Development and Application of a Vignette Measure of Self-Compassion

by

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF A VIGNETTE MEASURE OF SELF-COMPASSION

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The purpose of this study was to examine self-compassionate and uncompassionate content in emerging adults’ automatic thoughts in response to vignettes of difficult situations. In Study 1, I created vignettes and developed a coding scheme to categorize respondents’ automatic thoughts generated in response to the vignettes. Participants reported their first three automatic thoughts to vignettes depicting challenging scenarios. A team of coders analyzed responses from the first sample (recruited through Mechanical Turk; N = 178) and organized them into categories. These categories included concepts central to Neff’s conceptualization of self-compassion: mindfulness vs. over-identification, self-kindness vs. self-judgment, and common humanity vs. isolation. In Study 2, personal failure and social rejection vignettes completed by undergraduate students (N = 586) were coded using these categories. Inter-rater reliability was high for most categories observed with reasonable frequency. Evidence for convergent validity was mixed. The most compelling evidence was for the coded categories of Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, and Isolation. Associations between the categories and related variables of interest were small, but the confidence intervals (CIs) were narrow. Overall, automatic thoughts that conveyed a lack of self-compassion were much more common than were self-compassionate thoughts. Proportions of thoughts falling in each coding category differed according to vignette theme (i.e., failure and social rejection). In using self-compassion theory as a lens to observe and interpret the content of automatic thoughts, this study adds to understanding of the forms that compassion, or more commonly un-compassion toward oneself may take in response to difficult situations. It also provides a vignette measure and associated coding scheme for use in future research.
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Chapter 1 - General Introduction

Much of how we perceive our value comes from how we perceive our achievements. People frequently measure how valuable they are by examining success in domains that are important to them, such as wealth, relationships, academics, career, athletics, and aesthetics. Because it is achievement-based, self-esteem often involves social comparisons, with success defined as performing better than most people: this, by definition, is not possible for half of the population (Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2003b). Responses to failure, or not performing better than others, can include self-flagellation. Self-talk often contains criticisms that we would not hurl at others, but have learned to say to the self. Although this negative self-talk is sometimes produced with the goal of keeping oneself safe (e.g., by motivating the self to do better next time; Gilbert and Proctor, 2006), there are alternative ways of relating to the self that may be more soothing and ultimately more productive.

An important alternative way of relating to the self is mindful self-compassion. Here is a scenario to illustrate self-compassion. Imagine you are at a friend’s birthday gathering. You have lit the candles, and you are bringing the cake to the table. On the way, you drop the cake on the floor. This is a social failure, and there are several ways one may respond. Many of us would respond to this embarrassing situation with harsh automatic thoughts such as, “You clumsy fool! You should have been more careful!” Imagine instead, the feelings that arise if we were to think something warmly to the self, like “Oops! This is embarrassing, but I am human.” One can imagine it might be easier to clean up the cake, and continue to contribute to an enjoyable evening with friends if encouraged by a kind inner voice, instead of a judgmental one.

For more than 15 years, Kristin Neff (2011a), Paul Gilbert (2009), Christopher Germer (2009), and others have captured compassionate elements of Buddhist philosophy, and articulated them in a way conducive to study in Western psychology. Empirical work to date has revealed encouraging results of the benefits of self-compassion in several domains (see Barnard & Curry, 2011, for a review). Self-compassion consistently has been related to lower levels of depression and anxiety (Neff, 2003a; 2009), higher positive affect (Leary et al., 2007), higher emotional intelligence, coping, and stability (Neff, 2003b), more health-promoting and pro-social behaviours (see Neff, 2012 for a review), and feelings of well-being and life-satisfaction (Neely, Schallert, Mohammed, Roberts, & Chen, 2009; Neff 2003a). A recent meta-analysis found that
the relation between a lack of self-compassion and psychopathology is quite robust (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012).

**Compassion for Others**

The current research focuses on Neff’s (2003b) definition of self-compassion described below, since her definition and Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003a) are so frequently used in the literature. Before defining self-compassion specifically, definitions of compassion more generally will be touched on here. Neff (2011a) defines compassion as mindfully and clearly seeing suffering, feeling kindness and a desire to help those who are suffering, and understanding our shared human experience.

Germer (2009) begins his definition of compassion with a discussion of loving-kindness: Wishing joy for others. He sees compassion as a type of loving-kindness that is wishing for freedom from suffering, which makes suffering a necessary condition to have compassion. He notes that compassion occurs when we are moved to want to alleviate suffering.

Gilbert (2009) opens with a broad definition of compassion as kindnesses coupled with awareness of suffering, and a wish and drive to help. He discusses it as a spiritual concept and a practice rooted in brain science. He includes a discussion of related Buddhist concepts, including Karuna, which is compassion that includes patience, ethical behaviour, and generosity with action.

A related definition comes from the study of love and compassion in education (Miller, 2018). Compassion is described as impartial love that is cultivated from wisdom and loving-kindness. It sees, and wants to connect to, the divine in all beings. It understands that all beings wish to be happy and free from sorrow, and acknowledges the oneness of experience and the sharing of the experience of suffering.

All four definitions of compassion share conceptual overlap. Neff and Gilbert have a heavier focus on mindfulness in their definitions of compassion. Neff emphasizes clearly seeing and Gilbert notes the importance of awareness of suffering. Although these components are not as explicitly discussed in Miller and Germer’s opening definitions, later in both books they discuss the importance of mindfulness and meditation for compassionate practice (indeed, Germer’s book is entitled “The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion”). All four definitions note the importance of wishing for the ease of suffering, but Gilbert’s definition goes one step further to refer to generous action. All four definitions focus on kindness or loving-kindness. The last two
definitions make explicit references to spirituality, whereas the first two begin with more secular language. Lastly, although each definition indicates the importance of caring for others, Neff and Miller’s definitions focus more on a sense of common humanity: Neff writes about the importance of understanding our shared human condition, and Miller notes the significance of recognizing the divine core of all beings and that we all experience suffering together.

Self-compassion is defined in the following section. Even though Neff and Germer authored the texts cited above independently from one another, their definition of self-compassion converged as they published together on their shared Mindful Self-Compassion training program (Germer & Neff, 2013).

Self-Compassion

Whereas people in North American society tend to think of compassion in terms of warm, kind feelings towards others, Buddhist philosophy has long recognized the importance of compassion directed inwards (Neff, 2003a). Mindful self-compassion (also referred to simply as “self-compassion”) is compassion focused on oneself (Germer & Neff, 2013). According to Neff, self-compassion consists of three main components: mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity (Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2003b). Neff (2011a) defines mindfulness as seeing clearly and accepting circumstances as they are with objectivity, so that one can respond in a compassionate and effective way. It is being aware of internal experiences (like thoughts and feelings) in a balanced manner rather than over-identifying with them (Neff, 2003a). She argues that we must first become cognizant of, and emotionally attuned to, our own suffering before we can tend to it. By mindfully observing an experience, it creates the space needed to respond with awareness instead of quickly, mindlessly reacting. We are able to see our experiences for what they are, instead of ignoring, suppressing, avoiding, or exaggerating them. The inverse of mindfulness is termed over-identification (Neff, 2003a; Germer & Neff, 2013).

Neff (2011a; 2003b) defines self-kindness as gentleness and understanding directed towards oneself. Self-kindness includes being touched by one’s needs, and actively caring for, 

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1 One of my committee members noted the difficulty with perceiving experiences “objectively,” as we cannot claim with certainty that we are observing our experiences for what they are. This is a problem with Neff’s (2011a) definition of mindfulness. Another commonly cited definition of mindfulness is, “The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; p. 145). Instead of emphasizing objectivity, it focuses on nonjudgmental awareness.

Common humanity refers to a sense of being connected to other human beings, as opposed to feeling alone in our suffering (Neff, 2011a; 2003a; 2003b). It involves acknowledging that all humans, including the self, suffer and are innately valuable and worthy of love and care despite our imperfections. An understanding of common humanity also helps us to gain a different perspective on life experiences as part of the interconnected human experience (Neff, 2003a). The opposite of a sense of common humanity is a sense of isolation (Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2003a). These components contribute to one another and interact to produce a self-compassionate state of mind (i.e., by being mindful and recognizing your suffering within the context of the shared human condition, you are able to be kind to yourself in the face of that suffering).

Gilbert and Procter (2006) define self-compassion as relating to the self with warmth, which includes: concern for the well-being of the self; being sensitive to and tolerating our distress; being sympathetic and empathetic towards ourselves; trying to comprehend our suffering and where it comes from; and forgoing self-criticism and self-judgment. Gilbert (2014) provided an alternate but similar description characterized by a two-step process of engaging with, and attempting to alleviate, suffering. This definition of self-compassion is similar to Neff’s (2003b) more widely-used definition, minus the focus on common humanity. For conceptual organization and simplicity, Neff’s definition will be used throughout this document.

Concepts distinct from self-compassion. There are several concepts that are often confused with self-compassion. These include self-pity, self-esteem, and self-indulgence. Self-compassion is distinct from self-pity (Neff 2003a; 2003b; 2011; Germer & Neff, 2013). Self-pity includes becoming over-focused on one’s own problems, often to the exclusion of the suffering of others. The common humanity element of self-compassion, on the other hand, reminds one that we all suffer, which connects us to others in the human experience.

Self-compassion is also different than self-esteem: the latter is based on internal and external evaluations and comparisons of performance, whereas self-compassion is nonjudgmental acceptance of the self within the context of the human condition (Neff, 2003a; 2003b).

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2 Suffering is not explicitly defined by Neff in the sources cited above; however, in her writing suffering appears as a broad range of painful experiences.
Theoretically, self-compassion allows for a mindful view of shortcomings instead of over-inflated self-views that may accompany self-esteem (Neff, 2003a). In addition, self-compassion may allow for self-improvement, not motivated out of a desire to have better self-esteem or status, but rather because of a desire for well-being for self and others.

Several researchers have found that the long-term costs of self-esteem outweigh the short-term benefits (Neff, 2003b; Vonk & Smit, 2012). Self-esteem appears to depend on achieving above average consistently, which is unrealistic for most individuals. When achievement goals are not met, people have been shown to act in ways that undermine learning, self-regulation, relationships, autonomy, and mental and physical health (for a review, see Crocker & Park, 2004). Self-esteem has been associated with narcissism (Neff & Vonk, 2009), unrealistic views about the self (Sedikkides, 1993), prejudice (Aberson, Healy, & Romero, 2000), aggression (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996), and bullying (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999). Self-compassion, on the other hand, does not invoke investing feelings of self-worth in achievement or social comparison (Neff; 2003a; 2003b). Instead, self-compassion is associated with one’s ability to separate performance from one’s self-worth and identity (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Thus, even when self-compassionate individuals are not at the top of the class, the most popular, the best athlete, or the most attractive, they can act kindly towards themselves, freeing up mental resources to rally and put forth a best effort in the future. Not surprisingly, therefore, self-compassion has been revealed as a stronger predictor than self-esteem of a stable sense of self-worth that depends less on specific outcomes (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Self-compassion is unlike self-indulgence or passivity (Neff, 2003a; 2003b; 2011). Although self-compassion is an alternative to harsh self-criticism, the mindful component of self-compassion requires that failings still be noticed. In addition, the self-kindness component of self-compassion warmly encourages those behaviours that are important for long-term health and well-being, from emotional comfort to physical nurturance (e.g., healthy diet and exercise). In fact, Neff (2003b) argues that lack of self-compassion is more likely to result in passivity, because when self-compassion is absent, it is threatening to examine one’s faults and what is needed to improve. Self-compassion, on the other hand, provides a safe space for self-awareness apart from harsh self-judgements and criticism. Neff (2003b) offers the metaphor of a compassionate parent who directs her child in ways that the child may find unpleasant at the
time, but these directions are warm and loving and lead the child to a place of better health and well-being. Similarly, someone who is self-compassionate will at times have to work hard, and perhaps go through painful and difficult times, for the purpose of greater long-term well-being. Empirical support for the difference between self-compassion and passivity comes from Breines and Chen (2012) who found that self-compassion was related to increased motivation to correct a mistake and avoid a moral wrongdoing in the future, more time studying for a challenging exam after failing, and increased drive to improve upon a weakness. Lastly, self-compassion has been negatively correlated with neurotic perfectionism, but not correlated with high personal standards (Neff, 2003a; 2003b). This finding suggests that self-compassionate people may be less perfectionistic, but do not show evidence of setting lower standards for themselves. Thus, productivity does not suffer, although indices of positive mental health improve. In fact, self-compassion has been connected with more personal initiative and drive to work towards one’s potential (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Self-compassion in emerging adults. Findings from this type of research likely will diverge according to the specific population studied. Emerging adulthood is defined as the period between the late teenaged years and adult independence with a focus on ages 18-25 (Arnett, 2000). In recent decades, there has been a trend in industrialized societies for delaying marriage and childrearing, creating a period of emerging adulthood where exploration of different life paths and identities is common. It is characterized by a subjective sense of not fully having transitioned into adulthood. University education is a common component of emerging adulthood for many.

My research focused on observing self-compassion among a subset of emerging adults, university students. Despite the general over-reliance on this population among researchers, the mental health crisis among students at North American universities necessitates continued study of self-compassion within this population, given its strong association with mental health. According to the American College Health Association (2017), 52.7% of university students reported feeling hopeless, 39.1% felt so depressed it was difficult to function, and 61.9% felt overwhelming anxiety within the past year. At the University of Guelph where the current set of studies were conducted, there were four suicides in the 2016-2017 school year (Goffin, 2017).

