The Humiliation Experience: Causes, Emotional Correlates, and Behavioral Consequences

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The Humiliation Experience: Causes, Emotional Correlates, and Behavioral Consequences

Abstract

The goal of this research was to provide a comprehensive investigation of the emotional experience of humiliation by examining: (1) the direct effects of self-esteem and narcissism on emotional responses to potentially humiliating events; (2) the direct effects of the emotional correlates of humiliating experiences (i.e., sadness, humiliation, and anger) on the related behavioral reactions to such events (i.e., withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization); and (3) a process model to determine whether or not the emotional correlates of potentially humiliating events mediated the predicted effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the behavioral consequences on those events.

Participants, ranging in age from 18 to 25, were recruited via social networking websites and undergraduate psychology courses. The data were collected through an online survey tool that presented participants with 8 vignettes, describing mild to extreme humiliation-provoking events. Following each vignette, participants were asked to identify with the protagonist (the victim of the humiliating event) and answer a series of questions related to how their anticipated emotional and behavioral reactions to the hypothetical event. Analyses were based on the responses of 210 individuals.

Path analysis revealed that withdrawal behaviors were significantly predicted by low levels of self-esteem and high levels of sadness and humiliation. Self-esteem also had an indirect effect on withdrawal, through its association with humiliation. Retaliation was predicted by high levels of narcissism. Anger and humiliation were also associated with retaliation. There was an indirect positive effect of narcissism on retaliation, through its relationship with anger. The positive relationship between humiliation and retaliation was altered once anger was controlled for. Finally, high levels of minimization were associated with low levels of anger. Additionally, narcissism had a very small, but significant, indirect effect on minimization, whereby lower levels of narcissism led to decreases in participants’ tendencies to feel angry, following a potentially humiliating event, which resulted in greater endorsement of minimization behaviors. Implications were discussed, as were suggestions for future research. Conclusions emphasized the need for a developmental understanding of these processes.

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Ph.D.

Department
Psychology

First Advisor
Susan Harter, Ph.D.

Second Advisor
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Third Advisor
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Keywords
Blame, Devaluation, Embarrassment, Humiliation, Self-conscious emotions, Shame

Subject Categories
Developmental Psychology

Publication Statement
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THE HUMILIATION EXPERIENCE: CAUSES, EMOTIONAL CORRELATES, AND
BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Kendall E. McCarley
June 2009
Advisor: Susan Harter
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Susan Harter for her support and guidance throughout my graduate career. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable insight and feedback provided by my committee members, Drs. Daniel McIntosh, Stephen Shirk, Nancy Whitesell, and Kathy Green (Outside Chair). Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my family and friends for their unconditional support throughout this challenging process.
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Background and Significance

As a result of the growing number of high-profile school shootings, research on the prediction and prevention of school violence has proliferated. For example, interest in the personality characteristics and response tendencies of bullies and victims is at an all-time high (e.g., Burgess, Garbarino, & Carlson, 2006; Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997; Smith, 2004). Similarly, many investigators are currently focusing their efforts on peer rejection and aggression (Bierman, 2003). While providing valuable insight into some aspects of school violence, the majority of this research fails to address one of the most critical themes, consistently identified in most of the school shooters' case histories: the emotion of humiliation.

A review of case studies and media analyses of the events leading up to the school massacres indicate that the majority of the shooters reported being humiliated by their peers (Harter, Low, & Whitesell, 2003; Twenge & Campbell, 2003). Similarly, the descriptive evidence provided in forensic reports, along with findings from a very limited body of qualitative research, suggests that adolescents and young adults frequently experience humiliation, for some, on a daily basis. Despite preliminary evidence suggesting the widespread effects of humiliation and its link to violence, additional
research on the fundamental role of related emotions, such as anger and sadness, is needed to better understand individuals’ responses to the emotional experience of humiliation.

Evidence from case histories of the school shooters reveals that the a number of the shooters were ridiculed because of their appearance and/or lack of participation in athletics. For example, Andrew Golden (Jonesboro, AR shooting) and Luke Woodham (Pearl, MS shooting) were frequently teased because of their weight. Other shooters demonstrated a lack of interest and/or ability in athletic activities and as a result, were referred to as “wusses” or “gay” (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003). In essence, many of the shooters were humiliated because they often violated social norms. Social norms represent the set of expectations that guide social interactions among group members and between a group and the outside world (Heerey, Capps, Keltner, & Kring, 2005). Provocation occurs when these norms are violated (Fritsche, 2002; Heerey, et al., 2005). This is also consistent with results from one study in which participants were asked to provide their own examples of humiliating situations (Harter, Kiang, Whitesell, & Anderson, 2003). Many participants described incidences in which social norms were violated, such as urinating on themselves in public. Thus, humiliating situations are often self-caused violations of social norms that occur in the presence of an audience.

Exploratory evidence suggests that acts of revenge and retaliation are common behavioral reactions to the emotional experience of humiliation. In one study, participants responded to a set of open-ended questions asking how they personally would react to the humiliation-provoking situations (Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003). While the majority of
participants indicated they would be most likely to seek revenge against the perpetrator(s) of the humiliating event, some revealed that they would act out violently toward anyone, which has been a common feature of the school shootings. Similarly, Jackson (2000) constructed a series of vignettes intended to typify situations that elicit humiliation. Among the questions following the scenarios, several assessed the association between the emotional experience of humiliation and the resulting desire to seek revenge. In general, participants tended to agree with statements that reflected the protagonist’s motivation to seek revenge for what happened.

However, revenge and retaliation are not the only reactions reported in response to humiliation. Nonviolent reactions were also generated in response to open-ended questions about humiliation-provoking situations (Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003). Included among these were attempts to hide or escape as well as attempts to “laugh it off” or minimize the insult. Lazare (1987) has argued that the desire to hide may serve an adaptive purpose, by providing the victim with a signal to maintain his or her distance, attempt to hide, and protect him or herself. However, once this response begins to deprive the humiliated individual of normal intimacy it is considered maladaptive, with the most extreme cases ending in suicide. Based on his clinical observations, Lazare (1987) predicted that withdrawal should be the most common behavioral response to the emotional experience of humiliation.

While the findings supplied by Jackson (2000) and Harter, Kiang et al. (2003) suggest a number of important links between the emotion of humiliation and its typical behavioral correlates, many questions remain unanswered. In general, more empirical
evidence is needed that links both violent and nonviolent behavior to humiliation. In particular, literature on the nonviolent types of behavioral reactions is incomplete. Furthermore, Elison and Harter (2007) suggest the need for a process model of humiliation that would provide direct links between the causes, emotional correlates, and behavioral reactions associated with the emotion of humiliation.

Despite limited theoretical and empirical efforts, researchers have managed to identify a fairly consistent conceptual definition of the emotional experience of humiliation. Investigators typically characterize humiliation from the perspective of the victim. Victims of humiliation-provoking events often feel that they are placed, against their will and in an extremely hurtful way, in situations that they perceive as unjustified. This intense experience leads to the sense that one’s self has been attacked, diminished, or threatened unjustifiably (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003; Harter, Low, et al., 2003; Klein, 1991; McCarley, 2005). Experientially, the victim feels lowered in the eyes of his/her peers. Typically, the belief that one’s social standing is in jeopardy makes the situation intensely painful and demands individuals to escape from the situation or react in manner that will minimize the pain experienced (Steiner, 2006).

The research questions presented throughout the current study revolve around the emotional experience of humiliation. Consequently, it is necessary to begin with the same level of understanding of the situational antecedents of humiliation, and the resulting emotion experienced in general terms before presenting any hypotheses.
Theories of Humiliation

Humiliation as a Social Tool

The emotion of humiliation is best understood as a mechanism, provoked by others who wish to gain control over their victim(s). Recent speculations, based on evolutionary theory, increasingly suggest that people’s need to form and maintain interpersonal relationships is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). To satisfy this need, researchers hypothesize that a set of internal mechanisms has survived evolution to guide human behavior. These proposed mechanisms include tendencies to: orient toward other members of the social group, undergo distress when deprived of social contact, and experience pleasure from relational connections (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999).

Interpersonally, humiliation is a tool used by members of a group, to gain social control over another group-member. As a tool, the provocation of humiliation helps the group secure compliance and conformity from individual group members who threaten the group hierarchy (Hartling, Rosen, Walker, & Jordan, 2000). Current research and theory on humiliation often stems from this perspective. Accordingly, the emotion of humiliation is elicited following severe relational violations and functions as a precursor to loss of acceptance and active rejection (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Hartling, et al., 2000; Klein, 1991).

Situational Antecedents of Humiliation

Most researchers agree on four situational antecedents of humiliation. First and foremost, events that provoke humiliation involve a victim, who feels that he or she has
been forced into a powerless position by another person who, at least temporarily, is more powerful (Jackson, 2000; Lindner, 2002; S. B. Miller, 1988). Specifically, the agent of the humiliating situation exercises power over the target (Klein, 1991). This typically involves exposing a flaw, shortcoming, or failure in the target of the humiliating event, with social control exerted in an intentional way. On the receiving end, the humiliated individual often feels that he or she has been lowered in the eyes of others, degraded, ridiculed, and put down. As a result, the target experiences a loss of dignity, social status, and/or esteem. In short, the theoretical emphasis in the first situational antecedent of humiliation has been on the lowered position of the victim (Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; Lindner, 2002; S. B. Miller, 1988; W. I. Miller, 1993; Sarphatie, 1993; Stamm, 1978; Statman, 2000).

A second situational antecedent of humiliation is the hostile role of the other (Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; Lindner, 2002; S. B. Miller, 1988; W. I. Miller, 1993; Sarphatie, 1993; Stamm, 1978; Statman, 2000). The process of humiliation is located in the relationship between the instigator and the victim (Klein, 1991). The agent’s actions are overt and malicious, reflecting hostile intent to hurt the victim by revealing his or her inadequacies (Jackson, 2000).

Third, a sense of unfairness or injustice is an essential piece of humiliation-provoking events (Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Silver, Conte, Miceli, & Poggi, 1986; Stamm, 1978; Statman, 2000). Humiliating situations involve an attack on an individual’s personal sense of self, not simply his or her actions (Klein, 1991). As
such, the victim typically does not accept responsibility for the humiliating event; people rarely believe they deserve their humiliation (Jackson, 2000; Klein, 1991; Stamm, 1978). The sense of unfairness that accompanies events that provoke humiliation refers to the attack, not the flaw exposed.

The final situational antecedent of humiliation is the presence of an audience (Elison & Harter, 2007; Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003; Harter, Low, et al., 2003; Jackson, 2000; Klein, 1991; S. B. Miller, 1988; W. I. Miller, 1993; Silver, et al., 1986). The emotional experience of humiliation is intensely unpleasant. The added public nature of humiliation-provoking situations exacerbates its effect by potentially preventing the victim from minimizing or reinterpreting the attack (Jackson, 2000).

*Empirical Evidence*

To date, only a handful of studies have empirically investigated the situational antecedents of humiliation. In one of the only studies that has addressed the antecedents of humiliation-inducing experiences, participants were asked to generate narratives describing situations that elicit humiliation, as well as shame (Jackson, 2000). Based on the open-ended responses and theories of humiliation, Jackson (2000) created a series of vignettes in which excessive overt derogation, deservingness, and publicity were manipulated to create situations in which the protagonist might experience varying degrees of humiliation. As expected, Jackson’s (2000) study revealed that there appear to be specific situational factors required to elicit the emotion of humiliation. First and foremost, situations involving another person actively derogating another, with hostile intent, were rated as more humiliating. Contrary to the researchers expectations,
deservingness (or fairness) did not affect participants’ ratings of the situations as more or less humiliating. Finally, situations including an audience were viewed as significantly more humiliating than situations involving only the protagonist and antagonist (Jackson, 2000).

In their efforts to identify the situational antecedents of humiliation, Harter and colleagues have conducted a number of studies that were derived from analyses of the media accounts of the high-profile school shootings. Many of the school shooters often described how they had been ridiculed, teased, and bullied by their peers, publicly rejected by romantic interests, and embarrassed by teachers, resulting in their severe humiliation. Central to these experiences was the presence of a hostile audience who laughed at the victim, thereby exacerbating and perpetuating the intensity of the harassment. To address the common antecedents of humiliation, the researchers created vignettes that were intended to simulate the social norm violations that led to the humiliation experienced by the school shooters. In two separate studies, participants were asked to imagine themselves as the victim in the vignettes and indicate how humiliated they would feel. The findings from both studies demonstrated that the simulations provoked high humiliation ratings for all adolescents (Harter, Low, et al., 2003; McCarley, 2005; McCarley & Harter, 2005). Thus, the vignettes appeared to capture critical situational antecedents of humiliation.

