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2022

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Genuine and Narcissistic Altruism Are Differentially Related to Anger, Shame, and Joy Dispositions

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Introduction

Types of Altruism

- Most people think of altruism in its **Genuine** form – helping others even when there is no reason to believe there will be benefits to oneself (Batson & Powell, 2003)
 - However, it may not be the case that all apparently altruistic behavior is motivated primarily by the desire to help others
- Sometimes acts that appear altruistic are performed for egoistic reasons (Batson, 2011) and may be considered **Narcissistic**
 - Indeed, “self-sacrificing self-enhancement” is included on a popular narcissism measure (Pincus et al., 2009)
 - Suggesting that apparently altruistic behavior can alternatively be motivated by a desire to appear other-serving and therefore worthy of admiration

Altruism and Emotion Dispositions

- Although **Genuine Altruism** is motivated by a desire to benefit others, lay theory suggests that altruistic acts can bring the actor feelings of joy and satisfaction
 - Additionally, feelings of joy may even facilitate engagement in altruistic behavior (Rosenhan et al., 1981)
- By comparison, given the role of fragile self-esteem in narcissism, **Narcissistic Altruism** may be most likely to occur when individuals are experiencing unpleasant emotion
 - Very little work has been done on the self-sacrificing self-enhancement facet of narcissism to date
 - Brunell et al. (2014), however, found that greater narcissism was associated with engaging in volunteering that would enhance the self, such as by gaining career experience or allowing for social networking
 - By contrast, narcissism reduced the likelihood of volunteering simply to help the less fortunate
 - Additionally, evidence suggests that narcissism is associated with unpleasant emotions like anger and shame (e.g., Schoenleber & Berenbaum, 2012; Stucke & Sporer, 2002; Tangney et al., 1992)

Hypotheses

- Greater **Genuine Altruism** would be associated with greater propensities for joy, greater tolerance for joy experiences, and greater tendencies to ruminate on – or savor – joy experiences and triggers
- Additionally, greater **Genuine Altruism** would be associated with lower propensities for anger and shame, lower tendencies to ruminate on anger and shame experiences and triggers, and greater tolerance for anger and shame experiences
- By comparison, greater **Narcissistic Altruism** would be associated with greater propensities for anger and shame, greater tendencies to ruminate on anger and shame experiences and triggers, and lower tolerance for anger and shame experiences
- And greater **Narcissistic Altruism** would be associated with lower propensities for joy and lower tendencies to savor joy experiences and triggers, but a greater tolerance for joy experiences

Method

PARTICIPANTS:

- 466 undergraduates – Gender Identity: 72.5% female, 26.8% male, 0.6% other; *M*age = 19.7 years (*SD* = 2.2)
 - 89.5% White, 4.7% Multiracial, 2.4% Hispanic/Latino(a), 1.5% Asian American, 1.1% Native American, .9% African American

MEASURES:

Genuine & Narcissistic Altruism

- Altruism on the Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised** (Carlo et al., 2003) – 4 items on a 5-point scale for how well statements describe them
 - $\alpha = .71$; E.g., “I feel that if I help someone, they should help me in the future.” (all items on this scale are reverse-scored)
- Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement on the Pathological Narcissism Inventory** (Pincus et al., 2009) – 4 items on a 6-point scale for how well statements describe them
 - $\alpha = .80$; E.g., “I make sacrifices for others so that they can admire me for having done it.”

Proneness for Anger, Shame, & Joy

- Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3** (Tangney, 2000)
 - 16 scenarios followed by shame-related cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses
 - $\alpha = .79$; E.g., “You break something at work and then hide it”
- Joy & Anger Readiness Scales**
 - 10 scenarios followed by anger- and/or joy-related cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses
 - $\alpha = .42$ & $.70$; E.g., “With their birthday party coming up, you ask a friend what they would like you to get them as a gift. They say “Oh, anything is fine.”

