

## Narcissism, Sexual Refusal, and Aggression: Testing a Narcissistic Reactance Model of Sexual Coercion

Brad J. Bushman and Angelica M. Bonacci  
Iowa State University

Mirjam van Dijk  
Utrecht University

Roy F. Baumeister  
Case Western Reserve University

Laboratory analog studies investigated the theory that narcissism and reactance contribute to causing rape. In Study 1, narcissism correlated positively with rape-supportive beliefs and negatively with empathy for rape victims. In Study 2, narcissists reported more enjoyment than other men of film depictions that presented consensual, affectionate activity followed by rape (but not in response to either affection or rape alone). In Study 3, narcissists were more punitive than other men toward a female confederate who refused to read a sexually arousing passage aloud to them.

Rape and sexual coercion are widely recognized as a serious social problem and a source of traumatic suffering for many unfortunate individuals. The causes of rape, however, remain poorly understood for a combination of reasons, including ideological and dogmatic commitments, outdated theoretical frameworks, widely discrepant definitions, and formidable obstacles (both ethical and pragmatic) to collecting data or conducting simulation studies. Felson (2002) has argued convincingly that prevailing theories about rape are at best weakly supported and at worst strongly contradicted by the existing evidence. Hence, both new theorizing and new efforts at collecting data seem urgently needed.

The purpose of this investigation was to conduct some empirical tests of a recent theory that sexual coercion might stem from a

combination of narcissistic tendencies and reactance. Specifically, the core idea is that narcissism constitutes a personality trait that may foster tendencies toward sexual coercion, especially given the narcissistic propensity for self-serving interpretations, low empathy toward others, and inflated sense of entitlement. Meanwhile, some men (especially narcissists) may exhibit reactance when their sexual desires are rejected, and the reactance may foster an increase in sexual desire, attempts to take what has been denied, and a willingness to aggress against the person who thwarted them—responses that in concert may contribute to sexual coercion.

The narcissistic reactance theory of rape and sexual coercion was put forth by Baumeister, Catanese, and Wallace (2002). However, that work was limited to theoretical analyses and interpretive review of existing findings, few of which provided direct, unambiguous evidence that narcissism plays a role in the mistreatment of women in sexual or romantic contexts. Baumeister et al. (2002) concluded that although the narcissistic reactance theory provided a good fit to existing evidence, conducting some direct empirical tests that include a measure of narcissism was a crucial next step.

Definitions of rape and sexual coercion have been controversial, especially in light of efforts by some theorists to deny that rape is sexually motivated. Further complications have been introduced by the legal system's efforts at precise definitions, because even the criterion of force or coercion is not uniformly applied. (Thus, most states define consensual sex as rape if one person is under the age of 18 and the other is 18 or older.) Yet another complication is that perpetrator and victim may have radically different experiences as to whether the act was sexual. Rather than seeking to resolve all these definition problems, we acknowledge that our focus is on the psychology of male perpetrators. Rape and sexual coercion consist of using aggressive force to make a woman

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Brad J. Bushman and Angelica M. Bonacci, Department of Psychology, Iowa State University; Mirjam van Dijk, Department of Psychology, Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands; Roy F. Baumeister, Department of Psychology, Case Western Reserve University.

Roy F. Baumeister is now at the Department of Psychology, Florida State University.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brad J. Bushman, who is now at the Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 426 Thompson Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. E-mail: bbushman@umich.edu

engage in sexual activity that the man desires but she actively refuses. In this definition, the man is not necessarily seeking to harm the woman, but he may be willing to harm her in order to get his way. Moreover, as we shall explain, her continued refusal of his wishes may eventually cause him to act in aggressive, punitive ways toward her, in which case he would be seeking to hurt her, but we assume that this is a frustrated last resort and he would prefer having sex with her rather than hurting her.

### Narcissism and Aggression

Narcissism is a personality trait defined by an unusually high degree of self-love, as exemplified by the character from Greek mythology who fell in love with his own reflection in the water. Research has indicated the need for some refinements of the Greek myth, however. In particular, the mythological character was so wrapped up in himself that he was indifferent to the attentions and affections of others, whereas empirical studies indicate that modern narcissists are preoccupied if not downright obsessed with garnering the admiration of others (see Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, for review). The term *narcissism* is linguistically related to the word *narcotic*, implying perhaps that people sometimes become addicted to loving themselves (see Baumeister & Vohs, 2001). According to the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), narcissism is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance and uniqueness, an unreasonable sense of entitlement, a craving for admiration, exploitative tendencies toward others, deficient empathy, and arrogance. Narcissists are strongly motivated to sustain their own and others' perception of them as superior beings.

Narcissism has been associated with aggression in empirical studies. Bushman and Baumeister (1998) found that identical remarks of insulting criticism elicited more severe and aggressive retaliation from high narcissists than from other participants. Narcissists provide some of the best evidence that threatened egotism is an important cause of aggression (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996).

There are multiple reasons for predicting that narcissists would be more likely than other men to engage in sexual coercion, in addition to their propensity for aggressive retaliation (see Baumeister et al., 2002). First, their inflated sense of entitlement may make them think that women owe them sexual favors. Second, their low empathy entails that they would not be deterred by concern over the victim's suffering. Ironically, narcissists are capable of empathy but simply do not bother to use it when it is not in their interests to do so. Third, their tendency to maintain inflated views of self by means of cognitive distortions might help them rationalize away any borderline objectionable behaviors, such as if they could convince themselves that their coercion victims had really desired the sex or had expressed some form of consent. Last, their concern with getting others to admire them could lead them to seek out sexual conquests in order to have something to boast about to their peers, and in fact, studies of coercive men have suggested that peer pressure and boasting are sometimes important contributing factors (Kanin, 1985; Lisak & Roth, 1988).

### Reactance and Sexual Refusals

Reactance is defined as negative responses to loss of freedom (or threats of loss). When people lose a desired option, they respond by increasing their desire for that option, by trying to do what is now forbidden, or by aggressing against the person who deprived them of the option (J. W. Brehm, 1966, 1972; S. S. Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974).

Although some theorists such as Brownmiller (1975) argued forcefully that rape has nothing to do with sex or sexual motivations, the weight of evidence has suggested that sexual motivations are prominent factors from the rapist's perspective, even though to be sure rape is not a sexual experience for most victims (Muehlenhard, Danoff-Burg, & Powch, 1996). Felson (2002) and Palmer (1988) have revealed both conceptual and empirical fallacies in the argument that rape is not sex. The present investigation assumed that sexual motivations (in the male aggressor) play a role in leading to rape and coercion.

If one assumes that sex is a factor, then reactance can readily come into play. A man may desire sex with a particular woman, but she may refuse his advances. The potential for such conflict is inherent in many heterosexual encounters, insofar as men generally desire sex earlier in the relationship, with more possible partners, with less commitment, and otherwise more often than women (see Baumeister, Catanese & Vohs, 2001, for review). The woman's refusal may lead to reactance, especially if the man had anticipated sex with her. All three of the main consequences of reactance (i.e., increased desire, attempt to exercise the forbidden option, and aggression toward the source of the prohibition) would contribute to male aggression toward a woman who has refused his sexual advances.

We reiterate that we do not see this line of work as justifying rape or reducing the culpability of the offender. Sexual coercion is always immoral and odious. Our effort is simply to understand how otherwise seemingly normal and decent men might engage in this disgraceful behavior.

The reactance and narcissism components of the theory may seem independent, but there are several overlaps. Narcissists have an inflated sense of entitlement, so they should be more prone to reactance, because they are more likely than others to believe they deserve things that they are not getting. Moreover, empirical studies have shown that reactance and narcissism are positively correlated (e.g., Frank et al., 1998; Joubert, 1992), such that narcissists have more reactance than others.

