



The Effects of Being the Target of Envy on Satisfaction with Success

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Background

- Envy has been defined as wanting something that someone else has, which is distinct from jealousy, because jealousy is emotion fueled by an evolutionary need to protect one's mate (Parrot & Smith, 1993).
- Benign and malicious envy are distinct in how they motivate us. Benign envy motivates us to perform as well as the target of envy, whereas malicious envy motivates us to sabotage the performance of the target of envy (Lange & Crusius, 2015).
- Benign envy is exhibited through feelings of motivation whereas malicious envy is exhibited through feelings of anger (van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2011; van de Ven et al., 2015).

Hypotheses

STUDY 1

- **H1:** Participants who were the target of malicious envy would be significantly more satisfied with their success than participants who were the target of benign envy
- **H2:** Participants who were the target of malicious envy would feel they deserved their success significantly more than participants who were the target of benign envy.

STUDY 2

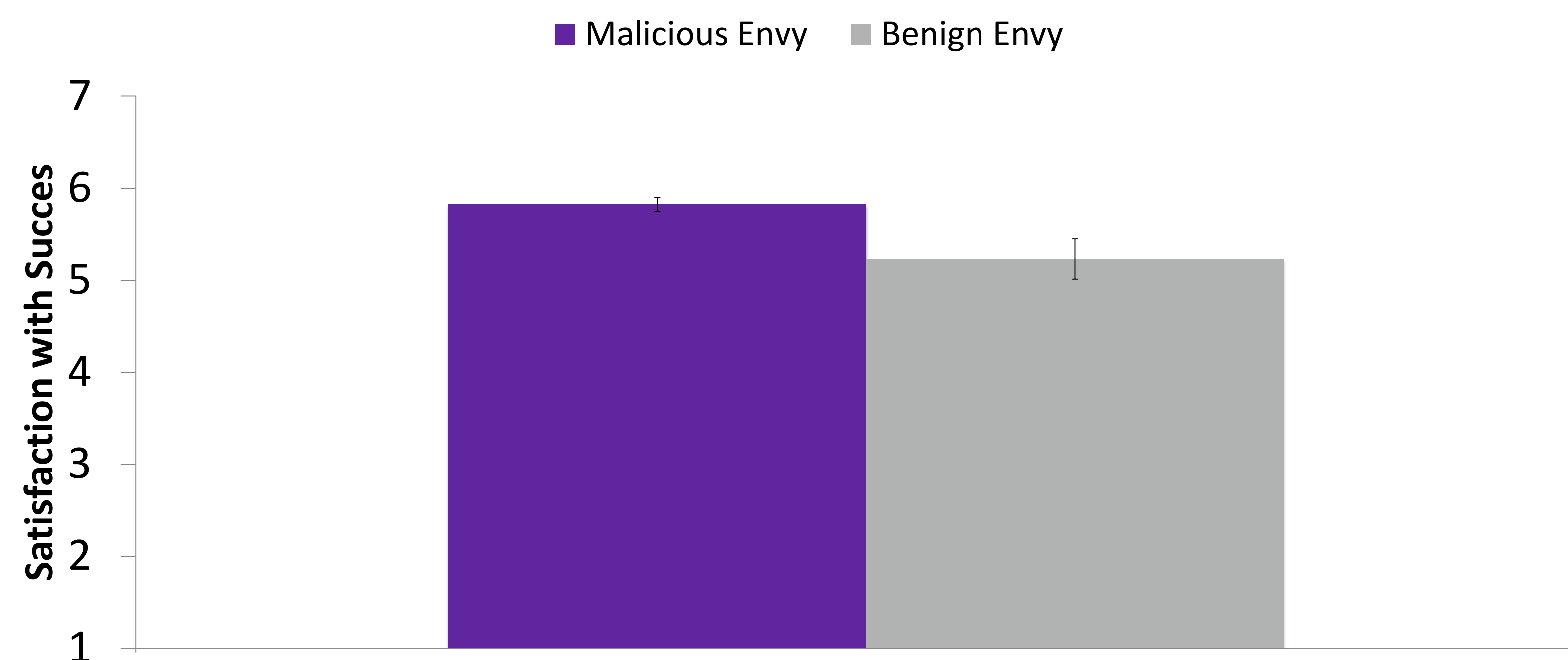
- **H1:** Participants who were the target of feelings of anger would be significantly more satisfied with their success than participants who were the target of feelings of motivation.
- **H2:** Participants who were the target of feelings of anger would like the envier significantly less than participants who were the target of feelings of motivation.

