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Zipeng Ma April 12, 2020

Vulnerable Narcissism and Other-Derogation: Examining How Vulnerable Narcissists Respond to Self-Esteem Threat

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Abstract

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Self-esteem threats are prevalent in everyday life. Individuals' reactions to self-esteem threats may differ depending on certain personality factors. The present study examined how individual differences in vulnerable narcissism influenced the propensity to derogate an innocent other following a self-esteem threat. A sample of 159 undergraduate students participated in the study. In the experiment, participants took part in a job preparedness assessment and were randomly assigned to receive negative or neutral feedback regarding their performance. Participants were then given the opportunity to derogate a fictitious job applicant through assessing the job applicant's resume. As predicted, participants who scored high in vulnerable narcissism engaged in more other-derogation than participants who scored low in vulnerable narcissism. Contrary to prior prediction, there was no significant interactive effect between feedback condition and vulnerable narcissism. The study suggested that individuals need not be the direct source of negative information to be on the receiving end of unfavorable evaluation from those who are high in vulnerable narcissism.

Keywords: Vulnerable narcissism, self-esteem threat, other-derogation

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Vulnerable Narcissism and Other-Derogation: Examining How Vulnerable Narcissists Respond to Self-Esteem Threat

From receiving a bad grade on an exam to getting a poor performance review from a supervisor, negative feedback is an unpleasant but inescapable part of life. Individuals often experience situations or events that may challenge their self-concept, i.e., one's ideas and understandings of the self (Oyserman, 2004). People can respond to these potentially threatening experiences in a variety of ways, some of which may be counterproductive and can negatively impact others around them. Thus, it is important to examine factors that may influence the extent to which these counterproductive behaviors occur in an effort to mitigate these negative reactions and potentially improve everything from peer group dynamics to work culture.

Self-Esteem

Global self-esteem refers to one's overall evaluation toward the self (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Over the past several decades, self-esteem has assumed a prominent role in social psychological research and is one of the most widely studied constructs (Van Lange et al., 2011). The high level of scholarly interest is perhaps not surprising, given the important role that self-esteem plays in shaping individuals' attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors.

A variety of psychological theories provide functional explanations for self-esteem. For example, Greenberg et al. (1992) suggested that self-esteem serves an anxiety-buffering function, protecting individuals from existential anxiety and providing a sense of security and safety. In contrast, sociometer theory focuses on self-esteem's function in interpersonal relationships, proposing that self-esteem acts as an internal monitor to gauge the extent to which one is valued by a relational partner (Leary, 2011). Another well-supported conceptualization states that self-esteem promotes psychological well-being and success (Bandura, 1977; Greenwald, 1980;

Taylor & Brown, 1988). An abundance of empirical research supports this view, which has important theoretical and clinical implications. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have found a positive correlation between self-esteem and life outcomes such as relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, and occupational status (Voss et al., 1999; Schackelford, 2001; Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge et al., 2000; Judge & Hurst, 2008; Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008). In addition, past research has found that low self-esteem predicts depression, providing additional evidence for a link between self-esteem and psychological well-being (Orth et al., 2008; Orth et al., 2009). Although theorists have different functional explanations for self-esteem, there is broad consensus that self-esteem is vital for individuals' self-concept and psychological functioning.

Self-Esteem Maintenance

Given the important functions that self-esteem serves, it is not surprising that people seek to maintain positive self-views. Indeed, the notion that individuals seek to maintain their self-esteem and develop positive impressions of themselves has been well-established (Adler, 1930; Jones, 1973; Rogers, 1959). According to self-affirmation theory, individuals are motivated to maintain their self-worth and integrity (Steele, 1988; McQueen & Klein, 2006; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). Compared to negative information, positive information about the self is easier for most people to process, since it aligns with most people's views of themselves (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; vanDellen et al., 2011). In fact, even those who possess low self-esteem typically prefer positive feedback over negative feedback (Swann et al., 1989).

Self-Esteem Threat

Self-esteem threat, which refers to a situation, event, or context that is deemed important enough to challenge one's positive self-concept, occurs frequently in everyday life (Kelly, 1965; Jones, 1973; vanDellen et al., 2011). Threats to self-esteem may occur in a variety of domains, including inadequate academic and job performance, social rejection, physical illness, and interpersonal conflict (Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

Self-esteem threats may pack a particularly potent punch because they violate self-relevant expectations: the view that one is competent, capable, and successful. Consistent with this, some work suggests that negative information about the self may be harder to process than positive self-relevant information, as it triggers a discrepancy between an individual's desired feelings about the self and current feelings (vanDellen et al., 2011). Since negative information about the self can create an undesired inconsistency between individuals' *actual* self-feelings and how they *should* feel, individuals often perceive self-esteem threats as unsettling and uncomfortable (Kelly, 1965; Jones, 1973; Sherman & Cohen, 2006). In response, people may be particularly motivated to reduce this discrepancy and restore their positive sense of self in the wake of a self-esteem threat.

Reactions to Self-Esteem Threat

People utilize various cognitive, psychological, and behavioral strategies to cope with self-esteem threats; importantly, not all individuals respond to self-esteem threats in the same way. In a meta-analysis on the types of reactions to self-esteem threat, vanDellen et al. (2011) classified such responses to self-esteem threat into three categories: breaking, resisting, and compensating. Each category represents a different constellation of cognitive styles and behavioral reactions to negative self-relevant information.

Breaking reactions indicate some level of receptivity to a threat and acceptance of its veracity. Individuals who show breaking reactions often acknowledge the self-esteem threat as valid and reflective of who they are (vanDellen et al., 2011). Breaking reactions may take the form of positive evaluations of the evaluator (source of threat), internal attributions for failure, and decreased aggression.

Resistance reactions indicate that, analogous to the body's resistance to disease, individuals either actively or passively reject threatening information about the self (vanDellen et al., 2011). Individuals who adopt active resistance responses may shift their attention to other positive aspects of themselves, whereas those who adopt passive resistance responses may fail to see the relevance of the threatening information. In contrast to breaking reactions, resistance strategies often involve no change in mood or aggression, and are associated with neutral evaluations of the source of the threat.

Compensation reactions typically involve changing the current situation so that individuals reduce the focus on the threat and redirect attention to other information. Unlike resistance strategies, some compensating strategies do not involve simply "balancing out" the negative information. Individuals who compensate tend to enhance their state self-esteem to the point of inflation rather than simply restore it into a neutral state. Thus, compensation strategies typically necessitate more effort and energy. For example, individuals who compensate may display aggression, increased motivation or persistence, positive self-evaluation, and external attributions for failure.

Individuals react to self-esteem threats differently based on situational and personality factors. For example, those with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in breaking and resisting strategies than compensating strategies (vanDellen et al., 2011).

Restoring Self-Esteem via Other-Derogation

Although all three categories of reactions to self-esteem threat are interesting to examine, I argue that it is particularly important to study compensating strategies because individuals who adopt these strategies may directly and adversely impact others. In fact, one means by which individuals restore self-esteem is by negatively evaluating or belittling someone else, a phenomenon known as other-derogation (Stucke & Sporer, 2002; Park & Colvin, 2015). In other words, after receiving threatening information about the self, people may put others down in an effort to feel better about themselves.

Indeed, a plethora of past empirical work has suggested that self-esteem threat can increase negative evaluations of others; moreover, such derogation leads to enhanced self-esteem (Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Fein & Spencer, 1997). For example, a study that investigated the relation between narcissism and aggression found that in general, individuals who received ego-threatening feedback engaged in more acts of aggression than individuals who received positive feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). In addition, Fein and Spencer (1997) found that participants who received negative performance feedback subsequently evaluated an individual from a marginalized outgroup more negatively than those who received neutral feedback. This derogation, in turn, restored participants' self-esteem. The finding that derogating others restores people's self-esteem following threats indicates that, rather than an unjustified or random response, other derogation acts as a functional mechanism for self-esteem maintenance.

The extent to which individuals derogate others following exposure to self-esteem threats can vary based on personality differences. In particular, past research has extensively examined how narcissism relates to reactions to self-esteem threats. Next, I provide a brief description of the concept of narcissism and then explain the distinctions between two recently identified

subtypes: Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Finally, I discuss why individual differences in vulnerable narcissism are especially important to consider in the context of reactions to self-esteem threat.