### Present Investigation

The present investigation used three different methods to test the prediction that narcissism would constitute a risk factor for sexual coercion. Study 1 used questionnaire measures to establish whether narcissists would exhibit attitudes that have been linked to sexual coercion, specifically endorsement of rape myths and low empathy toward rape victims. Study 2 assessed enjoyment of a videotape depiction of a rape episode, as a function of narcissism and contextual factors (including an ambiguous suggestion of victim encouragement). Study 3 investigated whether male participants reacted punitively to a female confederate who did or did not refuse to provide sexual stimulation that had been anticipated.

Although recent findings indicate that both males and females engage in sexually coercive behaviors (e.g., Anderson &

Struckman-Johnson, 1998), coercion of women by men is generally regarded as the more severe social and criminal problem, and female victims of male coercion are much more likely to report enduring distress and trauma than are male victims of female coercion. Therefore, our investigation focuses exclusively on male perpetrators and female victims, even though we do not intend to minimize or condone victimization of males by females or same-gender sexual coercion. Also, the present investigation relied on laboratory and experimental evidence, which may have advantages in terms of precise control but also possible limitations in terms of generalizability, especially given the ethical and pragmatic difficulty of simulating sexual coercion in the laboratory.

### Study 1

Study 1 was a preliminary investigation designed to see whether narcissism might correlate with attitudes that have been linked to rape. We measured narcissism using the standard, widely used instrument developed by Raskin and Terry (1988). This study seemed a necessary first step in view of the relative scarcity of data linking narcissism to sexual coercion.

Two measures of rape-relevant attitudes were administered. The first was the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley, & Bently, 1982). This measure was designed to distinguish individuals who are sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of rape victims from those who would be more prone to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrators. Narcissists tend to blame others rather than themselves for conflicts and problems (e.g., Patrick, 1990; Sankowsky, 1995). If narcissism is indeed a risk factor for sexual coercion, we reasoned that narcissistic males would show less empathy for rape victims and would instead be inclined to shift responsibility away from the perpetrators onto the victims.

The other measure we used was the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980). It consists of attitudes that could be used to rationalize sexual coercion, such as that ambiguous female behaviors constitute sexual encouragement that justify persistent sexual advances by males and that sexual coercion can be justified under some circumstances. As reviewed by Felson (2002), some studies have found that men who score high on this scale are more likely to engage in sexual coercion, although other studies have failed to find a link. In any case, such self-serving interpretations and rationalizations seemed potentially consistent with the narcissistic version of sexual aggression, and so we predicted that narcissists would score higher than other men on acceptance of rape myths.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 403 college men enrolled in introductory psychology courses. They received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation. Their mean age was 20.5 years ( $SD = 2.5$  years). None of the participants in Study 1 participated in Studies 2 or 3.

#### Individual Difference Measures

**Narcissism.** Narcissism was measured by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988). For each of the 40 forced-choice dyads on the scale, participants choose either the narcissistic response (e.g., "If I ruled the world it would be a better place.") or the nonnarcissistic response

(e.g., "The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me."). The 40 items are summed together. High scores indicate high narcissism. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory has good psychometric properties. The alpha coefficient for the full scale is .83 (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

**Rape empathy.** Rape empathy was measured by the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al., 1982). For each of the 20 forced-choice dyads on the scale, participants choose either an empathic response toward rape victims (e.g., "In general, I feel that rape is an act that is not provoked by the rape victim.") or a nonempathic response toward rape victims (e.g., "In general, I feel that rape is an act that is provoked by the rape victim."). The 19 items are summed together.<sup>1</sup> High scores indicate high empathy toward rape victims. The Rape Empathy Scale has good psychometric properties. Item-total correlations for the 19 items range from .18 to .75. The 19-item scale is also internally consistent, with alpha coefficients ranging from .82 to .89 (Deitz et al., 1982).

**Rape myth beliefs.** Belief in rape myths was assessed by the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980). This scale measures the extent to which respondents agree with views that have been deemed as conducive to rape, such as that when women say no to sex, they really mean yes. Sample items include "If a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her" and "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex." Responses to the 19 items on the scale are summed together. High scores indicate high belief in these rape-conducive views. The Rape Myth Acceptance Scale has good psychometric properties. The item-total correlations for the 19 items range from .27 to .61. The alpha coefficient for the full scale is .88 (Burt, 1980).

#### Procedure

Participants completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988), the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al., 1982), and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) as part of a battery of questionnaires given in mass-testing sessions.

#### Results

The alpha coefficients for the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988), the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al., 1982), and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) were .81, .93, and .82, respectively. All three scales were internally consistent. The average scores for the scales were 17.92 ( $SD = 6.49$ ), 5.66 ( $SD = 5.64$ ), and 47.42 ( $SD = 11.85$ ), respectively.

As expected, narcissism was negatively correlated with empathy toward rape victims and was positively correlated with belief in rape myths ( $r_s = -.13$  and  $.11$ ,  $p_s < .05$ ). Empathy toward rape victims was also negatively correlated with belief in rape myths ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

#### Discussion

Study 1 was essentially a pilot study designed to show that narcissism could indeed predict some of the undesirable traits that

<sup>1</sup> In the standard version of the scale, after selecting the response they prefer most, participants rate how strongly they prefer the statement they chose over the other statement with the response using a scale ranging from 1 (*no preference*) to 7 (*strong preference*). However, the alpha coefficient for the scale scored this way was only .58. Thus, we decided to simply sum the number of rape empathic responses instead, which produced an alpha coefficient of .93.

have been put forward as conducive to sexual coercion. The findings were consistent with the view that sexually coercive men may have narcissistic tendencies. Narcissism was linked to low empathy toward rape victims, suggesting that a narcissistic male who was tempted to coerce a woman would not likely be deterred by feelings of compassion or sympathy, or indeed even understanding, of how unpleasant the victimization might be for her. In a similar fashion, narcissists were more prone than other males to express beliefs in the so-called rape myths. These myths tend to blame the rape victim for her victimization and suggest that perpetrators of sexual coercion were likely misled or encouraged by the victim's actions.

Study 1 was hardly a full test of the narcissistic reactance theory of rape. It does however lend some plausibility to it. Narcissists did exhibit a pattern of attitudes that could be conducive to sexual coercion. Although significant, the results were weak. The weakness is perhaps understandable given that the measures involved general attitudes rather than specific behaviors and that their relationship to actual sexual coercion is itself rather weak. Alternatively, the small size of the effect could be an indication that narcissism is only weakly (if at all) related to sexual coercion. Still, the narcissistic reactance theory could have been falsified if there had been no relationship or if narcissism had correlated in the opposite direction with the rape-relevant attitude scales, and so in that sense the theory did survive a preliminary test. In any case, it was necessary to devise more rigorous empirical tests.

## Study 2

Study 2 examined reactions to a film depiction of rape. Past work has found that sexually coercive men respond more favorably than other men to videotape and audiotape depictions of rape (e.g., Bernat, Calhoun, Adams, 1999; Hall, Shondrick, & Hirschman, 1993; Malamuth, 1989). We reasoned that if narcissism is a risk factor for rape, then narcissistic men would enjoy a rape film more than would other men.

As argued by Baumeister et al. (2002), the evidence does not really justify the conclusion that sexually coercive men actually prefer depictions of coercive sex. If anything, most of them show a slight preference for depictions of consensual sex. Their enjoyment of consensual sex is comparable with that of other men. Thus, the difference is best characterized by saying that sexually coercive men enjoy depictions of sex regardless of how the woman is responding, whereas noncoercive men are strongly put off by depictions of forcible sex. The depiction of force or coercion spoils any enjoyment for most men but does not seem to bother sexually coercive men. Possibly they have means of rationalizing or ignoring any unpleasant aspect of using force to obtain sex. A meta-analysis by Hall et al. (1993) confirmed that only studies with small samples of highly deviant or pathological (e.g., incarcerated) sex offenders showed even a trend toward preferring rape depictions over depictions of consensual sex. Larger and less pathological samples generally showed that even sexually aggressive men preferred consensual sex depictions over rape.

