be an indication of a weak manipulation. The manipulation check was not successful in demonstrating participants' differing sense of responsibility. The responsibility manipulation was designed in this way because a pilot study suggested that the responsibility manipulation was too strong. The original manipulation told participants that their evaluation alone had caused the applicant to lose the job or that another participant's evaluation had caused the applicant to lose the job. In the pilot study, participants appeared to disbelieve their strong role in the hiring process, and the manipulation was changed as a result. It is possible, however, that this change made the manipulation too weak, causing some participants to be unaware of the negative effect that they had on the applicant.

One of the most surprising results was that narcissists actually evaluated the applicants more positively than less narcissistic participants on both evaluations. This was contrary to what was expected, as past research has indicated aggression of narcissists towards superior others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993). One possible explanation for this relates to the personality of the applicant. The applicant was made slightly arrogant in order to avoid ceiling effects in participant evaluations. It is possible that one unforeseen side effect of the applicant's arrogance was to endear the applicant to narcissists more than to participants lower in narcissism. Narcissists are typically arrogant themselves and may, therefore, not have been as repulsed by the applicant's arrogant tendencies. Due to their arrogance, they may have viewed the arrogance of the

applicant as a sign of a confident and qualified leader. Past research has demonstrated that individuals are more attracted to others who are similar to them (Kupersmidt, DeRosier, & Patterson, 1995; Newcomb, 1961).

Narcissists, however, were significantly more likely than nonnarcissists to rate themselves as superior to the applicant and more qualified for the position of lab manager. This supports the assumption of narcissists' arrogance. It could even be concluded that narcissists did not experience an ego threat from the applicant or they would have derogated the applicant. It is possible that narcissists were able to recognize the excellence of the applicant, but were not threatened by her due to their strong belief that they were, nevertheless, superior to the applicant.

Narcissists reported significantly lower levels of dispositional envy, but not significantly less envy of the applicant. This may indicate a sensitivity in the extensively validated 8-item measure of dispositional envy that was not matched by the 3-item measure of envy of the applicant created for this study. The fact that narcissists rated the applicant more positively than nonnarcissists suggests that they were not envious of the applicant.

Narcissism was expected to relate to a number of different variables with which it had no relationship. For example, narcissism was not significantly related to prosocial behavior. In fact, all participants significantly increased their scores of the applicant during the second evaluation, regardless of their narcissistic tendencies or the level of their responsibility. It is possible that all participants rated applicants more highly the second time due to the less demanding qualifications needed for the position of lab assistant. A relationship was found, however, between prosocial behavior and guilt. This

suggests that it was the relationship between guilt and prosocial behavior that led to a higher evaluation the second time, rather than the different demands of the job.

Schadenfreude was correlated with less guilt and more envy of the applicant. This suggests that, in order for participants to be free to experience schadenfreude, they may require lower levels of guilt, as more guilt would take away their ability to enjoy the applicant's setback. Envy was linked to lower levels of guilt. This suggests that when participants were envious enough of the applicant they may have ignored any tendencies they had to feel guilt due to the extent of their envy.

Self-esteem was also shown to be an indicator of guilt levels. Those participants with high self-esteem were found to experience less guilt than those with lower self-esteem. As mentioned before, this effect was not found for narcissism and guilt. This suggests that an individuals' degree of self-esteem, as opposed to narcissism, is related to their experience of guilt.

Unexpectedly, a correlation was found between suspicion of the study during the debriefing and envy of the applicant. Those participants who reported more suspicion over the hypothesis of the experiment or the genuineness of the applicant were found to also be more envious of the applicant. It is possible that envy of the applicant, and a wish to believe that such an applicant does not really exist, motivated participants' suspicion of the authenticity of the applicant and the study in general.

Limitations

A number of limitations in this study may account for some of the unexpected results. First, the responsibility manipulation may not have been sufficiently strong. As

discussed earlier, the strength of the study's manipulation was decreased in order to increase its believability. This may have made the manipulation too weak, however.

Second, narcissism levels were not equally distributed amongst the different conditions of the study. Specifically, although participants were randomly assigned to conditions, more high narcissists were in the high responsibility condition, and more low narcissists were in the low responsibility condition. This occurrence may have affected the results of the study.