Narcissism

Narcissism, a combination of vanity, self-absorption, arrogance, and entitlement, characterizes individuals who often disregard others' needs and possess inflated views of the self (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Past research has extensively documented that individuals who are high in narcissism have a propensity to exhibit aggressive tendencies (Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake, 1996; Baumeister et al., 2000; Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Emmons, 1984). Through observational data, Raskin and Terry (1988) found that individuals who were high in narcissism were often rated as more aggressive, autocratic, and assertive than individuals who were low in narcissism. Consistent with this, Rhodewalt and Morf (1995) demonstrated that those high in narcissism exhibit increased hostility and antagonism after receiving threats to self-esteem. For example, following negative performance feedback, participants who possessed higher levels of narcissism rated the evaluator more negatively than participants lower in narcissism (Kernis & Sun, 1994; Smalley & Stake, 1996).

Grandiose and Vulnerable Narcissism

Traditionally, studies examining this topic have operationalized narcissism via composite scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, a forced-choice measure of subclinical narcissism (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979). Participants choose between narcissistic statements, such as "I see myself as a good leader" and non-narcissistic statements, such as "I am not sure if I would make a good leader". However, by solely utilizing the NPI as a measure of narcissism,

past researchers have treated narcissism as a broad, aggregated concept and have overlooked meaningful variability within the overarching construct. Consequently, the majority of studies that have examined the relation between narcissism and other psychological and behavioral variables have not addressed if or how these patterns differ across different facets of narcissism.

Wink (1991) proposed two subtypes of subclinical narcissism: Grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. Although both subtypes of narcissism share common features, including self-indulgence, conceit, arrogance, and disregard for others, an increasing amount of literature has indicated the need to distinguish between them (Wink 1991; Miller & Campbell, 2008; Freis et al., 2016). Unlike grandiose narcissism, which reflects characteristics captured in the Narcissistic Personality Disorder, vulnerable narcissism is described as overtly modest, self-inhibited, and empathetic towards others, yet harboring grandiose self-views (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003). Specifically, empirical work to date indicates that the two subtypes differ in their relations to other personality variables and interpersonal behavior (Miller et al., 2010).

Personality. Although both subtypes appear to be characterized by hostility and disagreeableness, grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism differ in their associations with these and other personality constructs. Grandiose narcissism, commonly referred to as the overt subtype, is positively related to extraversion and negatively associated with agreeableness and neuroticism (e.g., Miller & Campbell, 2008; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). In contrast, vulnerable narcissism, which is sometimes referred to as the covert subtype, is positively correlated with neuroticism and negatively associated with extraversion and agreeableness (e.g., Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Miller et al., 2010). Of particular relevance to the current investigation, although there is a positive relation between grandiosity and self-esteem, a negative association has been found between vulnerability and self-esteem (e.g., Rohmann et al., 2019).

Interpersonal behavior. There is also reason to suspect that those high in grandiose versus vulnerable narcissism may also act differently in interpersonal relationships. Wink (1991) found that spouses of grandiose narcissists described them as arrogant, assertive, and conceited. In contrast, spouses of vulnerable narcissists described them as anxious, shy, bitter, emotional, and negative. In addition, whereas vulnerable narcissists tend to conceal their entitlement and positive self-regard with modesty and concern for others, grandiose narcissists fail to present this façade (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2008). As a result, a critical difference emerges in the subtypes' self-esteem regulation strategies. Grandiose narcissists utilize more overt forms of self-enhancement strategies, including self-aggrandizement, charm, and manipulation (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2008). On the other hand, vulnerable narcissists rely more heavily on the approval of others around them (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2008). Vulnerable narcissists tend to be more sensitive to and place relatively greater weight on feedback from external sources; this is believed to stem from a lack of clarity surrounding the self-concept, including core attitudes, beliefs, and self-evaluations (Hendin & Cheek, 1997; Wink, 1991).

A sizable body of work has demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Of particular relevance to the current study, the subtypes have been found to differ markedly in terms of self-esteem level, self-esteem regulation strategies, and interpersonal interaction. Given vulnerable narcissists' sensitivity to feedback from others, it is important to understand how individuals high in vulnerable narcissism are likely to respond to self-esteem threats.

Vulnerable Narcissism and Reactions to Self-Esteem Threat

The differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissists can also manifest in individuals' reactions to self-esteem threats. Krizan and Johar (2015) suggested that vulnerable

narcissism, rather than grandiose narcissism, acts as a strong predictor of poor anger control, distrust of others, hostility, as well as displaced aggression (i.e., aggression toward an innocent target who was not responsible for provocation). Furthermore, narcissistic vulnerability, rather than grandiosity, has been found to drive narcissistic rage, a combination of anger and hostility arising from threats to sense of self (Krizan & Johar, 2015). Past work indicates that different types of self-esteem threat can trigger more negative outcomes depending on differences in narcissistic vulnerability versus grandiosity. For example, Besser and Zeigler-Hill (2010) suggest that grandiose narcissism predicted negative reactions to public threats, whereas vulnerable narcissism predicted negative reactions to both public and private threats.

These recent studies provide compelling evidence that narcissistic vulnerability and grandiosity differ in their relation to reaction to self-esteem threats. An important next step is to disentangle the subtypes of narcissism when investigating a particular type of reaction: the tendency to derogate others.

Based on past work, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism tend to derogate others more than those low in vulnerable narcissism following a threat to self-esteem (e.g., Okada, 2010; Besser & Priel, 2010). For example, Okada (2010) found that individuals high in vulnerable narcissism evaluated those who had previously criticized them more negatively than individuals low in vulnerable narcissism. Furthermore, recent work on vulnerable narcissism and aggression suggested that those high in vulnerable narcissism may engage in more displaced aggression after provocation than those low in vulnerable narcissism. For example, during a "taste test" experiment, when made to believe that a fictitious coparticipant chose an unpleasant food for them to taste, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism were more likely to administer a spicy version of hot sauce to future participants (Krizan & Johar, 2015). Thus, those with high

vulnerable narcissism may engage in more displaced aggression after provocation than those low in vulnerable narcissism (Krizan & Johar, 2015).

Past research examining the relation between vulnerable narcissism and self-esteem threat has largely stopped short of investigating the specific tendency to restore self-esteem by derogating innocent others. Given that vulnerable narcissism has been linked to behavioral tendencies such as hostility, poor anger control, and displaced aggression (Krizan & Johar, 2015), it seems reasonable to expect that, when feeling threatened, those high in vulnerable narcissism may be particularly likely to derogate others, even if those targets were not directly responsible for the self-esteem threat.

Current Study

Building on past literature, the current study investigated if and how individual differences in vulnerable narcissism can influence the propensity to engage in the derogation of an innocent other following a self-esteem threat.

The current study built on past work in important ways. First, it sought to clarify and extend our scientific understanding by directly investigating the role that vulnerable narcissism may play in predicting the use of other-derogation as a means of restoring self-esteem following a threat. Second, whereas prior work has largely examined how people respond to an "other" who is perceived to have provoked or otherwise wronged them (e.g., Okada, 2010), the current study examined whether this tendency to derogate extends to an "innocent other," i.e,. someone who did not deliver the self-esteem threat. Lastly, the current research examined reactions to self-esteem threat in the context of a job evaluation and hiring process, thereby providing an important connection to real-world events.

Hypotheses

1. **Effect of self-esteem threat.** It was hypothesized that individuals who experienced a threat to self-esteem would engage in more innocent other-derogation than individuals who did not experience self-esteem threat. Considering individuals' desire to protect their positive self-view and engage in self-regulatory strategies to restore self-esteem, those who received negative self-relevant feedback were expected to give more negative evaluations of others than those who did not experience the threat (e.g. Steele, 1988; Kelly, 1965; vanDellen et al., 2011).
2. **Effect of vulnerable narcissism.** It was hypothesized that individuals who scored higher on vulnerable narcissism would derogate more than individuals who scored lower on vulnerable narcissism. Since past research has found vulnerable narcissism to predict indirect aggression (i.e., behavior that causes harm but does not involve direct confrontation; Okada, 2010; Parton, 2018), it was expected that those high in vulnerable narcissism would provide more negative evaluations of another person than those low in vulnerable narcissism.
3. **Interactive effect of self-esteem threat and vulnerable narcissism.** I predicted that the effect of the self-esteem threat on other-derogation would be stronger when vulnerable narcissism is high compared to when vulnerable narcissism is low, such that the self-esteem threat would yield more other-derogation among individuals high (vs. low) in vulnerable narcissism. Based on past studies, vulnerable narcissists display more anger and hostility in the face of provocation than those who score low on vulnerable narcissism (e.g. Okada 2010; Krizan & Johar, 2015). Among those who did not receive a

threat to self-esteem, there was no expected significant difference between those high in vulnerable narcissism and individuals low in vulnerable narcissism.