The present study was therefore set up with different versions of the rape film. These varied as to whether they offered the viewer some way to rationalize or downplay the coercive aspect. Some viewers saw only the rape scene. Others saw the rape scene after they watched the male and female actors engage in mutually

consensual physical activities including dancing, hugging, and kissing. The latter version was particularly relevant to many date rapes (which form the vast majority of incidents of sexual coercion; e.g., Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). For example, in Kanin's (1985) study of self-confessed date rapists, every single instance of date rape was preceded by mutually consensual activity, usually oral sex or necking. Converging evidence from victim reports was provided by O'Sullivan, Byers, and Finkelmann (1998), who found that the majority of rape victims reported that they had had consensual intercourse with the rapist on a previous occasion.

We predicted that the scenes involving consenting activity prior to the rape would be especially acceptable, even appealing, to the narcissistic men for two reasons. First, as already stated, our main hypothesis was that narcissism is a risk factor for rape, and so narcissists should respond like sexually coercive men—which would include seeing consensual affection as possibly justifying the use of coercion later. Second, one of the defining features of narcissism is an inflated sense of entitlement, and so they should be more prone than other men to think that a man is entitled to sex if a woman has encouraged and aroused him through kissing, hugging, and other physical contact.

If the predictions were confirmed, and narcissists showed greater enjoyment of rape when combined with affection (but not otherwise), an alternative explanation might be suggested. Specifically, it would be possible that the scene of affectionate, consensual sex appealed to narcissists more than to other men, independent of the rape. To test this possibility, we included a third condition, in which participants saw only the scene of consensual affection, without the rape. The narcissism theory of rape would predict that narcissists would show significantly higher enjoyment than other men only when they viewed both the consensual affection and the rape, insofar as narcissists would be more prone than other men to see the consensual affection as justifying the use of force later.

The attempt to simulate sexual coercion by having participants watch a film rests on the assumption that viewers identify with the perpetrator in the film, at least to some extent. Rather than leave this assumption implicit, we both manipulated and measured it. That is, we asked all participants to report the extent to which they identified with the male actor and with the female actor. We predicted that narcissistic men would find it more difficult than other men to identify with the female victim, consistent with the view that they are not empathic when it is not in their own interests. Furthermore, participants were explicitly instructed to identify with either the man or the woman in the film. Enjoyment of the film should be facilitated by identifying with the male character (especially among narcissistic men) and inhibited by identifying with the female character.

The manipulation of film content is also relevant to the role of reactance. When a woman dances with a man and then hugs and kisses him (in the consensual affection scenes), she may give rise to hopes or expectations that there will be sexual activity. Although she has every moral and legal right to refuse any further sexual activity, some men may respond negatively to her refusal, especially if they believe that she has given him legitimate reason to expect sex. The removal of an expected benefit is an important cause of reactance, which could cause him to use aggression in the attempt to reclaim the option that he feels has been unfairly taken

away from him (J. W. Brehm, 1966). Viewers who identify with the male character in such a scene may sympathize with his disappointment, and some of them may be less inclined to condemn him for coercing her.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 300 men enrolled in introductory psychology courses at Iowa State University. Participants received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation. None of the participants in Study 2 participated in Studies 1 or 3.

Participants were randomly selected from a larger group of participants who had completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988) as part of a battery of tests administered in mass-testing sessions. The coefficient alpha for the scale was .84, and the average narcissism score was 16.31 ( $SD = 6.86$ ).

#### Videotapes

We used film segments from two different commercially available, R-rated films—*The Accused* (Kaplan, 1988) and *Higher Learning* (Singleton, 1995)—to increase the generalizability of the results (Wells & Windschitl, 1999). Both segments showed a man raping a woman, who expressed pain and disgust during the rape. Both segments also showed mutually consenting affectionate activity between the man and the woman prior to the rape.

Three different versions of the segments were recorded for each film. One version showed only the rape scene. A second version showed the woman engaging in mutually consenting affectionate activities with the man prior to the rape scene (e.g., kissing, dancing, and hugging). A third version showed only the mutually consenting affectionate activities. Each participant watched only one version of one film.

#### Procedure

Participants were scheduled by telephone. They were told that the study was being conducted to evaluate clips from commercially available, R-rated films. They were told that the film clips might contain violence, sex, or both. The experimenter who scheduled participants and the experimenter who conducted the experiment were both blind to participants' narcissism scores.

Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the three versions of the film (i.e., rape only, rape and affection, affection only). Within each film version, half of the participants were told to identify with the male actor in the film, whereas the other half were told to identify with the female actor.

Immediately after viewing the film segment, participants rated how enjoyable, entertaining, sexually arousing, and violent they thought the film was. They also rated how much they identified with the male and female actors in the film segment. All ratings were made on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*). Participants also indicated whether they had seen the film from which the segment had been taken. As a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate which actor the experimenter told them to identify with (i.e., male actor, female actor, don't remember). Finally, participants were fully debriefed.

### Results

#### Preliminary Analyses

*Identification manipulation check.* Over 95% of participants correctly recalled which actor the experimenter told them to identify with.

*Film differences.* We used two different films (i.e., *The Accused*, *Higher Learning*) to increase the generalizability of the results (Wells & Windschitl, 1999). No significant differences were found between the two films on any of the rating dimensions (i.e., *enjoyable*, *entertaining*, *sexually arousing*, *violent*). The random-effects variance estimates for film exemplar were also quite small, ranging from 0.00 to 0.03 ( $M = 0.02$ ). None of the maximum likelihood random-effects variance estimates significantly differed from zero. Thus, the data were collapsed across film exemplar for subsequent analyses.

#### Analysis Strategy

The dependent measures were analyzed by means of 3 (film version: rape only, rape and affection, affection only)  $\times$  2 (identify with male vs. female character)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low narcissists) analyses of covariance. Whether the participants had seen the film from which the segment was taken was used as a covariate in the analyses (19% of those shown *The Accused* had seen it before; 19% of those shown *High Learning* had seen it before). The means were therefore adjusted to reflect whether the participant had seen the movie before. A median split was used to identify high versus low narcissists. Regression analyses, treating narcissism as a continuous variable, yielded the same pattern of results.

We expected narcissists and other men to differ in their ratings of the film showing affectionate activity (e.g., dancing, hugging, kissing), followed by the rape. We did not expect narcissists and other men to differ in their ratings of the film showing only affectionate activity or in their ratings of the film showing only the rape. To test this hypothesis, we performed simple effects analyses between narcissists and other men for each version of the film.

#### Enjoyment of Film

Participants rated how much they enjoyed the film. Main effects were obtained for film version,  $F(2, 287) = 40.26, p < .0001$ , and narcissism,  $F(1, 287) = 6.67, p < .05$ . That is, viewers generally liked the nonrape versions more than the rape versions and liked the affectionate versions more than the nonaffectionate versions. Plus, narcissists enjoyed the films in general better than nonnarcissists.

We performed three simple effects tests to determine whether narcissists and nonnarcissists differed in how much they enjoyed each version of the film. As Figure 1 shows, narcissists enjoyed the film more than other men when it showed both consensual affection and rape,  $t(287) = 3.04, p < .005, d = 0.36$ . Narcissists did not differ from others in how enjoyable they found the film to be when it depicted only the rape,  $t(287) = 0.73, ns$ . Hardly any of the men enjoyed this version of the film. Furthermore, and crucially, narcissists did not differ from other men in how enjoyable they found the film to be when it depicted only the mutually consenting affectionate activities between the man and woman (i.e., dancing, hugging, kissing),  $t(287) = 0.73, ns$ . Thus, as predicted, narcissism only enhanced enjoyment of the film that contained both consensual affection and rape.