A considerable amount of research on self-compassion has been conducted with university students. As with other populations, self-compassion has repeatedly been found to be
correlated with beneficial outcomes among emerging adults: it was associated with fewer negative health effects following stress (Breines et al., 2015), decreased symptoms of depression (Yamaguchi, Kim, & Akutsu, 2014), and other indices of well-being (Neff & Mcgehee, 2010). It also was related to many positive characteristics, including curiosity, exploration, and initiative towards personal growth (Sharma & Davidson, 2015); self-confidence and willingness to take responsibility for one’s actions (Arslan, 2016); perceived self-efficacy (Iskender, 2009); and intentions to engage in health promoting behaviours (Sirois, 2015). However, young people may have less self-compassion than other populations. Bluth, Campo, Futch, and Gaylord (2016) found that older adolescent girls reported less self-compassion than did younger adolescents; however, Neff and Mcgehee (2010) did not find a difference between younger and older adolescents. In a large Danish sample, self-compassion increased between the ages of 18 and 38 (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

**Self-report questionnaires versus vignettes.** Research on self-compassion is growing (Neff, 2016; Neff & Dahm, 2014). The vast majority of this research has relied on the SCS (Neff, 2003a). Despite the scale’s established reliability and validity, Neff and others have called for novel ways to look at self-compassion (Falconer, King, & Brewin, 2015; MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Neff, 2003a; Neff, 2016; Williams, Dalgleish, & Kuyken, 2014). Broadening our understanding of self-compassion requires examining it in different yet complementary ways. For example, researchers cannot observe how self-compassion manifests in thoughts during moments of suffering using a questionnaire with predetermined closed-ended response options. Although we cannot look directly into a person’s mind to observe their internal processes, I asked participants to report on their thoughts as they arose, which was intended to be a proxy of their internal mental process of self-compassion.

In addition, it is important to find novel ways to measure self-compassion that do not require self-report questionnaires (Neff, 2003a). Individuals may not have enough emotional awareness to accurately evaluate and report their self-compassion. Specifically, people who are not mindful of their feelings and avoid difficult emotions may not report experiences that the SCS is trying to measure, like self-judgement and isolation.

Some qualitative research has examined self-compassion as a process. These interview-based studies ask specifically about experiences and thoughts about self-compassion. For example, they have asked people about their general perceptions of self-compassion (Campion &
Glover, 2017), their experiences of body self-compassion (i.e., acceptance and kindness toward one’s physical body; Berry, Kowalski, Ferguson, & McHugh, 2010; Woekel & Ebbeck, 2013), and self-compassion in the context of exercise and athleticism (Rogers & Ebbeck, 2015; Sutherland, Kowalski, et al., 2014) and psychosis (Waite, Knight, & Lee, 2015). Others have analyzed participants’ responses to self-compassion and mindfulness-based interventions (Köhle et al., 2017; L’Estrange, Timulak, Kinsella, & D’Alton, 2016). This research adds to our understanding of what self-compassionate thoughts and ideas might look like, particularly through a retrospective lens.

A pioneering study demonstrated the potential to examine speech for self-compassionate content as it spontaneously arises. Sutherland, Dawczyk, De Leon, Cripps, and Lewis (2014) observed that comments posted by internet users recovering from self-injury contained self-compassionate content. Analyzing this content, they identified themes that fit under Neff’s three components of self-compassion: self-kindness entailed being understanding and warm towards the self, acknowledging strength and recovery, self-care through actions, and seeing themselves as more than simply someone who self-injures. Responses involving common humanity included receiving or feeling compassion from or for others, normalization of self-injury, opposing judgment, and being visible to others. Mindfulness themes included having a balanced perspective, accepting experience, interpreting distress as manageable, and being hopeful. These themes were found in content that likely was written after personal reflection and thoughtful deliberation by people who developed the strength to overcome a personal struggle.

As yet unknown, however, is the frequency and content of self-compassionate thoughts as they arise in everyday life. It is believed that self-compassionate responses are particularly relevant and beneficial when responding to difficult and stress-inducing experiences, as they buffer people from some of the negative emotions associated with such experiences (Neff, 2003b). How often do self-compassionate thoughts arise in such contexts, and what is the content of these thoughts?

In response to this call for novel ways to measure self-compassion, I have developed vignettes to elicit participants’ automatic thoughts about situations that may evoke different levels of self-compassion. Automatic thoughts to specific scenarios may be more readily accessible than summative judgments about one’s responses to difficult emotional experiences, as queried on the SCS.
A study by Falconer, King, and Brewin (2015) recently investigated the use of an eight-item vignette measure of self-compassion and self-criticism. Participants rated how they would respond to each situation on a 7-point Likert scale, rating how harsh, contemptuous, hostile, cold, critical, soothing, reassuring, compassionate, and warm they would be to themselves in each situation. The responses are not open-ended. It is meant to capture self-compassion and self-criticism in a specific way, whereas the current measure looks at automatic thoughts and leaves room for a greater variety of possible responses. My vignette measure does not directly assess all facets of self-compassion; instead it probes for general responses that will be coded subsequently for self-compassionate content. The vignettes used by Falconer et al. and the current vignettes both measure state instead of trait self-compassion.

Falconer et al. noted that self-compassion is composed of complex, multilevel responses to the self that are time limited, and are likely challenging to evaluate when thinking abstractly about how self-compassionate someone feels in general. They found that their measure of state self-compassion had a small correlation with trait SCS Self-Kindness ($r = .21$; which they felt was the SCS subscale that was closest conceptually to their conceptualization of self-compassion). They suggested that even though there appears to be a relation between state and trait self-compassion, questionnaires do not capture self-compassionate processes as they relate to transient situations. Fleeson (2001) proposed that traits may be density distributions of states: One person may demonstrate the full behavioural range of a given trait in different situations over time (states), but their central tendencies of behavioural distributions are stable (traits). Accordingly, vignettes are not intended to be measures of stable reactions over time; rather, they are made to measure reactions to specific, typically temporary, situations.

**Is self-compassion one, two, or six separate constructs?** The SCS was constructed with the goal of measuring what was hypothesized to be an overarching construct of self-compassion (Neff, 2003a), which originally included three subscales: mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity. Three confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted for each of the three subscales. For each of the three subscales, two-factor models fit the data better than one-factor models (e.g., the mindfulness subscale was divided into two subscales, mindfulness and over-identification). Therefore, the SCS was considered to consist of six subscales: self-kindness, self-judgement, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. It makes sense that each of the original three subscales should be divided two new subscales (for a total of
six subscales), because for each subscale, the two components are not theoretically mutually exclusive. For instance, one may not judge oneself, but that does not necessarily mean that one is therefore being kind to oneself; self-judgment is a separate concept from self-kindness. Neff (2003a) then did an overall CFA and determined that the six factor model fit the data adequately. Finally, a higher-order CFA yielded a single factor model of self-compassion, explaining the inter-correlations between the six subscales. Neff (2016) interpreted this as evidence that it was appropriate for researchers to use a total self-compassion score, and/or the subscales separately depending on the research question.

The original factor structure was confirmed in subsequent research (Castilho, Pinto, & Duarte, 2015), although several findings have challenged Neff’s first proposed factor structure and associated conceptualization (Costa, Marôco, Pinto-Gouveia, Ferreira, & Castilho, 2015; López et al., 2015; Williams, Dalgleish, & Kuyken, 2014). Costa and colleagues’ (2015) and López and colleagues’ (2015) factor analyses suggested that SCS data from their samples best fit a two-factor model: self-criticism (containing the three negative subscales), and self-compassion (containing the three positive subscales), and argued that self-compassion therefore was not a unified construct assessed using the six subscales provided by Neff and colleagues.

Other research has yielded a six-factor correlated model, without self-compassion as a higher-order factor, thus, contradicting Neff’s (2003a) conceptualization. Williams and colleagues’ (2014) factor analyses suggested that the six factors of the SCS might be better conceptualized as six facets of self-compassion, calling into question whether it made sense to aggregate the subscales to assess self-compassion as a single unified construct. Petrocchi, Ottaviani, and Couyoumdjian (2013) had similar findings using an Italian version of the SCS. Williams and colleagues’ (2014) research spanned three samples: an adult convenience sample, an adult meditator sample, and a depressed adult sample.

Largely in response to Williams et al., Neff (2016) argued that the SCS has merit as an overarching construct because it is aligned with her theoretical definition of self-compassion, which encompasses three distinct elements. She (2016, p. 1) summarizes her view of self-compassion as “a dynamic balance between the… ways that individuals emotionally respond to pain and failure (with kindness and judgement), cognitively understand their predicament (as part of the human experience or isolating), and pay attention to suffering (in a mindful or over-
identified manner).” Because all three are necessary components of the larger process, self-compassionate responses would not occur if one of the elements were removed.

Neff, Whittaker, and Karl (2017) suggested that the higher order factor model, as originally proposed, may not be the best approach to modeling the data. The higher order factor model suggests that self-compassion explains the correlation between the subscale factors, and assumes that there is not a direct effect of self-compassion on the individual scale items. Instead, they utilized a bi-factor model, whereby self-compassion is believed to contribute to responses on individual items in the scale, and the items also group into factors. In other words, each item loads onto the general self-compassion factor, and also loads onto one subscale factor (i.e., one of the six subscales). The factors are not allowed to correlate in this model because the correlation between the items is accounted for by self-compassion. This part of the bi-factor model is confusing theoretically, since in reality, the factors do indeed correlate, and the subscales of the SCS are thought to interact and contribute to one another. However, the bi-factor model fits with Neff’s theoretical conceptualization in that self-compassion is thought to influence the manner in which one responds to suffering (like the SCS items). This model proposes that the factors combine to create self-compassion, rather than the original hierarchical model that presumes that self-compassion comes from the six subscale components in a linear fashion.

The new bi-factor model allowed Neff and colleagues (2017) to present new evidence (using Omega index estimates, a measure representing the percentage of variance in the total scores accounted for by all of the factors) suggesting that 90% of the reliable variance in SCS scores can be explained by an overarching factor (i.e., self-compassion) in four different samples (meditation practitioners, university students, community adults, and a clinical sample of individuals with recurrent depression). In addition to offering this bi-factorial model to defend the validity of using “self-compassion” as a united construct, Neff, indeed, found that the six-factor correlated model that Williams and colleagues’ (2014) proposed fit the data best. Note that the key difference between Williams’ model and Neff’s model is that the Williams’ model does not include the overarching single factor named self-compassion. In conclusion, she suggested that SCS scores can be examined as a whole (supported by the Omega index estimates), or examined by looking at the subscales, depending on the interests of the researcher. When
conducting factor-analyses to determine validity, she recommended using a bi-factor model, as well as a six-factor correlated model.

The debate over the factor structure of the SCS and the construct of self-compassion continues. Pfattheicher, Geiger, Hartung, Weiss, and Schindler (2017) suggest that a total self-compassion score should not be used and the negative subscales of the SCS should be dropped, since they are redundant with neuroticism. Neff, Tóth-Király, and Colosimo (2018) criticize their methods, and argue that there is overlap between negative subscales of the SCS and neuroticism, but they are distinct constructs. Each side continues to bolster their arguments (Geiger et al., 2018; Neff et al., 2018), and the debate continues.

In sum, although there is support that self-compassion is a unified construct, there is more research suggesting that the distinction between the components of self-compassion is meaningful. Also, the research regarding the factor structure is contradictory. In the current study, components of self-compassion will be considered separately.

**Chapter 2 – Study 1: Development of Self-compassion Vignettes**

**Introduction**

The purpose of Study 1 was to create a vignette-based self-compassion measure. Using vignettes that probe for free-response automatic thoughts provided an opportunity for participants to give inner-responses to situations that may not be captured by traditional self-report measures. In addition, the focus on thoughts, rather than emotions, may have removed some of the potential difficulties with avoidance that Neff (2003a) predicted would be a problem with the self-report SCS.

I developed a vignette-based measure to probe for automatic thoughts arising in response to difficult situations that participants could encounter in their everyday lives. The goal was to code participants’ responses to the vignettes to determine how often they were spontaneously self-compassionate, to see what the process of self-compassion looked like for our sample, and to situate self-compassionate (and uncompassionate) responses within the full, broad range of thoughts that such scenarios engendered (i.e., to code all of the responses, even ones that seemed to lack self-compassionate content). Use of a variety of vignettes allowed for examination of self-compassion at a situation-specific, rather than generalized trait-like, level.
Method

Development sample participants

The sample used for initial development of content codes was recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Mechanical Turk is a crowd-sourced online community that has recently become a popular resource for recruiting research participants to complete studies online (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017). An MTurk sample was utilized to develop our coding scheme to capture the demographic diversity of MTurk workers (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Initial reliance on a relatively diverse sample was intended to elicit a broader range of responses to the vignettes than was expected from an undergraduate sample. Although undergraduate students typically are considered emerging adults, they constitute only a subgroup, and are fairly unrepresentative of the broader population of emerging adults (i.e., they are typically white, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Data obtained from MTurk samples have proven to be at least as reliable as more traditional samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011).

One hundred and seventy-eight participants initially opened the survey, but 75 were excluded for completing less than 50% of the items in the full survey, leaving $n = 103$ in the final development sample. MTurk participants were 24 years old on average (range from 18-35 years; $SD = 2.94$). Sixty-three participants identified as White/European, 10 as Black/African/Caribbean, 14 as South Asian, 7 as Latin American, 6 as Southeast Asian, and 3 as “other” (i.e., Caribbean/Caucasian, Native American, Hispanic). Fifty-nine (57.2%) participants identified as male, and 41 (39.8%) participants identified as female, and 2 participants identified as “other” (1.9%, i.e., non-binary and transgender).

Materials

Demographics questionnaire (Appendix A). A brief demographics questionnaire was included in the pre-test. It measured participant age, gender, and ethnicity.

Vignettes. Twenty-four illustrated scenarios were created to evoke feelings of self-compassion (or lack of self-compassion) in participants (see Figures 1a. and 1b. for examples of illustrations, and Appendix B for a list of the scenarios). Each scenario portrayed a difficult experience that would be common in emerging adulthood. The vignettes were accompanied by illustrations to better appeal to emerging adults and increase their engagement with the scenarios, thus facilitating access to relevant automatic thoughts. The vignettes were also designed to
appeal especially to those with lower reading achievement levels. I attempted to cover a broad range of difficult experiences (e.g., difficult situations that would arise at school, during leisure activities, and in social situations within a variety of relationships such as dating, friends, and teammates). Items generally could be grouped into three broader content domains: achievement difficulty or failure (7 items), social rejection (10 items), and social transgressions (4 items; the content of other remaining items contained elements of more than one domain). Vignettes were presented one-by-one and in random order. No time limit was imposed. Participants were provided with images that matched their specified gender (including an androgynous character for participants who indicated their gender as neither female nor male). Participants were given the following instructions, “For the following scenarios, we ask that you please tell us what your automatic thoughts would be in the given situations. We are looking for phrases or statements that describe your thoughts, not individual words like "good" or "ok" or a single emotion word.”