Third, it cannot be guaranteed that participants were, in fact, threatened by the applicant. Although debriefing results suggest that most participants were impressed by the applicant's qualifications and impressive resume, it is possible that participants lacked sufficient feelings of envy and inferiority. This is a difficult phenomenon to test, however, since people are not often willing to report when they experience an ego threat.

Fourth, the evident arrogance of the applicant may have influenced results with regard to participants' scores of the applicants. Not only might narcissists not be as repelled by this trait, but this is an adequate reason to suggest that an applicant not be hired. In other words, it is possible that logical concerns about arrogance, as opposed to envy, would lead participants to give negative evaluations. For these reasons, another manipulation aimed at managing ceiling effects might be more effective.

Finally, due to the design of the study, only females were allowed to participate. This eliminates the possibility of generalizing these results to males as well as females. Future studies would benefit from a study design that includes both males and females.

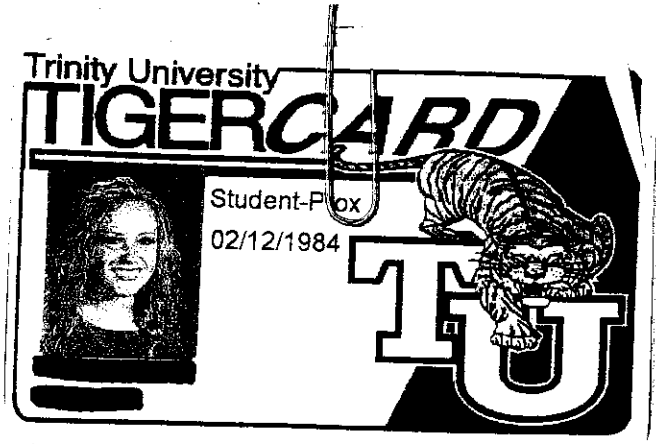
Future research is needed to verify and further investigate the relationships between the variables of interest. Nevertheless, this study has provided new information with regard to narcissism and schadenfreude. Although the role of responsibility did not affect schadenfreude, guilt, or prosocial behavior in this study, responsibility may still play a role in this relationship. Future study is needed to fully uncover those relationships. For now, this study has provided a better understanding of how individuals react towards threatening others, and how they respond to having caused harm.

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Appendix A

Department of Psychology
Trinity University
Lab Manager Supplementary Application
2005-2006

Applicant Number: 34 Year: Junior

- I am: applying for the first time a current lab assistant in this lab
 a previous lab manager in a different lab a previous lab assistant in a different lab

High School Information

High School Attended: Highland Park - Dallas
GPA: 4.28 Class Rank: 2/475
SAT: 740, 760

College Information

Current GPA 4.00 Class Rank 3/550

1. How many hours are you taking this semester? 17
2. How hard do you work for the grades you receive? average
3. As a student, I am... 10
1—failing; 10—top of the class
9. I am a natural born leader: 9
1—absolutely not; 10—I have exceptional leading ability
10. I am well liked by those around me. 9
1—never; 10—always
11. My teachers tell me that they see great abilities and potential in me.
10
1—never; 10—always
12. My classmates enjoy having me in the class. 9

1—never; 10—always

13. I give of my time to help other students who are struggling. 8

1—never; 10—often

14. I volunteer...: 7

1—never; 10—every day of the week

15. I am very involved in activities outside of the classroom: 10

1—not at all; 10—very involved

16. My position on an athletic team is most often: (circle one)

- a. Sitting on the bench
- b. Playing about half the games
- c. Playing for the majority of the time
- d. I'm vital to the team
- e. I'm not involved in athletics

18. My position on my extracurricular team/club is: (circle all that apply)

- f. Partial attendee
- g. Full-time attendee
- h. On the leadership team
- i. VP
- j. President

19. Are you currently employed? Yes No

If so, where? But I was a lab manager last year.

Appendix B

Dr. [REDACTED]
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Trinity University

October 18, 2005

Harry Wallace:

I am writing to recommend [REDACTED] for the position of lab manager in your Social Psychology Lab.