Methods

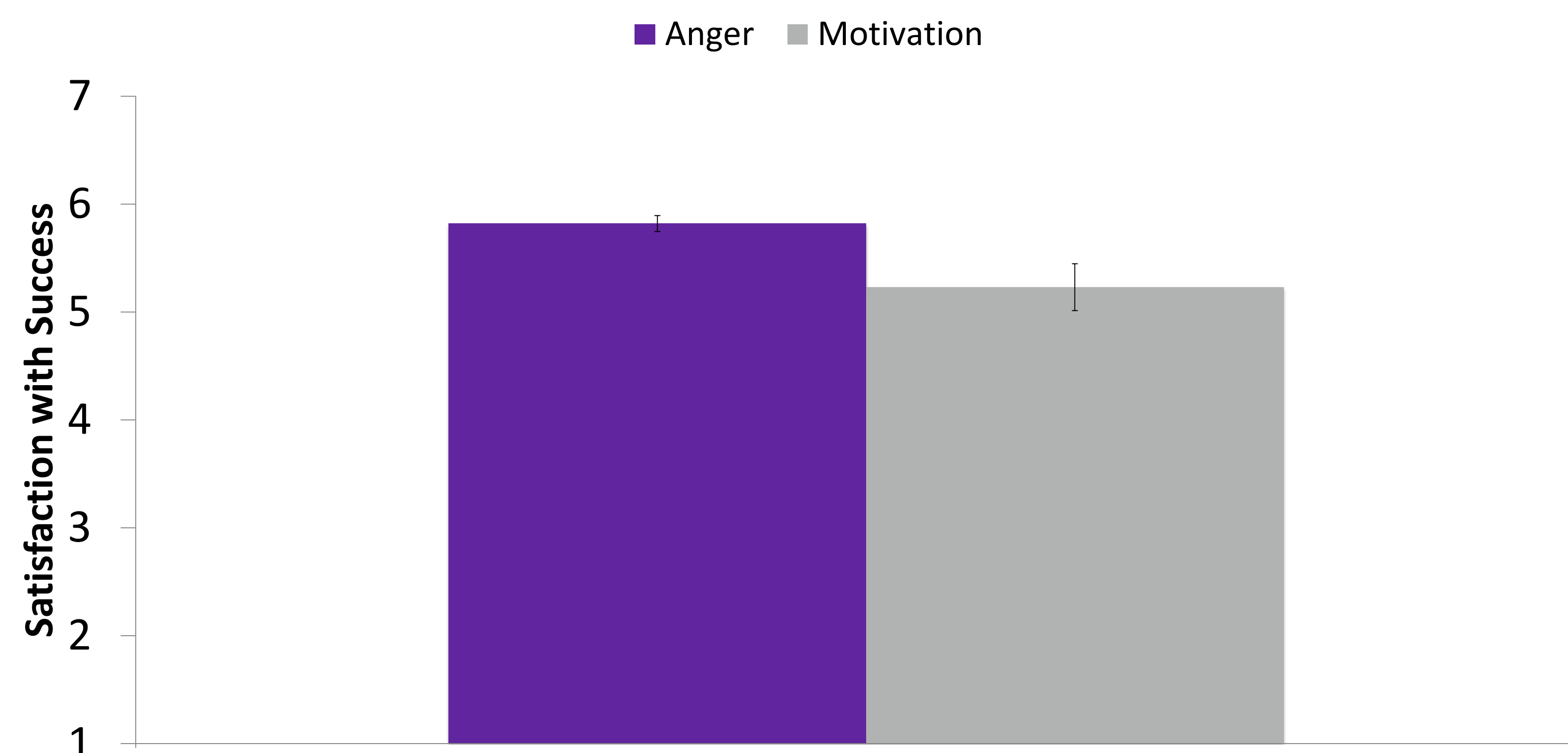
Stephen F. Austin State University students participated in both studies. Participants were recruited through the SONA-system, the online recruiting system for Stephen F. Austin University. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two scenarios for both studies, each of which put the participant in a position of experiencing the success of earning a new computer with their friend eliciting either malicious or benign envy (Study 1) or anger or motivation (Study 2) in response to this purchase. To measure the participants' satisfaction with their success (Studies 1 and 2), how much they felt they deserved their success (Study 1), and how much they liked their friend (Study 2), participants answered survey questions on a Likert-Type Scale with 1 representing "very dissatisfied" and 7 representing "very satisfied".

Results

Study 1



Study 2



Discussion

The hypotheses were supported by the data. Participants who were the target of malicious envy (Study 1) and feelings of anger (Study 2) were significantly more satisfied with their success than participants in the other conditions. Future research should examine the relationship between types of envy (malicious and benign) and emotions experienced (anger and motivation, respectively).

References

- Lange, J. & Crusius, J. (2015). Dispositional envy revisited: Unraveling the motivational dynamics of benign and malicious envy. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41, 284-294.
- Van de Ven, N., Hoogland, C.E., Smith, R. H., van Dijk, W. W., Breugelmans, S. M., and Zeelenberg, M. (2015). When envy leads to schadenfreude. *Cognition and Emotion*, 29, 1007-1025.
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