Method

Participants

One hundred sixty-six undergraduate students from Emory University were recruited to participate in this study. Students were recruited primarily through the psychology department's SONA system, which enables students to choose studies to participate in exchange for research credit that counts toward a course requirement. Additional recruitment took place via flyers placed around campus and the surrounding community. Participants recruited outside the SONA system were offered a $10 Amazon gift card for their participation. To take part in the study, participants had to be 18 to 25 years old, fluent in English, and not clinically diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder. After eliminating responses from participants who only partially completed the questionnaires or who were missing data for key variables, the final sample for analyses consisted of 159 participants.

Descriptive information for the sample is provided in Table 1. In general, the sample consisted of mostly women (around two thirds of the participants were women) and was primarily comprised of individuals who identified as White or Asian.

Description of Cover Story

Participants were told that the study examined job preparedness and personality variations among young adults. The experimenter told participants that they would respond to several short answer prompts similar to the sorts of questions they would reasonably expect to encounter in a job application. Participants were told that their responses to these prompts would

be assessed by a computer software called VenusTech, a hiring tool that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to evaluate job candidates. AI-driven hiring tools are popular in many companies' recruitment processes, and participants were made aware of the prevalence of the use of such software in hiring practices. Participants then received feedback on their responses to the short answer prompts that ostensibly was generated by VenusTech and personalized for them.

Measures of Primary Variables

Job preparedness prompts. The job preparedness task (see Appendix A) consisted of three short prompts that resembled behavioral questions commonly asked in job interviews. A sample prompt is "Describe a challenge or conflict you have faced, and explain how you have dealt with it." Participants were required to respond to all three short prompts within 30 minutes. Participants answered each prompt in short paragraph form. Participants' responses to each prompt ostensibly served as the basis for evaluation via the VenusTech software. In reality, participant responses were not scored.

Feedback manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to receive either negative (see Appendix B) or neutral feedback (see Appendix C) on their job preparedness task responses. In each condition, participants were given quantitative ratings on both communal and agentic traits, such as competence, friendliness, and writing proficiency. Performance on each dimension was rated from 1 (Far below average) to 7 (Far above average).

State self-esteem. The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; see Appendix D) is a 20-item, 5-point measure (1=not at all, 5=extremely) of short-lived changes in self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Specified items were reverse-scored; participants' responses to each item were then aggregated into a composite construct that ranged from 20 to 100. A high score indicated a

high level of state self-esteem. The SSES has high internal consistency (α = 0.92); reliability scores in the current study confirm its viability (α = 0.89).

Vulnerable narcissism. The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS; see Appendix E) is a 10-item, 5-point measure of vulnerable narcissism developed by Hendin & Cheek (1997). The HSNS consists of a series of statements such as "My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by the slighting remarks of others;" respondents rate their agreement to each statement from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Each participant's responses were aggregated into a composite score, ranging from 10 to 50. Higher scores indicated higher levels of vulnerable narcissism. This scale has demonstrated high internal consistency in prior work (α = 0.75; Hendin & Cheek, 1997); reliability scores in the current study (α = 0.65) confirm its viability.

Job candidate profile. The hypothetical job candidate profile (see Appendix F; adapted from Widner & Chicoine, 2011), which was displayed in the format of a resume, was read by all participants. The profile included the candidate's education background, previous job experiences, and qualifications.

Job candidate evaluation. Participants evaluated the hypothetical job candidate's resume using a 10-item, 10-point questionnaire (see Appendix G) created by King et al. (2006). The job candidate evaluation included a series of questions, such as "How intelligent do you think this individual is?". Respondents answer each question from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very). Participants' responses on this scale served as the indicator for their levels of derogation towards an innocent individual. The scores for each item were later combined to generate a composite "derogation score" that ranged from 10 to 100. Lower scores constitute greater derogation. This scale has demonstrated high internal consistency in prior work (α = .91; King et al., 2006); reliability scores in the current study (α = .92) confirm its viability.

Measures of Additional Variables

Global self-esteem. The Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; see Appendix H) is a 10-item, 4-point measure of global self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). The RSE measures both positive and negative feelings about the self and all items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 3 (Strongly Agree). It includes items such as "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Specified items were reverse-scored and a composite variable was created by adding scores across all items. The composite variable ranged from 0 to 30. Higher scores indicated a higher level of global self-esteem. This scale has demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.77$; Rosenberg, 1965); reliability scores in the current study ($\alpha = 0.83$) confirm its viability.

Grandiose narcissism. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; see Appendix I) is a 40-item measure of grandiose narcissism used in nonclinical samples (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Participants were presented with narcissistic and non-narcissistic statements in a set of forced-choice items and were asked to choose which item was most descriptive of them. For example, participants were asked to choose between "I have a natural talent for influencing people." and "I am not good at influencing people." Each chosen narcissistic statement was given 1 point while each chosen non-narcissistic statement was given 0 points. A composite variable was created by adding all scores across items. The composite score ranged from 0 to 20. Higher scores indicated a higher level of grandiose narcissism. This scale has demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.80$, Raskin & Hall, 1979); reliability scores in the current study ($\alpha = 0.66$) confirm its viability.

Entitlement. The Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; see Appendix J) is a 9-item, 7-point questionnaire that measures entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004). Participants respond to

statements such as “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others.” ranging from 1 (Strong disagreement) to 7 (Strong agreement). Each participant’s responses were aggregated into a composite construct by adding all scores across items (after reverse-scoring specified items). The composite variable ranged from 9 to 63. Higher scores indicated a higher level of entitlement. The PES demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.87$, Campbell et al., 2004); reliability scores in the current study ($\alpha = 0.85$) confirm its viability.

Neuroticism. The Neuroticism subscale (see Appendix K) is an 8-item, 5-point scale assessing emotional stability derived from the Big Five Personality Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). It includes items such as “I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily.” Participants read through statements and chose responses ranging from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 5 (Agree strongly). After specified items were reverse-scored, each participant’s responses were added across all items to generate a composite construct, which ranged from 8 to 40. Higher scores indicated higher neuroticism. The Neuroticism subscale has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.80$, John & Srivastava, 1999); reliability scores in the current study ($\alpha = 0.78$) confirm its viability.

Demographics. The Demographics Questionnaire (see Appendix L) was created by the researcher and includes items assessing age, gender, race, etc.

Self affirmation task. Participants briefly wrote about three strengths (see Appendix M) they possessed as a means of affirming the self (i.e., restoring their self-esteem). Reflecting on one’s personal strengths has been shown to reduce the psychological impact of a self-esteem threat, thereby improving self-esteem (e.g., Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Thus, this task was included to reduce any adverse psychological impact of the self-esteem threat and allow participants to restore a positive self-view.

Suspicion probe. A subset of participants (*n*=63) were asked four questions (see Appendix N) regarding the extent to which they found the feedback regarding the job preparedness task believable and reflective of their true performance. This probe was added partway through data collection to examine whether the study's cover story was perceived to be believable for the participants. Thus, only a subset of participants completed these questions.

Procedure

This study was an in-person experiment; participants took part in this study in the Emory psychology department's computer lab, and all study materials were computer-administered. Participants took part in the study in groups up to five. As participants read through the informed consent forms, the experimenter (one of five members of the study team who were extensively trained prior to running study sessions) verbally highlighted important details of the study with them. The experimenter took great care to "sell" the legitimacy of the computer-based evaluation task, as well as to convey the importance of trying one's best and completing all study measures thoughtfully. After providing informed consent, participants were seated at individual computers in separate corners of the room to minimize the likelihood of viewing other participants' responses. Under the premise of a job evaluation/application task, participants answered a series of short essay questions akin to typical interview questions (see Appendix A). Participants were informed that their responses would be evaluated by VenusTech software and that they would receive feedback on the quality of their responses.

Following the job evaluation task, participants completed several questionnaires assessing personality traits (see Appendices E, H, I, J, K & L). Next, depending upon their assigned condition, participants received either negative (experimental condition) or neutral feedback (control condition) regarding their essay responses, which were comprised of scores on

several agentic and communal dimensions (see Appendices B & C, respectively). The feedback they received was prewritten and uniform across all participants in a given condition (i.e., neutral v. negative), although it was presented as personalized for each participant. To ensure that participants read the feedback they received, participants were asked to enter their scores for each dimension into the computer.

The receipt of feedback was immediately followed by the state self-esteem measure (see Appendix D) to assess the effectiveness of the self-esteem threat manipulation. Next, participants were instructed to read the resume of a hypothetical job applicant (see Appendix F). Participants then rated the job applicant on several dimensions, such as friendliness, likelihood of success, and competence (see Appendix G). These applicant ratings, once combined, served as the measure of other-derogation.