To address the role of the audience more specifically, Harter, Kiang et al. (2003) examined the commonalities of humiliating events, as described by college students in response to an open-ended probe. The findings revealed that the presence of an audience
was a critical factor in events that provoke humiliation. In a related study, Elison and Harter (2007) asked students to rate a series of vignettes on a number of emotional and behavioral reactions. Of the 27 vignettes that were good exemplars of humiliation-provoking situations, all 27 included an audience. Furthermore, the results indicated that, in response to hypothetical social-norm violations, participants anticipated feeling worse about themselves when an audience was present.

In sum, for a situation to be described as humiliating, it must satisfy four criteria: 1) the humiliated individual must feel that he or she has been degraded, or that his or her social status has been lowered as a result of the situation, 2) the perpetrator of the humiliating event must be acting in an overtly malicious manner, 3) the attack must be viewed by the victim as unfair and unjustified, and 4) the attack must occur in a public setting. The decrease in social status can motivate a number of behaviors. Some individuals are able to minimize the attack by placing all of their blame in a perpetrator who is not important to them, effectively minimizing any lingering, negative feelings. Others may attempt to escape or hide from the situation and the perpetrators so that they can avoid any further derogation and salvage their remaining social position. Finally, some young adults believe they can regain their lost status by retaliating against the perpetrator or seeking revenge (Elison & Harter, 2007).

The Effects of Self-Esteem and Narcissism on Humiliation

In general, the current study sought to determine whether or not there was any variability in young adults’ emotional and behavioral reactions to situations that provoke humiliation. In doing so, self-esteem and narcissism were incorporated into this process.
The above paragraphs describe the components that make up potentially humiliating events, in very general terms. In the following sections, the theoretical foundations for, as well as the empirical evidence supporting, the relationship between the internal experience of and subsequent emotional and behavioral reactions to humiliation-provoking situations will be discussed. The discussion first focuses on the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on humiliation. More specifically, the present study explored how global self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies differentially affected young adults’ interpretations of potentially humiliating events.

**Global Self-Esteem**

The progression through adolescence carries with it a great deal of confusion and uncertainty with regard to individuals’ self-representations. This state of self-doubt is thought to be the result of both cognitive-developmental advances and changing social expectations (Harter, 1999). Throughout adolescence and early adulthood, the self becomes increasingly differentiated as a function of social context. However, cognitive-developmental advances often conflict with socialization pressures to develop different selves in different relational contexts (Harter, 1999).

The relationship between global self-esteem and emotional responses to humiliating situations is somewhat complicated. It is theorized that one’s global self-esteem colors how he or she interprets and responds to humiliating events. Julian Stamm was one of the first theorists to identify and analyze the destructive consequences that the emotion of humiliation has on self-esteem and self-presentation. He focused on the impact of self-esteem within a psychoanalytic framework. According to Stamm (1978),
“humiliation is the affect associated with the sensation of unpleasure and any idea
connoting loss of self-esteem when one’s self-esteem is attacked, diminished, or
threatened unjustifiably” (p.425). This affect is experienced as an attack, by others, on
one’s self-esteem and the attack serves as a threat to the stability of one’s self-
representation. Based on his formulation, individuals with unstable self-esteem, as well as
those who are more dependent on external evaluations, may be more vulnerable to an
external assault on their self-representation.

Taking a symbolic interaction perspective, Klein (1991) views global self-esteem
as the internalization of interactions with real and imagined others. The self is constructed
via an interaction between the socializing environment and the individual, whereby the
process of self-creation is ongoing. Therefore, to understand the dynamic nature of
humiliation, it is necessary to factor in the important role that this process plays, in which
real and imagined ridicule may have a negative impact on the development of self-esteem
(Klein, 1991).

Traditionally, low self-esteem has been considered a psychological liability
associated with depression, fearfulness, loneliness, suicidal ideation, and homicidal
ideation (see Harter, 1999; Harter, Low, et al., 2003; Papps & O'Carroll, 1998). In
adolescent samples, depression, which shares a strong link with low self-esteem, is
affectively experienced as both sadness and anger at others for rejecting them (Harter,
1999). The fact that adolescents and young adults report feeling both emotions
simultaneously, in the context of humiliation, suggests that it may be fruitful to reflect
this ability in the measures used to assess the emotional correlates of humiliation.
In reviewing the potential consequences of self-esteem, research on the link between global self-esteem and aggressive anger has yielded conflicting results. The long-standing assumption that low self-esteem is associated with aggression is based on the idea that people lacking self-esteem will attempt to self-enhance by aggressively dominating others. Recently, this assumption was challenged by Baumeister and colleagues (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). According to their argument, individuals with high self-esteem react with anger and aggression when threatened to maintain their positive self-views. On the contrary, their findings revealed that once they controlled for narcissism, self-esteem had no effect on anger and aggression. McCarley and colleagues specifically examined Baumeister’s hypothesis in a sample of adolescents. According to their findings, following humiliating events, adolescents who reported low self-esteem also reported higher levels of both anger and aggression, compared to their high self-esteem peers (McCarley, 2005; McCarley & Harter, 2005).

Based on the conflicting evidence, it is difficult to draw any conclusions with respect to the emotional and behavioral consequences of self-esteem, as they relate to humiliating situations. The current study explored how global self-esteem affected young adults’ emotional responses to events that elicit humiliation. It was hypothesized that self-esteem would have a negative association with humiliation, sadness, and anger following a humiliating event. In other words, lower levels of reported self-esteem were expected to be associated with higher levels of humiliation, sadness, and anger following a humiliating event.
Narcissism

According to diagnostic criteria, narcissism is defined as a pattern of grandiosity, self-focus, and self-importance (American Psychiatric Association, 2000 [DSM IV-TR]; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). It is important to note that, while narcissists often report high self-esteem, their self-concepts are typically fragile and vulnerable to external appraisals. In particular, as a result of their heightened sensitivity to evaluative events, narcissistic individuals often respond to ego threats with anger and hostility in attempt to protect their fragile positive self-appraisals (Baumeister, et al., 1996). To maintain their inflated self-concepts, narcissists tend to develop a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal strategies (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). For example, many narcissists fantasize about fame and power (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991), respond to critical feedback with anger and self-enhancement attributions (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), and derogate those who provide threatening feedback (Baumeister, et al., 1996; Kernis, 2005).

The characterization of the narcissistic personality was reformulated by social psychologists to reflect the idea that narcissism lies on a spectrum, ranging from a severe psychiatric disorder to a less severe personality “style” (Johnson, 1987). This conceptualization has also allowed researchers to apply and measure the construct in normal, non-clinical populations. In other words, while the non-clinical operationalization of the narcissistic personality was derived from the above clinical criteria, it is applicable to the general population (Campbell, et al., 2002; Emmons, 1987; Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2004).
Maladaptive narcissism. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Terry, 1988) is one of the most commonly used measures in the identification of levels of narcissism in normative populations. The standard version of this measure incorporates a spectrum view of narcissistic personality tendencies. In doing so, a number of subscales assess more positive aspects of narcissism and a number measure more maladaptive aspects of the disorder. Some experts have argued that, when theoretical considerations call for maladaptive narcissism, only the maladaptive subscales should be included (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Salmivalli, 2001).

Entitlement, exhibitionism, and exploitativeness have been identified as the narcissistic factors that should be highly influenced by external evaluations and should characterize people who are particularly sensitive to ego threats. By focusing on maladaptive narcissism, the potentially confounded relationship between narcissism and self-esteem can be avoided. In fact, based on these arguments, McCarley (2005) examined the relationship between a similar definition of maladaptive narcissism (entitlement, exhibitionism, and vanity) and self-esteem in adolescents. Unlike other research, which has been unable to untangle these two constructs, this study was able to demonstrate a negligible correlation between narcissism and self-esteem.

McCullough and colleagues theorized that maladaptive narcissists expect so much admiration and respect from others that they are constantly feeling disappointed and slighted because their needs are virtually impossible to meet (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003). From this perspective, the tendency for narcissists to feel constantly victimized may help explain the narcissistic tendency toward anger and
aggression. When their grandiose self-image is challenged, unhealthy narcissists react with anger and aggression, aimed at promoting their superiority through the physical and psychological dominance of others (Washburn, McMahon, King, Reinecke, & Silver, 2004).

The relationship between narcissism and the emotion of humiliation is largely speculative at this point. The literature seems to suggest a positive association, whereby higher levels of narcissistic tendencies are met with a heightened sensitivity and reactivity to negative interpersonal interactions (Steiner, 2006; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). Due to a tendency to chronically focus attention on the self, Tracy and Robins (2004) theorized that narcissistic individuals should demonstrate a vulnerability to the emotional experience of humiliation. Similarly, others have suggested that narcissistic individuals approach the social world with a heightened sensitivity to the actions of others (McCullough, et al., 2003).

Situational factors such as the frequency, duration, and/or the intensity of humiliation that individuals receive from peers may account for some of the variation that has been observed in their reactions. Unfortunately, there is little literature on the effects of narcissism in this process. The need to examine the effects of narcissism in ways that either intensify or minimize the likelihood of a maladaptive response to humiliating situations is important. These individual differences in the emotional experience and expression of humiliation could be due to the tendency for some adolescents to rely on external sources of evaluation. In the present study, it was predicted that young adults who reported higher levels of maladaptive narcissism would be more likely to experience
humiliation, anger, and sadness following a humiliating event, as compared to those with lower levels of narcissism.

*The Emotional Correlates of Humiliation*

The emotion of humiliation has been both associated and equated with a number of other emotions, including: anger and sadness (J. D. Brown & Dutton, 1995; Elison & Harter, 2007; Farmer & McGuffin, 2003; Harter, Low, et al., 2003). Humiliation is most frequently likened to the self-conscious emotions, such as shame and embarrassment. In fact, many theorists make no distinction between shame and humiliation, often describing humiliation as high-intensity embarrassment. In the current study, emotional reactions to humiliating experiences will be considered.

Anger toward others is almost always included as an emotional correlate of humiliation, as the target reacts to what is seen as an attack (Gilbert, 1997; Klein, 1991; S. B. Miller, 1988; Stamm, 1978). To illustrate this point, participants in one study provided detailed accounts of instances in which they felt either humiliation or shame. They then answered a series of questions concerning the experience they described. Unlike shame, which involved self-directed anger, participants reported significantly more anger toward others in the humiliation condition (Jackson, 2000). Humiliation has also been associated with sadness and depression.

Although self-directed anger does not seem to be related to humiliation, self-directed sadness, or depression, may be correlated. There is some evidence supporting an association between sadness and humiliation. In three studies (G. W. Brown, Harris, & Hepworth, 1995; Farmer & McGuffin, 2003; Kendler, Hettema, Butera, Gardner, &
Prescott, 2003), researchers examined the association between humiliation, assessed via the Life Events and Difficulty Schedule (G. W. Brown, et al., 1995), and depression. In each case, the investigators found that depression was associated with higher loss (i.e., the death of a loved one) and increased humiliation ratings. More specifically, Kendler and colleagues (2003) revealed that events involving humiliation and loss were judged to be more depressogenic than events involving loss alone. Likewise, Brown and colleagues (1995) demonstrated that events involving humiliation and entrapment were deemed more depressogenic than either pure loss or pure danger.

To examine the potential for individuals to display multiple, simultaneous emotions in reaction to humiliating events, Harter and colleagues (2003) applied Shaver’s emotion prototype theory to the emotional experience of humiliation. This perspective provides a way to probe and represent the emotion knowledge of participants by identifying the prototypic causes of, correlates of, and reactions to different emotions. The first set of questions asked individuals to generate three events that would cause them to feel humiliation. The events generated by participants often described social-norm violations, such as urinating on oneself in the presence of an audience. Next, building on Harter’s work on multiple emotions (Harter & Whitesell, 1989), another set of questions asked participants to list the emotions that they might feel in the face of a humiliating event. An examination of the spontaneously generated emotional correlates of humiliation included anger (86%) and sadness (56%) (Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003).

Both Jackson’s (2000) and Harter’s (2003) work made important contributions to the humiliation literature by characterizing social norm violations in the context of
humiliation and by demonstrating the relationship between humiliation and its emotional correlates. However, both studies relied on open-ended responses; it is difficult to ensure consistency in the events generated by participants. For example, participants may not define humiliation similarly. Moreover, participants may not possess the same understanding of humiliation as the researchers. By asking participants to respond to hypothetical situations involving social-norm violations that characterize humiliation, the current study attempted to extend the findings of the aforementioned studies.

The limited and contradictory evidence regarding the relationship that self-esteem and narcissism share with the basic emotions, specifically anger and sadness, following situations that elicit humiliation, suggests the need for further examination to clarify the processes underlying the humiliation experience. The current study specifically examined how self-esteem and narcissism affected humiliation, anger, and sadness following potentially humiliating events.