As expected, participants who were asked to identify with the male actor enjoyed the film more than did those who were asked to identify with the female actor ( $M_s = 2.43$  and  $2.12$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 5.78, p < .02, d = 0.28$ . Men who had not seen

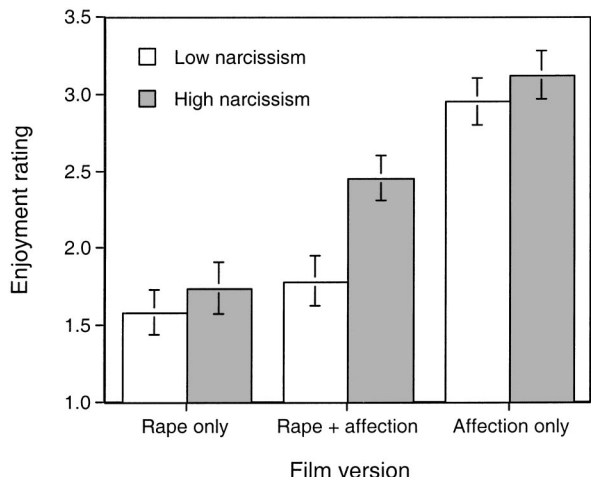


Figure 1. Interaction between narcissism and entitlement on film enjoyment ratings.

the film before enjoyed it more than did those who had seen it before ( $M_s = 2.42$  and  $1.70$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 16.47, p < .0001, d = 0.48$ . No other effects were significant.

Entertainment Ratings

Participants also rated how entertaining the film was. Main effects were obtained for film version,  $F(2, 287) = 26.89, p < .0001$ , and narcissism,  $F(1, 287) = 10.09, p < .005$ . As with enjoyment, entertainment was higher in response to affection and lower in response to rape, and narcissists reported higher entertainment than other men overall.

We performed three simple effects tests to determine whether narcissists and nonnarcissists differed in how entertaining they thought each version of the film was. As Figure 2 shows, narcissists thought the film was more entertaining than others did when it showed consensual activity between the man and the woman prior to the rape,  $t(287) = 3.05, p < .005, d = 0.36$ . Narcissists did

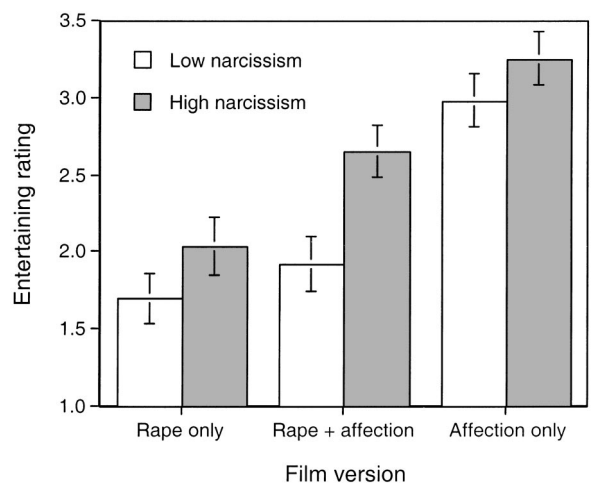


Figure 2. Interaction between narcissism and entitlement on film entertaining ratings.

not differ from others in how entertaining they found the film to be when it depicted only the rape,  $t(287) = 1.39, ns$ , nor when it depicted only the mutually consenting affectionate activities between the man and woman,  $t(287) = 1.09, ns$ . Men who had not seen the film previously thought it was more entertaining than did those who had seen it before ( $M_s = 2.53$  and  $1.91$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 10.81, p < .0001, d = 0.39$ . No other effects were significant.

Sexual Arousing Ratings

Participants also rated how sexually arousing the film was. Main effects were obtained for film version,  $F(2, 287) = 4.77, p < .01$ , and narcissism,  $F(1, 287) = 4.20, p < .05$ . As with enjoyment and entertainment, arousal was higher in response to affection and lower in response to rape, and narcissists reported higher arousal than other men overall.

We performed three simple effects tests to determine whether narcissists and nonnarcissists differed in how sexually arousing each version of the film was. As Figure 3 shows, narcissists thought the film was more sexually arousing than others did when it showed consensual, affectionate activity followed by the rape,  $t(287) = 2.32, p < .05, d = 0.27$ . Narcissists did not differ from others in how sexually arousing they found the film to be when it depicted only the rape,  $t(287) = 0.73, ns$ , nor when it depicted only the mutually consenting affectionate activities between the man and woman,  $t(287) = 0.52, ns$ . Men who had not seen the film previously thought it was more sexually arousing than did those who had seen it before ( $M_s = 2.63$  and  $2.19$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 4.95, p < .05, d = 0.26$ . No other effects were significant.

Violence Ratings

Participants also rated how violent the film was. A main effect was obtained for film version,  $F(2, 287) = 225.47, p < .0001$ . Not surprisingly, the film versions that depicted the rape were judged to be more violent than the version depicting only consenting activity. The three simple effects comparing narcissists and other

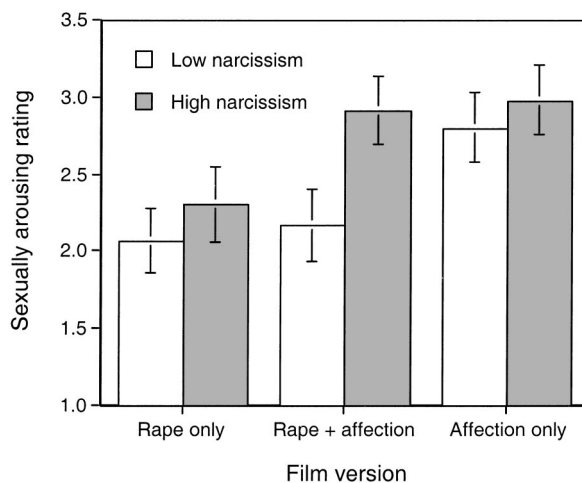


Figure 3. Interaction between narcissism and entitlement on film sexually arousing ratings.

men were nonsignificant for all three film versions,  $t_s(287) = 1.21, 0.33,$  and  $0.52$  for the rape only, rape and affection, and affection only film versions, respectively.

There was a significant interaction between narcissism and which actor participants were told to identify with on violence ratings,  $F(1, 287) = 4.52, p < .05$ . This two-way interaction, however, depended on the version of the film that participants watched, as indicated by a nearly significant three-way interaction,  $F(2, 287) = 2.33, p < .10$ . The mutually consenting activity only, mutually consenting activity followed by rape, and rape only versions of the film are depicted in Figures 4A, 4B, and 4C.

For the film that depicted only consensual affection (and no rape), there was no difference in how violent narcissists and nonnarcissists judged the film to be regardless of whether they were asked to identify with female or male actor,  $t_s(287) = 0.01$  and  $0.73$ , respectively, *ns* (see Figure 4A). The mutually consenting activity tape was judged as nonviolent by all participants, and identification made no difference.

Regarding the film that depicted both consensual, affectionate activity and rape, identification did seem to matter. When asked to identify with the female actor, narcissists judged this film to be less violent than did others, although this difference was not quite significant,  $t(287) = 1.88, p < .10, d = 0.22$  (see Figure 4B). When asked to identify with the male actor, narcissists and nonnarcissists did not differ in how violent they judged that same film (consensual affection plus rape) to be,  $t(287) = -1.44, ns$  (see Figure 4B).

Identification also mattered when participants saw only the rape segment. When asked to identify with the female actor, narcissists judged the rape to be less violent than did others,  $t(287) = 2.19, p < .05, d = 0.26$  (see Figure 4C). When asked to identify with the male actor, narcissists and nonnarcissists did not differ in how violent they judged the rape to be,  $t(287) = -0.42, ns$  (see Figure 4C). No other effects were significant.