**Fig. 1a.** Failing a test, female illustration

**Fig. 1b** Getting picked last for teams at a soccer game, male illustration
Procedure

The University of Guelph’s Institutional Ethics Review Board approved this study. Participants were recruited through MTurk. Potential participants read a brief description of the study. Those who proceeded provided informed consent by indicating their agreement; they were then linked to the study housed on Qualtrics online survey software. In a single session (requiring approximately one hour), participants were asked to complete a brief demographics questionnaire, respond to the vignettes, and complete several questionnaires (the latter as part of a larger study). Participants completed the vignettes before the questionnaires to avoid influencing the content of their automatic thoughts. Participants were compensated $0.75 USD for completing the study.

Qualitative analytic approach. The Development Sample’s responses to the 24 vignettes were qualitatively coded and organized. I assembled a team composed of a faculty advisor, a graduate student, and three fourth-year undergraduate research interns to identify content codes. It was imperative to the process to include undergraduate team members, because, being emerging adults, they were able to provide perspective on the function of certain automatic thoughts for their cohort. Because the goal was to develop a better understanding of participants’ spontaneous thoughts, in their entirety in response to various challenging situations, we conducted complete coding (i.e., we coded the entire data set).

Over the course of several months, the research team met on a weekly basis for approximately three hours to go through the responses to look for patterns. Taking a complete coding approach (see Braun & Clarke, 2013), we sorted the complete set of responses into categories, grouping together responses that seemed to serve a similar function. Responses were not grouped based simply on wording; rather, we considered the context surrounding each response, and with consideration surmised the most likely function of each response. We assigned these initial categories temporary placeholder names (e.g., “guilt,” “questioning,” “self-care,” etc.). As additional data were added to these categories they evolved as needed. For example, categories were broadened to encompass similar but non-redundant responses, or split when multiple, fairly coherent sub-themes were identified within a category. Additional categories were generated when we noticed a recurring theme in the data that did not fit the pre-existing categories. Considerable attention was also given to capturing subtle nuances in the language used by the sample of emerging adults. In order to ensure the correct interpretation of
For approximately the first quarter of the dataset, we categorized the data as a team. We then progressed to dividing up the data amongst the coders to work on independently. Automatic thoughts that did not clearly fit into one of the categories were discussed during weekly group meetings so we could consider multiple perspectives on how best to categorize them. Each categorized thought was entered into a shared online document, which each coding team member reviewed to ensure agreement between coders. We coded all of the automatic thoughts that were provided by participants, with the exception of thoughts that were deemed uncodeable. The most common type of responses that we could not code were single-word answers, as they typically did not provide enough information for us to infer the function of the thought (e.g., “mad,” or “stupid.”)

Once we had categorized enough data that the parallels between the content codes and Neff’s (2003b) self-compassion theory became apparent, we formally examined our categories to consider how they related to self-compassion theory. We re-named the categories of responses using researcher-derived codes to capture the coding team’s interpretations of implicit meanings in the data. For example, a response such as “This will be a funny story” would have originally been grouped with “It will be great when I learn to play it [the song they are struggling to learn to play]” in a category that we called “positive thinking.” Subsequently, we used our interpretive lens to name this category “self-encouragement” under the superordinate category, “self-kindness.” The core superordinate categories in our coding model closely parallel Neff’s (2003b) self-compassion conceptualization. Even though the participants never used the term “self-kindness” or “self-encouragement,” we put responses that we believed expressed that underlying theme under that researcher-derived category. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013), the codes were as concise as possible, capturing the most important part of the data for our research questions (i.e., capturing the inferred functions of automatic thoughts through a self-compassionate lens).

Results

Our primary goal was to see what form participants’ responses would take, and to situate self-compassionate responses within the full, broad range of responses that such scenarios
engendered. Similarly, we were interested in the variety of responses that could be considered uncompassionate.

Our iterative coding process with the Development Sample resulted in 26 content categories. Upon considering how these categories related to one another and interpreting them through the lens of self-compassion theory, we generated a conceptual diagram to depict the conceptual relation among our codes (see Figure 2). The majority of the identified categories could be situated within Neff’s conceptualization of self-compassion. The three overarching elements of self-compassion are represented by the three large circles in Figure 2. The three overarching uncompassionate elements, considered to be the conceptual inverse of each corresponding self-compassion element, are depicted in the “inverse” boxes associated with each of the large circles. For example, the conceptual inverse of mindfulness, termed over-identification, is depicted in a box adjacent to the mindfulness circle. Individual categories were listed within these overarching elements when they appeared to exemplify these categories.

**Fig. 2** An illustration of 26 coding categories, and their relation to one another.
Mindfulness, the first of Neff’s self-compassion elements, was exemplified in three ways: accepting personal limitations, often in the form of acknowledging a personal shortcoming without over-identifying with it; accepting experience, such as labelling the unpleasant experience while tolerating or welcoming it; and accepting personal responsibility, by recognizing one’s role in creating the situation. Acknowledging experience was a frequent response category whereby participants stated what they were feeling. These responses were given a designation separate from the mindfulness category, because there usually was not enough information in these responses to discern whether or not these acknowledgements were indicative of mindful acceptance or over-identification (e.g., “I’m so frustrated”). The inverse of mindful acceptance, over-identification, was observed in seven conceptually different ways. These were grasping, such as wanting or wishing for something; avoiding experience, such as drinking or sleeping to avoid an unpleasant feeling; avoidant devaluing, denigrating something because it has led to an unpleasant feeling; self-protective externalizing, assigning responsibility for a problem to someone or something else; directed hostility, acting out against something that is associated with an unpleasant experience; and catastrophizing, irrationally inferring terrible consequences to a difficult experience. A seventh catch-all category, termed “other over-identification,” included a variety of thoughts that generally conveyed over-identification with the negative experience (e.g., “I hate this,” or “I can’t do this at all.”)

Common humanity was demonstrated by (a) taking another’s perspective in difficult situation; (b) wishing others well, and (c) references to general human experience (e.g., “Everyone makes mistakes.”) The inverse of common humanity, isolation, was exemplified in two distinct ways: (a) a general sense of isolation and being alone in one’s experience, and (b) focusing on oneself as a (solitary or unique) victim in the situation. There were three observed forms of self-kindness: (a) making self-encouraging statements, (b) expressing liking or fondness for oneself, and (c) referencing self-care activities. The inverse of self-kindness was expressed as self-critical judgements.

In addition, two inverse categories appeared to reflect the inverse of more than one element of self-compassion. The category “Fear of Others’ Reactions” appeared to reflect both over-identification, the inverse of mindfulness, and isolation, the inverse of common humanity. The category “Pressure to Achieve” appeared to reflect both over-identification and self-judgment. These categories were labelled “inverse overlap” in Figure 2.
Since we attempted to code all of the responses, we were able to situate self-compassionate responses within the full, broad range of responses. There were several response categories that did not appear to be self-compassionate or uncompassionate. We categorized other common responses as serving the functional purpose of venting, reasoning, information-seeking, and problem solving. We grouped reasoning, information seeking, and problem-solving together in an overarching category called “reasoning,” as all three were logical, pragmatic responses lacking in emotional valence. They were included in the overall model: a provisional attempt was made to situate these categories proximally to the element of self-compassion to which arguably they may relate most closely, although we made no assumptions about their similarity or association with self-compassion. Thus, venting was placed to the left of acknowledging emotions, and the overarching reasoning category to the right of self-kindness. Table 1 provides a further description of the 26 categories, including categories not specific to self-compassion, with examples.
Table 1

*Coded categories, explanations, and examples.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over-Arching Element</th>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>Brief venting of displeasure, not directed at a specific target.</td>
<td>“Shoot!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Acknowledging Experience</td>
<td>Simply stating experience.</td>
<td>“I feel sad.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness and Acceptance</td>
<td>Accepting Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>Stating awareness of the part one played in a difficult situation without over-identification.</td>
<td>“I did not study.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting Experience</td>
<td>Beyond simply acknowledging experience, the experience is embraced.</td>
<td>“It’s okay that I was not invited to the party.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting Personal Limitations</td>
<td>Stating awareness of a weakness without evidence of over-identification.</td>
<td>“I am not good at baseball.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Kindness</td>
<td>Liking Self</td>
<td>Explicit expression of fondness for the self or an aspect of the self.</td>
<td>“I may not excel at art, but I do excel at other things.” “I am talented.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Encouragement</td>
<td>Providing the self with support, confidence, or motivation. This can include positive and realistic predictions about the future.</td>
<td>“You will get it next time!” “Good job, you tried!”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>An active attempt to extend caring towards the self, and doing something to nurture the self.</td>
<td>“I am going to take a bubble bath to relax.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Humanity</td>
<td>Common Humanity</td>
<td>Considering others. Acknowledging that they are not alone in the human experience, including imperfections.</td>
<td>“This happens to everyone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>Viewing the present situation from the viewpoint of others for the purpose of bringing themselves closer to others, either symbolically or literally.</td>
<td>“Maybe they are busy and will get back to me later.” (In the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Regulation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Example</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving Kindness/Wishing Others well</td>
<td>Genuinely wishing for the wellbeing of others, despite one's difficult experience.</td>
<td>“Hopefully there’s better players on the team to take it home.” (In the context of striking out at baseball, hoping the team still does well).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-Identification</td>
<td>Grasping</td>
<td>Holding or “clinging” onto an outcome; failing to accept the present emotions or circumstances. Often wishing, wanting, or worrying.</td>
<td>“I wish I didn’t have to write this test.” “I could have done better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding Experience</td>
<td>Unwilling to engage in the experience, such that one avoids it by either explicitly opting to do something else or disengaging to avoid.</td>
<td>“I am going to go watch TV instead” (Of doing homework). “I give up.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant Devaluing</td>
<td>An attempt to mitigate the unpleasant impact of an experience by denigrating the experience in some manner.</td>
<td>“I didn’t want to be friends with them anyway.” “This is a waste of time.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Protective Externalizing</td>
<td>Responding to an experience in a defensive manner or blaming someone/something else in order to deflect personal responsibility.</td>
<td>“It was an unfair test.” “Angry at the teacher for not having reviewed the material more.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directed Hostility</td>
<td>Exerting hostile statements or actions towards another individual or object.</td>
<td>“I am going to break the controller.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catastrophizing</td>
<td>A projection of irrational predictions of negative outcomes or jumping to extreme conclusions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You idiot!”</td>
<td>“I’m going to be lonely forever.”  “I’ll never amount to anything.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Over-Identification</td>
<td>When over-identification (O) is present, but it does not fit into one of the other O categories (or fits into two of the O categories equally well). This can be general pushing away of an experience, rumination, shutting an experience down, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I can’t do art.”</td>
<td>“I hate soccer.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Judgment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I am not good at anything.”</td>
<td>“I’m ugly.” “I’m so stupid.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Isolation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>The individual feels as though they are alone in their experience, and therefore, disconnected from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“No one likes me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self as Victim</td>
<td>Self-pity, typically feeling as though this problem frequently targets them in particular. The individual feels that they are deficient in some regard (i.e., “What’s wrong with me?”).</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Why am I so dumb?”</td>
<td>“Of course this would happen to me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over-Identification + Self-Judgment</td>
<td>Beyond merely wanting to improve, there is evidence of wanting to meet an intense standard and is often described as a “need.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I need to study harder to do better on the next one.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over-Identification + Isolation</td>
<td>Fear/anxiety/worry associated with the anticipation of others’ responses to the self and one’s actions. Missing a sense of common-humanity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“No one can ever see this.”</td>
<td>“My parents are going to kill me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Seeking</td>
<td>Aiming to gain further information or clarification.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“What can I do to fix this?”</td>
<td>“Why isn’t this working?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Reasoning</td>
<td>Aiming to further make sense of a challenging experience (e.g., “Everyone else must have...”)</td>
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</table>
weighing options). This category is used when Information Seeking and Problem Solving were ruled out. “been better athletes.” “Maybe he forgot to invite me.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Providing possible solutions to solve a problem.</th>
<th>“I will keep practicing.” “Maybe I can get a coach or a trainer to get better.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

n/a Uncleable

Responses where the inferred function is undecipherable. Includes single word responses that do not provide enough information to decipher what the participant was thinking.

“sad.” “embarrassed”

**Discussion**

In this study, we observed how self-compassion works as a process by reviewing emerging adults’ automatic thoughts in response to a variety of difficult hypothetical situations. Our goal was to code their responses to the vignettes to determine if participants were spontaneously self-compassionate, to observe and describe what the process of self-compassion looked like in our sample of emerging adults, and to situate self-compassionate (and uncompassionate) responses within the full, broad range of responses that such scenarios produced. Considering that the vast majority of research on self-compassion has relied on questionnaire-based assessment methods, the current focus on identifying compassionate self-talk provided a complementary perspective. Coding automatic thoughts provided insight into the specific forms that self-compassion may take, and the variety of ways that emerging adults expressed a lack of self-compassion.

Throughout the coding process we found it helpful to remember that responses considered theoretically uncompassionate are not always maladaptive, depending on one’s situational goals. For instance, temporary avoidance of distressing emotions in order to get through a discrete difficult experience can be adaptive. Similarly, exerting a moderate amount of pressure to achieve might be consistent with one’s goals, and could be adaptive if exerted moderately within a greater context of a self-compassionate relationship with the self.

Although we were able to make a number of salient functional distinctions, we also noted some limitations in our ability to discern the function of some statements. Russell and Hogan
(1982, p. 1137) coined the term “fundamental researcher attribution error” to describe when researchers assume they can accurately understand a participant’s attributions of causality. They pointed out that an underlying causational explanation is often ambiguous in utterances, and even when the intention of the statement is clear, there are nuances to how causes are perceived between individuals. Accordingly, a measure of humility is important when researchers try to decipher the meaning behind an utterance, especially a statement as brief as the automatic thoughts that we coded in the current study. Therefore, the categories are based on the coding team’s best assessment of the function of each statement, with the acknowledgement that future research that makes direct inquiries to participants about the function of automatic thoughts is necessary to have more confidence in the functional distinctions we inferred.

For some automatic thoughts, it was difficult to categorize their function. At times, it was not possible to discern whether some of the automatic thoughts coded as “problem solving” likely served a self-compassionate function by facilitating self-care, a form of self-kindness. Although many of these problem-focused thoughts appeared simply to have solving a problem as their pragmatic end goal, others might have served an implicit self-care function that was not explicitly communicated (for example, “I will keep practicing” is a way to solve the problem, but also a way to better oneself and work towards a sense of mastery). For purposes of clarity, we did not infer beyond the speech that was provided and coded such responses as “problem solving” when self-care was not explicitly referenced in the text.