The relationships among the constructs discussed in the preceding sections are typically analyzed in piecemeal fashion. Furthermore, the literature related to humiliation is overwhelmingly theoretical, typically drawing its tenets from case studies involving abuse and torture. As such, assertions about the relationships between humiliation and other psychological constructs are largely speculative and overly simplistic; many only study associations between humiliation and one other construct, ignoring the complexity that defines the experience. Admittedly, given the very recent emergence of empirical attempts to understand humiliation, researchers had to first lay the bivariate groundwork. For example, evidence supplied by McCarley (2005) and McCarley and Harter (2005)
suggests that adolescents with lower levels of self-esteem are more prone to humiliation, as are those teenagers who exhibit high levels of maladaptive narcissism. These early studies have provided critical knowledge about the basic nature and experience of humiliation. However, with basic knowledge of the emotional experience of humiliation and its situational antecedents, it is now possible to go further.

The current study aimed to provide a more complex, integrative understanding of humiliation. Building on the foundation provided by initial studies, researchers in this area are finally in a position to consider the multivariate nature of the causes, correlates, and consequences of the emotion of humiliation. Furthermore, a thorough investigation must also address the possibility for both direct and indirect effects. The current study aimed to extend prior research on the emotional experience of humiliation by integrating the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on emotional reactions to potentially humiliating events. It was hypothesized that individuals with lower self-esteem would report more humiliation, sadness, and anger than those with higher levels of self-esteem. Likewise, high levels of narcissism were expected to be associated with higher levels of humiliation, sadness, and anger responses following humiliating events.

*Behavioral Consequences of Humiliation*

In general, research on emotion processes suggests that emotions serve motivational, communicative, and regulatory functions (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000; Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Witherington, 2006). Consequently, there has been long-standing theoretical interest in understanding the multiple ways that emotion and cognition interact. For example, emotions play a critical role in weighting and prioritizing
the multiple goals held by individuals while processing social information (e.g., Simon, 1967). In attempt to integrate emotion and cognition, Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) argued that individual differences in emotionality and emotion regulation play a significant role in social information processing.

Interpersonally, emotional reactions both arouse and regulate human behavior. Specifically, emotions reinforce certain behavioral patterns, either increasing or decreasing the likelihood of their occurrence in future relational contexts (Murphy & Eisenberg, 2002). Negative emotional reactions (e.g., anger, sadness) during conflict have implications on behavioral outcomes. Theoretically, anger has been linked to behaviors aimed at eliminating situational factors that present an obstacle for the individual. Thus, aggressive, vengeful, and persistent behavior should be more likely during incidents involving provocation (Arsenio, Lover, & Gumora, 1993). Functions of anger include generating the motivation necessary to remove obstacles interfering with one’s goals and establishing one’s dominance over another (Frijda, 1987; Izard, Ackerman, Schoff, & Fine, 2000). In contrast, there is some evidence that the expression of sadness may trigger emotional contagion (Jakobs, Fischer, & Manstead, 1997). Emotional contagion is described as the automatic transmission of emotion between individuals during a social interaction (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Following events that provoke humiliation, the target may display sadness as an attempt to elicit sympathy or pity from others.

Theoretical perspectives as well as research on the behavioral consequences of humiliating events suggest the possibility for a number of different outcomes, both
violent and nonviolent. Typically, the behavioral reactions to humiliating situations are motivated by retaliation, withdrawal, and minimization (Elison & Harter, 2007; Jackson, 2000). In reaction to shaming events, Elison, Lennon, and Pulos (2006) described these motivators, their underlying cognitive evaluations, and the emotional responses associated with the actions. In withdrawal behaviors, the person recognizes the negative experience of self, internalizes the message that was conveyed, and consequently, attempts to hide or escape from the situation; sadness is listed as one of the associated emotions. In behavioral reactions aimed at minimizing the situation, the person does not typically acknowledge the negative experience of self, does not internalize the message, and attempts to distract the self and others from the events that have occurred. Finally, in behaviors motivated by revenge and retaliation, the person may or may not recognize the negative experience of self, often does not internalize the incoming message, and attempts to make some target feel worse to bolster his or her own self-esteem; anger is the primary emotion related to such behaviors (Elison et al., 2006; Nathanson, 1992).

The empirical support for the different types of behavioral responses to humiliation-provoking events is limited. Utilizing vignettes, designed to simulate hypothetical situations, many participants in Elison and Harter’s (2007) study indicated that they would react with revenge or retaliation. However, they also endorsed nonviolent reactions, such as attempting to escape from the perpetrator and the event, as well as attempting to minimize the insult. Similarly, participants in Jackson’s (2000) study reported a strong desire for revenge as well as a desire to hide or escape the situation.
Unfortunately, both studies failed to examine individual differences in participants’ tendencies to endorse the various behaviors.

McCarley and Harter (2005) examined the effects of global self-esteem and narcissism on violent ideation following humiliating events. The findings revealed that individuals with low self-esteem and high narcissism were more likely to report violent ideation following a humiliating event. However, the path from global self-esteem to violent ideation was weak and partially mediated by behavioral self-concept. In a separate study, Harter, Low et al. (2003) found that higher levels of depression were associated with higher levels of both suicidal and homicidal ideation following a hypothetical event describing a potentially humiliating situation. Additionally, higher levels of anger-induced physical aggression resulted in higher levels of homicidal ideation, in response to humiliating events.

The effects of anger and sadness have also been studied with respect to the relationship that shame shares with both internalizing and externalizing behaviors in children (Bennett, Sullivan, & Lewis, 2005). In particular, the researchers found that anger mediated the relationship between shame and externalizing behaviors, but not internalizing behaviors. Specifically, the researchers concluded that, in association with shame, the expression of anger reflects hostility, a maladaptive, antisocial emotion. In this form, anger leads to rage, resulting from feelings of powerlessness and a motivation to lash out at others. Sadness, while related to shame, did not affect internalizing or externalizing behaviors. Although these findings are only indirectly related to the current
study, they still provide information regarding the relationship between emotion and behavior in the context of self-conscious emotions.

Another study investigated the relationship between anger and several nonassertive responses to provocation in a sample of school children (Champion, 2009). According to the findings, intense feelings of anger predicted a lower likelihood of two nonassertive behavioral responses (ignoring and distraction), motivated by a desire to minimize the situation. In other words, children who experienced high levels of anger, across several provocative contexts, found it difficult to ignore the event or use distraction in attempt to minimize its effects. Based on the findings from the Champion (2009) study, it was predicted that low levels of anger would be related to the tendency to use minimization behaviors following a humiliating event.

What is lacking in the humiliation literature is an understanding of the underlying process of the emotional experience of humiliation. Where most conceptualizations of humiliation simply examine its behavioral consequences, the current study took into consideration a number of additional variables that were expected to help explain young adults’ decisions to engage in certain behaviors following potentially humiliating events. The present study explored how the emotional experience of humiliation was related to those consequences. In doing so, a more complex understanding of the nature of emotional reactions to events that provoke humiliation was provided. The current study also investigated the relationship between individuals’ emotional responses to humiliation and their subsequent behavioral responses to the event. It was expected that high levels of anger would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in
behavioral responses that involve aggression, while high levels of sadness were expected to be related to higher levels of withdrawal.

Earlier, the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the interpretation of humiliating events and individuals’ subsequent emotional responses were reviewed. The literature suggests that low self-esteem will be related to higher levels of sadness and anger following potentially humiliating situations. Recent research has suggested restricting the examination of narcissism to the unhealthy, maladaptive subscales of narcissism (exhibitionism, entitlement, and exploitativeness). High narcissism has been consistently associated with high levels of anger in response to events thought to provoke humiliation.

Next, the relationship between emotional responses to humiliating events and the behavioral consequences of those events (such as revenge/retaliation, minimization, and withdrawal) was discussed. In particular, the evidence indicated that high levels of sadness typically lead to withdrawal following a negative social event while high levels of anger resulted in behaviors such as revenge and retaliation.

One of the major goals of the current study was to create a unified model to explain the emotional experience of humiliation. Realistically, the predictors presented earlier were expected to be relevant in the prediction of the behavioral reactions to humiliation and had the potential to provide critical information related to young adults’ experiences with humiliation. Through this integrative, comprehensive model, the relative contributions of the predictor to the explanation of the behavioral consequences of humiliation-provoking situations were identified and investigated. The central goal of
the current study was to provide an integrative model that captured the complex variations in individuals’ responses to humiliating events.

*The Present Study*

Given the paucity of empirical evidence on the emotional experience of humiliation, researchers have only been able to speculate that humiliation plays a significant role in shaping the nature of social interactions/relationships. Furthermore, the existing body of literature pertaining to humiliation has yet to provide a model to help understand the construct. The current study attempted to both extend understanding of the process underlying the events that elicit humiliation as well as provide a more comprehensive model of the emotion of humiliation. In doing so, the present investigation hoped to contribute to the explanation of the process underlying the emotion of humiliation and assist in the development of future research studies on humiliation.

The current study evaluated two central research goals related to the processes hypothesized to contribute to the behavioral consequences of humiliating events (withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization). The first goal was to elucidate the role of emotional responses to potentially humiliating situations (sadness, humiliation, and anger) in this process. The second goal was to extend previous findings that linked low self-esteem and high narcissism to increases in violent ideation following humiliation-provoking events (McCarley, 2005; McCarley & Harter, 2005). Namely, the current study examined the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on a number of behavioral outcomes associated with humiliating situations (withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization), both violent and non-violent.
For many young adults, the emotional experience of humiliation represents a serious threat to the ego. According to Stamm (1978), individuals with low self-esteem and those who are more dependent on external evaluations should be more vulnerable to the external assault on the self that typifies the emotion of humiliation. Given this vulnerability, it was predicted that individuals with low self-esteem would be more likely to view the emotional experience of humiliation, and the resulting loss of social status, as more of a threat than those with higher levels of self-esteem. Consequently, humiliating events were expected to elicit stronger emotional responses (e.g., sadness, humiliation, and anger) as well as more maladaptive behavioral outcomes (withdrawal and retaliation) in those individuals reporting lower levels of global self-esteem. Similarly, narcissistic individuals’ reliance on external evaluations was expected to be associated with greater sensitivity to humiliating events. As such, it was hypothesized that individuals reporting high levels of maladaptive narcissism would report feeling stronger emotions and more negative behavioral reactions following potentially humiliating events.

The emotional correlates of humiliation (sadness and anger) were also expected to have implications on the predicted behavioral consequences of humiliating events. As previously mentioned, individuals with low self-esteem and high narcissism were expected to be more likely to experience stronger emotional reactions to humiliating events. Consequently, it was hypothesized that emotional responses to potentially humiliating situations would partially mediate the relationship global self-esteem and narcissism share with the behavioral consequences of those events.
The hypothesized path analytic model (see Figure 1) integrated the different hypothesized predictors of the behavioral consequences of humiliation, including self-esteem, narcissism, and the emotional correlates of humiliation, primarily to determine whether or not emotion mediated the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on behavior following events that elicit humiliation. To accomplish the research goals, mentioned above, the specific hypotheses and results were organized according to recommendations regarding the necessary conditions that must be satisfied for tests of mediation. According to a paper by MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets (2002), the current model first established that self-esteem and narcissism were significantly related to the mediating emotions. The next condition required the relationship between the mediating emotions and behavioral outcomes to be statistically significant. After satisfying the conditions for mediation, the integrated model was evaluated and integrated in terms of its direct end indirect effects.
Figure 1. Hypothesized general model depicting direction of direct effects of self-esteem, narcissism, and the emotional correlates of humiliation on the behavioral consequences.
Specific Hypotheses

The Effects of Self-Esteem and Narcissism on Emotional Correlates

1) As stated previously, individuals reporting stronger emotional reactions to humiliating situations were expected to be more vulnerable to ego threats and more dependent on external evaluations (Stamm, 1978). Based on evidence suggesting that individuals with low self-esteem are more negatively affected by threats to the ego, or the loss of esteem (Klein, 1991; Stamm, 1978), it was hypothesized that lower levels of self-esteem would be related to higher levels of reported sadness, humiliation, and anger.

2) Similarly, narcissistic individuals are thought to be overly dependent on external evaluations (Baumeister, et al., 1996; McCullough, et al., 2003; Washburn, et al., 2004), which characterize humiliating situations. As a result, it was expected that higher levels of reported narcissism would be related to high levels of sadness, humiliation, and anger following humiliating events.

The Effect of Emotion on the Behavioral Consequences of Humiliation

3) Given the association between sadness and withdrawal (Elison, Lennon, & Pulos, 2006) and the theoretical link between humiliation and withdrawal (Elison & Harter, 2007; Jackson, 2000), it was expected that sadness and humiliation would be associated with greater endorsement of withdrawal behaviors in response to humiliating events. Specifically, it was hypothesized that higher levels of sadness would predict higher levels of withdrawal behaviors. Similarly, higher levels of
humiliation were expected to be associated with higher levels of the endorsement of withdrawal behaviors.