#### Identification With Male and Female Actors

Regardless of whom they were told to identify with, narcissists identified more with the male actor than did nonnarcissists ( $M_s = 2.62$  and  $2.16$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 5.50, p < .05, d = 0.28$ . Thus, apparently narcissism promoted a tendency to see the film actor as similar to oneself.

Not surprisingly, participants identified more with the male actor if they were told to identify with him than if they were told to identify with the female actor ( $M_s = 2.85$  and  $1.94$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 22.09, p < .0001, d = 0.55$ . This finding indicates that the identification manipulation was effective. There also was a significant effect for film version,  $F(2, 287) = 12.00, p < .0001$ . Participants were more prone to identify with the male actor in the

film version depicting only consenting activity than in the film versions depicting rape. No other effects were significant on the measure of identification with the male actor.

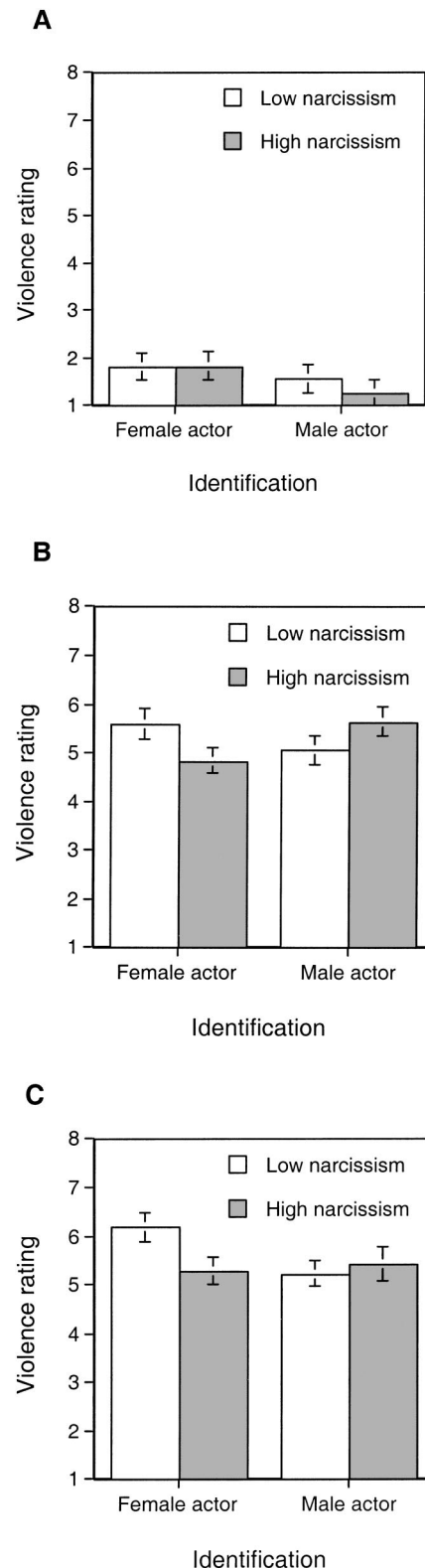


Figure 4. (A) Interaction between narcissism and which actor participants were told to identify with on violence ratings for the film depicting only consenting activity. (B) Interaction between narcissism and which actor participants were told to identify with on violence ratings for the film depicting consenting activity prior to the rape. (C) Interaction between narcissism and which actor participants were told to identify with on violence ratings for the film depicting only the rape.

Likewise, participants identified more with the female actor if they were told to identify with her than if they were told to identify with the male actor ( $M_s = 3.68$  and  $2.51$ , respectively),  $F(1, 287) = 24.43$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $d = 0.58$ . This finding indicates that identification manipulation was effective. No other effects were significant.

### Discussion

The findings of Experiment 2 provided further evidence that sexual coercion may be more acceptable to narcissistic men than to other men. Film depictions of rape were rated as more enjoyable, entertaining, and sexually arousing by narcissists than by other men.

These results do not indicate that narcissists actually like or enjoy films of rape. Among participants who saw only the rape scene, narcissists did not show any more enjoyment than nonnarcissists. Indeed, our entire sample gave low ratings to the rape-only film. Nor was there a significant difference in enjoyment when participants saw only the consensual, affectionate activity, which rules out the alternative explanation that narcissists simply respond more favorably than other men to depictions of consensual sexual activity.

The difference was mainly found when participants saw the rape occurring after some depiction of mutually consensual, affectionate activity. Narcissists gave more positive ratings than other men to that film. The most likely explanation appears to be that narcissists and nonnarcissists enjoy watching sexually oriented affectionate activity, but when this is followed by coercive sex, the nonnarcissistic male's pleasure is spoiled—whereas the narcissist's enjoyment remains significant. Coercive sexuality, when preceded by consensual affection, is thus still positive and enjoyable to the narcissist.

Additional findings supported the hypothesis that low empathy toward rape victims may mediate the responses of narcissists. To rape victims, rape is essentially an act of violence, even though to perpetrators it may be primarily a sexual act (e.g., Baumeister & Tice, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Felson, 2002). The narcissists seemed less able than other men to see the act from the woman's perspective. First, they reported identifying more with the male character, regardless of whom they were instructed to identify with. Second, when participants were instructed to identify with the female character (which should have facilitated perception of the rape as an act of violence), narcissists gave the scene lower ratings on violence than other men.

The results are also consistent with a reactance analysis. Reactance was most relevant to the version in which the couple first was depicted engaging in romantic, affectionate activity, which might plausibly lead the man to expect sex (and therefore feel reactance when she refused). The film was rated as more enjoyable and more entertaining in that condition, and narcissists in particular seemed to enjoy it. They did not respond positively to rape depicted without the initial, consensual activity.

In sum, these results provide some support for the narcissistic reactance theory. Depictions of rape were perceived more favorably by narcissists than by other men, and their higher enjoyment was most pronounced when the male character appeared to receive first encouragement and then refusal.

### Study 3

In Study 3, we sought to experimentally assess how high and low narcissists reacted when a woman denied them something sexual in nature. For obvious reasons, we used analog procedures that fell short of full-fledged date rape. That is, we sought to create a situation that was analogous in theoretical terms to events that might occur in a date rape situation. Male participants believed they were involved in a study assessing perceptions of pornographic material. We told them a female actor would read them a piece of pornographic prose (thereby leading them to expect a form of sexual stimulation), which they would later evaluate. The female actor stopped reading the sexual prose at the same point for all participants. For some participants, however, the female was very reluctant to read the prose, and eventually she refused to read any more, leading the male participants to believe that they had been denied access to the sexual material. For other participants, the female actor read the entire passage without stopping and without prodding from the experimenter.

Participants then decided how much money the female actor should receive for the session, whether she should be rehired for future studies, and whether they would like to participate in another study with her. Empathic concern for the confederate was manipulated by saying the female actor either needed the money or did not need it. We predicted that high narcissists, compared with low narcissists, would give the female actor less money, would be less likely to endorse rehiring her, and would be less willing to participate in another study with her, especially if she denied them something sexual (i.e., stopped reading the sexual prose). The narcissistic reactance theory proposes that male narcissists do not have empathic concern for female victims. Therefore, we predicted that high narcissists would be unaffected by the confederate's need for money, whereas low narcissists would give the female actor more money and be more willing to rehire her when she needed the money than when she did not need it.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 120 males enrolled in introductory psychology courses. Participants were randomly selected from a group of 512 men who had completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988) as part of a battery of tests given in mass-testing sessions. The alpha coefficient for the Narcissistic Personality Inventory was .74, and the average narcissism score was  $18.75$  ( $SD = 6.32$ ). The mass-testing and experimental sessions were about 2 months apart. Students received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation. None of the participants in Study 3 participated in Studies 1 or 2.