Next, to alleviate any potential discomfort that participants may have experienced due to receipt of the feedback, all participants engaged in a self-affirmation task by briefly writing about three strengths they possess (see Appendix M). A subset of participants (n=63) was then probed for suspicion regarding the true nature of the study and the extent to which they believed in the feedback they received (see Appendix N). Lastly, participants received a detailed oral debriefing, in which they learned about the goals of the study and the bogus nature of the feedback. Experimenters again took great care in explaining both the nature and necessity of the use of deception in the study and monitored participants closely for any adverse effects of the bogus feedback. Participants were asked to keep the study's true nature and design confidential. They were then thanked and dismissed.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the primary and additional variables of interest are presented in Table 2. Before proceeding with additional analyses, it was necessary to ensure that the data met the assumptions for linear regression. All variables of interest met the assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity, making it appropriate to run analyses with these data in their original form.

Manipulation Check

Differences in state self-esteem were examined to see whether performance feedback served as a valid self-esteem threat. A one-way ANOVA was utilized to examine the experimental manipulation of self-esteem threat. Assumptions of one-way ANOVA, including normality and homogeneity of variance, were met. State self-esteem scores among those who received negative feedback (M=66.07, SD=12.83) were not significantly different from the scores of those who received neutral feedback (M=68.58, SD=12.49), $F(1, 157) = 1.56$, p=0.21. Thus, it appears that manipulation of self-esteem threat, although modeled upon well-established paradigms in the literature (e.g. Kernis & Sun, 1994; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Stucke & Sporer, 2002) was unsuccessful in the current study.

Suspicion Probe

Among the 63 participants who were probed for suspicion, 21 participants raised suspicions regarding the authenticity and accuracy of the feedback given. When asked to rate the extent to which they believed the feedback given, participants provided an average rating of 4.73 out of 10. Thus, it appears that a nonnegligible number of participants raised suspicions regarding the cover story and the feedback given.

Test of Main Hypotheses

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to examine both the main and interactive effects of feedback condition and vulnerable narcissism on innocent other-derogation. Direct effects of the two predictors on other-derogation were assessed in Step 1. Feedback condition was dummy-coded, with the experimental condition (negative feedback) assigned as "1" while the control condition (neutral feedback) assigned as "0". The vulnerable narcissism variable was centered before being entered into the multiple regression. The two-way interaction between vulnerable narcissism (centered) and feedback condition (dummy-coded) was entered in Step 2.

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis are presented in Table 3. Regarding direct effects, contrary to Hypothesis 1, feedback condition was not significantly associated with other-derogation (p=.60). Mean evaluations of the hypothetical job candidate provided by the negative feedback group (M=57.28, SD=14.53) did not differ significantly from those of the neutral feedback group (M=57.98, SD=15.51). However, there was a significant positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism and other-derogation (p=.04), supporting Hypothesis 2. Those who were higher in vulnerable narcissism evaluated the hypothetical candidate more negatively than those who were lower in vulnerable narcissism. Lastly, contrary to Hypothesis 3, the interaction between feedback condition and vulnerable narcissism was not significant (p=0.11). The general pattern of this interaction is presented in Figure 1. As can be seen in the figure, among individuals in the experimental condition, it seems that those higher in vulnerable narcissism derogated individuals more than those lower in vulnerable narcissism. Although the interactive effect did not meet the threshold of statistical significance, the general pattern is in line with the original prediction.

Exploratory Analyses with Additional Variables

Pearson correlations were run to take an initial look at the connections among primary variables and the additional variables of grandiose narcissism, global self-esteem, entitlement, and neuroticism. The correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 3. These correlations provide confirmation of previous findings and conceptual relations established in earlier work. Consistent with prior work, vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with other-derogation. Somewhat surprisingly, however, no other variables were found to correlate significantly with other-derogation. Consistent with past research, vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with both entitlement and neuroticism, but negatively correlated with global self-esteem. Also in keeping with prior findings, grandiose narcissism correlated positively with global self-esteem but negatively with neuroticism. Lastly, as anticipated, there was a negative relationship between neuroticism and global self-esteem.

Discussion

The current study is an extension of a relatively limited body of literature related to vulnerable narcissism and reactions to self-esteem threats. Several past studies have identified narcissistic vulnerability as a predictor of rage, anger, and hostility (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Okada, 2010; Krizan & Johar, 2015). In addition, recent research on this topic has found that individuals high in vulnerable narcissism are more likely to engage in acts of displaced aggression than those who are low in vulnerable narcissism (Krizan & Johar, 2015; Parton & Ent, 2018). Thus, the purpose of the current study was to further investigate how vulnerable narcissists respond to self-esteem threats by examining their propensity to derogate “innocent” others, i.e., those who are not the source of negative self-relevant information.

Hypothesis 1

First, in line with previous research demonstrating that individuals who experience self-esteem threat can utilize derogation as a self-esteem enhancing strategy (e.g. Fein & Spencer, 1997; vanDellen et al., 2011), I hypothesized that individuals in the negative feedback condition would derogate an innocent other to a greater extent than those in the neutral feedback condition. Contrary to this prediction, no significant difference in derogation levels was found between the negative and neutral feedback condition.

This failure to replicate past studies is most likely due to the unsuccessful experimental manipulation of self-esteem threat, as demonstrated in the manipulation check. Although the self-esteem threat manipulation utilized in this study was modelled on well-established paradigms in the literature (e.g. Kernis & Sun, 1994; Fein & Spencer, 1997; Stucke & Sporer, 2002), some specific aspects of this particular adaptation differed from previous manipulations.

First, the bogus feedback provided in the study was regarding job preparedness, rather than intelligence test scores, which are more commonly used in self-esteem threat manipulations (e.g. Smalley & Stake, 1996; Stucke & Sporer, 2002; Collange, Fiske & Sanitioso, 2009). Although the more traditional manipulation, related to intelligence test scores, was carefully considered, I ultimately decided against it in the current study in favor of a self-esteem threat based on job preparedness. My rationale in making this change was based on several factors. For instance, I expected that the topic of fitness for employment would be highly relevant to the sample, which consisted of college undergraduates. Since the data collection period coincided with the typical timeline of internship and job searches (late Fall and early Spring), it was expected that the construction of a self-esteem threat related to job preparedness would be more applicable to the sample than one relating to general intelligence. Relatedly, as there is a large amount of psychological literature on bogus intelligence test feedback, there was reason to

suspect that providing fake feedback on intelligence would arouse participants' suspicions. This concern was particularly salient in the current study, since the majority of the sample consisted of introductory psychology students who may have learned about such manipulations in their courses. Another consideration was that many assessments, such as intelligence tests, involve clear correct and incorrect answers. Given the clear-cut nature of such assessments, it would be relatively more difficult to introduce a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty into the scoring, such that participants would not be as easily able to predict their performance. Since the job preparedness assessment was relatively more ambiguous in nature (i.e., based on evaluation on a number of dimensions, not simply scoring of responses as correct or incorrect), it was thought that participants would find the feedback manipulation to be more believable.

Although adaptations to the task domain were made in an attempt to enhance task relevance and plausibility, it was possible that some of these changes may have aroused suspicion among participants. For example, another adaptation in the study design involved making the feedback computer-generated. Computer-generated feedback has been used in past research on this topic (e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997; Stucke & Sporer, 2002), but the feedback provided has typically been for tasks that were less ambiguous in nature, such as intelligence tests. With more ambiguous task domains, past studies often give feedback through the experimenter or confederates (e.g., Kernis & Sun, 1994; Twenge et al., 2001; Horton & Sedikides, 2009). For example, in a study that examined social exclusion and aggression, participants were asked to write an essay on an assigned, controversial topic (Twenge et al., 2001). Later on, the participants received bogus feedback regarding their writing skills from a confederate. In contrast, in this study, participants were told that their responses were assessed by an artificial intelligence (AI) recruiting software. It is important to note that AI-driven hiring

tools are in fact commonly used in recruitment processes at real companies, in order to maximize hiring efficiency. Although this fact was mentioned to participants in the study, some may still not have viewed the feedback source as legitimate or credible. In fact, some participants reported suspicions about the VenusTech software, questioning how a computer software could assess a variety of agentic and communal traits.