4) Previous findings from our own laboratory have demonstrated a positive association between humiliation and retaliation, as well as between anger and retaliation following a potentially humiliating event (Elison & Harter, 2007). Based on these findings, individuals who respond to humiliating situations with higher levels of humiliation and anger were expected to react to the situation with retaliatory behaviors.

5) Individuals experiencing high levels of emotional humiliation in response to negative social interactions are expected to endorse minimization behaviors less frequently than those experiencing lower levels of humiliation. Similarly, those who report more anger surrounding humiliating events will have a more difficult time engaging in minimization behaviors.

The Integrated Model of the Humiliation Experience

6) It was hypothesized that self-esteem would have both direct and indirect effects on withdrawal. First, it was predicted that individuals reporting lower levels of self-esteem will tend to withdraw from their peers following potentially humiliating events (direct effect). Additionally, as previously stated, individuals with low self-esteem were expected to experience higher levels of sadness and humiliation following a potentially humiliating situation. Sadness and humiliation were also expected to motivate withdrawal behaviors.
A number of researchers have demonstrated a link between low self-esteem and violent behaviors in reaction to humiliating events (Harter, Low, et al., 2003; McCarley, 2005). As such, it was hypothesized that low self-esteem would have a direct effect on retaliatory behaviors following events that provoke humiliation. Self-esteem was also expected to be indirectly related to retaliation, through its relationships with humiliation and anger.

Based on their tendency to react to ego threats with aggression, it was expected that high levels of narcissism would be associated with higher levels of retaliatory behaviors following a humiliating event. Earlier, it was predicted that narcissistic individuals would experience higher levels of humiliation and anger in reaction to a humiliating event. Since higher levels of humiliation and anger were also expected to lead to retaliation, it was hypothesized that the positive association between narcissism and retaliation will be partially mediated by emotional responses involving humiliation and anger.

Given their sensitivity to threats to the ego, it was hypothesized that narcissistic individuals may have more difficulty engaging in behaviors aimed at minimizing potentially humiliating events. Therefore, higher levels of narcissism were predicted to be negatively related to the endorsement of minimization behaviors. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, narcissism was expected to be positively related to humiliation and anger, which also make it more difficult to minimize humiliating events. It was predicted that the negative association between
narcissism and minimization would be partially mediated by both humiliation and anger.
Method

Participants

Two strategies were used to recruit study participants. The first recruitment strategy targeted 18- to 25-year-old undergraduate students at a small private university in the Western United States. Specifically, psychology instructors informed currently enrolled students of the potential to earn extra credit by participating in departmental research projects. Students then logged on to a university-sponsored internet database, which provided descriptions of all studies being conducted within the psychology department. For those studies being conducted online, students were then able to access study-related information and an internet link to the study website. For their participation, psychology students received extra credit in their psychology courses. To access a wider and more diverse range of people, the second recruitment strategy targeted 18- to 25-year-olds, using the world-wide-web. Specifically, advertisements were posted on craigslist.org and facebook.com. The advertisements provided a one- or two-sentence description of the study, which specified the age restrictions, and provided an internet link for potential participants to access the study questionnaires. To encourage higher rates of participation, the advertisements also informed potential participants that they would be entered into a raffle to win one of four $50 Visa gift cards for their participation. Analyses were conducted to identify potential differences between students
and non-students on the variables of interest; there were no differences between the two groups. Additionally, the sample recruited from university psychology courses did not differ from the sample recruited online.

The final sample consisted of 210 participants, ranging in age from 18- to 25-years-old ($M = 21.1$ years, $SD = 2.1$ years). College students made up 76.2% of the sample and non-students comprised 23.8% of the sample. The gender distribution of the sample was 72.9% female and 27.1% male. The racial breakdown of the final sample was 71.9% White, 9.5% Asian, 9.5% Hispanic, 7.1% African American, 1.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.5% Pacific Islander.

Procedure

All participants accessed the survey online through surveymonkey.com. Participants then read a consent form, explaining the limits of confidentiality, and indicated whether or not they agreed to participate in the study. Once consent was obtained, participants were allowed access to the study questionnaires. Participants completed questionnaires assessing demographics, self-esteem, narcissism, and humiliation. They were then asked to read a series of gender-specific vignettes describing a variety of social interactions and answer questions related to how participants imagined they might respond in the same situation. The survey took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. For their participation, university students received two extra-credit points that were applied to their psychology courses. Non-students were entered into a raffle to win one of four $50 Visa gift cards.
Measures

*Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1988).* To conceptually and empirically define global self-esteem in a manner that distinguishes it from narcissism, the global self-esteem subscale from Harter’s (1988) *Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents* was administered (Appendix A). The *Self-Perception Profile* has multiple versions, created for use with children, adolescents, college students, and adults (Harter, 1985, 1988; Messer & Harter, 1989; Neemann & Harter, 1987). The global self-esteem subscale is included in all four versions and is comprised of items, nearly identical in content. Given the considerable overlap in content across the four versions, the use of the adolescent version of the instrument for the current study was deemed appropriate. For the purposes of online presentation, it was necessary to modify the response-option format, used in Harter’s (1988) original measure. Specifically, the online survey software was unable to accommodate the structured-alternative format (Harter, 1982). The adapted version presented the opposing statements, typical of a structured-alternative item, as two separate items that participants then rated on a four-point Likert scale. To insure that the opposing statements, adapted from Harter’s (1988) original measure, were not presented sequentially, the modified items were ordered randomly. However, the content of the items was not altered.

Conceptually, global self-esteem refers to the overall value that individuals place on themselves, their general worth as a human being, and their satisfaction with themselves. Sample items include: “Some people are HAPPY with themselves most of the time” and “Some people wish they were DIFFERENT.” Participants rated whether
each statement was “not at all true for me,” “sort of true for me,” “pretty true for me,” or “very true for me.” Global self-esteem was calculated through eight items, scored on a four-point scale, and averaged, such that higher scores represented higher self-esteem. Actual scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00. The internal reliability of this measure was excellent, with Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.89$.

*Narcissistic Personality Inventory* (*Raskin & Terry, 1988*). As previously mentioned, this study was specifically interested in maladaptive narcissism, which is believed to characterize individuals who are extremely sensitive to ego threats. This is consistent with the definition of the narcissistic personality, found in the most recent version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), in its focus on the more negative features of the disorder. According to a number of theories, only certain aspects of narcissism are associated with behavioral maladjustment (*Emmons, 1987*). The maladaptive dimension of narcissism describes an interpersonally manipulative, exploitative, and entitled person at one extreme and an interpersonally sensitive and communally concerned person at the other extreme. In order to measure maladaptive narcissism among participants, three of the seven subscales from the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* (*NPI;* Raskin & Terry, 1988) were administered (Appendix B).

The Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, and Entitlement subscales reflect maladaptive interpersonal behaviors and have been linked to negative personality characteristics (Bogart, et al., 2004; Emmons, 1987). In other words, Exhibitionism (e.g., “I like to be the center of attention”), Exploitativeness (e.g., “I find it easy to manipulate...
people”), and Entitlement (e.g., “I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve”) are considered maladaptive based on their associations with poor social adjustment. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals who score high on these subscales report greater levels of hostile affect and use downward comparisons to feel better about themselves (Bogart, et al., 2004; Washburn, et al., 2004).

Each of the three subscales administered consisted of four items, scored on a four-point Likert scale. Response options included: “not at all true,” “not very true,” “pretty true,” and “very true.” A total of twelve items were averaged, with low scores indicating low endorsement of behaviors characteristic of maladaptive narcissism and higher scores indicating high endorsement of behaviors characteristic of maladaptive narcissism. Internal consistency of the combined subscales was good (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81$).

To examine predictions regarding the positive relationship between self-esteem and the remaining four subscales of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, the more “adaptive” subscales were also administered (Appendix B). The Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, and Vanity subscales have been associated with more positive personality characteristics. Therefore, while these subscales were administered, they were excluded from the primary measure of maladaptive narcissism included in the analyses. Sample items include: “I see myself as a good leader” (Authority), “I like to take responsibility for making decisions” (Self-Sufficiency), “I think I am a special person” (Superiority), and “I like to look at myself in the mirror” (Vanity). Response options were identical to those listed above. Adaptive narcissism was measured by averaging 16 items from the four subscales, with higher scores reflecting high endorsement of more adaptive
personality characteristics. Internal consistency of the adaptive narcissism scale was also good (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$).

**Humiliation vignettes.** To explore adolescents’ emotional responses and behavioral reactions to hypothetical events that provoked humiliation, vignettes were created based on stories previously used by Harter and colleagues (Elison & Harter, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Harter, Low, et al., 2003; McCarley, 2005). To ensure sufficient variability and/or individual differences in the interpretation of the events, scenarios were constructed to simulate a variety of negative social interactions, ranging from extreme to mild humiliation. In attempt to secure some basic level of humiliation across the hypothetical situations, all of the vignettes described degradation, in which the protagonists’ social status was lowered. The remaining three situational antecedents hypothesized to underlie the emotion of humiliation were manipulated independently to create the vignettes, similar to the manipulations employed in Jackson’s (2000) study. Specifically, eight scenarios were constructed that systematically manipulated the following variables: intent (hostile vs. non-hostile), fairness (fair vs. unfair), and publicity (high vs. low). Appendix C displays the manipulation used to create the vignettes and Appendix D presents the actual vignettes.

As discussed in the introduction, negative social interactions involving exposure by an antagonist who is intentionally hostile were predicted to be more humiliating than interactions in which the antagonist is not hostile. To create scenarios that ranged in the level of humiliation experiences, the intent of the antagonist was manipulated. Four
vignettes described situations involving antagonists with hostile intent and the other four
describe scenarios involving non-hostile antagonists.

Each of the vignettes described an interaction between the protagonist and one or
more other people. In each scenario, the social interaction resulted in an unpleasant
incident that ranged from extremely humiliating to slightly humiliating. The four
vignettes in the hostile intent condition describe scenarios in which the antagonists
actively and overtly harass, ridicule, or tease the protagonist by exposing his/her
shortcomings. In other words, the antagonist behaves in a hostile manner and
intentionally causes the unpleasant incident and the resulting discomfort experienced by
the protagonist. For example, in the vignette about Melinda (Vignette 1, Appendix D),
the boy Melinda had a crush on asked her be his date to an upcoming party. After
Melinda said yes to the boy’s invitation, he proceeded to laugh at her, exclaiming,
“there’s no way I’d be caught dead at a party with you!” In this example, it is clear that
the boy was intentionally ridiculing Melinda.

In contrast, in the remaining four vignettes (non-hostile intent condition), the
incident was unintentionally caused by a non-hostile antagonist. For example, in the
vignette about Cindy (Vignette 4, Appendix D), a boy asked Cindy out on a date, but did
not arrive at the scheduled location and time agreed upon. In this scenario, the boy’s
motivation for asking Cindy on a date but not showing up was unintentional. Participant
either interpreted the boy’s behavior as hostile, thereby assuming that he intentionally
stood Cindy up, or assumed that the boy was not behaving in a hostile manner, and that
the boy unintentionally stood Cindy up because some emergency arose.
In the fairness manipulation, the event occurred because of something the protagonist did (fair) or as a result of circumstances the protagonist had little or no control over (unfair). An example of the fair condition is seen in the vignette about Marcie (Vignette 5, Appendix D). In this scenario, Marcie received a failing grade on her history project as a result of her own procrastination; the failing grade and subsequent scolding she received were her fault. In contrast, an example of the unfair condition is described in the vignette about Jane (Vignette 7, Appendix D). In this scenario, Jane was misguided into the men’s locker room and harassed. In this situation, Jane did nothing to provoke the harassment she received after walking into the men’s room.

Publicity was manipulated by having the protagonist’s shortcoming either exposed in the presence of an audience (high publicity) or kept between the protagonist and antagonist (low publicity). For example, in the high publicity condition, Sally’s teacher verbally berated her in front of her classmates (Vignette 3, Appendix D). In contrast, in the low publicity condition, Marcie’s instructor discussed her poor performance on her history project privately, after class (Vignette 5, Appendix D).

In summation, the eight vignettes were created through the manipulation of three variables (intent, fairness, and publicity), each containing two levels (Appendix C). The manipulations were modeled after the vignettes created in Jackson’s (2000) study. Participant ratings from Jackson’s (2000) study suggested that the vignettes described a range of potentially humiliating situations, as intended. Additionally, based on the school shooters’ histories, the vignettes included one sentence indicating that these events may be chronic for the protagonists described in the situations. Specifically, each vignette
ended with “this wasn’t the first time something like this happened to <main character’s
name>."