Also, responses categorized as “acknowledging experience” were particularly ambiguous, and one of the most common types of automatic thoughts. Thoughts assigned to this category typically involved labeling one’s emotion (e.g., “I feel [so] angry,”) or simply restating the situation (e.g., “They don’t want to go out with me.”) The first step in a mindful response is to acknowledge moments of suffering in just this way. To the extent that feelings and situations were acknowledged with acceptance and openness, such acknowledgment would exemplify mindfulness. However, if such statements reflected resistance, or were a precursor to over-identification, then they would not be considered mindful. The statements themselves did not provide enough information to discriminate between these possibilities. Thus, we did not include this category within the mindfulness construct, and expect that it is quite heterogeneous.

Additional uncertainty (and debate within our research group) remains regarding the function of certain responses coded as self-encouragement. Some were unambiguously self-
encouraging (e.g., “I’ve got this!”), but some felt trite and perhaps conveyed elements of pressure to achieve, such as, “Practice makes perfect.” Secondly, it is currently unclear if there should be a distinction between levels of self-judgment. Some statements coded as self-judgement appear to be more transient and situation-specific than more global self-judgements (e.g., “I feel ugly” versus “I am ugly”); however, if individuals are consistently giving themselves such messages, less severe self-judgemental thoughts may have the same impact as more global self-judgements. Future research can validate if these are indeed functionally distinct thoughts.

Chapter 3 – Study 2: Application of Vignettes and Coding System

Introduction

The purpose of Study 2 was to apply the vignettes and associated coding system in order to examine the automatic thoughts of a second “application” sample. Inter-rater reliability was tested, validity was explored, and the proportion of codeable automatic thoughts that were observed for each coding category was quantified.

Several correlations were examined to explore the validity of the coding system. The current thesis was proposed and mostly conducted during a time of transition at the University of Guelph where this study was conducted, and in statistics in psychology more broadly (McCook, 2016). The University of Guelph’s Psychology Department published a series of guidelines for statistics in theses that helped change the trajectory of the current study to be more in line with consensus within the statistical community in psychology (Al-Aidroos et al., 2018). In the current context, this research is best considered exploratory, not confirmatory in nature. When researchers pre-register their specific analysis plan before a study it is considered to be confirmatory (Wagenmakers, Wetzels, Borsboom, van der Maas, & Kievit, 2012). Although certain relations are expected because of logical and theoretical conceptual links (e.g., Mindfulness as measured by the coding system is expected to be associated with self-reported SCS Mindfulness), no hypotheses were pre-registered before the study began, and therefore, hypotheses were not formally delineated.

Theoretically I expected that elements of self-compassion as captured by the coding system would be correlated (i.e., mindfulness, self-kindness, and common humanity), and elements of un-compassion would be correlated (i.e., over-identification, self-judgment, and
isolation), and the elements of self-compassion would be negatively correlated with the elements of un-compassion.

In addition, associations between coding categories and SCS subscales were explored. The strongest evidence for convergent validity of the vignette and coding system would be associations with subscales of the SCS. Inasmuch as the coding categories capture the six elements of self-compassion and un-compassion as conceptualized by the SCS, I expected the coding categories to be positively associated with their corresponding SCS subscale. Even though the SCS is a trait measure of self-compassion and the vignette and coding system is a state measure, I still expected considerable conceptual overlap between the two.

Next, evidence for discriminant validity would come from a lack of association between the codes and guilt. Guilt does not come from a pervasive underlying negative view of the self (like shame), but rather is a negative perspective on a more limited, defined action or behaviour that is judged to be wrong. Since guilt is based on specific behaviour rather than a global self-perspective, it is more likely to motivate attempts to repair the transgression (Novin & Rieffe, 2015). Indeed, guilt measured by the TOSCA-A is typically not associated with maladaptive functioning, since the form of guilt measured is a mild response to a mistake that motivates reparation (Luyten, Fontaine, & Corveleyn, 2002). Accordingly, guilt was not expected to be associated with either self-compassionate or uncompassionate responses.

Lastly, I explored convergent validity by examining the correlations between coded responses and variables measured by established scales that represent enduring relationships with the self or experience that would be expected to be associated with self-compassion. Shame and self-criticism were two such variables thought to be inversely related to self-compassion. The theory behind Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) helps to illuminate why shame and self-criticism are conceptually related to self-compassion. Shame and the resultant self-criticism are viewed as ultimately adopted by the psyche in an effort to keep one safe from threat. Gilbert (2007; 2014) suggests that often it is the threat of shame (and other intensely feared emotions) that brings on self-criticism: individuals criticise themselves to try to ensure self-improvement in order to stave off the threat of external criticism or feeling unloved, undesired, and disconnected. In CFT, clients are taught to be compassionate towards the inner critic (who, after all, is actually trying to keep them safe), and towards the fear and shame that lie behind the self-critic. Compassion is activated in order to heal the internal threat (often shame). By understanding the
roots of self-criticism and increasing self-compassion, self-criticism and shame will lessen over time, leading to further psychological benefits. That is to say, self-criticism is not targeted directly: rather, cultivating self-compassion and a warm relationship to the self is the starting point.

In sum, in CFT, the therapist aims to activate the affiliative system and help clients aim compassion at themselves (including their self-critics; Gilbert, 2014). The feelings of threat that underlie self-criticism are identified, and the self-critic is understood as a response to feeling threatened (by shame, fear of rejection, etc.). This allows for the regulation/soothing of feared affect and allows the client to open up to addressing those threats that lie underneath the self-criticism. If one is able to soothe oneself under difficult conditions, it allows one to be less reactive, allowing more mindful responses and the ability to work through challenges effectively.

Other research points to the relation between self-compassion and self-criticism. Several researchers have used the terms self-judgment and self-criticism synonymously (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Researchers who have conducted exploratory factor analyses on the Self-Compassion Scale have suggested that self-criticism is the inverse of self-compassion (Costa et al., 2015; López et al., 2015), although Neff (2003a) sees self-criticism as distinct from the inverse of self-compassion. Self-compassion on the SCS was found to negatively correlate with self-criticism ($r = -.65$; Neff, 2003a).

Self-esteem, although distinct from self-compassion as discussed above, is also a related construct. Previous research exploring the correlation between self-esteem and self-compassion have found associations from $r = .56$ (Leary et al., 2007) to $r = .68$. (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Even though these relations are strong, self-esteem and self-compassion have different correlates that indicate more positive associations with self-compassion, and negative links with self-esteem (Barnard & Curry, 2011).

Lastly, previous studies have found that self-compassion is negatively related to experiential avoidance. Self-compassion has been found to be negatively correlated with avoidance posttraumatic stress symptoms, and it was suggested that self-compassionate individuals may benefit from natural exposures following a traumatic experience because they engage in fewer avoidance strategies (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). Self-compassion was also negatively associated with thought suppression (Neff, 2003b), and other avoidant coping
strategies (denial and mental disengagement), and positively related to emotion-focused coping strategies (acceptance and positive reinterpretation and growth; Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005).

In summary, evidence for convergent validity would come from negative associations between elements of coded self-compassion and self-criticism (e.g., Neff, 2003a), shame (e.g., Ewert, Gaube, & Geisler, 2018; Gilbert, 2014), experiential avoidance (e.g., Costa & Pinto-Gouveia, 2013), and positive associations with self-esteem (e.g., Neff & Vonk, 2009). The most compelling pattern would be for coded elements of self-compassion to be associated most strongly with corresponding SCS subscales, rather than with these other variables that are related, but dissimilar constructs.

Method

Application Sample Participants

The application sample consisted of 586 undergraduate students who participated in exchange for credit toward an introductory psychology course. This sample was obtained to evaluate reliability and validity of the coding scheme, provide descriptive data on the proportion of each of the codes, as well as further develop the coding scheme as necessary. Although content codes initially were derived through a more diverse sample, I selected a sample of undergraduate students for the application phase. I decided to focus on this specific sub-sample to better understand how they think and feel about themselves. I wished to understand more about university study samples to increase their self-compassion in future research, considering the stress levels often faced by this sub-sample of emerging adults (Bayram & Bilgel, 2008).

The undergraduate student participants had a mean age of 18.35 years old (range from 16-37 years; $SD = 1.18$). Four-hundred and forty-seven participants identified as White/European, 37 as Southeast Asian, 35 as South Asian, 18 as Black/African/Caribbean, 9 as Arab, 8 as Latin American, 6 as West Asian, and 1 as Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis, and 23 as “other.” One-hundred and sixty participants identified as male (27.2%), and 423 participants identified as female (71.9%), and 3 (0.5%) participants identified as “other” (i.e., agender or genderless).

Participants who did not provide at least 18 codeable responses (50% of what was requested) were excluded from the following analyses, leaving $n = 448$. Their demographic data were similar to that of the full sample. The mean age of remaining participants was 18.37 years (range from 16-36 years; $SD = 1.25$). Three-hundred and thirty-five participants identified as
White/European, 30 as Southeast Asian, 30 as South Asian, 15 as Black/African/Caribbean, 7 as Latin American, 6 as Arab, 5 as West Asian, and 1 as Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis, and 19 as “other.” One-hundred and twenty-seven participants identified as male (28.3%), and 319 participants identified as female (71.2%), and 2 (0.4%) participants identified as “other” (i.e., agender and genderless).

Materials

The demographics questionnaire and vignettes that were used in Study 1 were also used in Study 2. They are described above.

At the end of Study 1, we had developed all but three of the categories we used for Study 2. The development of new categories is to be expected when coding new text, as each time a researcher codes new data the researcher must decide if it fits into the categories already provided or if a new code is needed to accurately portray the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is recommended that codes are refined as often as necessary until the best possible fit for the data is found. I believe the coding team was approaching this best fit, as we did not need to generate any new categories when coding the second half of the data in Study 2.

The three new categories that were added to the coding system in Study 2 were as follows. Proto-Self-Judgment captured thoughts that seemed to express anger or disappointment at the self instead of accepting the experience. It is not as harsh or global as the pre-existing Self-Judgment category. Examples include, “I feel angry at myself. I feel like a loser.” Narcissism captured isolation by placing oneself above others, which the team inferred served a self-protective function (e.g., “I don’t get rejected. I know I’m not the problem.”) Lastly, Internalization of Failure or Judgment captured thoughts where participants altered their views of themselves in response to the vignette; such as, “I’m not as smart as I thought I was.” These thoughts appeared to contain elements of self-judgment, and are conspicuously lacking a sense of common-humany.

The SCS (Neff, 2003a; Appendix C). The SCS is a 26-item scale that measures six subscales: self-kindness (e.g., “I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.”), self-judgment (e.g., “I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.”), common humanity (e.g., “When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.”), mindfulness (e.g., “When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.”), isolation (e.g., “When I’m feeling down, I
tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.”), and over-identification (e.g., “When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.”). Please see Study 1 for a discussion of the factor structure. This is a self-report questionnaire that uses a 7-point Likert scale (with 1 indicating “strongly disagree,” and 7 indicating “strongly agree”). In the first scale validation study, validity was supported by negative correlations with self-criticism, perfectionism, and mental health difficulties, and positive correlations with social connection, emotional intelligence, and life-satisfaction (Neff, 2003a). Other studies have confirmed the internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and the convergent validity of this scale (e.g., Castilho, Pinto, & Duarte, 2015). This scale is appropriate for ages 14 and above (for those with at least a grade-eight reading level; Neff, 2015). I decided not to use the short-form of the SCS because the subscales are not reliable in this version (Neff, 2015), and our research questions concern specific subscales. In the current study, internal consistency was as follows: Cronbach’s α = .72 for Mindfulness, .73 for Over-Identification, .84 for Self-Kindness, .81 for Self-Judgment, .78 for Common Humanity, and .77 for Isolation.

**Level of Self-Criticism (LOSC) scale (Thompson & Zuroff, 2004; Appendix D).** This 22-item self-report scale makes use of a seven-point Likert scale, with one indicating “strongly disagree,” and seven indicating “strongly agree.” Convergent validity was supported by positive associations with a measure of self-critical self-definition (part of a depressive experiences questionnaire), low self-esteem, and mental distress (Thompson & Zuroff, 2004). The alpha coefficient was .88 for Internalized Self-Criticism (ISC; e.g., “I am very frustrated with myself when I don't meet the standards I have for myself.”) and .84 for Comparative Self-Criticism (CSC; e.g., “I am confident that most of the people I care about will accept me for who I am.”) in the initial validation study. In the current study, internal consistency was as follows: Cronbach’s α = .88 for ISC and .78 for CSC.

**Test of Self-Conscious Affect for Adolescents (TOSCA-A; Tangney, Wagner, Gavlas, & Gramzow, 1991; Appendix E).** This measure presents participants with ten negative and five positive vignettes (e.g., “You trip in the cafeteria and spill your friend’s drink.”). Each vignette has four possible responses to which participants rate how likely they are to respond in that way on a five-point Likert scale (with one indicating not likely, and five indicating very likely; e.g., “I would be thinking that everyone is watching me and laughing.”). The responses can reflect shame, guilt, externalization, detachment, and pride. Shame (15 items) and Guilt (15
items) subscales were used in the current study. Preliminary validity data were provided by expected relations between the subscales and empathy (associated with shame-free guilt), and anger (associated with shame; Tangney et al., 1991). This scale has been used successfully, and is applicable for use with undergraduate university samples (R. Warden, personal communication, February 9, 2015). The adolescent measure was used instead of the adult measure because originally, I had planned to have an adolescent Application Sample and I wanted to compare analyses directly between samples. In the current study, internal consistency was as follows: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$ for Shame, and $\alpha = .84$ for Guilt.

**The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965; Appendix F).** The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a widely-used10-item self-report scale, answered using a 4-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It assesses feelings about the self in order to measure global self-worth (e.g., “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.”). In the current study, internal consistency was as follows: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$.

**The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-2 (AAQ-2; Bond et al., 2011; Appendix G).** The AAQ-2 is thought to assess experiential avoidance, which is also referred to as psychological inflexibility or the inverse of acceptance (e.g., “I’m afraid of my feelings.”). It has historically demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and validity (e.g., predicting mental health as theoretically predicted; Bond et al., 2011). In the current study, internal consistency was Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$.