Hypothesis 2

The second a priori hypothesis posed in the current study was that there would be a positive correlation between vulnerable narcissism and other-derogation. This hypothesis was supported by the study's findings. Indeed, individuals higher in vulnerable narcissism derogated an innocent other more (i.e., evaluated the hypothetical job candidate more negatively) than individuals lower in vulnerable narcissism. This finding is congruent with past research, which indicates that individuals high in vulnerable narcissism tend to report higher levels of interpersonal aggression due to their general distrust of others, hostility, angry rumination, envy, and tendency to derive pleasure from others' misfortunes (Krizan & Johar, 2012; Krizan & Johar, 2015; Lobbestael et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 3

The study's third hypothesis was that there would be an interactive effect between vulnerable narcissism and feedback condition on innocent other-derogation. Specifically, it was expected that, when confronted with negative performance feedback, individuals high in vulnerable narcissism would be particularly apt to evaluate another person harshly in an effort to restore their self-esteem, even if that hypothetical individual did not directly threaten them. This prediction represents an extension of prior work in that, to my knowledge, no previous studies have examined how those high in vulnerable narcissism derogate "innocent" others when they experience a self-esteem threat. However, the interactive hypothesis was based on past work

demonstrating positive correlations between vulnerable narcissism and derogation of those perceived as the source of a self-esteem threat (e.g., Besser & Priel, 2010; Okada, 2010).

The interactive hypothesis was not supported by the data in the current study. This lack of interaction effect may again be largely due to the unsuccessful manipulation of self-esteem threat. Specifically, since the self-esteem threat did not have an impact on participants' self-esteem, there is no clear indication that participants who received negative feedback experienced a true threat to their self-esteem. If participants did not experience a true threat to their self-esteem, then restorative strategies such as other-derogation would not necessarily be expected to occur.

It is important to note that the general pattern of the interaction obtained in the current study was consistent with previous expectations. Among individuals in the negative feedback condition, those who scored higher in vulnerable narcissism derogated the innocent hypothetical job candidate more than those who scored lower in vulnerable narcissism. It would be valuable to study this interaction effect with a more effective form of self-esteem threat to determine if this suggestive result pattern would more clearly emerge, and perhaps meet traditional significance thresholds.

Strengths

The current study investigated a relatively unexplored connection between vulnerable narcissism and other-derogation by examining whether this derogation extended to individuals who were not responsible for the provocation. To my knowledge, no research studies in the past have looked at the propensity for vulnerable narcissists to derogate an unrelated individual. The current study's findings extend past work on vulnerable narcissists' tendency to derogate others and suggest that individuals do not need to be the direct source of negative information to be on

the receiving end of unfavorable evaluation from those who are high in vulnerable narcissism. Although the interactive effect of vulnerable narcissism and feedback condition did not reach the traditional threshold of statistical significance, the general pattern of results provisionally suggests that there may in fact be important differences between those high versus low in narcissistic vulnerability in propensities to derogate innocent others following a self-esteem threat.

Great care was taken to maximize participant engagement in the current study. Although all study measures were administered online, participants completed the study "in-house", i.e., in the lab with an experimenter monitoring them throughout the whole study session. This design ensured that participants were on-task, took the study seriously, and followed instructions. This was done in an attempt to bolster the cover story and believability of the study's premise and value, as well as ensure consistency in the study environment and context (something that would have been free to vary had participants been able to complete the study online from a location of their choosing). The research assistants who ran these sessions were extensively trained and their instructions and responses scripted to ensure that all participants received a consistent study experience. Extensive informed consent and debriefing procedures were developed, vetted, and delivered consistently across all study sessions, which enhanced the credibility and consistency of the entire study experience for all participants. Finally, participants were fairly compensated for their time, either through research credit or financial incentives, giving them more motivation to pay attention to the study.

In addition to the efforts made to ensure the viability of the study itself, the current investigation was designed with generalizability and real-world application in mind. A diverse sample was recruited, which was relatively representative of the Emory undergraduate

community, making the study's findings generalizable to the wider population of college students. The addition of non-SONA participants in the study was done to extend the reach of the participant pool and further increase its representativeness. Finally, the current study attempted to investigate vulnerable narcissism and other-derogation in a workplace context, providing a unique and relatively real world context for this research topic. The study therefore provides an important extension of established literature into a more applied domain, in which negative feedback and interpersonal dynamics are both relevant and critically important. Given the realities of both evaluation and collaboration in the workplace, it is important to understand if and how individuals differ in their responses to self-relevant negative evaluations (e.g., performance feedback), especially propensities to engage in other-derogation as a means of restoring self-esteem.

Limitations

Despite its strengths, the current study had several limitations. Of particular importance is the apparent failure of the feedback manipulation to induce self-esteem threat. Furthermore, issues regarding length of the study session itself and the use of deception may have also affected the study's findings.

Self-esteem threat. Many participants reported suspicions regarding the feedback source, VenusTech. Among the subset of participants who provided written information as part of the debriefing after the study (n=63), 21 of them voiced doubts regarding the accuracy of VenusTech's assessments. A common question indicated a lack of understanding as to how computer software could generate scores regarding traits such as likeability. This distrust of the feedback source may have undermined the believability of the feedback itself and negatively impacted the study's findings.

Cover story. During oral debriefing, several participants reported suspicions regarding the study's true intentions. When asked to guess the study's goals as part of debriefing, a small number of people suggested that the study looked at reactions to the feedback given. Responses among the subset of participants who were asked open-ended questions about their thoughts on the study (n=63) also indicated that some participants were suspicious of the study's true intentions and goals. Participants' suspicions may have influenced the study's findings.

Length of study session. Although study sessions were set to last for one hour, many participants were inclined to spend a great deal of time on the job preparedness task component (i.e., responding to hiring-style prompts), to such an extent that they had to be reminded that there were additional study elements that they needed to move on to. As a result, some participants may have believed that they were not given sufficient time to prepare and provide their best performance on their written responses. Thus, they may have externalized any negative feedback as due to rushing through the responses and not internalized it to the extent that their self-esteem was threatened. Essentially, participants may have dealt with any negative self-relevant feedback by making a (ready-made) external attribution for the failure, essentially bypassing the self-esteem hit that would have been captured in the state self-esteem measure and eliminating the need to bolster self-esteem via other means (e.g., other derogation).

Participant naivety. Since the study mostly consisted of participants who were recruited from introductory psychology courses, it is possible that some participants were not naive to the study's true purpose. Given the relatively small class sizes and interconnected nature of Emory University's student body, it is reasonable to expect that some participants who had already participated in the study may have revealed the study's details or aims to future participants. Several efforts were made to curtail this problem, including probing participants for prior

knowledge (e.g., “Have you heard about or completed this study before?”) and asking them to not reveal details of the study to others upon completion. Despite these efforts, it is still possible that some participants were not fully naive.

Future Directions

First, future research should work to address the current study’s limitations. In particular, the current study’s negative feedback manipulation should be revised. There are several possible ways to make the negative feedback manipulation seem more legitimate to participants. Since some participants questioned the legitimacy of the computer software, future studies could present the job preparedness task on a fictitious platform that looks more similar to a hiring tool, rather than on a survey platform. Future studies could also have an actual person, who may pose as a recruiter, provide feedback to participants.

Another next step would be to more thoroughly examine how additional individual difference variables affect the relations among feedback, narcissistic vulnerability, and other-derogation. Data collected on variables such as neuroticism and grandiose narcissism was examined at only a cursory level in this project, as it was not the primary focus. It would be interesting to take a closer look at these and other individual differences as potential covariates, moderators, or mediators of the primary effects examined here.

Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct analyses on the subset of participants who did not report suspicion regarding the cover story and self-esteem threat of the study. Specifically, it would be important to examine whether the exclusion of suspicious participants from the analyses would affect the results. In addition, it would also be useful to look at the distribution of suspicious participants among the negative and neutral conditions.

In addition, since the current study focused on a threat in an achievement domain (i.e., fitness for a job), another interesting area to examine is the tendency for those high in vulnerable narcissism to derogate others after experiencing an interpersonal threat. Several past studies have examined vulnerable narcissists' reactions to interpersonal threats (Okada, 2010; Besser & Priel, 2010; Parton & Ent, 2018). For example, Okada (2010) found that after recalling an experience of social rejection, individuals with higher levels of vulnerable narcissism derogated the person who provoked them more than individuals lower in vulnerable narcissism. However, to my knowledge, no studies looked at whether individuals high in vulnerable narcissism have a propensity to derogate *innocent* others after experiencing interpersonal threat. In addition, the majority of the past studies have presented the interpersonal threat to participants through a more hypothetical manner. For example, in Okada's (2010) research, participants experienced interpersonal threat by reading about a hypothetical situation in which they were socially rejected. Although this method has been validated in previous studies (Twenge & Campbell, 2003), it would be interesting to study this topic by inducing interpersonal threat in a laboratory setting. Lastly, it would be interesting to investigate this topic in a more work-oriented sample. For example, instead of conducting this research on undergraduate students from introductory psychology courses, it would be interesting to examine the patterns among upperclassmen in college or young career professionals.