Emotional responses to humiliating events. In order to test the hypotheses that
relate to the emotional responses to humiliation-provoking events, after reading each
vignette, participants were asked to identify with the protagonist in the scenario and rate
their anticipated levels sadness (e.g., “How SAD would you feel?”), humiliation (e.g.,
“How HUMILIATED would you feel?”), anger (e.g., “How ANGRY would you
feel?”)(Appendix E). Participants rated the emotion items on a four-point scale. Sample
response options for the sadness question were: “not at all sad,” “a little sad,” “pretty
sad,” and “very sad.” Similarly, response options for the humiliation item were: “not at
all humiliated,” “a little humiliated,” “pretty humiliated,” and “very humiliated.”
Response options for the anger item were: “not at all angry,” “a little angry,” “pretty
angry,” and “very angry.” For each of the emotions, items were averaged across the eight
vignettes, yielding a separate score for sadness, humiliation, and anger. Higher scores
reflected higher endorsement of sadness, humiliation, or anger across the vignettes. The
actual scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00 for sadness, from 1.12 to 4.00 for humiliation, and
from 1.29 to 4.00 for anger. Internal consistence estimates for the three emotion measures
ranged from satisfactory to good: for sadness Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.84$, for humiliation
Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$, and for anger Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.72$.

Behavioral consequences of humiliating events. To investigate the behavioral
consequences of humiliation-provoking events, an additional six items assessing
participants’ anticipated behavioral reactions to each scenario followed each of the
vignettes (Appendix E). As a reminder, previous research has revealed that individuals typically report one of three behavioral reactions to potentially humiliating situations: withdrawal, minimization, and retaliation. Therefore, following each vignette, participants rated two questions about their likelihood of withdrawing from the situation (e.g., “How likely would you be to try to run and hide from everyone?”), two questions about their likelihood of minimizing the situation (e.g., “How likely would you be to ignore the situation and pretend like it never happened”), and two questions about their likelihood of retaliating against the antagonist(s) involved in the situation (e.g., “How likely would you be to plan a way to get back at the person who made fun you?”). For each behavior, items were averaged across the eight vignettes, resulting in a 16-item measure for each behavior. All items were rated on a four-point scale, “not at all likely,” “not very likely,” “pretty likely,” and “very likely,” such that higher scores indicated greater endorsement of the behavior as an anticipated reaction, across the scenarios. Each behavioral scale demonstrated excellent reliability: for withdrawal Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$; for minimization Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81$; and for retaliation Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.92$. 
Results

Preliminary Analyses

Statistical Assumptions

Prior to examining specific hypotheses, the data were downloaded from surveymonkey.com, imported into SPSS, and examined for missing values and violations of the statistical assumptions underlying path analysis. The raw data contained responses from 299 individuals. An inspection of the data revealed that 84 (28.0%) respondents terminated the study after completing the required demographic questions. Since those 84 respondents failed to complete any of the measures relevant to the variables of interest, their data were excluded from the analyses, resulting in 215 cases for analyses.

An examination of standardized scores (for continuous variables), and an inspection of relevant graphical plots (for categorical/dichotomous variables) revealed no univariate outliers. To detect the presence of multivariate outliers, Mahalanobis distances using a $p < .001$ criterion were examined. Five cases were identified as multivariate outliers and deleted accordingly, resulting in a sample of 210 cases.

For each measure, scores were calculated by averaging the non-missing items for each scale. Mean substitution was used when missing items were found. Additionally, means were only calculated for those participants who provided responses for at least half of the items on a given scale. An examination of the missing data revealed that all
participants met those requirements on all of the scales. To determine the pattern of missingness among the data, groups were created to distinguish participants with complete data from those with missing data. A group comparison of mean scores on the model variables revealed that there were no significant differences on any of the model variables. Based on these findings, it was determined that the data were missing at random. The resulting dataset was comprised of 210 cases with mean scores for all of the model variables.

Table 1 displays the minimum and maximum values, means, standard deviations, and skewness estimates for the variables included in the models. An examination of the univariate distributions and descriptive statistics for each variable revealed several violations of the normality assumption. Specifically, two of the measured variables (self-esteem and retaliation) demonstrated significant skewness, \( p < .001 \). Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend using a square root transformation when the distribution of a variable differs moderately from normal and a logarithmic transformation when the distribution differs substantially from normal. To determine the effect of the skewness on the models estimates, a square root transformation was applied to self-esteem and a logarithmic transformation was applied to the retaliation variable. The path analytic model was examined separately using the untransformed variables and the transformed variables. The estimates from both analyses were compared and yielded virtually identical results. Therefore, to ensure the interpretability of the variables and their path estimates, the analyses were conducted using the untransformed variables. However to
adjust for non-normality, the models were estimated with maximum likelihood estimation, using bias-corrected bootstrap resampling methods.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Skew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
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<td>3.82</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
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<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean Differences*

No specific hypotheses were advanced regarding the potential effects of gender and ethnicity on the model variables. To determine whether there were any ethnic group and/or gender differences subject to post-hoc interpretation, a series of one-way ANOVAs were performed.

*Ethnic group differences.* Mean scores on the eight model variables were compared among the following ethnic groups: European Americans ($N = 151$), Asians ($N = 20$), African Americans ($N = 15$), and Hispanics ($N = 20$) (American Indians/Alaska Natives ($N = 3$) and Pacific Islanders ($N = 1$) did not have sufficient group sizes for
Appendix G displays mean scores for the four comparison groups on the eight model variables. Of the eight variables, ethnicity had a significant main effect on one: retaliation ($F (3, 202) = 6.86, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that European Americans reported significantly lower mean levels of retaliation ($M = 1.66, SD = .52$) than Asians ($M = 2.19, SD = .67$). However, since there were so few Asian participants, the post-hoc comparison, although significant, is difficult to interpret. The medium effect size was not predicted for that one comparison. Since the group sizes for ethnicity were very small and very discrepant, ethnicity was not included as a covariate in the path analytic model. All participants, regardless of ethnicity, were included in the path analytic model.

*Gender differences.* Table 2 displays means, standard deviations, significance levels, and effect sizes for the gender comparisons. An examination of the group means on the model variables reveals that, out of eight comparisons, significant gender differences were identified for four: sadness ($F (1, 208) = 26.32, p < .001$), humiliation ($F (1, 208) = 13.06, p < .001$), anger ($F (1, 208) = 15.53, p < .001$), and withdrawal ($F (1, 208) = 19.97, p < .001$). In particular, females reported experiencing higher levels of sadness ($M = 2.25, SD = .60$) than males ($M = 1.80, SD = .48$) and higher levels of humiliation ($M = 2.66, SD = .56$) than males ($M = 2.34, SD = .47$). Additionally, females reported higher levels of withdrawal ($M = 2.37, SD = .64$) than males ($M = 1.95, SD = .48$). Although not predicted, it was somewhat unexpected that females reported higher levels of anger ($M = 2.60, SD = .56$) than males ($M = 2.28, SD = .43$). Based on these main effects, gender was included as a covariate in the path analytic model. Effect sizes
for the significant gender comparisons ranged from small (partial $\eta^2 = .06$) to moderate (partial $\eta^2 = .11$).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Gender Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female ($N = 153$)</th>
<th>Male ($N = 57$)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$F$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>.64</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>26.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>13.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>15.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>19.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
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<td>.61</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Path Analytic Model

The General Hypothesized Model

Figure 1 represents an overall hypothesized model of the relationships between the predictors, emotional responses, and behavioral reactions to potentially humiliating events. The hypothesized model predicts that the emotional responses that result following a potentially humiliating event (sadness, humiliation, and anger) mediate the relationship between the predictors (self-esteem and narcissism) and the behavioral reactions to that event (withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization). Specifically, it was predicted that self-esteem would be negatively related to sadness, humiliation, and anger.
That is, those with high self-esteem were predicted to show less sadness, less humiliation, and less anger. Conversely, those with low self-esteem were predicted to report greater sadness, greater humiliation, and greater anger.

The pattern with narcissism predicted just the opposite. Higher levels of narcissism were predicted to be associated with greater sadness, greater humiliation, and greater anger. With regard to the emotional mediators, sadness was predicted to be positively associated with withdrawal, in particular. High levels of humiliation were hypothesized to be positively related to high levels of both withdrawal and retaliation, but not minimization. Higher levels of humiliation were expected to predict low levels of minimization behavior. High levels of anger were predicted to be associated with high levels of retaliatory behavior, but low levels of minimization behavior. Table 3 contains the bivariate correlation coefficients among the variables included in the analyses.
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Narcissism</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
<th>Humiliation</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Retaliation</th>
<th>Minimization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.38***</td>
<td>-0.31***</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>-0.34***</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>-0.38***</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.65***</td>
<td>-0.70**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation</td>
<td>-0.31***</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.65***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
<td>0.65***</td>
<td>0.47***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>-0.70**</td>
<td>-0.65***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>-0.34***</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>0.30***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Results from the path-analytic model are graphically represented in Figure 2, with bold arrows representing significant direct effects and dashed arrows representing non-significant direct effects. For the sake of clarity, Figure 3 presents only the significant paths, with their coefficients. Overall, the hypothesized model of the predicted causes, emotional correlates, and behavioral consequences of humiliation provided a good fit for the data: $\chi^2 (7, N = 210) = 6.92, p = .44$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, and RMSEA = .02.
Figure 2. Path analytic model presenting direct effects of self-esteem, narcissism, and the emotional correlates of humiliation on his
Figure 3. Simplified path analytic model presenting only the significant direct effects of self-esteem, narcissism, and the emotional correlations of humiliation on its behavioral consequences.
The first research goal of the current study was to develop a mediational model of causes, emotional correlates, and behavioral consequences of potentially humiliating events. Prior to examining any mediated paths, it was first necessary to establish direct effects from the predictors to the emotional mediators. The first group of hypotheses (hypotheses one and two) made specific predictions about the relationships that self-esteem and narcissism share with the three emotional responses, believed to result following situations that provoke humiliation. These hypotheses were evaluated using path analysis and are graphically depicted in the first half of Figures 2 and 3. In predicting sadness, humiliation, and anger, post-hoc analyses revealed significant gender differences in the three emotions. As such, gender was included as a covariate in the path analytic model. The mean gender differences on sadness, humiliation, and anger responses are also depicted in Figures 2 and 3. The standardized ($\beta$) and unstandardized ($B$) model estimates, along with the 95% confidence intervals, for the direct effects of self-esteem, narcissism, and gender on sadness, humiliation, and anger are presented in Table 4.
### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-.33***</td>
<td>-.46, -.20</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
<td>-.40, -.11</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.20, .03</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
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<td>-.07, .22</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.04, .27</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.08, .36</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.57, -.28</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.30***</td>
<td>-.46, -.13</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-.33***</td>
<td>-.47, -.19</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Esteem and Narcissism on the Emotional Correlates of Humiliation

- Anger 95% CI
- Sadness

Table 4
In order to test the first hypothesis, that lower levels of self-esteem would be associated with higher levels of sadness, humiliation, and anger, the direct effects of self-esteem on sadness, humiliation, and anger were examined. The findings related to the first hypothesis are depicted on the left side of Figures 2 and 3. In general, the predicted effects of self-esteem on sadness, humiliation, and anger were partially supported by the data. Consistent with predictions, lower levels of self-esteem were significantly associated with more intense feelings of sadness ($\beta = -.34, p < .001$) and humiliation ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$). However, the predicted relationship between self-esteem and anger was not supported by the data; self-esteem had no effect on the amount of anger reported in response to the vignettes ($\beta = -.09, p = .18$).

In the second hypothesis, narcissism was expected to demonstrate positive associations with sadness, humiliation, and anger. To test this prediction, the path estimates, presented in the first half of Figures 2 and 3, were examined. The findings supported one of the predicted associations between narcissism and the emotional correlates of potentially humiliating events. In particular, narcissism was significantly and positively related to anger, such that higher levels of reported narcissism were associated with stronger feelings of anger following a humiliating experience ($\beta = .21, p = .001$). Contrary to hypotheses, narcissism bore no relationship to sadness ($\beta = .07, p = .27$) or humiliation ($\beta = .10, p = .13$).

The findings related to the prediction of sadness, humiliation, and anger partially support the first two hypotheses (see Figures 2 and 3). Specifically, higher levels of sadness were more likely to be reported by those with lower levels of self-esteem. There
was also a tendency for females to report more intense feelings of sadness, following potentially humiliating events ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$). Similarly, humiliation was more likely to be reported among those with low self-esteem, and among females ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$). Finally, more intense anger tended to be reported by participants who reported higher levels of narcissism, and by female participants ($\beta = -.27, p < .001$). Overall, 24% of the variance in sadness ($R^2 = .24$), 15% of the variance in humiliation ($R^2 = .15$), and 13% of the variance in anger ($R^2 = .13$) was accounted for by self-esteem, narcissism, and gender.