Aversions to Anger, Shame, & Joy

- Affective Control Scale** (Williams et al., 1997)
 - 7 items reflecting fear of anger and 13 items reflecting fear of positive emotion
 - Anger: $\alpha = .65$; E.g., “I would be embarrassed to death if I lost my temper in front of other people”
 - Joy: $\alpha = .86$; E.g., “I can get too carried away when I am really happy”
- Shame-Aversive Reactions Questionnaire** (Schoenleber & Berenbaum, 2010)
 - 14 items assessing shame as intolerable
 - $\alpha = .87$; E.g., “Feeling inadequate troubles me more than anything else”

Rumination on Anger, Shame, & Joy

- Anger Rumination Scale-C** (Smith et al., 2016)
 - 19 items on perseverating on anger experiences
 - $\alpha = .91$; E.g., “I think about the reasons people treat me badly”
- Self-Critical Rumination Scale** (Smart et al., 2015)
 - 10 items on dwelling on personal failings
 - $\alpha = .92$; E.g., “I wish I spent less time criticizing myself”
- Savoring Beliefs Inventory** (Bryant, 2003)
 - 24 items on thinking about past positive events
 - $\alpha = .92$; E.g., “I enjoy looking back on happy times from my past”

Results

Associations Among Emotion Dispositions and Between these Dispositions and Altruism

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	Genuine Altruism	Narcissistic Altruism
(1) Anger-Proneness		.21	.34	.31	.27	.18	-.05	.13	-.08	-.31	.32
(2) Anger Aversion			.45	.24	.27	.38	.01	.48	-.28	-.11	.16
(3) Anger Rumination				.29	.45	.51	.00	.31	-.20	-.24	.31
(4) Shame-Proneness					.45	.47	.21	.30	-.22	-.03	.12
(5) Shame Aversion						.57	-.04	.30	-.32	-.15	.22
(6) Shame Rumination							.03	.38	-.40	-.12	.18
(7) Joy-Proneness								.03	.18	.08	.02
(8) Joy Aversion									-.35	-.20	.27
(9) Joy Rumination										.04	-.06

Note: All **bold** correlation coefficients significant at $p < .001$

Summary of Regressions Examining All Emotion Dispositions Simultaneously

	Genuine Altruism ($\Delta R^2 = .16, p < .001$)		Narcissistic Altruism ($\Delta R^2 = .19, p < .001$)	
	β	f^2	β	f^2
(1) Anger-Proneness	-.28	.405	.26	.270
(2) Anger Aversion	.08	.024	-.07	.016
(3) Anger Rumination	-.14	.072	.19	.111
(4) Shame-Proneness	.15	.090	-.10	.029
(5) Shame Aversion	-.04	.006	.08	.018
(6) Shame Rumination	-.04	.003	.00	.000
(7) Joy-Proneness	.04	.012	.04	.006
(8) Joy Aversion	-.20	.172	.23	.184
(9) Joy Rumination	-.06	.018	.06	.012

Note: All **bold** correlation coefficients significant at $p < .001$

Note: $f^2 > .02$ = small effect; $> .15$ = medium effect; $> .35$ = large effect

Takeaways

- Propensities for and rumination on anger, as well as tolerances for shame and joy are most strongly associated with both types of altruism
- However, the two types of altruism differed greatly in relation to these emotion dispositions
 - Greater **Genuine Altruism** was associated with lower anger-proneness, anger aversion, and joy aversion
 - Greater **Narcissistic Altruism** was associated with higher levels of these emotional traits
 - Moreover, **Genuine Altruism** was associated with greater shame-proneness

Discussion

- Genuine Altruism and Narcissistic Altruism have very different relationships to emotion dispositions**
 - Whereas Genuine Altruism is fewer dispositions issues with anger and joy, Narcissistic Altruism displayed the opposite relationships
- Anger, in particular, seems to distinguish Genuine Altruism and Narcissistic Altruism**
 - Still, there is no way to know if propensities for or rumination on anger increases the likelihood of engaging in Narcissistically Altruistic behavior, or vice versa (or some more complex pathway altogether!)
- Genuine Altruism may have an interesting relationship with shame**
 - It may be that an elevated readiness to experience shame drives people to engage in more prosocial acts

Limitation & Future Directions

- Very little research has focused on Narcissistic Altruism/self-sacrificing self-enhancement specifically
 - This limited us to a short subscale, which future work may want to examine more closely
 - Highly contrasting findings herein may be partly attributable to the items on the PTM-R Altruism subscale
 - All items are egoistic in content and are then reverse-scored
- Work is also needed to improve the new JARS Joy-Proneness subscale prior to attempting to replicate results
- Future studies may also want to consider *why* genuinely altruistic acts don't seem to bring people joy
 - For example, perhaps such acts bring other positive emotions – pride or a sense of peace
- And work can further examine shame in relation to altruistic behavior
 - Why does shame-proneness emerge as a predictor of Genuine Altruism only when taking anger issues into account?