#### Procedure

Participants were told that the study was concerned with men's perceptions of sexually explicit and nonexplicit material. Participants were told that they would read one piece of prose and have another piece read to them. All participants were told that a female actor would first read them a sexually explicit passage. They were told that because of the sensitive nature of the material, they would not see or meet the female actor.

The male experimenter seated the participant in an individual room with a video camera that was turned on but was not actually taping the session. Each participant was told that the video camera was needed to give the



female actor feedback about how her audience was responding to the passage. Participants wrote a brief paragraph about themselves that the female actor would read, supposedly to learn more about them. In reality, there was no female actor present during the experiment. A tape recording of the female actor reading the prose, and any dialog between the actor and experimenter, was played over an intercom system.

While writing their self-descriptions, participants heard the female actor enter the lab. They also overheard, through the intercom, a conversation between the female actor and the experimenter about her payment. The experimenter said that she would not be paid until the end of the semester. In the *high need for money* condition, participants overheard the female actor reply "Are you sure it couldn't be any sooner? I really need the money. I'm behind on my tuition payments because my student loan fell through." In the *low need for money* condition, participants overheard the female actor reply, "That's fine. I don't really need the money anyway. I'm just doing this for fun."

The experimenter then returned to the participant and apologized for "accidentally" leaving the intercom turned on. He said the female actor would begin reading the prose selection after looking over the participant's self-description.

After a few minutes, the female actor began reading the sexually explicit prose, a passage from Linda Howard's (2000) romance novel titled *A Game of Chance*. The selection depicted a sexual encounter between two consenting adults, but was not pornographic. However, during experimental instructions, the participants were told the piece would become pornographic. In the *reluctant female* condition, the female actor was clearly uncomfortable while reading the prose selection. Although she began reading calmly and seductively (e.g., low tone and slow rate), a third of the way through the passage, she read nervously and hesitantly (e.g., stutter, frequent pauses, and rushed speech). She then stated she was uncomfortable reading and wished to stop. After prodding by the experimenter to continue reading, she continued reading, but hesitantly. Two thirds of the way through the passage, she again refused to continue, saying she was uncomfortable. The experimenter again prodded her to continue, arguing that she had read the study for *all* of the other men in the study. We thought the feedback about the female actor reading the passage to all other men, but not to the participants personally, would be a big blow to narcissists' egos. The female actor continued to read the selection, but was clearly flustered. She then vehemently refused to continue reading, saying the selection was too pornographic after this point. The experimenter again reminded her she had not had problems reading the entire passage to other men. The female actor responded that there was "something" about the participant that made her uncomfortable, and she again refused to continue. The latter statement was also expected to be a blow to narcissists' egos. In the *willing female* condition, the female actor read the entire selection calmly and seductively without any protest. The stopping point in the willing female condition was the same stopping point in the reluctant female condition. However, this time we let participants believe this was simply the end of the passage. Once the female actor finished reading, the experimenter thanked her and said she was free to leave.

After the female actor finished reading, the experimenter returned to the participant. In the reluctant female condition, the experimenter explained that the female actor refused to continue reading, even though she still had several minutes of reading left. Participants in the willing female condition were simply told that she had finished the selection.

The experimenter then explained that the female actor was hired by the Psychology Department and was being paid for her time. He told participants that the Psychology Department was interested in their feedback about how much money she should receive, and if she should be rehired for future studies. The experimenter assured participants their responses would be completely confidential. Participants indicated how much money, from \$0 to \$20, they felt the female actor should receive for the session. Participants also were asked to answer the following questions: "If I were part of the hiring committee, I would rehire the female actor I heard" and

"I would like to participate in another study with the female actor I heard." Responses were made on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*).

There was some concern that hearing the sexually explicit passage may cause some degree of arousal. As a means to dissipate this arousal, all participants read and evaluated a nonsexual piece of prose: a selection from Robert Fulghum's (1988) *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. We told participants that because they heard the female actor read the sexual prose, they would read the nonsexual prose themselves.

After the dependent variables were collected, participants responded to some manipulation check items. As a check on the need for money manipulation, participants were asked how much the female actor needed the money on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*a lot*). As a check on the female refusal manipulation, participants rated whether the female actor was eager and willing to read the sexual prose on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*).<sup>2</sup> Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and thoroughly debriefed.

## Results

### Data Analysis Strategy

The data were analyzed using a 2 (high vs. low need for money)  $\times$  2 (reluctant vs. willing female)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low narcissism) factorial design. A median split was used to classify participants into high-and low-narcissism categories. Treating narcissism as a continuous variable in regression analyses yielded the same pattern of results.

### Manipulation Checks

*Perceived need for money.* As a check on the manipulation of the confederate's perceived need, participants were asked how much the female actor needed the money on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*a lot*). As expected, participants in the high-empathy condition thought she needed the money more than did participants in the low-empathy condition ( $M_s = 5.08$  and  $4.25$ , respectively),  $F(1, 116) = 4.28, p < .05, d = 0.38$ . Thus, the manipulation of monetary need was effective.

*Female refusal.* As a check on the manipulation of the confederate's willingness versus refusal to read the sexual passage, participants rated whether the female actor was eager and willing to read the sexual prose on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*). As expected, the female actor was rated as more eager and willing to read the sexual prose in the willing female condition than in the reluctant female condition ( $M_s = 5.64$  and  $3.32$ , respectively),  $F(1, 118) = 24.97, p < .0001, d = 0.91$ . Thus, the female reluctant versus willing manipulation was effective.

<sup>2</sup> Participants in Study 3 also rated how sexually arousing the sexually explicit passage was, using a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*). The overall mean for sexually arousing ratings was 4.19 ( $SD = 2.44$ ), indicating intermediate arousal. None of the manipulated variables (i.e., money need, female willingness) or measured variables (i.e., narcissism) influenced ratings of how sexually arousing the sexually explicit passage was. This is not surprising given that the sexually explicit passage described mutually consenting activity between a man and a woman. In Study 2, narcissists and nonnarcissists did not differ in their reactions to the videotape depicting mutually consenting activity. In addition, sexual arousing ratings did not influence any of the dependent variables. We therefore report the simpler analyses in this article.

*Attractiveness Measure*

*Desire to be in another study with the female actor.* There was a significant interaction between narcissism and the female’s willingness to read the sexual prose on participants’ interest in being in another study with the female actor,  $F(1, 112) = 4.50, p < .05$ . As can be seen in Figure 5, high narcissists expressed less desire to participate with the female actor again when she was reluctant to read the sexual passage,  $t(112) = 2.44, p < .05, d = 0.46$ . Thus, narcissists were less attracted to the female actor when she denied them sexual stimulation. In the willing female condition, where participants were not denied something sexual, there was no difference in how much high and low narcissists wanted to participate with the female actor again,  $t(112) = 0.50, ns$ . No other effects were significant.

*Aggressive Retaliation Measures*

*Amount of cash the female actor should receive.* Overall, high narcissists gave the female actor less money than did low narcissists ( $M_s = \$7.83$  and  $\$10.75$ , respectively),  $F(1, 112) = 8.52, p < .005, d = 0.55$ . There also was a significant interaction between narcissism and the female’s willingness to read the sexual prose,  $F(1, 112) = 9.56, p < .005$ . As can be seen in Figure 6, high narcissists gave the female actor less money than did low narcissists when she was reluctant to read the sexual passage,  $t(112) = 4.12, p < .0001, d = 0.78$ . Thus, narcissists became aggressive in response to being denied sexual stimulation. In the willing female condition, where participants were not denied something sexual, there was no difference in how much money high and low narcissists gave the female actor,  $t(112) = 0.13, ns$ . No other effects were significant.