*The Effect of Emotion on the Behavioral Consequences of Humiliating Events*

The second step necessary to establish mediation maintains that the direct effects from the emotional mediators to the behavioral outcomes must be significant. As such, the second group of hypotheses (hypotheses three through five) made specific predictions about the associations between the emotional responses typically expressed following a humiliating event (sadness, humiliation, and anger) and the three theorized behavioral reactions to humiliation-provoking situations (withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization). The right side of Figures 2 and 3 graphically depict these effects. Additionally, Table 5 presents the standardized ($\beta$) and unstandardized ($B$) path coefficients and the 95% confidence intervals for the predicted direct effects of sadness, humiliation, and anger on withdrawal, retaliation, and minimization.
### Table 5

**Direct and Indirect Effects of Self-Esteem, Narcissism, and Emotional Correlates on the Behavioral Consequences of Humiliation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Retaliation</th>
<th>Minimization</th>
<th>R²</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-12.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliation</td>
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<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAR **</td>
<td>-0.22 **</td>
<td>0.19 -0.09</td>
<td>-0.23, 0.02</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Anger</td>
<td>-0.07 +</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Humiliation</td>
<td>-0.14 **</td>
<td>-0.14 -0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via Sadness</td>
<td>-0.15 **</td>
<td>-0.16 -0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. +p = .05. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
In the third hypothesis, higher levels of anger and sadness were expected to be associated with more frequent endorsements of withdrawal behaviors. Estimates of the predicted effects are provided on the right side of Figures 2 and 3. Predictions regarding the effects of sadness and humiliation on withdrawal behavior were supported by the findings from the current study. Consistent with predictions, stronger feelings of sadness were associated with the tendency for participants to endorse withdrawal behaviors ($\beta = .19$, $p = .03$). Likewise, higher levels of humiliation were correlated with higher endorsement of withdrawal behaviors ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of humiliation on withdrawal was almost three times higher than the effect of sadness on withdrawal, suggesting that humiliation accounted for more of the variance in withdrawal behaviors than did sadness.

In order to test the fourth hypothesis, which predicted that higher levels of humiliation and anger would be associated with greater endorsements of retaliation, path coefficients from the right side of Figures 2 and 3 were examined. As expected, stronger feelings of anger predicted greater endorsement of retaliatory behaviors ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$). Surprisingly, humiliation had a negative effect on retaliation, controlling for all other variables ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .01$). This effect appears to suggest that higher levels of humiliation are associated with less frequent endorsement of retaliatory behaviors. However, an examination of the bivariate relationship between humiliation and retaliation (see Table 3) reveals a positive relationship between humiliation and retaliation.
In the fifth hypothesis, higher levels of humiliation and anger were expected to be associated with lower levels of minimization; the path coefficients pertaining to this hypothesis are presented on the right side of Figures 2 and 3. Contrary to predictions, humiliation bore no relationship to minimization ($\beta = .15, p = .10$). However, the hypothesized negative relationship between anger and minimization was supported by the data. Namely, as anger levels increased, participants’ selection of minimization behaviors became less likely ($\beta = -.27, p = .001$).

The findings related to hypotheses three through five reveal that many of the predicted direct effects of the emotional responses to humiliating events on the behavioral reactions to the events were supported by the data. Specifically, higher levels of sadness and humiliation were associated with greater endorsements of withdrawal behaviors. Further, high levels of anger had a strong effect on the endorsement of retaliatory behavior following a hypothetically humiliating situation. Surprisingly, high levels of humiliation, in the presence of high anger, were related to the greater endorsement of retaliatory behavior, while high levels of humiliation, in the absence of high anger, were associated with lower levels of retaliation. Finally, there was a moderate effect of anger on minimization, such that the more anger participants reported, the less likely they were to choose minimization as a response to a humiliating situation. The anticipated effect from humiliation to minimization was not supported by the data.

*An Integrated Model of Humiliation*

The final set of hypotheses (hypotheses six through nine) addressed the predicted effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the behavioral consequences of humiliating
events. In particular, in addition to the direct effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the behavioral outcomes, the integrated model allowed for an examination of predictions related to indirect effects, whereby the emotional responses to potentially humiliating events mediated the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on behavioral reactions to those events. The significance of the intervening variables was evaluated using tests of indirect effects through Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2007). Bias-corrected confidence intervals were calculated for the indirect effects to account for non-normality of the estimate distributions. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 5.

According to hypothesis six, self-esteem was expected to have an indirect effect on withdrawal, through its associations with sadness and humiliation. Consistent with predictions, the relationship between self-esteem and withdrawal was significantly mediated by humiliation (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = -.14, \( p = .001 \), standardized coefficient = -.14). However, the indirect effect through sadness only approached significance (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = -.07, \( p = .05 \), standardized coefficient = -.07). Lower levels of self-esteem were associated with higher levels of humiliation experienced, and high levels of humiliation experienced were then related to the greater endorsement of withdrawal behaviors. Similarly, there was a weak trend for self-esteem to affect withdrawal indirectly through its relationship with sadness. Additionally, the second part of hypothesis six predicted a negative direct effect of self-esteem on withdrawal. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, the predictions were supported by the data: there was a small but significant direct effect of self-esteem on withdrawal (\( \beta = -.11, p = .02 \)), such that participants with lower levels of self-esteem were more likely to
choose withdrawal as an anticipated reaction than those with higher levels of self-esteem. In total, over half (54%) of the variance in withdrawal was accounted for by humiliation, sadness, self-esteem, and gender.

Next, according to hypothesis seven, a test for mediation was conducted to evaluate predictions that self-esteem might affect retaliation indirectly, through its associations with humiliation and anger. The hypothesized indirect effects of self-esteem on retaliation were not supported by the data. Humiliation was not a significant intervening variable between self-esteem and retaliation (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = .05, \(p = .06\), standardized coefficient = .05), nor was anger (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = -.04, \(p = .20\), standardized coefficient = -.05). Likewise, as seen in Figure 2, the direct effect of self-esteem on retaliation was not statistically significant (\(\beta = -.06, p = .39\)).

The eighth hypothesis examined the direct and indirect effects of narcissism on retaliation. Hypotheses related to the indirect effect of narcissism on retaliation, through its relationship with humiliation and anger, were partially supported. The results indicated that humiliation did not significantly mediate the relationship between narcissism and retaliation (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = -.02, \(p = .25\), standardized coefficient = -.02). In contrast, anger did serve as an intervening variable between narcissism and retaliation (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = .13, \(p = .004\), standardized coefficient = .11). Specifically, higher levels of narcissism were related to higher amounts of anger experienced following a humiliating event, which was then associated with the greater endorsement of retaliatory behaviors. Higher levels of
reported narcissism were also predicted to directly relate to higher levels of retaliatory behavior following a humiliating event. As expected, there was a moderate tendency for high levels of narcissism to predict greater endorsement of retaliatory behavior ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). In general, self-esteem, narcissism, humiliation, anger, and ethnicity accounted for almost one-third (30%) of the variance in retaliation.

The ninth hypothesis related to the direct and indirect effects of narcissism on minimization behaviors. Since, as previously mentioned, humiliation had no effect on minimization, it was not possible for humiliation to serve as an intervening variable between narcissism and minimization. However, the predicted indirect effect of narcissism on minimization, through its association with anger, was supported (unstandardized indirect effect coefficient = -.05, $p = .02$, standardized coefficient = -.06), though the effect was very small. This suggests a weak tendency for higher levels of narcissism to predict higher levels of anger, which are then associated with lower endorsements of minimization behaviors. Additionally, the ninth hypothesis predicted that participants with higher levels of narcissism would have more difficulty engaging in behaviors intended to minimize humiliating situations. Contrary to predictions, higher levels of narcissism did not significantly predict lower levels of minimization behaviors ($\beta = -.10$, $p = .17$). Overall, only 7% of the variance in minimization was accounted for by narcissism, humiliation, and anger ($R^2 = .07$).

*The Controversial Link between Self-Esteem and Narcissism*

In order to avoid confounding narcissism and self-esteem, the primary measure of narcissism, used in the current study, was based on the Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness,
and Entitlement subscales from the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* (Raskin & Terry, 1988) that are thought to assess maladaptive narcissism. To examine the prediction that self-esteem would be unrelated to this conceptualization of narcissism, the bivariate correlation ($r$) between the two variables was examined and is depicted in the curved arrow on the left side of Figure 2 and in Table 6. As expected, self-esteem was unrelated to narcissism ($r = .12, p > .05$). In contrast, and as predicted, there was a strong, positive correlation between self-esteem and the more adaptive subscales (Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, and Vanity) of the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* ($r = .48, p < .001$). The lack of relationship observed between self-esteem and narcissism supports the contention that using the more maladaptive subscales to measure narcissism helps avoid confounding the two constructs.

Table 6

*Correlations between Self-Esteem and Different Conceptualizations of Narcissism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-Esteem</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Combined Narcissism</td>
<td>.24 ***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maladaptive Narcissism</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.75 ***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adaptive Narcissism</td>
<td>.48 ***</td>
<td>.84 ***</td>
<td>.32 ***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *** $p < .001$. Combined narcissism consists of all seven subscales from the *NPI* (authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity, & entitlement). Maladaptive narcissism combines subscales for exhibitionism, exploitativeness, & entitlement. Adaptive narcissism is the average of the authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, & vanity subscales.
Summary

The aforementioned results suggest that sadness and humiliation may be among the mechanisms through which self-esteem is related to the tendency for some individuals to react to potentially humiliating events by withdrawing from the immediate situation and their peers. Although both indirect effect estimates were relatively small, it appears that the indirect effect through the emotion of humiliation is slightly stronger than the indirect effect through sadness. In particular, following humiliating situations, low self-esteem is associated with higher levels humiliation and sadness; higher levels of one or both of these emotions are associated with more frequent endorsements of withdrawal behaviors. Similarly, anger appears to be possible mechanisms through which narcissism is related to retaliatory behaviors following potentially humiliating events. Again, the indirect effect estimate was fairly small. Nonetheless, there is evidence for partial mediation, reflecting a trend for narcissistic individuals to experience more anger after being humiliated, which may lead them to retaliate against their perpetrators. The path analytic model presented in the current study failed to account for much of the variability in the endorsement of minimization behaviors. Even so, there was evidence that narcissism had a weak indirect effect on minimization, through its association with anger. Specifically, as mentioned above, the situations that provoke humiliation lead narcissistic individuals to experience higher levels of anger, which lessens the likelihood of endorsing minimization.
Discussion

In defining the emotional experience of humiliation, the literature has identified four critical situational antecedents. First, events that elicit humiliation are characterized by degradation, resulting in the loss of dignity, social status, and esteem. Second, the degradation or ridicule is exercised by an actively hostile agent (Elison & Harter, 2007; Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Jackson, 2000; Klein, 1991; Lazare, 1987; Lindner, 2002; S. B. Miller, 1988; W. I. Miller, 1993; Sarphatie, 1993; Stamm, 1978; Statman, 2000). The agent’s actions are overt and malicious, resulting in what is viewed as a hostile attack on the victim’s personal sense of self (Jackson, 2000; Klein, 1991). Third, from the victim’s perspective, this attack is viewed as unfair; the target of the humiliation-provoking event typically does not accept responsibility for the attack (Jackson, 2000; Klein, 1991; Statman, 2000). Finally, situations that provoke humiliation require the presence of an active audience (Gilbert, 1997; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Silver et al., 1986; Stamm, 1978; Statman, 2000).

In the present investigation, participants read a series of vignettes, based on various combinations of the four situational antecedents of humiliation. To ensure some base level of the emotional experience of humiliation, the first antecedent, degradation, was held constant and high. The three remaining situational antecedents of humiliation were manipulated to obtain variability in the participants’ responses to the vignettes. In
particular, in half of the vignettes, the agent’s actions were overtly hostile, while the remaining half described a non-hostile agent. Next, the vignettes either described situations in which the attack resulted from the victim’s own shortcomings (fair) or as the result of something beyond his or her control (unfair). Finally, previous empirical work has revealed that an observing audience is critical to the humiliation-provoking events (Harter, Kiang, et al., 2003; Jackson, 2000). Therefore, half of the situations described in the vignettes took place in the presence of a large audience and the other half described events in which only the victim and one other observer were present.