[REDACTED] was lab manager for my Cognitive Lab last year. This required her to help lab assistants, interact with study participants, maintain a lab schedule, and report to me any difficulties or incidents that occurred. On the whole, she did a fine job of running the lab and keeping me well informed. She also helped by adding her own input into the research ideas, experimental designs, conducting statistical analyses, and assisting in the presentation of research. Each task she performed was timely and acceptable.

[REDACTED] clearly has great intellectual capacity and an ability to take leadership. She was very competent in taking control and ensuring that the lab assistants were doing their duties. She handles the rigors of being lab manager and being a student very well, especially due to the fact that she's very involved in other extra curricular activities. I believe she possesses the self-confidence and determination needed to be in charge of a lab, although she may need to learn to improve her sensitivity in leading people.

On the whole, I feel that [REDACTED] makes a fine lab manager and has the commitment to the position that is greatly needed in a good lab manager. She is very determined and talented and is willing to put in the time that it takes to help achieve the lab's goals. I would recommend her as a good lab manager.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@trinity.edu

Appendix C

First Questionnaire—Evaluation for Lab Manager Position

You will now fill out an evaluation of the applicant you reviewed to see if he or she is qualified for the position of Lab Manager. You will be asked to rate this applicant on a number of different qualities.

Keep in mind that your evaluation will require you to evaluate this applicant based on both the evidence presented as well as your initial response to this applicant. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for you to speculate beyond the facts given you. We suggest taking a minute or two to think about what this applicant is like.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements that follow.

(You may pick any number from 1-9)

1. This applicant is qualified for the position of lab manager.
2. I would hire this applicant for the position of Lab Manager.
3. This is a superior applicant.
4. This applicant would excel as Lab Manager
5. This applicant will excel in all they do.
6. This applicant has the leadership skills required to be a Lab Manager.
7. This applicant has the people-skills required to be a Lab Manager

Please rate the applicant on the following traits on a scale of 1-9.

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

8. Kindness
9. Temper
10. Generosity
11. Perseverance
12. Understanding
13. Patience
14. Self-control
15. Creativity
16. Arrogance
17. Hard-working
18. Selfishness
19. Trustworthiness
20. Dependability
21. Willingness to follow orders
22. Fun to work with
23. Someone I would be friends with

These last two questions will carry the most weight when considering this evaluation

Rate the following item on a scale of 1-100 (1= strongly disagree, 100 = strongly agree.

For example, 50 and above would be a positive rating. 70 might = Outstanding applicant)

24. If I were the supervisor, I would hire this applicant.

Rate the following item on a scale of 1-100 (1= strongly disagree, 100 = strongly agree.

For example, 50 and above would be a positive rating. 70 might = Outstanding applicant)

25. I think this applicant would make an excellent lab manager.

According to the computer, in response to the item "If I were the supervisor, I would hire this applicant", you chose a <bigq1> on a scale of 1-100. Is this correct?

According to the computer, in response to the item "I think this applicant would make an excellent lab manager", you chose a <bigq2> on a scale of 1-100. Is this correct?

You are finished with the evaluation of this applicant. Please inform the researcher that you are done.

Appendix D

Second Questionnaire

This is an anonymous evaluation of the applicant that will have NO effect on his or her chances of qualifying for the Lab Manager position. Please give your initial thoughts, without editing yourself.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements that follow.

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

1. This participant deserves to have the job
2. This person is likely the best student that you could expect to hire.
3. I am more qualified for this job than this participant.
4. If I knew this applicant, I think I would like him or her.
5. I would be happy for this participant to get the job
6. I feel superior to this applicant
7. I feel inferior to this applicant
8. I wouldn't mind if this participant did not get the job.
9. This applicant deserves the credit for his or her successes.
10. This applicant worked hard for his or her successes.

Please rank the following items according to how influential they were in your evaluation of this applicant.

11. The academic performance of the applicant
12. The interview with the applicant

13. The personality of the applicant
14. The extracurricular experience of the applicant
15. The perceived capabilities of the applicant

It's been suggested that having to evaluate others has an emotional effect on evaluators.

"On a scale of 1-9, rating this applicant makes me feel..."

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

16. Happy
17. Sad
18. Proud
19. Envious
20. Resentful
21. Good
22. Responsible
23. Confused
24. Satisfied
25. Sorry
26. Angry
27. Jealous
28. Lucky
29. Guilty
30. In high spirits

You're now going to answer some questions about how you think you evaluated the candidate and what type of impact it's going to have.

