

Social and Emotional Responses to Being Envied in a Face-to-Face Social Interaction
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Abstract

Envy is a social emotion characterized by coveting another person's relationships, life circumstances, or material wealth. Most literature on this topic focuses on the envious individual, yet there is little research on its effects on the person receiving envy. In this study, we examined the effects of envy on the development of real-life relationships, as well as the personality traits that make people respond to envy in unique ways. 38 Georgetown University students were separated into three conditions. One condition received envy after a prime of positive ideas about success, the second condition received envy after a prime of negative ideas about success, and the control condition did not receive any expression of envy. An experimenter methodically expressed envy towards them and measured their reactions. Overall, receiving envy did not significantly affect likelihood of doing a favor for the experimenter. Yet those who received a positive concept of success prime were significantly less likely to do a favor than controls. Collectivism-Individualism and personality types greatly impacted one's reaction to envy. Those who returned compliments had high levels of horizontal collectivism and high levels of warm-heartedness, compared to those who did not. Personality plays less of a role in likelihood to do favors if receiving envy. Extroversion is strongly correlated with doing a favor, yet this relationship disappears when one receives envy. Personality strongly affects how one responds to envy and one's likelihood to do a favor for someone, but only in a normative social interaction.