The current study presented a process model of the hypothesized causes, emotional correlates, and behavioral consequences of potentially humiliating events. This model relies heavily of the role of self-rated emotions as mediators of this process, intervening between the predicted causal factors and behavioral outcomes. This approach is based on the assumption, and now on empirical evidence, that emotion functions as a mediator between the demonstrated causes and outcomes of humiliating events. This work was derived from Harter, Low, et al. (2003), who observed that a number of the school shooters reported that they had been previously humiliated by their peers. Based on further analysis of these school shooters and a study by Harter, Kiang et al. (2003), social norm violations appear to be critical to events that elicit humiliation. In the case of the school shooters, it was a violation of dress codes or failure to adhere to social norms regarding appreciation for or participation in athletic activities, to name a few. As a result of these social norm violations, the school shooters were teased, taunted, bullied, became humiliated, and ultimately struck back in revenge.
In order to empirically investigate these issues, Harter, Kiang, et al. (2003) asked college students to recall situations where they felt humiliated, in childhood and adolescence. Specific examples of spontaneously generated humiliating events included: “others put you down, tease you, about your clothes or hairstyle,” “giving the wrong answer in front of the class and the teacher,” and “you wet your pants in public.” These descriptions reveal that social norm violations are critical causes in a chain, linking humiliation as a causal emotional mediator to behavioral outcomes, including revenge, withdrawal, and minimization. As a result, in the present study, the vignettes were intended to typify social norm violations.

The investigation of the process model in the current study assessed two specific research goals. The first goal was to evaluate the emotional responses to potentially humiliating events (humiliation, sadness, and anger) as mediators of this process. The second goal of the present study was to replicate and extend previous findings suggesting that, following potentially humiliating events, individuals with lower levels self-esteem and higher levels of narcissism were more likely to report violent ideation (McCarley, 2005). Additionally, while the prediction of violent ideation may be pertinent from a school violence perspective, this research presents an incomplete view of the consequences of the emotion of humiliation; many victims of situations that provoke humiliation do not choose to retaliate against their perpetrators. To extend literature related to the behavioral consequences of humiliation, the current study examined three potential behavioral outcomes of potentially humiliating events, including retaliation (violent outcome), minimization, and withdrawal (nonviolent outcomes).
The Effects of Self-Esteem and Narcissism on Emotional Responses

In evaluating hypotheses one and two, which addressed the direct effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the emotional correlates of potentially humiliating events, the results partially supported predictions. The emotion of humiliation was significantly predicted by self-esteem, but not narcissism. The observed negative relationship between self-esteem and humiliation is consistent with findings from Baumeister and colleagues’ study on unrequited love, which suggests that loss of esteem typically accompanies the humiliation felt in this context (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993). Similarly, Brown and Dutton (1995) found that self-esteem influenced how humiliated people felt when they failed a task. In contrast, the predicted relationship between narcissism and humiliation was not entirely supported by the data. While there was a slight trend for higher levels of narcissism to be associated with higher levels of humiliation, this trend was not statistically significant. The lack of a clear positive association between narcissism and humiliation observed in the present investigation may have implications on the numerous theories that attempt to link narcissism to humiliation. For example, some researchers have speculated that narcissistic individuals may experience a vulnerability to humiliation (Tracy & Robins, 2004). However, results from the current investigation do not entirely support this hypothesis. Nonetheless, the observed effects of self-esteem and narcissism on humiliation add to the existing literature on humiliation and are particularly informative given lack of empirical evidence on these relationships.

It was of further interest to examine the link between both narcissism and self-esteem to sadness. The present study revealed that higher levels of sadness, following
potentially humiliating events, was reported by individuals with lower self-esteem; however, sadness responses bore no relationship to the levels of narcissism reported by participants. Given the fairly well-established link between self-esteem and depression (see Harter, 1999), the observed relationship between self-esteem and sadness is not surprising. Further, the fact that the predicted positive relationship between narcissism and sadness was not substantiated by the data is not entirely unexpected, given extremely contradictory evidence regarding the link between narcissism and sadness. For example, Sedikides et al. (2004) reported an inverse relationship between narcissism and daily reports of sadness. Likewise, Twenge and Campbell (2003) found that narcissists reported fewer feelings of sadness, anxiety, guilt, and embarrassment following rejection. In contrast, Bogart et al. (2004) found that greater narcissism was associated with general increases in negative affect. These contradictory findings may be related to the tendency for many researchers to confound operational definitions of narcissism and self-esteem. Given that many operational definitions of narcissism are unnecessarily confounded with definitions of high self-esteem, the current findings greatly add to the understanding of these two constructs as distinct through its specific focus on maladaptive narcissism.

In contrast to the inconclusive literature regarding the link between narcissism and sadness, the evidence supporting a positive association between narcissism and anger is extensive (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006; McCullough, et al., 2003; Papps & O’Carroll, 1998; Washburn, et al., 2004). As predicted, findings from the current study replicated this link. Specifically, individuals reporting higher levels of narcissism demonstrated a tendency to report feeling angry following a hypothetical situation.
intended to provoke humiliation. Contrary to expectations, self-esteem bore no relationship to anger responses following a potentially humiliating situation. This finding may be consistent with Papps and O’Carroll’s (1998) study, which revealed a tendency for individuals with low self-esteem to experience only moderate levels of anger. In interpreting this finding, they speculated that the strong propensity for those with low self-esteem to experience sadness may override any tendency toward feelings of anger.

The Effect of Emotion on the Behavioral Consequences of Humiliating Events

Hypotheses three through five addressed the predicted relationships between the emotional responses to humiliating events and the resulting behavioral reactions to those events. In hypothesis three, it was predicted that the inclination to seek out withdrawal behaviors following humiliation would be predicted by heightened feelings of sadness and humiliation immediately following the event. The expected relationships between the emotional responses to potentially humiliating events and subsequent tendencies to seek out withdrawal behavior were supported by the data. The positive relationship between sadness and withdrawal is consistent with appraisal models, which suggest that emotions motivate specific action tendencies (Frijda, 1987; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987; Stein & Levine, 1987). In particular, sadness is believed to motivate withdrawal (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987). While empirical evidence regarding the effects of emotion on withdrawal behaviors in the context of the emotional experience of humiliation is seriously lacking, these findings do closely parallel findings reported by Harter, Low et al. (2003). In particular, following humiliation-provoking events, individuals who scored
higher on a depression/adjustment composite tended to report increases in suicidal ideation, the ultimate withdrawal behavior (Lazare, 1987).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that higher levels of humiliation and anger would be associated with greater endorsement of retaliatory behaviors following a humiliating event; the data partially supported these predictions. Specifically, higher levels of reported anger were associated with higher levels of retaliation. The finding regarding the relationship between anger and retaliation is consistent with research and theory on outward-focused negative emotions (i.e., anger and hostility) (Allred, 1999; Averill, 1982; Weiner, 1985). Interestingly, while the bivariate correlation between humiliation and retaliation indicated a low to moderate positive association, the observed effect of humiliation on retaliation in the path analytic model revealed a direct effect, similar in magnitude, but in the opposite direction. Expectations for a strong link between humiliation and retaliation were derived from analyses of the school shooters, a very select and disturbed sample of adolescents who acted in the extreme. In a more normative sample, withdrawal appears to be the more common behavioral response to high levels of humiliation.

Hypothesis five predicted that increases in minimization behaviors following potentially humiliating events would be related to lower levels of humiliation and anger. The negative relationship predicted between humiliation and minimization was not supported. The Harter, Kiang, et al. (2003) study revealed that a small number of college students spontaneously mentioned minimization in response to humiliating events. However, this was a study of open-ended responses and there were no individual
difference predictors of behavioral responses to situations that provoke humiliation. Thus, more systematic approaches to the study of behavioral reactions to humiliation are needed. In contrast, the data from the present study supported the expected relationship between anger and minimization. Behaviors intended to minimize negative outcomes were reported more frequently by individuals who were experiencing low levels of anger in response to a humiliating event. The negative association between anger and minimization found in the present investigation paralleled findings from one study that examined children’s responses to provocation (Champion, 2009). Specifically, the findings revealed that higher anger reactivity, following provocation, predicted a lower likelihood of nonassertive responses, such as ignoring the provocation and engaging in distraction to minimize the experience.

The Integrated Model of Humiliation

As previously mentioned, the current study was developed to accomplish two central research goals. The first goal of the current study was to examine the emotional responses to humiliation-provoking events as mediators of the effects of self-esteem and narcissism on the behavioral consequences of potentially humiliating events. A number of researchers suggest that emotions are important not only as outcome variables, but also as mediators of behavior (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999). The current investigation revealed that anger partially mediated the direct effect observed from narcissism to retaliation. In particular, higher levels of narcissism were associated with stronger feelings of anger, which predicted the tendency to endorse retaliation in response to potentially humiliating events. Likewise, self-esteem
had an indirect effect on withdrawal, through its relationship with humiliation. Specifically, lower levels of self-esteem were associated with heightened feelings of humiliation, which resulted in the desire to escape from the situation. Finally, although narcissism did not directly affect minimization, the findings revealed a very small indirect effect of narcissism on minimization, through its relationship with anger. In other words, higher levels of reported narcissism were associated with stronger feelings of anger following potentially humiliating events, leading to fewer endorsements of minimization behaviors. By providing insight into the potential mechanisms underlying the emotional experience of humiliation, this integrated process model of humiliation represents a contribution to the literature.

The second goal was to replicate and extend the existing evidence that links self-esteem and narcissism to violent ideation in response to humiliating events (McCarley, 2005). In the current study, violent ideation was interpreted so that it encompassed acts of aggression (verbal or physical) primarily motivated by revenge. It was hypothesized (hypotheses seven and eight) that low self-esteem and high narcissism would be independently associated with higher levels of retaliation, in reaction to potentially humiliating events. Partially supporting the hypothesized relationships, the results revealed that retaliatory behaviors were predicted by higher levels of reported narcissism, but were unrelated to level of self-esteem reported. While the data were unable to replicate the negative association reported by McCarley (2005), they were consistent with empirical evidence reported by several other studies. In particular, a number of studies have found that the enactment of behaviors motivated by retaliation are more frequently
reported by individuals with high levels of narcissism and are unrelated to self-esteem (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; McCarley & Harter, 2005; Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

The present study adds to the current literature on humiliation by investigating additional behavioral reactions to the emotion of humiliation. Behavioral attempts to hide or escape from the instigator of the humiliating event have also been reported in reaction to the emotional experience of humiliation (Elison & Harter, 2007). Since withdrawal requires the recognition that the self has been negatively affected by humiliation, it was hypothesized (hypothesis six) that individuals reporting low levels of self-esteem would be more likely to endorse withdrawal behaviors following potentially humiliating events. The expected relationship between self-esteem and withdrawal was supported by the findings; withdrawal behaviors were reported more frequently by individuals who reported lower levels of self-esteem.

The final behavioral outcome examined in the present investigation was minimization. Given narcissists’ heightened sensitivity to external evaluations and increased reactivity to negative interpersonal interactions (McCullough, et al., 2003; Steiner, 2006; Stucke & Sporer, 2002), it was predicted (hypothesis nine) that individuals reporting higher levels of narcissism would be less likely attempt to minimize humiliating events. While there was a small indirect effect of narcissism on minimization, through its relationship with anger, the findings revealed that narcissism had no direct effect on minimization behavior following a humiliation-provoking situation.
Observed Gender and Ethnic Group Differences

No specific hypotheses were advanced regarding the effect of gender on the variables included in the path analytic model. However, based on preliminary analyses, revealing significant group differences on a number of the model variables, gender was included as a covariate of sadness, humiliation, anger, and withdrawal behaviors in the model. Ideally, these group differences would be investigated by testing the model separately for each group and comparing the results. However, group sizes were not sufficient to conduct separate analyses by gender.

In the path analytic model, gender differences were found for sadness, humiliation, and anger. Across all three emotions, females reported significantly stronger emotional responses to humiliating events than did males. These results are compatible with previous research in which females tend to report more negative affect in response to teasing (Jones, Newman, & Bautista, 2005) and provocation (Whitesell & Harter, 1996). In particular, Jones et al. (2005) found that, in response to hypothetical events involving being teased, girls reported feeling more hurt, embarrassed, and mad than boys. Additionally, Whitesell and Harter (1996) revealed that, following provocation, girls reported more anger and sadness than boys.

The Controversial Link Between Narcissism and Self-Esteem

In the model, both self-esteem and narcissism played an important role in predicting the emotional correlates and behavioral consequences of potentially humiliating events. However, there is a large issue, if not a controversy about the relationship between self-esteem and narcissism. Specifically, it was proposed that the
use of the full *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* (Raskin & Terry, 1988), which contains both adaptive and maladaptive components of narcissism, confounds the relationship between narcissism and high self-esteem. By using the more maladaptive subscales of narcissism measures, the current study was able to disentangle narcissism and self-esteem.

**Limitations to the Present Study**

The overall goal of path analysis is to establish causal versus non-causal aspects of observed correlations among a set of variables (Kline, 2004). As a result, path analysis and structural equation modeling are often referred to as “causal modeling” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In fact, the use of a statistical procedure is not sufficient to infer causality. Attributions of causality must satisfy three requirements. First, the exogenous variable must temporally precede the endogenous variable. Second, the direction of the causal relation must be correctly specified. Finally, the association between the exogenous and endogenous variable must not be spurious (Kline, 2004). Clearly, the design of the current study does not satisfy the conditions necessary to infer causality. Rather, the theorized temporal order and direction of effects among the variables is based on theory and on past research. Therefore, the current study cannot claim causality; additional experimental studies are needed that build upon the results of this study and provide additional insight into the nature of these relationships.