**Procedure**

The Institutional Ethics Review Board approved this study. Participants were recruited through the University’s undergraduate participant pool. Potential participants read a brief description of the study. Those who proceeded provided informed consent by indicating their agreement; they were then linked to the study housed on Qualtrics online survey software. In a single session (requiring approximately one hour), participants were asked to complete a brief demographics questionnaire, respond to the vignettes, and then complete the questionnaires in the following order: SCS, LOSC, TOSCA-A, SES, AAQ-2, and a brief assessment of alcohol use for a different study. Participants completed the vignettes, in a randomized order, before the questionnaires to avoid influencing the content of their automatic thoughts. Participants received a credit toward a psychology course for their participation.
Applying the coding system. Since a large number of undergraduate students \((N = 586)\) participated, to keep the study manageable we coded 12 of the original 24 vignettes across this larger sample. We, therefore, proceeded by identifying six vignettes in each of two domains: social rejection and failure, selecting vignettes that represent a variety of contexts where one can experience rejection and failure (e.g., selecting a vignette that represents rejection from a romantic interest and another vignette that captures rejection through electronic media). We chose items with little apparent conceptual overlap between categories (i.e., they clearly fit into either the failure or social rejection category, not both). Vignettes were as follows: achievement difficulties (struggling with homework, struggling with an art project, difficulties with playing an instrument, failing a test, losing at a favourite videogame, and striking out at a baseball game), and social rejection (picked last for team at a soccer game, rejected when asking someone on a date, left out of a social conversation, not receiving a response to a text message, not getting any likes on a photo posted on social media, and not being invited to a friend’s birthday party). In coding the MTurk sample we realized that we could achieve greater consistency across participant responses if we coded one vignette at a time.

I added four new undergraduate interns to the coding team to code automatic thoughts from the Application Sample. The team that had developed the coding scheme with the Development Sample trained these interns. New coders received approximately nine hours of training on self-compassion theory and the specifics of the content codes. Some of this training involved coding examples of automatic thoughts together as a group. Coders were supplied with a coding manual that listed all of the categories, explanations of the categories, and several examples of challenging items for each (see Appendix H). Decision rules were also provided for difficult items. New coders were given a test, where the team member’s coding was compared to a set of coded automatic thoughts that were agreed upon by the original expert coding team. If a team member’s coding was below 70% agreement then extra training was provided. For the remainder of the three-month coding period, coders met for approximately three hours per week to bring challenging items to the larger group (including the faculty advisor, graduate student, and long-term coders) for coding. Coders were encouraged to code individually only those items that they could code with certainty. All of these challenging items were recorded so that coders could refer to them for future reference while coding. This reference list was not available for use for reliability coding so as to not inflate reliability estimates. In addition, any revisions or
clarifications to the coding rules were recorded at each coding meeting and these were integrated into the coding manual. Coders used NVivo software to code the data.

**Reliability analytic strategy.** Inter-rater reliability for each response category was calculated on 20 percent of vignettes completed by the Study 2 sample using two-way mixed effects intraclass correlations. Reliability was calculated separately for failure and social rejection vignettes; since the type of vignette was associated with subtle content-related differences in some response categories and therefore impacted coding. A team of four reliability coders were randomly assigned 5 percent of the sample. Inter-rater reliability was calculated for category codes that were observed with sufficient frequency to support their estimation (i.e., allowing for sufficient response variability to detect reliability; Goodwin & Leech, 2006; Shoukri, Asyali, & Donner, 2004): our cut-off was categories accounting for at least one percent of total response codes, which eliminated nine categories in each of the failure and social rejection domains.

Two-way mixed effects intraclass correlations were used to test reliability for several reasons. Each participant was asked to give three automatic thoughts in response to twelve vignettes, which were then placed into 29 categories. I collapsed the data across vignettes such that each participant had a total rating on each of the 29 categories, which effectively created interval scales for each category (which was how the data were used in subsequent analyses). Intraclass correlations are often used for evaluating inter-rater reliability for interval variables (Hallgren, 2012). This method was used because it is appropriate for use with multiple coders, and for when a subset of participants is rated multiple times (instead of all participants being rated more than once). This statistic takes magnitude of disagreement into consideration to estimate reliability, with larger disagreements resulting in lower correlations.

Next, a two-way model was selected because the design was fully crossed (Hallgren, 2012) when considered from a coding-team perspective. The full coding team coded all of the automatic thoughts for the sample. While coders completed straightforward coding independently, any thoughts for which the category was not obvious were brought to the group for debate and decisions regarding how the thought should be coded. Therefore, for estimating reliability, the team was considered a single “coder,” since independent members of the team never made the difficult coding decisions alone. Then a subset of the team re-coded a random sample of participants’ automatic thoughts to test inter-rater reliability between the two teams.
The volume of thoughts coded was believed to interfere with recall of coding decisions for individual thoughts. In addition, care was taken to assign each team member to participants that they did not code previously (for the independent portion of the coding for the easily categorized thoughts). Each participant randomly selected for reliability coding was therefore coded by both teams, which makes the design fully crossed, and appropriate for a two-way model.

In addition, “single-measures” was used as the unit of analysis, since only a subset of participants’ responses was coded by both teams (Hallgren, 2012) as opposed to all participants’ responses being coded by both teams). This means that the reliability estimate between the two teams theoretically generalizes to all subjects that were only rated by the first team. Single-measures intraclass correlations are generally smaller than average-measures, and this was indeed the case in the current study. Lastly, the reliability estimates given here are not meant to generalize to a larger population of coding teams, since our coders were not randomly sampled from a population of coders (i.e., they were fixed). Therefore, a mixed-effects model was selected as the appropriate approach (Hallgren, 2012).

**Validity analytic strategy.** For the validity analyses, responses to the failure vignettes were analyzed separately from responses to social-rejection vignettes. To quantify coded responses to the vignettes, frequencies of responses in each category were calculated. Then, the subcategories within each major category were collapsed into overall scores (i.e., one for mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness, over-identification, isolation, and self-judgment). Mindfulness and self-kindness frequency counts were summed to provide an overall “self-compassion” score for each participant. Common humanity was excluded from further analyses because it was so infrequently observed that it could not be coded reliably. Over-identification, isolation, self-judgment, fearing others’ reactions, pressure to achieve, and internalization of others’ judgment, were summed to provide an overall un-compassion score. The associations between these core categories and key variables of interest were explored.

Spearman’s rank correlation was used to estimate the relations between variables of interest, since it does not assume normally distributed data and the coded variables in the present study were all positively skewed (see Tables 2 and 3 for skewness statistics). I conducted extensive data exploration, examining scatterplots for each association reported. R (R Core Team, 2018) and RVAideMemoire package (Hervé, 2018) were used to obtain the correlations and associated confidence intervals.
Results

Descriptive Statistics

In total, 91.7% of all participant responses (14438 in total) were assigned a category. The remainder were deemed unable to be coded for the following reasons: the writer clearly misinterpreted the vignette, the wording could justifiably place the thought in more than one contradictory category, thoughts were intended to be humorous (since humour serves different functions for different people; e.g., Meyer, 2000), and single-word answers that did not include enough context to interpret the overall function. Descriptive statistics for each core category are reported in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

*Failure coded categories: Minimums, maximums, means, standard deviations, and skewness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Kindness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Judgment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-identification</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Compassion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-compassion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.69</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

*Rejection coded categories: Minimums, maximums, means, standard deviations, and skewness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Kindness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Judgment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-identification</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Compassion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-compassion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean scores for each subscale of the SCS were calculated, as well as mean total Self-compassion scores, and Un-compassion scores. Mean scores of the Levels of Self-Criticism Scale were calculated for Comparative Self-Criticism (CSC), and Internalized Self-Criticism (ISC). Mean scores of Shame and Guilt were calculated from scores on the TOSCA-A. Mean
scores were calculated for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Mean Experiential Avoidance Scores were calculated using the AAQ-2. Descriptive statistics for each scale is reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre-existing sub/scales: Minimums, maximums, means, standard deviations, and skewness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub/Scale</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCS Self-Kindness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Common Humanity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Mindfulness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Self-Judgment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Isolation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Over-Identification</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Total Self-Compassion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS Total Un-Compassion</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Self-Criticism</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalized Self-Criticism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Avoidance</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of Responses in Each Category and Inter-Rater Reliability

See Table 5 for each of the coded categories and the proportion of automatic thoughts that were placed into each category. The proportions for failure and social rejection vignettes were kept separate as discussed above.

Table 5 also includes intraclass correlations, which are the reliability estimates for each category, separated by type of vignette (i.e., failure versus social rejection themed situations). The intraclass correlations consider the degree of agreement between coding teams, with stronger agreement resulting in higher intraclass correlations (see Hallgren, 2012 for the mathematical foundations). According to frequently cited guidelines (Cicchetti, 1994), 38 of the
54 intraclass correlations for specific categories were high enough to be considered excellent (> .75), 11 were good (between .60 and .74), three were fair (between .40 and .59), and two were poor (<.39). The codes with poor and fair reliability were observed fairly infrequently, thus the lower variability may have limited the strength of reliability estimates (Goodwin & Leech, 2006). Inter-rater reliability was also calculated for the over-arching elements (e.g., mindfulness, self-kindness); it usually was higher at this general level than for the specific categories that comprised them.

Table 5

*Coded categories, intraclass correlations, and proportion of responses in each category.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over-Arching Element</th>
<th>Category Name</th>
<th>Failure Intraclass Correlation</th>
<th>Failure Proportion</th>
<th>Social Rejection Intraclass Correlation</th>
<th>Social Rejection Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Venting</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Acknowledging Experience</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness and Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting Personal Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting Experience</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting Personal Limitations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Kindness</td>
<td>Liking Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Encouragement</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Humanity</td>
<td>Common Humanity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
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<td>.004</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loving Kindness/Wishing Others well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-Identification</td>
<td>Grasping</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidant Devaluing</td>
<td>Self-Protective Externalizing</td>
<td>Directed Hostility</td>
<td>Catastrophizing</td>
<td>Other Over-Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Judgment</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.84</td>
<td>.023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catastrophizing</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Over-Identification</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Self-Judgment                             | .82                | .071                         | .83               | .074            |                          |
| Self-Judgment                             | .93                | .040                         | .85               | .037            |                          |
| Proto-Self Judgment/Self-Directed Hostility | .67                | .031                         | .69               | .036            |                          |

| Isolation                                 | .78                | .031                         | .89               | .153            |                          |
| Isolation                                 | .77                | .018                         | .84               | .066            |                          |
| Self as Victim                            | .69                | .013                         | .70               | .083            |                          |
| Self-Protective Isolation/Narcissm         | n/a                | .000                         | n/a               | .005            |                          |

| Over-Identification + Self-Judgment        | Pressure to Achieve | .76                           | .086              | .82             | .019                     |
| Over-Identification + Isolation            | Fearing Others’ Reactions | .88                           | .025              | .68             | .019                     |
| Isolation + Self-Judgment                  | Internalization of Failure or Judgment | n/a                           | .005              | .71             | .030                     |

| Reasoning                                  | .92                | .206                         | .92               | .315            |                          |
| Information Seeking                        | .90                | .068                         | .92               | .177            |                          |
| Other Reasoning                            | .58                | .025                         | .85               | .096            |                          |
| Problem Solving                            | .87                | .113                         | .81               | .042            |                          |
| n/a                                        | Uncodeable         | .98                          | .045              | .98             | .038                     |

*Note.* Intraclass correlations were calculated using 20% of the application sample, for all categories assigned at least one percent of response codes.
Evidence for Validity

See Table 6 for the correlation matrix and for responses to failure vignettes, and Table 7 for the correlation matrix for responses to rejection vignettes (and the associated confidence intervals). Please note that self-compassion and un-compassion totals are provided in the tables for researchers who are interested in self-compassion as a unified construct. I will focus on the relations between subscales that capture facets of self-compassion separately to narrow in on the precise aspects of self-compassion that were captured by the current research, and to be congruent with the majority of factor analytic research that recommends the components be considered separately.

Cohen (1994) has long advocated for reporting effect sizes and associated confidence intervals (instead of using null hypothesis significant testing, which often leads to incorrect interpretation of data). The American Statistical Association subsequently adopted this perspective (McCook, 2016). Therefore, the upper and lower limits of 95% confidence intervals are reported around the estimated correlations. Confidence intervals can be understood as reasonable estimates of the range of an effect in the population that could have caused the observed sample effect (Cumming & Finch, 2005). The correlations are the point estimates of the association in the population, whereas the confidence interval provides an approximation of the accuracy of the point estimate. It is more likely that the correlation in the population is closer to the centre of the confidence interval; however, the range of the confidence interval should be (and is) considered in its entirety.