To give you a reference point, during last year's study, the "finalists" for the position of Lab Manager all had an average score of at least 96 on the following two questions (on a scale of 1-100):

"If I was the supervisor, I would hire this applicant." and "I think this applicant would make an excellent lab manager."

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements that follow.

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

31. My evaluation of this applicant will have a strong effect on this applicant's chances of getting the job.
32. Based on last year's standards (need an avg of 96 or above), my evaluation will positively influence the applicant.
33. Based on last year's standards (need an avg of 96 or above), my evaluation will not be a positive influence (and therefore a negative influence) for the applicant.
34. This applicant deserved to be Lab Manager
35. I feel badly that the participant might not qualify due to my evaluation of him or her. (only if you think that they will not be positively influenced by your evaluation)
36. I would be glad if the applicant qualified for the job due to my positive evaluation of him or her (only if you think that your evaluation will have a positive effect on the applicant)
37. I would feel responsible for the applicant qualifying/ not qualifying.

It has been suggested that having to evaluate others can have an emotional effect on evaluators.

"On a scale of 1-9, if I later learned that the applicant had or had not qualified for the position of Lab Manager due to a positive or negative evaluation of him or her, I would feel..."

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

- 38. Happy
- 39. Sad
- 40. Proud
- 41. Envious
- 42. Resentful
- 43. Good
- 44. Responsible
- 45. Confused
- 46. Satisfied
- 47. Sorry
- 48. Angry
- 49. Jealous
- 50. Lucky
- 51. Guilty
- 52. In high spirits

You are now done with this part of the study. Please let the researcher know you are done.

Appendix E

Third Questionnaire—Evaluation for Lab Assistant Position

You will now fill out an evaluation for this applicant to see if he or she qualifies to be a Lab Assistant. You will be asked to rate this individual on a number of different qualities.

Keep in mind that your evaluation will require you to evaluate this applicant based on both the evidence presented as well as your initial response to this applicant. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for you to speculate beyond the facts given you. We suggest taking a minute or two to think about what this applicant is like.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements that follow.

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

1. This participant is qualified for the position of a Lab Assistant.
2. I would hire this applicant for the position of Lab Assistant
3. This is a superior applicant
4. This is a model student.
5. This person will excel in all they do.
6. This person would work well with other lab assistants.
7. This person would have no problem working under a Lab Manager
8. This person can take direction from a peer Lab Manager
9. This person works well with a team.

Please rate the applicant on the following traits on a scale of 1-9.

(you may pick any number from 1-9)

10. Kindness
11. Temper
12. Generosity
13. Perseverance
14. Understanding
15. Patience
16. Self-Control
17. Creativity
18. Arrogance
19. Hard-Working
20. Selfishness
21. Trustworthiness
22. Dependability
23. Willingness to follow orders
24. Fun to work with
25. Someone I would be friends with

The next two questions will carry the most weight when considering this evaluation.

Rate the following item on a scale of 1-100 (1= strongly disagree, 100.= strongly agree.

For example, 50 and above would be a positive rating. 70 might = Outstanding

applicant)

26. If I were the supervisor, I would hire this applicant.

Rate the following item on a scale of 1-100 (1= strongly disagree, 100 = strongly agree.

For example, 50 and above would be a positive rating. 70 might = Outstanding applicant)

27. I think this applicant would make an excellent lab assistant.

28. Other than what you have been told, what do you think this study is about?

29. Earlier you were told that during last year's study, the "finalists" for the position of Lab Manager all had an average score of at least _____ on the following two questions (on a scale of 1-100):

"If I was the supervisor, I would hire this applicant."

and

"I think this applicant would make an excellent lab manager."

What was the average score of the finalists?

30. Earlier you filled out an evaluation for the position of Lab Manager (the evaluation you filled out at the beginning of the study, not the one you just completed).

What was your average score of the following two questions? (on a scale of 1-100)

"If I was the supervisor, I would hire this applicant."

and

"I think this applicant would make an excellent lab manager."

31. Earlier you were told how many other participants would be evaluating this applicant. What was that number?

You are now finished with the study and will be debriefed by the researcher.

Thank you!