In addition, although the sample size was sufficient in detecting moderate effects, there may not have been enough power to detect smaller effects. Additional problems with sample size were encountered when the sample was split by race/ethnicity and
gender for the purposes of group comparisons. Small group sizes prohibited multiple
group comparisons of the model. Since recruitment took place via the internet, it was not
possible to ensure the recruitment of individuals from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds.
As a result, the sample was primarily European American and the majority of participants
were female. Thus, the findings presented in the current study cannot be generalized
beyond this population.

Strengths of the Present Study

Limitations aside, the current study had several strengths. First, it effectively
addressed the broad research goals presented earlier. Specifically, findings from the
current study replicated previous evidence linking self-esteem and narcissism to violent
ideation following potentially humiliating events. The present study also sought to extend
those findings by examining the predictive abilities of self-esteem and narcissism on two
other behavioral consequences associated with the emotion of humiliation: withdrawal
and minimization. Research on behavioral reactions to the emotional experience of
humiliation is greatly lacking, in general. When the behavioral consequences of
humiliation have been examined by researchers, the sole focus tends to be on violent or
retaliatory behaviors, which are not the only behaviors associated with the emotion of
humiliation. The current study contributed to the literature on humiliation by
acknowledging and investigating a variety of behavioral responses and attempting to
provide an explanation for the different pathways individuals may take when selecting
different reactions to humiliation. An additional goal of the present study was to examine
the role of several emotional correlates of humiliation in this process.
The primary strength of the current study was in the comprehensive model it proposed and tested. Through this model, the proposed causes, emotional correlates, and behavioral consequences of the emotion of humiliation were effectively integrated, allowing for the simultaneous examination of direct and indirect effects. Although the proposed process model cannot infer any causal relationships among the variables, it provides a reasonable starting point for researchers to begin studying the nature of these relationships in greater depth.

The current study differs from popular research on topics such as bullying by demonstrating that emotions serve as powerful motivators of behavioral outcomes. Of particular interest is that there is little empirical research on humiliation, despite the fact that those in the company of children daily, such as teachers, see constant evidence of humiliation. Researchers need to respect these observations and devote considerably more investment in studying this emotion and its consequences. Analyses of the school shooters have been a wake-up call that should spur researchers to take seriously these emotions that seem to dictate many behaviors observed in the classroom and the schoolyard.

**Implications and Future Directions**

Overall, the present study supported the majority of the hypotheses advanced. The process model proposed by the current study suggests that relatively stable aspects of personality, namely self-esteem and narcissism, may affect how individuals interpret the situational cues that characterize humiliating events. The interpretation of these cues may then have implications on the processing of related emotions, which then influence
response selection and behavior enactment (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000). The process model presented in the current study, reframed using socio-cognitive terminology, supports a social-information processing framework. Future research on humiliation may benefit from such a theoretical framework, allowing for a more detailed investigation of the cognitive and social underpinnings of the emotional experience of humiliation, as well as its situational antecedents.

In the Harter, Kiang, et al. (2003) study, college students were asked to generate their own examples of humiliating events. A number of students spontaneously mentioned situations in which the audience was laughing at them, such as “saying something stupid and everyone laughing at you.” As previously mentioned, many researchers tend to equate humiliation and embarrassment, especially given that both of these self-conscious emotions require the presence of an audience. Future research may be able to disentangle these two emotions by manipulating whether or not the audience is laughing at the protagonist.

Additionally, as evident from the school shooters’ case histories, each of the shooters experienced chronic humiliation. In the current study, chronicity was built in to the vignettes. It is possible that, when these events are viewed as chronic occurrences, they elicit humiliation. In contrast, if the events are perceived as single occurrences, participants may feel more embarrassed than humiliated. By manipulating the chronicity of the events described, future research may be able to further distinguish humiliation from embarrassment.
Finally, while the most recent school shootings have taken place on college campuses, many would argue that humiliation is a more painful experience for adolescents. It is possible that the emotional correlates and behavioral consequences of humiliation change over the course of development. Specifically, the diminished reasoning capacities of adolescents, combined with their heightened focus on social relationships, may lead to intense emotional arousal following humiliating events and a tendency to overreact to humiliating situations. To date there is no research on the developmental trajectory of the emotional experience and expression of humiliation. Future studies need to address the role of development in the emotion of humiliation. A developmental perspective would undoubtedly have clinical implications on the treatment of the chronic humiliation experienced by the school shooters.
References


University of Denver, Denver, CO.


University of Denver, Denver, CO.


### Appendix A

*Global Self-Esteem*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some people are <em>HAPPY</em> with themselves most of the time.</th>
<th>NOT VERY TRUE FOR ME</th>
<th>SORT OF TRUE FOR ME</th>
<th>PRETTY TRUE FOR ME</th>
<th>VERY TRUE FOR ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some people are often <em>DISAPPOINTED</em> with themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people <em>DON'T LIKE</em> the kind of person they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people are <em>HAPPY</em> with the way they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people are <em>NOT HAPPY</em> with themselves most of the time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people are pretty <em>PLEASED</em> with themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people <em>DO LIKE</em> the kind of person they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people wish they were <em>DIFFERENT</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Narcissistic Personality Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>not at all true</th>
<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see myself as a good leader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be a success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People always seem to recognize my authority.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a natural talent for influencing people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Sufficiency</th>
<th>not at all true</th>
<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to take responsibility for making decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more capable than other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can live my life in any way I want to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superiority</th>
<th>not at all true</th>
<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am an extraordinary person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be complimented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I am a special person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>not at all true</th>
<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be the center of attention.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would do almost anything on a dare.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am will show off if I get the chance.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploitativeness</th>
<th>not at all true</th>
<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to manipulate people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can usually talk my way out of anything.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody likes to hear my stories</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vanity</th>
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<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to look at my body.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to look at myself in the mirror.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to display my body.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend a lot of time thinking about how I look.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entitlement</th>
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<th>not very true</th>
<th>pretty true</th>
<th>very true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect a great deal from other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me.</td>
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</table>
## Appendix C

### Vignette Manipulations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Vignette Number</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>Fairness</th>
<th>Publicity</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-Hostile</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Non-Hostile</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Non-Hostile</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Non-Hostile</td>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Humiliation Vignettes

Vignette 1: Hostile Intent, Unfair, Low Publicity
One day during English class, Melinda’s professor sent her to the library to get a book. As she walked across campus to the library, Melinda ran into a boy she had been interested in for the last few months. Melinda was shocked when he asked her to go to a party with him that weekend. She immediately accepted his invitation to the party. Right after she said “yes,” the boy started to laugh and told her he was joking. There’s no way I’d be caught dead at that party with you! This was not the first time something like this happened to Melinda.
Imagine you are Melinda:

Vignette 2: Hostile Intent, Unfair, High Publicity
After class one afternoon, as Lucy is walking back to her dorm, she spots some friends hanging out on the lawn. As she approaches her friends, she walks past a group of girls, who she has seen around her dorm before, but has never met. As she passes the girls, one of them starts snickering at Lucy and sarcastically yells, “I just love your outfit! You must tell me where you got it!” The whole group of girls burst into laughter, pointing at Lucy and loudly taunting her. Their shouts draw the attention of everyone else hanging out nearby. Everyone is now looking at Lucy and laughing at her. This isn’t the first time something like this has happened to Lucy.
Imagine you are Lucy:

Vignette 3: Hostile Intent, Fair, High Publicity
Last week, Sally’s English professor assigned the class some poetry to read over the weekend. Sally decided to blow off the assignment and hang out with friends instead. On Monday, the professor called on Sally to discuss the poem. Sally tried to bluff an answer, but her professor cut her off, exclaiming, “What are you talking about? A three-year-old could have provided a better interpretation than the one you just gave me! You obviously came to class unprepared!” The other students in the class started to laugh at her and how stupid her response was. This is not the first time something like this happened to Sally.
Imagine you are Sally:

Vignette 4: Non-Hostile Intent, Fair, Low Publicity
Cindy has had a crush on a boy in her math class all semester, but she has never gotten up the nerve to ask him out. Before class one day, while Cindy did her best to make small-talk with the boy, he surprised her by asking if she wanted to grab some coffee later that night. Cindy accepted and was very excited. Later that night, Cindy arrived at the coffee shop a little early, found a table, and waited for the boy. She waited in the coffee shop for two hours, but the boy never showed up. As soon as she got home, she tried to call him, but no one answered. This was not the first time something like this happened to Cindy.
Imagine you are Cindy:

Vignette 5: Hostile Intent, Fair, Low Publicity
After procrastinating for two weeks, Marcie finally started working on a project for her History class, which was due the following day. Realizing how bad her project turned out, she decided to turn in what she had so that she would not get a zero. The next week, during class, Marcie’s History professor handed back the graded projects to everyone in the class, except Marcie. As
Marcie got up to leave class, her History professor stopped her and asked her to stay after class for a few minutes. After class, Marcie’s professor handed the graded project to her. On the top of the page was a large red F. Marcie’s professor began to scold her, claiming that Marcie’s project was one of the worst he’d ever seen. This wasn’t the first time something like this happened to Marcie.

Imagine you are Marcie:

Vignette 6: Non-Hostile Intent, Fair, High Publicity
Katie spent all weekend hanging out with her friends, knowing that she was supposed to read a few chapters to prepare for class on Monday. As soon as she got to class on Monday, the professor started asking the class questions about the readings. Eventually, the professor asked Katie a question, but of course, she had no idea what the answer was. After a brief pause, a girl in class that Katie had only talked to a few times whispered the answer to her. Katie immediately repeated the answer the girl whispered to her. As soon as she finished talking, she realized that her answer made no sense and probably sounded completely ridiculous. The whole class started giggling at Katie. This was not the first time something like this happened to Katie.

Imagine you are Katie:

Vignette 7: Non-Hostile Intent, Unfair, High Publicity
During her first semester at the University, Jane decided to go check out the gym. After looking at the schedule, she decided she would try out one of the yoga classes. As she walked to the gym, she looked at her watch and realized that the gym was further away that she thought; she was going to be late to the yoga class. She rushed into the gym and frantically tried to find the girls’ locker room so she could change clothes. Unable to find it, Jane asked a nearby group of girls, chatting after their workout, where she could find the locker room. One of the girls replied: “Down the hall, first door on the left.” As Jane rushed into the locker room, she quickly realized that she had gone into the men’s locker room, which was full of half-naked men. Jane gasps, “oh no!” and runs out of the locker room. The guys in the locker room start to laugh and yell at Jane as she tries to run out the door. This isn’t the first time something like this happened to Jane.

Imagine you are Jane:

Vignette 8: Non-Hostile Intent, Unfair, Low Publicity
Julie was recently assigned a project in which students were required to work in pairs. To create the groups, Julie’s professor randomly drew students’ names from a hat. Julie was paired with another girl that she did not know very well. To work on their project, Julie went to her partner’s house one day after class. They decided to do some research on the internet before getting started on the actual project. When Julie and her partner went to sit down at the computer desk, her partner motioned for her to sit in one of the two chairs at the desk. As Julie sat down, the chair broke, making Julie fall on the floor. This was not the first time something like this happened to Julie.

Imagine you are Julie:
Appendix E

Emotional Reactions to Humiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. How HUMILIATED would you feel?</th>
<th>Not at all Humiliated</th>
<th>A Little Humiliated</th>
<th>Pretty Humiliated</th>
<th>Very Humiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. How ANGRY would you feel?</th>
<th>Not at all Angry</th>
<th>A Little Angry</th>
<th>Pretty Angry</th>
<th>Very Angry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. How SAD would you feel?</th>
<th>Not at all Sad</th>
<th>A Little Sad</th>
<th>Pretty Sad</th>
<th>Very Sad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

*Behavioral Reactions to Humiliation*

| 1. How likely would you be to ignore the situation and pretend like it never happened? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |

| 2. How likely would you be to try to leave the situation as soon as possible? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |

| 3. How likely would you be to plan a way to get back at the person/people? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |

| 4. How likely would you be to do nothing and just laugh it off? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |

| 5. How likely would you be to try to get away from the situation as soon as possible? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |

| 6. How likely would you be to seek revenge and humiliate the professor? |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Not at all Likely                | Not Very Likely                 | Pretty Likely                   | Very Likely                     |
| [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             | [ ]                             |
## Appendix G
### Ethnic Group Differences on Model Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Narcissism</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
<th>Humiliation</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Retaliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.93</td>
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<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>Narcissism</th>
<th>Sadness</th>
<th>Humiliation</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Retaliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.66</td>
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<td>Asian American</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *Means and standard deviations (SD) are provided for each ethnicity group.