Table 6

Correlations and confidence intervals for coding in response to failure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
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<td>1. Mindfulness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-Kindness</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.05,.24]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Over-Identification</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.25</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-.17,.02]</td>
<td>[-.34,-.16]</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Judgment</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-.15,.04]</td>
<td>[-.28,-.10]</td>
<td>[.00,.09]</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Isolation</td>
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<td>-.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.24</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
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<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
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<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.26</td>
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<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[0.64, 0.75]</td>
<td>[-0.27, -0.08]</td>
<td>[-0.04, 0.14]</td>
<td>[-0.09, 0.09]</td>
<td>[-0.07, 0.11]</td>
<td>[-0.14, 0.05]</td>
<td>[-0.18, 0.21]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7

**Correlations and confidence intervals for coding in response to rejection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Mindfulness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Self-Kindness</strong></td>
<td>.13 [.03, .21]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Over-Identification</strong></td>
<td>-.10 [-.19, -.01]</td>
<td>.05 [-.04, .15]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Isolation</strong></td>
<td>-.05 [-.15, -.03]</td>
<td>-.21 [-.30, -.12]</td>
<td>-.15 [-.24, -.05]</td>
<td>.32 [.23, .40]</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Self-Compassion</strong></td>
<td>.69 [.64, .75]</td>
<td>.76 [.71, .80]</td>
<td>-.02 [-.11, .07]</td>
<td>-.28 [-.37, -.20]</td>
<td>-.19 [-.28, -.10]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>-.16 [-.25, -.07]</td>
<td>-.20 [-.30, -.11]</td>
<td>.50 [.43, .57]</td>
<td>.40 [.32, .47]</td>
<td>.59 [.52, .65]</td>
<td>-.24 [-.33, -.16]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Un-Compassion</strong></td>
<td>.13 [.04, .22]</td>
<td>.21 [.12, .31]</td>
<td>-.06 [-.15, -.04]</td>
<td>-.18 [-.27, -.08]</td>
<td>-.26 [-.35, -.18]</td>
<td>.23 [.14, .31]</td>
<td>-.28 [-.36, -.19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Mindfulness</strong></td>
<td>.04 [-.05, .13]</td>
<td>.15 [.06, .24]</td>
<td>-.04 [-.14, -.05]</td>
<td>-.18 [-.27, -.09]</td>
<td>-.27 [-.36, -.18]</td>
<td>.14 [.05, .24]</td>
<td>-.25 [.34, -.17]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Self-Kindness</strong></td>
<td>.10 [.02, .19]</td>
<td>.12 [.03, .22]</td>
<td>-.09 [-.19, -.01]</td>
<td>-.08 [-.31, -.13]</td>
<td>-.22 [.05, .22]</td>
<td>-.22 [-.30, -.13]</td>
<td>.14 [.22, .40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Common Humanity</strong></td>
<td>-.12 [-.21, -.03]</td>
<td>-.25 [-.33, -.15]</td>
<td>.09 [-.01, .19]</td>
<td>.24 [.15, .33]</td>
<td>.21 [.12, .31]</td>
<td>-.25 [-.34, -.16]</td>
<td>.31 [.22, .40]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Over-Identification</strong></td>
<td>-.09 [-.18, .01]</td>
<td>-.18 [-.27, -.09]</td>
<td>.03 [-.06, .12]</td>
<td>.21 [.12, .30]</td>
<td>.28 [.19, .37]</td>
<td>-.20 [-.29, -.11]</td>
<td>.30 [.21, .38]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Self-Judgment</strong></td>
<td>-.12 [-.21, -.03]</td>
<td>-.22 [-.31, -.12]</td>
<td>.03 [.07, .12]</td>
<td>-.06 [.17, .34]</td>
<td>.25 [.23, .40]</td>
<td>-.24 [-.33, -.15]</td>
<td>.34 [.25, .42]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Isolation</strong></td>
<td>.09 [.00, .18]</td>
<td>.19 [.09, .28]</td>
<td>-.06 [-.16, .03]</td>
<td>-.18 [-.27, -.08]</td>
<td>-.29 [-.38, -.20]</td>
<td>.20 [.11, .29]</td>
<td>-.28 [-.37, -.20]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Self-Compassion Total</strong></td>
<td>.12 [-.21, -.03]</td>
<td>-.26 [-.35, -.16]</td>
<td>.06 [.04, .16]</td>
<td>.26 [.18, .35]</td>
<td>.31 [.22, .40]</td>
<td>-.27 [-.36, -.18]</td>
<td>.36 [.27, -.44]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCS Un-Compassion Total</strong></td>
<td>-.09 [-.02, -.19]</td>
<td>-.18 [-.13, -.30]</td>
<td>.06 [.15, .03]</td>
<td>.17 [.26, .07]</td>
<td>.24 [.32, .15]</td>
<td>-.23 [-.15, -.32]</td>
<td>.28 [.37, .20]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSC</strong></td>
<td>.09 [.01, .18]</td>
<td>.19 [.07, .26]</td>
<td>-.06 [.14, .04]</td>
<td>.21 [.30, .12]</td>
<td>.28 [.37, .19]</td>
<td>-.18 [.09, .28]</td>
<td>.32 [.40, .24]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISC</strong></td>
<td>-.09 [-.02, -.19]</td>
<td>-.18 [.06, .03]</td>
<td>.06 [.17, .24]</td>
<td>.17 [.26, .07]</td>
<td>.24 [.32, .15]</td>
<td>-.23 [-.15, -.32]</td>
<td>.28 [.37, .20]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key correlations for each aspect of coded self-compassion are emphasized in the paragraphs below. First, associations with other coded categories of self-compassion (or un-compassion) are noted, with emphasis placed on relations with other categories of the same valence (e.g., Mindfulness and Self-Kindness), and the theoretical inverse of each category (e.g., Mindfulness and Over-Identification). Then key associations with the SCS are highlighted. Lastly, correlations between each coded self-compassion category and other established scales are explored. Correlations that are less than \( r = \pm .10 \) are considered negligible, correlations between \( \pm .10 < r < \pm .29 \) are considered small, and correlations between \( \pm .30 < r < \pm .50 \) are considered moderate.

**Correlations between coded categories.** The largest and most consistent correlations between coded Mindfulness and the other coded categories were with Self-Kindness for failure and rejection vignettes, demonstrating that as expected the two aspects of self-compassion that were measured by the coding scheme had a small positive association. The CIs were narrow and consistent with anywhere from a negligible to small positive relation.

The negative correlations between coded Mindfulness and coded Over-Identification were in the expected direction. The CIs are narrow and range from no relation, to a small negative one. Self-Kindness had small negative correlations with coded Self-Judgment, with CIs that were narrow and consistent with a small or moderate negative relation. Also of note, coded Self-Kindness in response to failure was negatively correlated with coded Over-Identification (with a narrow CI consistent with a small to moderate negative relation), and coded Self-
Kindness in response to rejection was negatively correlated with coded Isolation (with a narrow CI consistent with a small to moderate negative relation). Common Humanity was not observed frequently enough to be coded reliably. Therefore, the relations between coded Common humanity and the other categories were not computed.

The correlations between coded Over-Identification and uncompassionate coded categories are inconsistent. Over-Identification coded in response to failure was positively associated with coded Isolation (narrow CI consistent with a negligible to small association), but not associated with coded Self-Judgment (narrow CI consistent with a negligible positive to a small negative relation). Unexpectedly, Over-Identification coded in response to rejection was negatively correlated with coded Self-Judgment and coded Isolation, with narrow CIs indicating small to moderate negative relations. However, as expected, coded Isolation was positively correlated with coded Self-Judgment in response to failure and rejection, with narrow CIs consistent with a small to moderate positive association.

Correlations between coded categories and the SCS. The correlations between coded Mindfulness and Mindfulness measured with the SCS were negligible but in the expected direction for failure vignettes (with a narrow CI consistent with a negligible negative to a small positive relation), and small for rejection vignettes (with a narrow CI consistent with a negligible to small positive relation). Mindfulness coded in response to rejection also had small associations with SCS Common Humanity, SCS Over-identification, and SCS Isolation, with narrow confidence intervals ranging from negligible to small associations in the expected directions. All other correlations between coded Mindfulness and subscales of the SCS were close to nil with narrow confidence intervals.

Coded Self-Kindness in response to both failure and rejection was positively correlated with the three SCS self-compassionate subscales and negatively correlated with all three SCS uncompassionate subscales. The confidence intervals were narrow, and consistent with a small positive association with SCS Mindfulness, a negligible to small positive association with SCS Self-Kindness, a negligible to small positive association with SCS Common Humanity, a negligible to small negative association (for failure) and small negative association (for rejection) with SCS Over-Identification, a negligible to small negative association with SCS Self-Judgment, and a negligible to small negative association (for failure) and a small negative association (for rejection) for SCS Isolation.
Coded Over-identification was negatively correlated with the SCS self-compassionate subscales and positively correlated with the SCS uncompassionate subscales. The confidence intervals were narrow, and ranged from negligible to small for Over-Identification coded in response to failure, and close to nil when coded in response to rejection.

Coded Self-judgment in response to both failure and rejection was negatively correlated with the SCS self-compassionate subscales, and positively associated with the SCS uncompassionate subscales. For Self-Judgment coded in response to failure, the CIs were narrow and ranged from small to moderate in the expected directions, with the strongest association between coded Self-Judgment and SCS Self-Judgment. For Self-Judgment coded in response to rejection, the CIs were narrow and ranged from negligible to small negative associations for SCS Mindfulness and SCS Self-Kindness, a small negative association to a negligible positive association for SCS Isolation, and a small to moderate positive association the SCS uncompassionate subscales.

Coded Isolation in response to both failure and rejection was negatively correlated with all three self-compassionate subscales, and positively correlated with all uncompassionate subscales measured by the SCS. For failure vignettes, the confidence intervals were narrow, and ranged from close to zero to a small association in the expected direction. The strongest of these correlations was Isolation coded in response to failure and SCS Isolation. The associations between Isolation coded in response to rejection were stronger, with all narrow CIs ranging from small to moderate associations.

**Correlations between coded categories and other pre-existing scales.** The associations between coded Mindfulness and pre-existing scales are varied. There were many correlations between coded Mindfulness and other scales that were in the expected directions, however were negligible in magnitude, with narrow CIs encompassing zero. Mindfulness coded in response to failure had a small negative correlation with Experiential Avoidance, with the narrow CI ranging from zero to small. Mindfulness coded in response to social rejection had a small negative correlation with ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, with all narrow CIs ranging from negligible to small associations.

The associations between coded Self-Kindness and pre-existing scales were stronger than the correlations for coded Mindfulness. For Self-Kindness coded in response to failure and rejection, there were negative correlations with CSC (narrow CI consistent with a small negative
association for failure, and a negligible to small association for rejection), ISC (a narrow CI consistent with a negligible to small association for failure, and a small to moderate association for rejection), Shame (a narrow CI consistent with a small association), and Experiential Avoidance (narrow CIs consistent with a negligible to small association for failure and rejection); and a positive correlation with Self-Esteem (narrow CIs consistent with a negligible to small association for failure and rejection).

Over-Identification coded in response to failure was positively correlated with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, and negatively correlated with Self-Esteem, with narrow CIs consistent with negligible to small associations. Over-Identification coded in response to rejection did not have any correlations with established scales over a magnitude of $r = \pm .10$, and the CIs were narrow, surrounding zero.

Coded Self-Judgment had small positive correlations with CSC, ISC, and Experiential Avoidance, and a small negative correlation with and Self-Esteem. For Self-Judgment coded in response to failure, the confidence intervals were narrow and consistent with a small to moderate association. For Self-Judgment coded in response to rejection, the confidence intervals were narrow and consistent with small to moderate associations for CSC, Experiential Avoidance, and Self-Esteem, and negligible to small associations with ISC. The strongest association for Self-Judgment coded in response to failure and rejection was with Shame, which had narrow CIs consistent with small to moderate positive association.

Lastly, Coded Isolation was positively correlated with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, and negatively correlated with Self-Esteem. For failure vignettes, the associated CIs were narrow and were consistent with associations that were negligible to small, with the exception of Shame, which had a CI consistent with a small association, and Self-Esteem, which had a CI consistent with a small to moderate association. For rejection vignettes, all associated CIs were narrow and consistent with small to moderate associations. Shame emerged as the strongest association with coded Isolation.

**Acknowledging experience.** In addition to the relations represented in Tables 6 and 7, I also analyzed the following categories. The Acknowledging Experience category was not included in the Mindfulness coding category, because it was unclear from these short automatic thoughts if they indicated true mindfulness. Acknowledging Experience was not associated with coded Mindfulness ($r_{\text{failure}} = -.07$, $CI = [-.16, .03]$, $r_{\text{rejection}} = -.05$, $CI = [-.13, .05]$), or SCS
Mindfulness ($r_{\text{failure}} = .01, CI = [-.09, .10], r_{\text{rejection}} = -.03, CI = [-.13, .07]$). The CIs were all narrow around zero. In summary, Acknowledging Experience did not relate to mindfulness as it was measured in the current study, and therefore the decision to separate it from the coded Mindfulness category was supported.

**Exploring the “inverse overlap” categories.** In Study 1, two coding categories were created that appeared to be combinations of uncompassionate elements (i.e., the inverse of self-compassion, and overlap between two uncompassionate categories). Fear of Others’ Reactions was believed to be a combination of Over-Identification and Isolation, and Pressure to Achieve was thought to reflect Self-Judgment and Over-Identification. A third inverse-overlap category was generated in Study 2 that reflected elements of Isolation and Self-Judgment, which was Internalization of Others’ Judgment.

Fear of Others’ Reactions was believed to be a combination of Over-Identification and Isolation. As expected, this overlap category, when coded from the data from the failure vignettes, was correlated with Isolation and Over-identification using the coding scheme ($r = .14, CI = [.05, .24]$ and $r = .16, CI = [.07, .25]$ respectively). The CIs were consistent with negligible to small relations. Fear of Others’ Reactions in response to failure vignettes was also related to SCS Isolation ($r = .12, CI = [.02, .21]$), SCS Over-Identification ($r = .11, CI = [.02, .20]$), and SCS Self-Judgment ($r = .12, CI = [.02, .21]$). Conversely, there were no correlations larger than $r = .10$ between Fear of Others’ Reactions in response to rejection vignettes and coded Over-Identification and coded Isolation. Fear of Others’ Reactions in response to rejection vignettes was related to SCS Over-Identification ($r = .13, CI = [.04, .22]$), but this was the only relation that had a CI consistent with at least a negligible to small association (i.e., all the other CIs were narrow and close to zero).

Thoughts that were categorized as Pressure to Achieve appeared to the coding team to reflect a combination of Over-Identification and Self-Judgment. Contrary to expectations there were no notable correlations between Pressure to Achieve in response to failure or rejection vignettes and Over-Identification or Self-Judgment using the coding scheme, or uncompassionate subscales of the SCS.

Responses that were coded as Internalization of Others’ Judgment were believed to be a combination of Isolation and Self-Judgment. Contrary to expectations there were no notable correlations between Internalization of Others’ Judgment in response to failure or rejection
vignettes and Isolation or Self-Judgment using the coding scheme, or uncompassionate subscales of the SCS.

**Proportions of Automatic Thoughts Sorted into Each Category**

When faced with failure and rejection experiences, our sample of university students was much more likely to generate automatic thoughts that were uncompassionate rather than compassionate toward themselves. Only 13% of codeable responses to failure-themed vignettes were considered self-compassionate. Another 8.4% of responses were categorized as acknowledging the experience (i.e., labelling the experience without any indication of acceptance or over-identification). Conversely, 50.8% of codeable responses indicated automatic thoughts that were considered to be functionally uncompassionate towards the self (i.e., conveying over-identification, isolation, self-judgment, or some overlap between these constructs). For social rejection-themed vignettes, only 6.5% of responses were self-compassionate, and another 9.9% acknowledged or labelled the experience, whereas 51% appeared to convey a lack of self-compassion in some way. See Table 5 for proportions of codeable automatic thoughts that fell into each of the categories.

