

Description for the General Public

Narcissism is a personality trait with diverse, and potentially negative, consequences for interaction partners and society. This research program aims for a better understanding of these consequences. We take into consideration that the social consequences of narcissism might depend on factors and circumstances that can modify them. We consider two classes of such modifying factors, narcissists' objective qualities (Subproject I) and situational factors (Subproject II). In Subproject I we test the hypothesis that narcissists' success in achieving what they desire depends on whether or not they have objective attributes (regardless of their self-views) that are beneficial for reaching these outcomes. In particular, we examine whether narcissists succeed in attaining wealth if they are intelligent, whether they succeed in gaining social influence if they possess socioemotional abilities (such as emotional intelligence, recognizing and understanding emotions) and whether they succeed in attracting mates if they are physically attractive. To this end, we will conduct a laboratory study where all participants will evaluate one another and a speed-dating study. Furthermore, we will analyze existing data from a large panel dataset with repeated measurements, representative of the German population (number of participants > 1500). In Subproject II, which deals with the modifying role of situations, we address two research questions. First, we investigate situations of competition between groups of people and test whether narcissists are evaluated more positively by members of their own group than by members of the other group. We will address this question in two laboratory studies where participants evaluate one another and a field study. This also includes an intercultural study testing whether the evaluation of German as opposed to Polish narcissists depends on the evaluator's nationality (German vs. Polish). Second, we investigate situational influences on narcissists' prosociality, helping behavior. We expect narcissists to show more prosocial behavior when such behavior is rewarded than when it is not, while we expect them to remain insensitive to the needs of those who receive their help. We address these questions in three experimental studies. The project altogether encompasses nine studies (number of participants per study ≥ 250). The results of the research project will shed new light on narcissism and its effects on social outcomes. Furthermore, they will more generally lead to a better understanding of how social outcomes are shaped by the interplay between motivation, objective qualities, and situational factors.