*Evaluation of whether the female actor should be rehired.* There was a significant three-way interaction between narcissism, empathy, and the female’s willingness to read the sexual prose,  $F(1, 110) = 8.91, p < .005$ . To interpret the three-way interaction,

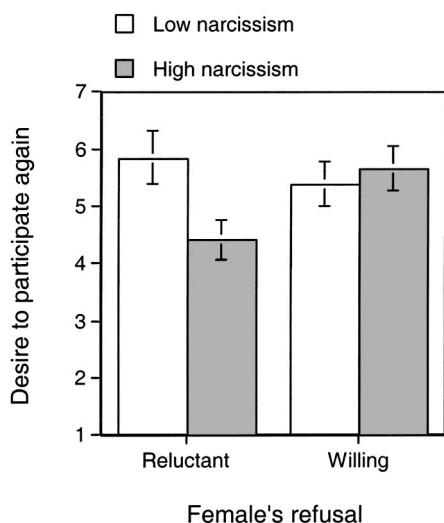


Figure 5. Interaction between narcissism and the female’s willingness to read the sexual prose on ratings of how much participants wanted to be in another study with the female actor.

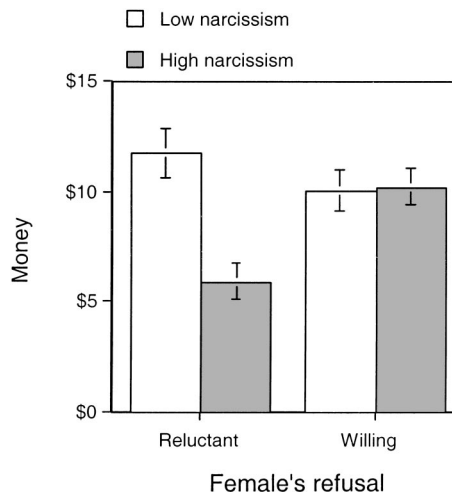


Figure 6. Interaction between narcissism and the female’s willingness to read the sexual prose on money allocated to the female actor.

we examined the two-way interaction between narcissism and empathy separately for reluctant female and willing female conditions (see Figures 7A and 7B). In the reluctant female condition, the two-way interaction between narcissism and empathy was significant,  $F(1, 112) = 5.91, p < .05$ . As can be seen in Figure 7A, high narcissists were less likely than low narcissists to recommend rehiring the female actor if she really needed the money,  $t(112) = 2.52, p < .05, d = 0.48$ . The hiring recommendations of high and low narcissists did not differ when the female actor did not need the money,  $t(112) = 0.98, ns$ . The two-way interaction between narcissism and empathy was nonsignificant in the willing female condition,  $F(1, 112) = 3.15, ns$  (see Figure 7B).

*Discussion*

The third study sought to test the narcissistic reactance hypothesis by having a female confederate (actually a tape-recorded confederate) refuse to read a sexually arousing passage aloud to the narcissist, even though she had allegedly been willing to read it to other, prior participants. In effect, she refused to provide sexual stimulation to the participant. According to reactance theory, this refusal should lead to aggression toward the woman, and we predicted these reactions would be strongest among narcissistic men.

The main measure of aggression was the amount of money that the participant recommended paying the confederate. Participants in the reluctant female condition had some grounds for recommending relatively low amounts, because the woman had refused to do her assigned job of reading the passage. Still, narcissists appear to have reacted more negatively than other men. They recommended lower payments. This does not appear to reflect a general stinginess, because in the control condition (where the woman read the passage without complaint) narcissists and non-narcissists recommended almost identical average payments. When the woman refused, however, the narcissists retaliated much more strongly than others, as indicated by their withholding payment. The same pattern of results was obtained when participants

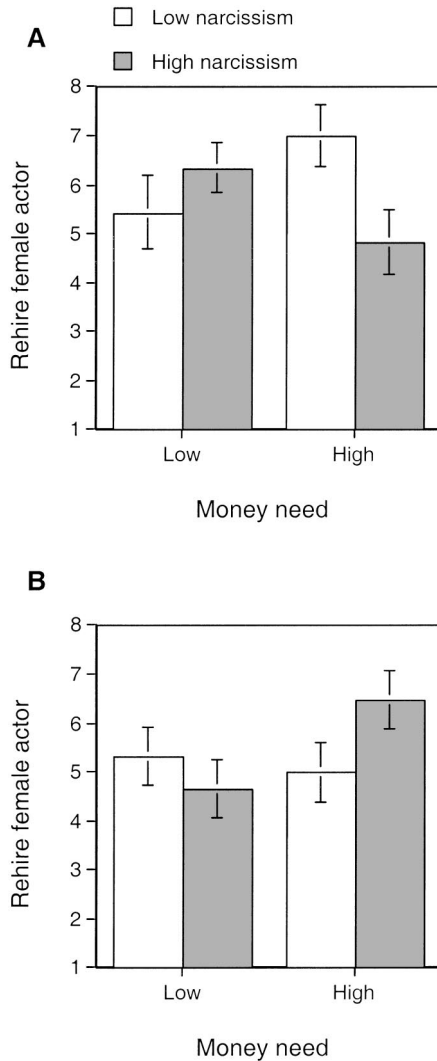


Figure 7. (A) Interaction between narcissism and empathy on hiring evaluations in the female reluctant condition. (B) Interaction between narcissism and empathy on hiring evaluations in the female willing condition.

were asked if they wanted to participate in another study with the female actor.

Similar findings were obtained on a second measure of aggression, namely the recommendation as to whether the confederate should be rehired. The most negative recommendations for rehiring the confederate came when she refused to read the passage to a narcissist and she had indicated that she really needed the money (and therefore would be most hurt by not getting the job). Narcissists were thus again punitive in response to being denied sexual stimulation.

Although the responses of narcissists indicate punitive aggression, our procedure did not offer them the opportunity for specifically sexual aggression. When she refused to provide the narcissist with the sexual stimulation he anticipated, he responded by reducing her pay and impairing her chances to get a job she wanted. We did not measure whether he engaged in rape or sexual

coercion. In our view, the finding that narcissists respond to sexual disappointments with aggression indicates that a hostile, punitive aggression is involved and therefore increases the interest value of the findings. (After all, if narcissists had responded to the sexual disappointment with sexual coercion, one might interpret that pattern as merely a persistence at pursuing the sexual goals, without any hostile or aggressive attitudes.) It seems likely that sexual aggression will follow the same patterns as aggression generally, although if there were some theoretical reason to expect that sexual disappointment would fail to produce sexual aggression (even though it produced nonsexual aggression), then further research would be warranted to replicate the present findings using specifically sexual measures of aggression. For the present article, our finding of nonsexual aggression supports the theory that narcissistic males respond to sexual refusals with reactance, including its aggressive aspect.

Withholding pay and voting against rehiring the woman may not constitute sexual coercion per se, but it is more directly analogous to what occurs in many instances of sexual harassment. Men who harass female coworkers sometimes make job-related rewards, including pay and sometimes continued employment, contingent on sexual favors, and when the woman fails to fulfill the man's sexual wishes, he punishes her by impairing her prospects for monetary success at her career. Hence, readers who are hesitant about generalizing from Study 3's results to rape may prefer to link them to harassment.

We also note that the design of this study did not include nonsexual stimuli. Our goal was to study reactions to being deprived of sexual stimulation, because we were testing a theory about sexual coercion. However, it is plausible in principle that participants would be offended had the confederate refused to continue reading them a passage about statistical methods, global warming, political economics, or any randomly chosen topic (or perhaps at least some topic that held a promise of being enjoyable and entertaining, such as sports). We suspect, however, that sexual stimulation is of special importance to the undergraduate males that formed our study population and that they would be especially disappointed to miss out on this. In any case, the relevance of our findings to sexual coercion would not be diminished if parallel patterns were sometimes found in nonsexual contexts.