I also found that the type of adverse experience (i.e., failure versus social rejection) elicited proportionately different responses. For instance, the three most common codes in response to failure vignettes were problem solving, grasping, and pressure to achieve, whereas the most common codes for social rejection were information seeking, acknowledging experience, and reasoning (see Figures 3a and 3b for the most common responses for failure versus social rejection vignettes).
Fig 3a Most common responses to failure vignettes: categories with frequency greater than 5%

Fig 3b Most common responses to social rejection vignettes: categories with frequency greater than 5%
Discussion

In Study 2, I used the coding scheme developed in Study 1 to analyse the responses to the vignettes for a new sample. Inter-rater reliability was investigated; validity was explored by examining correlations between categories, correlations between the coding categories and the SCS subscales, and correlations between the coding categories and other established scales; and responses to the vignettes were coded to determine how often participants were spontaneously self-compassionate.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Most of the derived categories had good inter-rater reliability. Reliability estimates tended to be higher for more frequently used categories. Even though intraclass correlations are a defensible measure of inter-rater reliability for interval variables, this method takes covariation into account instead of absolute inter-coder agreement, which is a more robust measure of inter-rater reliability when coding content (see Krippendorff, 2004; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). If this coding scheme is used in the future, I recommend using independent coders or coding teams, so that that Krippendorff’s Alpha can be used to calculate inter-rater reliability. If it is not feasible to have independent coding teams, then Krippendorff’s Alpha could at least be used as an inter-rater reliability check early in the coding process for the portions of coding that are done independently.

Evidence for Validity

Association between coded categories. Correlations between the coding categories were smaller than expected, and some codes were more problematic than others in this regard. The six subscales of the SCS are conceptually and empirically related. For example, in the current study, the correlations between the subscales ranged in magnitude from $r = .36$ to $r = .68$, which are much larger than the relations observed between vignette codes.

Coded Mindfulness had the fewest associations with the other codes. It appeared to be related to Self-kindness but did not show the expected relation with the uncompassionate coded categories, including its theoretical inverse, Over-Identification. Lower inter-rater reliability may have contributed to the lack of expected associations between Coded Mindfulness and other variables. Coded Over-Identification was also problematic when examining the relation between other coded uncompassionate categories. It was only associated with coded Isolation, and only for failure vignettes. Even more problematic, coded Over-Identification in response to rejection
was negatively associated with the coded Isolation and coded Self-Judgment, when theoretically they should have a positive relation. This requires further study, and may be a result of the heterogeneity within the coded Over-Identification category. It may be that over-identification is a normative response in this population when faced with social rejection, whereas self-judgment and isolation are more extreme responses that capture a qualitatively different and perhaps less adaptive response to rejection.

As expected, coded Self-Kindness was related to many of the other codes. We observed the expected inverse relations with coded Self-Judgment for failure and rejection vignettes, coded Over-Identification for failure vignettes, and coded Isolation in response to rejection vignettes. It is possible that the strength of this association was impacted by the nature of the vignettes: Perhaps self-kindness is more strongly inversely associated with over-identification when faced with failure, and more strongly inversely associated with isolation when faced with rejection. When faced with failure, we may be more likely to be kind to ourselves if we are not over-identified: Perhaps being able to accept the situation and move on is key to self-kindness when experiencing personal failure. On the other hand, when we are faced with rejection, feeling a less profound sense of isolation may be more important for generating self-kindness: Perhaps if we are less prone to feeling alone in general, when we are faced with a specific instance of rejection, we can still generate a sense of loving kindness towards ourselves.

The last relation between codes that was notable was the correlations between coded Self-Judgment and coded Isolation. As expected, there was a positive relation between the two codes in response to failure and rejection vignettes; however, these relations were small.

In summary, the coded categories were not as interrelated as one might expect based on the theoretical connectivity between the concepts and the large correlations between SCS subscales. However, it is not surprising that the associations are much smaller than those between SCS subscales. The SCS uses closed ended summative judgments with Likert scale responses; whereas the current study coded automatic thoughts with unlimited possible variations. We coded each individual’s automatic thoughts, with a coding scheme that had 29 coding categories, introducing a large amount of variability into the coding measure.

The lack of a strong relation between the codes may also reflect the possibility that components of self-compassion may have a weaker relation with one another in discrete situations like our vignettes, and a stronger relation with one another when measured using
summative trait-like judgments. For example, two items from the SCS read, “I’m kind to myself when I’m experiencing suffering.” and, “When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.” It is easy to imagine that respondents would be likely to endorse these statements similarly if they have a general schema of themselves as self-compassionate (or uncompassionate) individuals, or even more generally, mentally healthy or unhealthy. However, when faced with imagined, discrete situations like failing a test or being rejected for a date, automatic thoughts could take any form, and kind thoughts towards the self and thoughts that convey mindful awareness may be less likely to correlate.

Shedler and colleagues (Shelder, Mayman, and Manis, 1993; Shedler, Karliner, & Katz, 2003) identified a subgroup of individuals with “illusory mental health,” i.e., low self-reported distress levels in direct contrast to clinician evaluations of considerable mental health difficulties. The authors proposed that, for these individuals, reports of positive mental health resulted from defensive processes rather than a genuine appraisal of functioning. In support of this claim, those with illusory mental health showed a pattern of defensive responding and greater physiological reactivity to stress. This suggests that especially in situations where individuals are asked to make summary judgments of their well being, people are prone to defensive processes that may interfere with accurate reporting, which may be the case with the SCS.

**Discriminant validity.** In support of discriminant validity, all coded elements of self-compassion (and un-compassion) had negligible associations with guilt, with narrow confidence intervals around zero, with the exception of Isolation coded in response to failure, which had a CI consistent with a nil to small positive association between coded Isolation and Guilt.

**Convergent validity.** *Coded Mindfulness and Over-identification.* There is weak evidence for the validity of coded Mindfulness. Examining the two CIs between coded Mindfulness and SCS Mindfulness suggest a negligible to small association between the two measures. Mindfulness coded in response to rejection showed inconsistent associations with other SCS subscales and established scales, showing slightly stronger relations when coding Mindfulness in response to rejection. The strongest evidence for convergent validity for coded Mindfulness were the negligible to small negative associations with Experiential Avoidance.

In addition, how mindfulness appeared in the current study was centred on acceptance of various circumstances, which is fundamental to Neff’s (2011a) definition, but does not capture all elements of mindfulness. One aspect of mindfulness that was not captured by the coding
The automatic thoughts of the sample were not interpreted to represent balanced awareness, which is a key component of mindfulness, which is one reason why the mindfulness category may not have the expected associations. It also may be that mindfulness has an experiential quality to it that may not lend itself well to articulation with words; therefore, it is possible that coding automatic thoughts may not be the most fruitful method to capture mindfulness.

Examination of the mindfulness subscale of the SCS also provides a partial explanation for the pattern of results. The four mindfulness items focus heavily on having a balanced perspective (e.g., “When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance;” Neff, 2003a, p. 232), whereas the coding scheme focuses on acceptance. Even though both concepts are theoretically central to mindfulness, having a balanced perspective (as in the SCS) is not the same as acceptance (as in the coding scheme). In future research, it would be interesting to see how coded Mindfulness relates to other measures of mindfulness, such as Brown and Ryan’s (2003) Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, or the comprehensive Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer et al., 2008) that assesses observing, acting with awareness, non-judging and non-reactivity to inner experiences, and describing.

There is slightly stronger evidence for the validity of coded Over-Identification. Over-Identification was negatively correlated with the SCS self-compassionate subscales and positively correlated with the SCS un-compassion subscales; however, the CIs encompassed values from nil to small associations. Examination of the CIs showed that there is no evidence that the association was stronger between coded Over-Identification and SCS Over-Identification, which I would expect if the coding system was narrowing in on Over-Identification specifically, and not un-compassion more generally.

Over-identified thoughts in the current sample also did not map completely onto the over-identification items on the SCS. Two over-identification items on the SCS map onto Grasping, one of the seven categories of coded Over-Identification in our sample: “When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.” and, “When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.” (Neff, 2003a, p. 232). A third item maps onto the coded category Catastrophizing. Four of the coded Over-Identification categories were not represented in SCS items; however, logically they are consistent with over-identification (i.e., Avoiding Experience, Avoidant Devaluing, Self-Protective Externalizing, and Directed Hostility). The last
of the four items, “When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy,” (Neff, 2003a, p. 232) fits better onto our conceptualization of self-judgment than over-identification: Even though the “consumed by feelings” sounds like over-identification, the focus on inadequacy sounds more like self-judgment. In sum, how the coding team observed over-identification in the current sample did not correspond well to the over-identification items on the SCS; however, the extreme reactions (hostility) and avoidance that characterized subcategories of coded Over-Identification fit well into the theoretical definition of over-identification.

When the associations between coded Over-Identification and other established scales were examined, there was little consistent evidence for convergent validity. Over-Identification coded in response to failure was positively correlated with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, and negatively correlated with Self-Esteem. The magnitudes of these associations were smaller than the correlation with SCS Over-identification, with the exception of the correlation with Shame. These associations were not present when coding Over-Identification in response to rejection.

Heterogeneity of the Over-Identification category may have contributed to its weak relation with other constructs: Every other superordinate category has a maximum of three subcategories, whereas coded Over-Identification had six that ranged from grasping, to avoidance, to catastrophizing. A fruitful avenue for future research would be to disentangle the six types of over-identification that were coded, and see if any of the subcategories had a stronger relation with the other coded categories or established scales.

In summary, there is no compelling evidence that the coding system is validly measuring Mindfulness and Over-Identification as it is commonly theoretically understood and empirically measured by the SCS. Mindfulness was rare in the current study (i.e., 6% of responses for failure, and 3% of responses for social rejection), and had lower inter-rater reliability estimates. It is possible that in a different sample, such as a sample of meditators, Mindfulness could be more frequently and reliably coded, which may lead to stronger associations with other categories and established questionnaires. Indeed Baer and colleagues (2008) found that experienced meditators developed mindfulness skills that were related to positive psychological functioning.
**Coded Self-Kindness and Self-Judgment.** There is evidence for convergent validity for coded Self-Kindness. Coded Self-Kindness had positive associations with SCS self-compassion subscales, and negative associations with SCS uncompassionate subscales. Examination of the CIs demonstrated that there is no compelling evidence that the association was stronger for any particular SCS subscale. Further evidence for convergent validity of coded Self-Kindness comes from associations with pre-existing scales. There were negative correlations with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance; and a positive correlation with Self-Esteem.

Coded Self-Judgment has the strongest evidence for convergent validity, as the associations to follow were the largest out of the coded categories, particularly for failure vignettes. It was negatively correlated with the SCS self-compassionate subscales, and positively associated with the SCS uncompassionate subscales. In addition, coded Self-Judgment had positive correlations with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, and a small negative correlation with Self-Esteem.

It is possible that the stronger associations for coded Self-Judgment and Self-Kindness reflect stronger conceptual clarity. Both categories were among the codes with the highest estimations of inter-rater reliability, indicating that the concepts were well-defined and easy for coders to classify. Furthermore, there is consistency between Neff’s (2003b) theoretical conceptualization of these concepts, SCS items (Neff, 2003a), and the Self-Kindness and Self-Judgment we coded in our sample. Examination of the items in the SCS Self-Kindness subscale reveals clear overlap between coded sub-categories of Self-Kindness: Liking the Self, Self-Encouragement, and Self-Care (e.g., “I try to be loving towards myself when I feel emotional pain;” Neff, 2003b, p. 231). Coded Self-Judgment was the most succinct category, with only two categories that represent two levels of the same construct. The categories and associated thoughts had a clear mapping onto SCS Self-Judgment items.

**Coded Isolation.** Coded Isolation had moderate evidence for convergent validity. The associations with SCS subscales were consistent with convergent validity, with the strongest associations between coded Isolation, and SCS Isolation. The associations were stronger for rejection vignettes than for failure vignettes, which may indicate that rejection vignettes primed isolation schemas. This makes sense because isolation is an intrinsic component of the social-rejection items (e.g., not being invited to your friend’s birthday party, or being left-out of a
Indeed, Isolation was coded more frequently and reliably in response to rejection than failure vignettes (see Table 5).

Coded Isolation was positively correlated with CSC, ISC, Shame, and Experiential Avoidance, and negatively correlated with Self-Esteem. These associations were stronger for rejection vignettes than failure vignettes. For failure vignettes, the strongest association was a negative association with Self-Esteem. For rejection vignettes, Shame emerged as the strongest association with coded Isolation. This suggests that both situations lead to a poorer self-image, but there is a nuanced difference between the change in self-perception when feeling isolated. When feeling alone in failure people may experience a decrease in a general sense of self-worth, demonstrating how self-esteem is tied up in achievement as predicted by Neff (2003b). On the other hand, when people feel alone when they are rejected, they may feel ashamed. Shame has been defined as, “An intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging (Brown, 2006, p. 45).” It makes sense then, that when rejected by others and feeling isolated we would internalize this sense of unworthiness.

Additional coded categories. Study 2 supported the decision in Study 1 to keep coded Acknowledging Experience out of the Mindfulness category, as it does not correlate with coded Mindfulness or SCS Mindfulness. This category requires further study and reflection, especially since it was one of the most commonly used categories. Additionally, Fearing Others’ Reactions was the only “inverse overlap” category that had any evidence for validity. Thoughts coded as Pressure to Achieve and Internalization of Others’ Judgments require further study and re-categorization. Post-hoc examination of thoughts categorized as Pressure to Achieve suggested that these thoughts might have had a problem solving function (e.g., “I need to study harder.”) The coding team may have put too much emphasis on “need” part of the phrase, which at the time indicated to us that participants were putting pressure on themselves in an over-identified manner. Similarly, post-hoc examination of thoughts categorized as Internalization of Failure or Judgment suggested that several of the thoughts in this category may be mindful re-evaluation of abilities based on performance, rather than self-judgmental criticisms.

