

IRGF Final Report

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Project Title: Basking in Reflected Tragedy in Everyday Life

1.1 Project Summary

People often associate themselves with tragic events, a tendency I term Basking in Reflected Tragedy (BIRT). Despite its ubiquity, BIRT has never been systematically studied. This project surveyed a large, diverse sample to examine its frequency, the types of connections made, and how they are expressed across social contexts.

1.2 Student involvement

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1.3 Dissemination and Knowledge Mobilization

Grant, N.K., & Benoit, B. Basking in Reflected Tragedy: An Impression Management Behavior. (February 2024). Poster presented at the annual meeting for the Society of Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA. Grant, N.K. Basking in Reflected Tragedy? Sharing Connections to Tragic Events. Manuscript in preparation.

1.4 Project Outcomes and Impacts

This project advances the field of social psychology by generating new theoretical and empirical insights in an area that has received limited prior attention. By exploring the nature of this understudied phenomenon, the project opens multiple avenues for future research and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Basking in Reflected Tragedy as a potential impression management behavior. The project also created valuable opportunities for undergraduate research training and professional development. Student collaborators received hands-on experience in the full research process, including survey design, qualitative coding, and quantitative data analysis. Through this mentorship, students developed skills in critical thinking, teamwork, and research communication. One student leveraged this experience to secure admission to a highly competitive graduate program in social psychology at the University of Toronto.