Consistent with the first two studies, there was evidence of low empathy. On both the payment and the rehiring recommendations, some differences emerged as a function of whether the woman said she really needed the money. Her expression of need appears to have elicited some sympathy from the nonnarcissistic men. Although they may have been disappointed or even offended when she refused to read the sexual passage, they were more generous toward her when she indicated that she really needed the money. Narcissists were however unmoved by her expression of need. These results suggest that the reactions of narcissists (as compared with other men) revolved mainly around their own wishes and feelings and were relatively insensitive to the woman's wishes and feelings.

## General Discussion

The main findings from this work can be summarized as follows. The first study showed that narcissism correlated positively with rape myth acceptance and negatively with empathy toward

rape victims. That is, narcissistic males were more likely than other men to hold rape-conducive beliefs, such as the belief that if a woman says no to sex she may actually mean yes. They were also more likely than other men to think that rape victims often share responsibility for the rape, and so by extension, perpetrators of sexual coercion should not bear as much blame. Thus, in situations in which a narcissistic man (as compared with other men) wanted sex and a woman refused, he might be tempted to continue pushing for sex (possibly including by force) and might find it easy to justify his own use of coercive force as something she deserved or caused.

The second study involved watching filmed depictions of rape. Narcissists responded more favorably (or less unfavorably) than other men to some of these scenes. Narcissists rated these scenes as more entertaining, more enjoyable, and more sexually arousing. More precisely, the relatively higher enjoyment of narcissists was most pronounced when the rape scene was preceded by depictions of consensual affectionate activity. This fits the view that narcissists are less prone than other men to condemn sexual coercion if the woman has seemingly encouraged the man.

The third study approached the issue by having male participants experience a sexual refusal from a female confederate. Narcissists appear to have reacted more negatively than other men to this refusal: They recommended lower levels of pay for her and were less favorable toward rehiring her. (In the control condition, where there was no refusal, narcissists did not differ from other participants.) Thus, narcissists were more punitive than other men toward a woman who refused them some sexual stimulation that they had anticipated.

All three studies provided some evidence that narcissistic men feel less empathy than other men toward a woman who may be a victim of aggression or sexual coercion. Narcissists scored lower on a questionnaire measure of empathy toward rape victims in Study 1. In Study 2, they were less prone to identify with the female than with the male character (as compared with other viewers), regardless of instructions. Moreover, when instructed to identify with the female victim, they apparently were less successful in perceiving the rape the way a victim would feel, insofar as they gave it lower ratings on violence than other viewers. They were no different from other viewers when instructed to identify with the male character. These results fit the pattern of selective empathy: Narcissists can be empathic under some circumstances, but apparently they do not bother trying to empathize with victims of sexual assault. Last, narcissists also exhibited low empathy in Study 3 in that they were less sympathetic and responsive to the female confederate's (overheard) claim that she needed money. Indeed, when the woman refused to provide the narcissist with sexual stimulation, he seemed especially punitive by voting against rehiring her for the job when she said she most needed the money. Her expression of need appears to have elicited some sympathetic treatment from the nonnarcissistic men, whereas the narcissists were unmoved by her plight and, if anything, seemed to use her need as a way to punish her for the sexual refusal.

The present results also support the view that reactance can contribute to sexual coercion. According to the theory, reactance should arise when a man feels that he may justifiably anticipate sexual stimulation but the woman then refuses it. In Study 2, the positive reactions of narcissists (compared with other men) occurred only when the rape scene followed depictions of consen-

sual, affectionate activity, and it seems likely that the consensual activity may have encouraged the men (including, by identification, the viewers) to expect that sexual intercourse would occur. In Study 3, the participant was led to expect that the woman would read a sexually explicit passage to him, but then the woman refused. Moreover, her refusal was presented as somewhat arbitrary and specific to him (which should generate maximum reactance). When the same woman read the same amount of material without creating reactance (by refusing), participants treated her more favorably, and narcissism made no difference.

Although the present studies were designed to test the narcissistic reactance theory, the findings could be interpreted in other contexts as well. Most notably, Malamuth (1996) has proposed a confluence model of rape and sexual aggression, which holds that the trait of hostile masculinity will combine with a preference for impersonal sex so as to cause sexual aggression. Although hostile masculinity and impersonal sex may sound quite different from narcissism and reactance, there are some possible similarities. In particular, Malamuth (1996) proposed that men who feel hurt, rejected, and otherwise mistreated by women are more prone to develop the hostile masculinity syndrome (which itself is characterized by the desire to control women and an insecure but hostile attitude toward them). Narcissists may be especially prone to follow the path from feeling rejected, hurt, or mistreated into becoming hostile and aggressive (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Malamuth, Heavey, and Linz (1993, p. 87) have noted that some measures of hostile masculinity are highly correlated with narcissism. Meanwhile, impersonal sex in Malamuth's (1996) model is understood as an enjoyment of casual, uncommitted, game-playing sex. Because many women are averse to uncommitted or casual sex (e.g., Oliver & Hyde, 1993), men who seek and desire it may find their wishes thwarted, and they might well respond with reactance—especially if they believed they were going to have that kind of sex or that the woman encouraged and then rejected them. As we proposed, narcissists may be especially likely to have such feelings of inflated entitlements and expectations. If one equates rejected narcissists with Malamuth's (1996) notion of hostile masculinity, then the punitive reactions observed in the present Study 3 seem quite compatible with the confluence model. It is a greater stretch to interpret Study 2's findings (especially the higher levels of entertainment and sexual arousal reported by narcissists in response to affection, as compared with how they responded to depictions of force) as supporting the confluence model, but they do not clearly contradict it either.

Our findings are less compatible with certain other theories. Brownmiller (1975) proposed that all men support and benefit from rape, and the negative reactions of our participants to the rape depictions contradict that view. Brownmiller's approach was updated by Hall and Barongan (1997), who proposed that rape in America is a result of normal white male socialization and that ethnic minority or feminist socialization is an effective antidote to rape. (They conceded that their theory conflicts with FBI data showing that some ethnic minorities commit rape at higher rates than White males.) Again, though, most participants in our studies were the products of the mainstream socialization decried by Hall and Barongan, and yet only some became aggressive in these sexual situations and only under certain, limited circumstances. Our data suggest that narcissism, rather than white male socialization, is a more promising trait on which to pin a predisposition

toward rape. On the positive side, however, Hall and Barongan did propose factors such as low empathy and indifference to coercion as factors that predispose toward rape, and our findings are consistent with those points.

The limitations of the present investigation are readily apparent. It is not feasible to have research participants engage in actual rape, of course. We have tried to test causal hypotheses by using procedures that were in some ways analogous to real-world sexual coercion, including measuring how people reacted to film depictions of rape (Study 2) and by leading men to expect but then be refused some sexual stimulation by a female confederate (Study 3). Skeptics might certainly claim that these experiences differ in important ways from sexual coercion outside the laboratory. Still, the review by Baumeister et al. (2002) used real-world findings to construct their theory of narcissistic reactance, and so that theory does fit what is known about actual rape. Data on nonlaboratory, actual rape has ample drawbacks and limitations as well, which is why it seems necessary to look for convergence between laboratory simulations and experiences in reality. Moreover, the present investigation used three quite different methods, and the convergence of findings is therefore encouraging.

Another limitation is that not all acts of rape and sexual coercion follow the same pattern or arise from the same roots. We think it highly plausible that there is more than one correct theory about the causes of rape. The present findings should not therefore be taken as ruling out or discrediting alternative theories. They indicate only that narcissism and reactance may be worthy of further study as causal factors in many instances of rape and sexual coercion.

Sexual coercion is an unconscionable abuse of another person that exploits another's body for one's own sexual gratification. When women refuse sexual advances, most men respect that refusal, but a minority press ahead and use force. To explain these unusual, shameful, but important instances, it seems necessary to invoke both individual predisposing traits and situational factors. The present results suggest that narcissistic men may be more prone than others to engage in sexual coercion, especially in circumstances in which they can rationalize their behavior as having been encouraged by the woman or in which they feel that the woman offended them by refusing them something they both wanted and anticipated.

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