Conclusion

This study extended our understanding of the link between vulnerable narcissism and other-derogation by examining whether individuals high in vulnerable narcissism would derogate an unrelated individual who was not responsible for provocation. Examining the influence of personality factors, such as vulnerable narcissism, on the types of responses to self-esteem

threats can enhance the understanding of why people respond differently to negative events or situations. This research lays the foundation in potentially improving workplace culture and peer group dynamics.

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Table 1

Sample characteristics

Characteristic	***M (SD)***	***Frequency (%)***
Age	19.27 (1.37)	
Gender		
Male		52(32.70)
Female		107 (67.30)
Year in School		
Freshman		67 (42.14)
Sophomore		49 (30.82)
Junior		19 (11.95)
Senior		10 (6.29)
Other		1 (0.63)
No response provided		13 (8.18)
Ethnicity		
White, Caucasian, European American		50 (31.45)
Asian, Pacific Islander		56 (35.22)
African-American, Black		18 (11.32)
Hispanic, Latino(a)		21 (13.21)
Other		14 (8.81)

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Primary and Additional Variables of Interest

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*Skew*
Vulnerable Narcissism	27.67	5.66	13.00	42.00	-0.12
State Self-Esteem	67.41	12.67	31.00	95.00	-0.37
Other Derogation	57.61	14.95	14.00	100.00	-0.02
Grandiose Narcissism	7.26	3.40	0	17	0.37
Global Self-Esteem	20	4.37	6	30	-0.33
Entitlement	26.93	9.00	9	48	-0.01
Neuroticism	24.19	5.85	10	39	-0.02

Table 3

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Other-Derogation from Feedback Condition and Vulnerable Narcissism

Variable	***β***	***t***	*ΔR²*
Step 1			.03
Feedback Condition	1.24	.52	
Vulnerable Narcissism	-.45	-2.12*	
Step 2			.02
Feedback Condition X Vulnerable Narcissism	-.68	-1.62	

* $p < .05$

Table 4

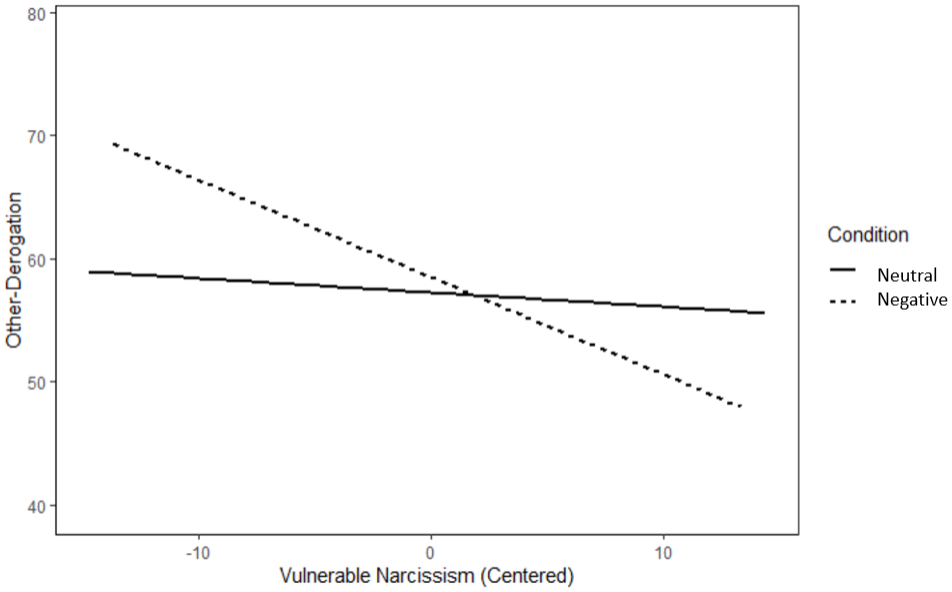
Pearson correlations among study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Vulnerable Narcissism	1.00					
2. Global Self-Esteem	-.39**	1.00				
3. Grandiose Narcissism	-.09	.39**	1.00			
4. Entitlement	.26**	-.04	.15	1.00		
5. Neuroticism	.42**	-.52**	-0.22**	.04	1.00	
6. Other-Derogation	-.16**	.15	-.05	-.04	-.15	1.00

** p <.01

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Interaction of Feedback Condition (Dummy-coded) and Vulnerable Narcissism (Centered)


80
70
60
50
40
Other-Derogation
-10
0
10
Vulnerable Narcissism (Centered)
Condition
Neutral
Negative

Appendix A: Job Preparedness Task

In this task, please imagine you are applying for a job. Respond to the following short essay prompts the same way you would as part of a job application.

Your responses will be evaluated by VenusTech, a computer software that uses standardized algorithms to evaluate the quality of written job materials. VenusTech conducts automated candidate screening and is routinely used to help companies make hiring decisions. The software uses natural language processing to make predictions about job candidates.

Here are the criteria you will be assessed on:

- Overall competence
- Writing proficiency
- Intelligence
- Determination
- Friendliness
- Likeability
- Agreeableness

For more information, here is how VenusTech evaluates your responses:
Sentence Parsing: Automatically parses text data to extract entities, keywords, semantic roles, and more.
Keyword Detection: Identifies keywords in writing that indicate competence and capability to perform basic job functions.
Sentiment Analysis: Uses AI to identify polarity (positive, negative, neutral), emotions (excited, happy, sad, etc.) and intentions (interested, uninterested, etc.)

Companies often use VenusTech as a hiring tool to screen applicants. VenusTech distinguishes job applications that receive high/low scores. This allows recruiters to easily identify more qualified candidates.

Your responses should be 1-2 paragraphs for each prompt. Please write your responses in a way that best demonstrates your abilities and communication skills.

1. *Describe a challenge or conflict you have faced, and explain how you dealt with it.*

2. *Describe one of your weaknesses and how you have worked to address it.*

3. *Describe an experience you have had working as part of a team.*

Appendix B: Negative Feedback (Experimental Condition)

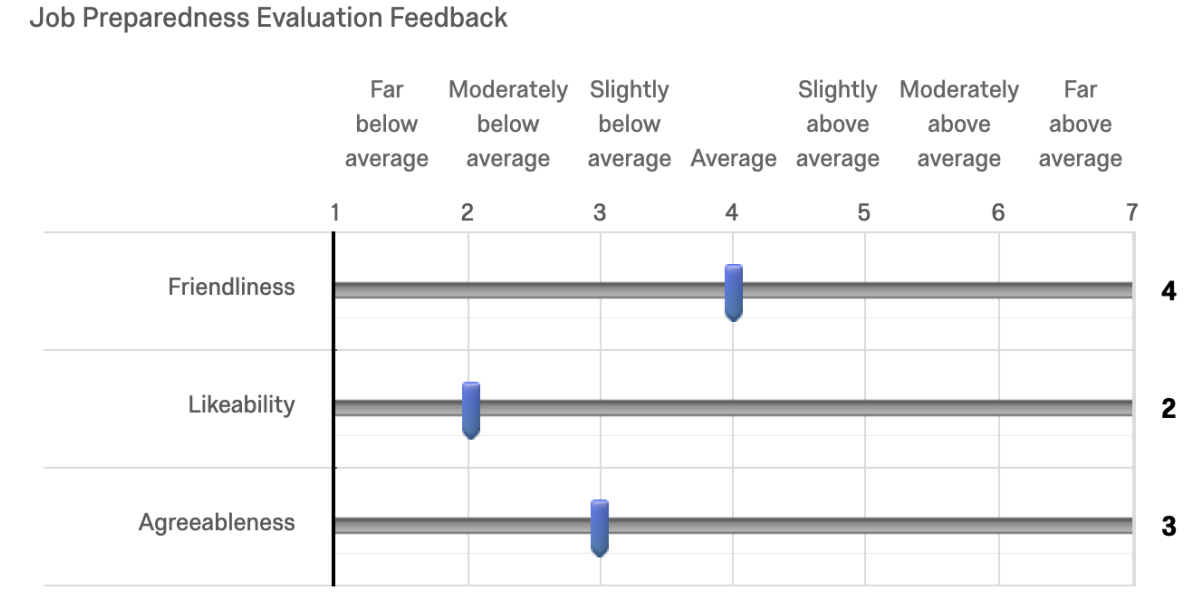
Please take some time to **review your scores** on the Job Preparedness Task. These scores are calculated by *VenusTech* based on your responses in the Job Preparedness Task. For more information, here is how *VenusTech* evaluated your responses:

- Sentence Parsing: Automatically parses text data to extract entities, keywords, semantic roles, and more.
- Keyword Detection: Identifies keywords in writing that indicate competence and capability to perform basic job functions.
- Sentiment Analysis: Uses AI to identify **polarity** (positive, negative, neutral), **emotions** (excited, happy, sad, etc.) and **intentions** (interested, uninterested, etc.)

Companies often use VenusTech as a hiring tool to screen applicants. *VenusTech* **distinguishes** job applications that receive high/low scores. This allows recruiters to easily identify **more qualified candidates**.

(Refer to the next page for feedback)


Job Preparedness Evaluation Feedback
Far below average
Moderately below average
Slightly below average
Average
Slightly above average
Moderately above average
Far above average
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Overall Competence
2
Writing Proficiency
3
Intelligence
2
Determination
4


Job Preparedness Evaluation Feedback
Far below average
Moderately below average
Slightly below average
Average
Slightly above average
Moderately above average
Far above average
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Friendliness
4
Likeability
2
Agreeableness
3

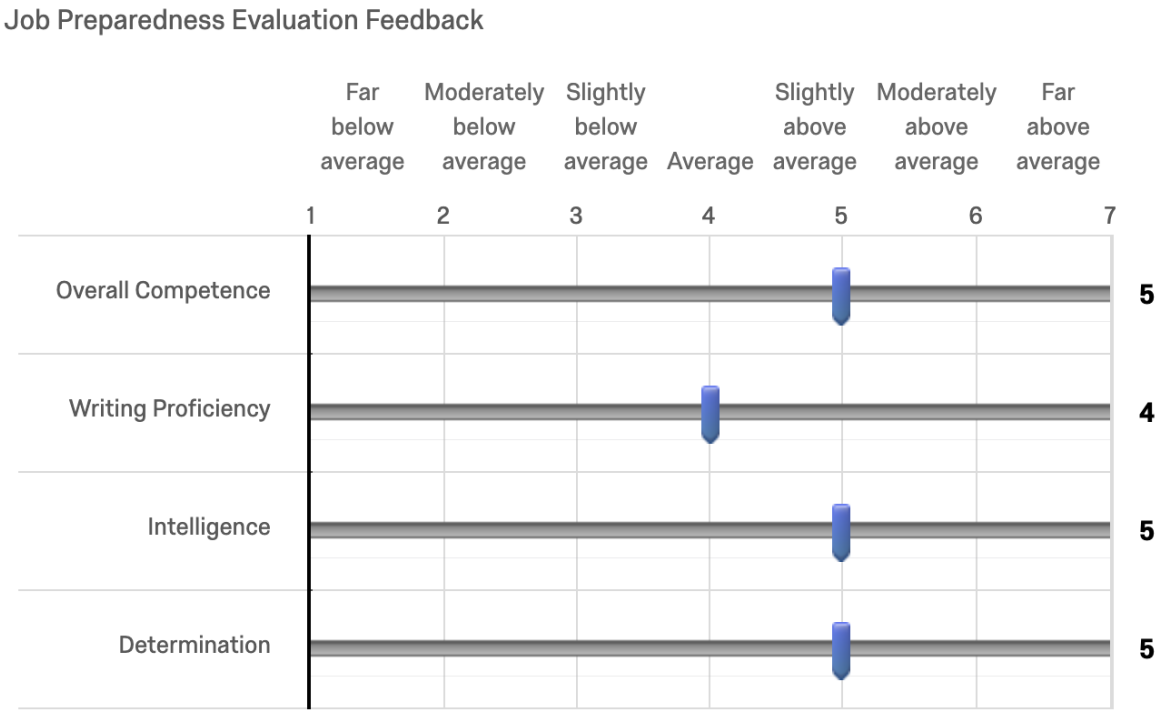
Appendix C: Neutral Feedback (Control Condition)

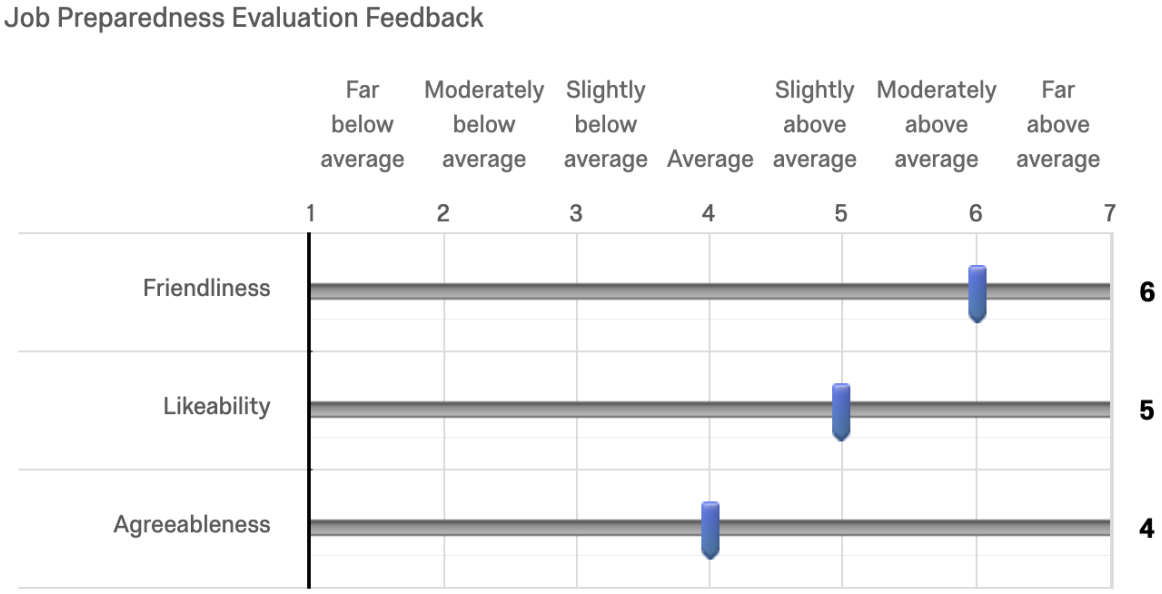
Please take some time to **review your scores** on the Job Preparedness Task. These scores are calculated by *VenusTech* based on your responses in the Job Preparedness Task. For more information, here is how *VenusTech* evaluated your responses:

- Sentence Parsing: Automatically parses text data to extract entities, keywords, semantic roles, and more.
- Keyword Detection: Identifies keywords in writing that indicate competence and capability to perform basic job functions.
- Sentiment Analysis: Uses AI to identify **polarity** (positive, negative, neutral), **emotions** (excited, happy, sad, etc.) and **intentions** (interested, uninterested, etc.)

Companies often use VenusTech as a hiring tool to screen applicants. *VenusTech* **distinguishes** job applications that receive high/low scores. This allows recruiters to easily identify **more qualified candidates**.

(Refer to the next page for feedback)


Job Preparedness Evaluation Feedback
Far below average
Moderately below average
Slightly below average
Average
Slightly above average
Moderately above average
Far above average
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Overall Competence
5
Writing Proficiency
4
Intelligence
5
Determination
5


Job Preparedness Evaluation Feedback
Far below average
Moderately below average
Slightly below average
Average
Slightly above average
Moderately above average
Far above average
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Friendliness
6
Likeability
5
Agreeableness
4

Appendix D: State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991)

1 = Not at all
2 = A little Bit
3 = Somewhat
4 = Very much
5 = Extremely

1. I feel confident about my abilities.

2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure. (R)

3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.

4. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance. (R)

5. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read. (R)

6. I feel that others respect and admire me.

7. I am dissatisfied with my weight. (R)

8. I feel self-conscious. (R)

9. I feel as smart as others.

10. I feel displeased with myself. (R)

11. I feel good about myself.

12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.

13. I am worried about what other people think of me. (R)

14. I feel confident that I understand things.

15. I feel inferior to others at this moment. (R)

16. I feel unattractive. (R)

17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making. (R)

18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others. (R)

19. I feel like I'm not doing well. (R)

20. I am worried about looking foolish. (R)

Appendix E: Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (Hendin & Cheek, 1997)

1 = Very uncharacteristic or untrue; strongly disagree

5 = Very characteristic or true; strongly agree

1. I can become entirely absorbed in thinking about my personal affairs, my health, my cares or my relations to others.
2. My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by the slighting remarks of others.
3. When I enter a room I often become self-conscious and feel that the eyes of others are upon me.
4. I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.
5. I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present.
6. I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people.
7. I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way.
8. I easily become wrapped up in my own interests and forget the existence of others.
9. I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people's troubles.
10. I am secretly ''put out'' when other people come to me with their troubles, asking me for my time and sympathy.

Appendix F: Job Candidate Profile (Adapted from Widner & Chicoine, 2011)

This candidate is applying for an office manager position at a mid-sized Fortune 500 company. Based on this information, let us know how qualified this candidate is for the job position.

Education

Spokane Community College 2003

AA Business Management

Employment

Philips Medical Systems North America Inc., Seattle WA 2005 – 2009
Administrative Supervisor

- Responsible for the supervision of a staff of twelve employees
- Responsible for interviewing, hiring, training, performance evaluations, and promotions
- Encouraged a productive and team-oriented environment
- Prepared financial reports and proposals for senior management review
- Developed a new employee training program
- High level of technical abilities and a strong analytical background

Fatigue Technology, Seattle WA 2003-2005
Administrative Assistant

- Performed general office duties and administrative tasks
- Prepared weekly confidential sales reports for presentation to management
- Handled mail functions
- Answered incoming calls
- Utilized Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point

Qualifications

- Highly motivated and goal-oriented
- Well-organized and resourceful
- Diplomatic and tactful with both professionals and nonprofessionals
- Supervised a very successful office staff of twelve employees
- Extensive experience with Microsoft Office

Appendix G: Evaluation of Job Candidate (adapted from King, Mendoza, Madera, Hebl, Knight, 2006)

1 = Not at all
10 = Very

1. How intelligent do you think this individual is?

2. How creative do you think this individual is?

3. How lazy do you think this individual is?

4. How friendly do you think this individual is?

5. How responsible do you think this individual is?

6. How competitive do you think this individual is?

7. How motivated do you think this individual is?

8. How likable do you think this individual is?

9. How ambitious do you think this individual is?

10. How likely would you want to work with this individual?

11. How likely would you see yourself working under this individual?

12. How likely would you offer this individual an interview?

13. How likely would you be to hire this individual?

14. How likely would you be to promote this individual within the first year?

15. How likely would you be to increase the salary of this individual within the first year?

16. How likely would this individual be to get a bonus his first year?

Appendix H: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	SA	A	D	SD
2.*	At times, I think I am no good at all.	SA	A	D	SD
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	SA	A	D	SD
5.*	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SD
6.*	I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
8.*	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SD
9.*	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	SA	A	D	SD

Appendix I: Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979)

This inventory consists of a number of pairs of statements with which you may or may not identify.

Consider this example:

A. I like having authority over people

B. I don't mind following orders

Which of these two statements is closer to your own feelings about yourself? If you identify more with "liking to have authority over people" than with "not minding following orders", then you would choose option A.

You may identify with both A and B. In this case you should choose the statement which seems closer to yourself. Or, if you do not identify with either statement, select the one which is least objectionable or remote. In other words, read each pair of statements and then choose the one that is closer to your own feelings. Indicate your answer by writing the letter (A or B) in the space provided to the right of each item. Please do not skip any items.

1. A. I have a natural talent for influencing people.

   B. I am not good at influencing people. 1. _____

2. A. Modesty doesn't become me.

   B. I am essentially a modest person. 2. _____

3. A. I would do almost anything on a dare.

   B. I tend to be a fairly cautious person. 3. _____

4. A. When people compliment me I sometimes get embarrassed.

   B. I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so. 4. _____

5. A. The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me.

   B. If I ruled the world it would be a better place. 5. _____

6. A. I can usually talk my way out of anything.
   B. I try to accept the consequences of my behavior. 6. _____

7. A. I prefer to blend in with the crowd.
   B. I like to be the center of attention. 7. _____

8. A. I will be a success.
   B. I am not too concerned about success. 8. _____

9. A. I am no better or worse than most people.
   B. I think I am a special person. 9. _____

10. A. I am not sure if I would make a good leader.
    B. I see myself as a good leader. 10. _____

11. A. I am assertive.
    B. I wish I were more assertive. 11. _____

12. A. I like to have authority over other people.
    B. I don't mind following orders. 12. _____

13. A. I find it easy to manipulate people.
    B. I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people. 13. _____

14. A. I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.
    B. I usually get the respect that I deserve. 14. _____

15. A. I don't particularly like to show off my body.

B. I like to show off my body. 15. _____

16. A. I can read people like a book.

B. People are sometimes hard to understand. 16. _____

17. A. If I feel competent I am willing to take responsibility for making decisions.

B. I like to take responsibility for making decisions. 17. _____

18. A. I just want to be reasonably happy.

B. I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world. 18. _____

19. A. My body is nothing special.

B. I like to look at my body. 19. _____

20. A. I try not to be a show off.

B. I will usually show off if I get the chance. 20. _____

21. A. I always know what I am doing.

B. Sometimes I am not sure of what I am doing. 21. _____

22. A. I sometimes depend on people to get things done.

B. I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done. 22. _____

23. A. Sometimes I tell good stories.

B. Everybody likes to hear my stories. 23. _____

24. A. I expect a great deal from other people.

B. I like to do things for other people. 24. _____

25. A. I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.
B. I take my satisfactions as they come. 25. _____

26. A. Compliments embarrass me.
B. I like to be complimented. 26. _____

27. A. I have a strong will to power.
B. Power for its own sake doesn't interest me. 27. _____

28. A. I don't care about new fads and fashions.
B. I like to start new fads and fashions. 28. _____

29. A. I like to look at myself in the mirror.
B. I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror. 29. _____

30. A. I really like to be the center of attention.
B. It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention. 30. _____

31. A. I can live my life in any way I want to.
B. People can't always live their lives in terms of what they want. 31. _____

32. A. Being an authority doesn't mean that much to me.
B. People always seem to recognize my authority. 32. _____

33. A. I would prefer to be a leader.
B. It makes little difference to me whether I am a leader or not. 33. _____

34. A. I am going to be a great person.
B. I hope I am going to be successful. 34. _____

35. A. People sometimes believe what I tell them.
B. I can make anybody believe anything I want them to. 35. _____

36. A. I am a born leader.
B. Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop. 36. _____

37. A. I wish somebody would someday write my biography.
B. I don't like people to pry into my life for any reason. 37. _____

38. A. I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.
B. I don't mind blending into the crowd when I go out in public. 38. _____

39. A. I am more capable than other people.
B. There is a lot that I can learn from other people. 39. _____

40. A. I am much like everybody else.
B. I am an extraordinary person. 40. _____

Appendix J: Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004)

1 = Strong Disagreement
2 = Moderate Disagreement
3 = Slight Disagreement
4 = Neither Agreement Nor Disagreement
5 = Slight Agreement
6 = Moderate Agreement
7 = Strong Agreement

1. I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.
2. Great things should come to me.
3. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!
4. I demand the best because I'm worth it.
5. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment.
6. I deserve more things in my life.
7. People like me deserve an extra break now and then.
8. Things should go my way.
9. I feel entitled to more of everything.

Appendix K: Neuroticism Scale (John & Srivastava, 1999)

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. Please respond to each item to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

1 = Disagree strongly
2 = Disagree a little
3 = Neither agree nor disagree
4 = Agree a little
5 = Agree strongly

I see Myself as Someone Who…

1. Is depressed, blue
2. Is relaxed, handles stress well
3. Can be tense
4. Worries a lot
5. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
6. Can be moody
7. Remains calm in tense situations
8. Gets nervous easily

Appendix L: Demographics Questionnaire

Age: _____

Gender:

- Man
- Woman
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Ethnicity:

- White, Caucasian, European American
- Hispanic, Latino(a)
- African-American, Black
- Asian, Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other (please list): _____

How would you describe your current employment status? (Check all that apply)

- Working full time
- Working part time
- Going to school full time
- Going to school part time
- Stay-at-home parent
- Retired
- Not currently working
- Other (please list): _____

What year are you in college? (if applicable)

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Fourth year
- Other (please list): _____

Did you sign up for the study via SONA (for research credit)?

- Yes

- No
- Not sure

Appendix: M: Self-Affirmation Task

In the space below, please identify and write about three of your personal strengths: Those things about yourself that you really value and are especially proud of. Take a moment or two to reflect on your responses before writing.

1)

2)

3)

Appendix: N: Suspicion Probe

Have you previously heard about or completed this study before?

- Yes
- No

At one point in the study, you received personalized feedback for your job preparedness task. To what extent did you believe the feedback given?

I did not believe the feedback at all. I believed the feedback given to me.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think your feedback is reflective of your performance? Please explain.

- Yes
- No

Was there any part of the study in which you felt suspicious or curious? Please explain.