The importance of shame. Some of the strongest associations between coded Over-identification and Isolation were with shame, and the literature has outlined why this might be. Shame is brought on by negative evaluations of the self, and fearing negative evaluations from others that are based on this deficient self-view (Novin & Rieffe, 2015). Main proponents of
Compassionate Mind Training (Gilbert & Proctor, 2006) and Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT; e.g. Gilbert, 2014) emphasize the role of self-compassion in cultivating resilience due to deactivation of the threat system and activating the safe, care-giving, self-soothing system (called the affiliative system) to allow healing from shame. They discuss how the absence of a sense of common humanity (i.e., loneliness and isolation) could often be rooted in a sense of shame. The feeling of unworthiness that is a component of shame can make people feel separate from others who may be viewed as more valuable than oneself. Individuals experiencing shame may also feel separated or isolated from others because they fear negative evaluations from others. When clients undergoing CFT see their difficulties within the context of the shared human condition, it helps to start decreasing the experience of shame. Theoretically then, removing shame frees up the mind to work on caring for the self and cultivating motivation for positive changes.

**Summary.** Many of the correlations that support convergent validity were present, especially for Self-Kindness, Self-Judgment, and Isolation; however, the most compelling scenario for evidence of convergent validity (i.e., where the strongest associations would be between coded categories and their corresponding SCS subscales) was not found consistently. The CIs were narrow, supporting the veracity of the relations. However, the associations were still small.

The small associations are not unexpected. Due to common method variance, I would expect correlations to be stronger between traditional self-report scales than between traditional self-report scales and coded automatic thoughts (see Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003 for a discussion of common method bias). The correlations between coded automatic thoughts and self-report scales are not as vulnerable to artificial inflation as correlations between self-report scales due to potential sources of common method biases, such as item characteristic effects like item social desirability, item ambiguity, and common scale formats and anchors. Responses to the vignettes may still be vulnerable to common method biases because of having a common rater (e.g., consistency, mood state, and social desirability). However, the impact of having a common rater may be partially mitigated because responses to vignettes are reporting automatic thoughts about a finite event, instead of traditional self-report measures that require complex thinking that involves inferences, reflection, predictions, interpretations, and summative evaluations (see Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Data obtained from self-report measures are typically filtered through complex thought processes, and are susceptible to biases along the
way; whereas the vignette measure asks for the first three automatic thoughts, with the hope that we are getting a more pure, authentic measure of how our participants respond to failure and rejection.

The TOSCA-A also uses a vignette format. The response format requires participants to rate how likely they would be to react in four possible ways to each vignette on a Likert scale. Responses to the TOSCA-A may, therefore, be less impacted by response biases, because respondents are asked to react to discrete situations instead of reflecting on how they respond in general (and may therefore have some common method variance with our vignettes). However, instead of just listing spontaneous automatic thoughts, the response format is closed and there is the added layer of cognition where participants need to evaluate if they would typically respond in a set way. This extra layer of cognition may leave responses more vulnerable to the biases common to traditional self-report measures.

**Observing Self-Compassion**

Strikingly, only a relatively small proportion of responses could be described as self-compassionate. For situations involving personal failure, out of the five most common responses, two were uncompassionate (i.e., grasping and pressure to achieve). Similar findings were observed for scenarios involving social rejection: two of the five most frequent responses were also uncompassionate (i.e., self as victim and the isolation subcategory). None of the top five responses for either vignette category were self-compassionate.

I also observed that the ways that self-compassion was expressed differed as a function of the type of adversity to which they were responding. For failure vignettes the most widespread responses were focused on a desire and drive to succeed. The most common thoughts were about trying to solve the problem, which is a logical first step, and may even come from a self-compassionate place as discussed in Study 1. The second and third most common categories illustrate wanting to succeed (i.e., Grasping, such as wanting to succeed, and Pressure to Achieve). On the other hand, for rejection, the most frequent responses were logical, even emotionally cool in nature. Even thought the situations were meant to evoke distressing experiences of exclusion, participants were most likely to seek more information about the situation to help them interpret it, simply acknowledge the experience, or reason about what might be happening. This could be indicative of calculated social reasoning, or it could also represent avoidance of the acute pain that social rejection engenders in most people. Future
research can clarify if these trends are common in other populations, or if these findings are particular to university students, our sub-sample of emerging adults. I would expect that other samples would be notably different, since university samples are typically outliers (Henrich et al., 2010). For instance, pressure to achieve may be more common in university students whose work is regularly and explicitly evaluated, and decisions about their futures are often directly affected by their grades. The participants may have even been primed to give responses geared towards achievement since they were completing the study for class credit.

Chapter 4: General Discussion

Overview and Summary of Results

Several self-compassionate themes were coded from the data, only some of which overlapped with Neff’s (2003b) conceptualization of self-compassion. Consistent with the concept of mindfulness we observed that people accepted experiences, accepted personal limitations, and assumed personal responsibility. Regarding the theme of common humanity, a small number of responses involved perspective-taking, wishing others well, and reflecting on shared human experiences. Self-kindness also was observed, almost entirely in the form of self-encouragement, and occasionally liking or taking care of oneself.

Neff described a lack of self-compassion as taking three different general forms: we differentiated a number of response categories that fit within, and occasionally across, these broad constructs. Over-identification appeared as grasping, avoiding experience, avoidant devaluing, self-protective externalizing, directed hostility, catastrophizing, and other forms of over-identification. Isolating thoughts included feeling isolated or alienated, thinking about the self as a victim, and narcissism. Self-judgment appeared as harsh, self-critical judgments about the self, or as qualified or tempered punitive thoughts. Three additional categories of uncompassionate thoughts seemed conceptually to fit within more than one of Neff’s constructs: these were fearing other’s reactions, internalizing others’ judgments, and pressure to achieve. Altogether, then, we differentiated 15 uncompassionate response categories, which together accounted for more than half of the codeable responses.

Common humanity was particularly infrequent, comprising less than one percent of responses. Despite its infrequency, I believe this overarching category is important because it was qualitatively distinct from other types of responses, and because it appeared to serve the specific function anticipated by Neff (2003b). It is possible that responses involving common
humanity themes may occur more frequently in different populations or using vignettes that portray different types of experiences. For example, common humanity responses were seen more frequently in response to social rejection than failure vignettes, which may suggest that social situations could prime the most inherently social aspect of self-compassion (common humanity). Common-humanity may be more commonplace in populations such as experienced meditators (who have demonstrated higher levels of self-compassion, Neff & Pommier, 2013), or people from cultures that cultivate deeper understandings of common-humanity.

Responses conveying self-kindness and mindful acceptance also did not occur often, although they did occur relatively more frequently that common humanity. Missing from the data was balanced awareness, which is a key component of mindfulness. Self-kindness appeared in the data in a manner more analogous to Neff’s (2003b) conceptualization; however, it was rare.

In the current study, it is possible that self-compassion is a rare response to situations involving failure and social rejection because our participants may have been encouraged to foster self-esteem, which is often based on achievement and competition, rather than cultivating self-compassion. Neff (2011b) outlines psychology’s “love affair” with self-esteem and the promotion of self-esteem in schools, along with the problems with self-esteem that include ego-defensiveness and self-enhancement. If our sample were taught to value themselves based on achieving better than average, rather than valuing themselves from a self-compassionate perspective that emphasizes common humanity, then it makes sense that our sample showed much more pressure to achieve and isolation than self-kindness and common humanity. Accordingly, research indicates self-compassion may be more positively associated with consistent self-worth, and inversely associated with self-rumination, anger, and other negative outcomes, than self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Empirical support for the advantages of self-compassion over self-esteem continues to build (e.g., Leary et al., 2007; Marshall et al., 2015; Neff, 2003b; Neff & Vonk, 2009).

The coding system was demonstrated to be reliable by one metric (i.e., intraclass correlations). This finding would be bolstered by future research in which independent raters reached absolute agreement, and rigorous statistics such as Krippendorff’s Alpha were used.

Evidence for validity was mixed. The correlations between the coded categories and established scales, when present, were typically small. First, it is important to note that even though the associations were small, the CIs were narrow, providing support that I have
uncovered real, albeit small, associations. These small associations can be interpreted in different ways. One interpretation is that the small correlations indicate that the vignettes and coding scheme are not precisely capturing self-compassion as it is currently conceptualized. Another interpretation is that the vignettes and coding scheme are measuring different aspects of self-compassion. It is likely that both of these interpretations are operative: The vignettes and coding scheme require further refinement, and it is also providing useful information about the presence of self-compassion within automatic thoughts.

The vignette measure may be capturing spontaneous state expressions of self-compassion (and un-compassion) through automatic thoughts, as opposed to the SCS that is capturing self-reports of summative judgments about trait-like responses in moments of suffering. Even though we are unable to see directly into someone’s mind to observe how self-compassionate they are to themselves, examining their automatic thoughts is a way to get one step closer to a naturalistic observation of the relationship with the self. It is true that reporting of automatic thoughts may still be prone to reporting biases, but asking participants to provide immediate automatic thoughts in response to discrete scenarios can give useful data for two primary reasons. First of all, by asking people to give their automatic thoughts in response to a scenario, we are asking for “state” responses in specific situations instead of asking for “trait” judgments of how they feel they relate to themselves on a regular basis. This may be less prone to defenses, as they are just responding to a single situation, instead of reflecting on how they usually, or perhaps should respond to themselves most of the time. Additionally, the items on the SCS may be priming people to think about their responses in self-compassionate terms, whereas automatic thoughts in response to vignettes allow people to show us how they respond to suffering spontaneously. For example, one item of the SCS states, “I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.” This might be an ideal that one upholds; however, when faced with suffering in the moment, they might have any number of spontaneous responses. It is important to note that the mean SCS Self-compassion score was only slightly lower than the SCS Un-compassion score; however, when I actually looked at automatic thoughts, un-compassion was much more common in participants’ first three automatic thoughts than self-compassion.

A limitation of the current study is that I relied on self-report of automatic thoughts. We used vignettes to offer an alternative to traditional questionnaires with the hope that asking for spontaneous automatic thoughts would provide us with more immediate, genuine responses to
discrete scenarios instead of asking for summative judgments that emerged after individual consideration and interpretations. Although compared to a questionnaire approach this method allows for a closer look at the process as it occurs, it is still possible that participants may not recognize or actually be willing to report their first three automatic thoughts if they are difficult or threatening. Furthermore, well-developed self-kindness, common humanity, and particularly mindfulness, may take a non-verbal, or perhaps ineffable form that would not be detected in linguistically mediated automatic thoughts. It is possible that mindful awareness is often non-verbal and is therefore rarely detectable in automatic thoughts, or mindful awareness may happen in parallel to other thoughts, and therefore not get expressed in self-talk, especially if we are not socialized to verbally share mindful observations.

Another key limitation of the current study is its reliance on vignettes instead of real experiences of failure and rejection. I asked participants to imagine various scenarios; however, this request was made through an online study and participants undoubtedly varied in their levels of engagement with the study. Furthermore, imagining what one might think in a given situation is removed from what one might think when actually faced with that situation. I would expect that the level of emotional intensity would be much less when imagining a situation. Also, similar to critiques about traditional self-report measures (see Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), people make judgments about how they might react in certain situations and may lack the insight necessary to be able to accurately predict their own behaviour, including thoughts. Vignettes may be one step closer to true experiences than traditional self-report questionnaires; however, it is still removed from real life. This element of the study could be improved upon by actually putting participants in (ethically sound) situations of failure or rejection and asking them to reflect on and share their thinking processes.

**Directions for Future Research.**

The vignette measure and coding scheme requires refinement and further validation. Some preliminary ideas for doing this are: having self-compassion experts provide input on the coding system, conducting interviews with participants who respond to vignettes to explore the meaning and intention around automatic thoughts, or developing innovative experiments to try to evoke self-compassion (or un-compassion) in participants and asking them to explain their intrapersonal processes immediately after a failure or rejection scenario, and code these more in-depth responses to see how the coding scheme performs in such cases.
A notable strength of the current study was the use of two large samples (MTurk and a university sample) to develop and apply the coding system, thus increasing confidence in its generalization to similar samples. It also allowed us to differentiate more subtypes within our major categories, possibly laying the groundwork to code the self-compassionate functions of automatic thoughts of future diverse samples. For instance, narcissism (self-protective isolation) was an extremely rare category in our sample; however, due to the large sample size we were able to detect this qualitatively distinct subtype of isolation that might be centrally relevant in clinical or forensic populations. Although some categories occurred too infrequently to permit calculation of inter-rater reliability, it is possible that these responses may be more frequent, and therefore more reliably coded, in other samples or using different vignettes. For example, the vignette “being told by a stranger that your sweater is ugly” may evoke more feelings of anger and make revelations of narcissistic automatic thoughts more common. Thus, I recommend future research include these categories.

The application sample was limited in that it was restricted to undergraduate students. This was a logical sample with which to launch the coding scheme; however, findings from this sample will not necessarily generalize to all emerging adults because university students tend to be unusual on many variables when compared to other samples of the human population (Henrich et al., 2010). The vignettes may also be scalable for use with adolescents. Future research with populations that differ by age, culture, and sub-culture, might reveal meaningful differences in what self-compassion looks like among these groups. Understanding the forms self-compassion might take across these different cultural perspectives would teach us about what self-compassion means for different groups of people. Comparison of unique ways that self-compassion manifests in different cultures may lead to hypotheses about how self-compassion develops, or present novel ways to foster the development of self-compassion in other groups. In the current study, a broad range of scenarios were developed that tend to be commonly experienced in an undergraduate population. A variety of scenarios gathered responses to failure and rejection across several life domains (e.g., academic failures, creative failures, social rejection through electronic media, and in-person social rejection). Before conducting research with other populations, I recommend piloting the vignettes to ensure participants find the scenarios salient and soliciting other examples of difficult experiences. Although I expect that social rejection and personal failure will be broadly considered stressful,
other scenario categories (e.g., not meeting one’s responsibility; ageing) may be relevant to certain populations.

The coding team and I coded responses using a self-compassion lens. Researchers coming from other theoretical orientations would see different distinctions with which to categorize these data. For example, from a mental health and well-being perspective, responses could be sorted by typically adaptive versus maladaptive. Alternately, from a mental illness perspective, some responses may be associated more with internalizing versus externalizing difficulties. There are myriad ways the data could be organized depending on theoretical lens.

Additionally, the concept of self-compassion itself is in a period of evolution and debate. Future research could refine the coding system to reflect other conceptualizations of self-compassion and relate it to new measures of self-compassion. Gilbert and colleagues (2017) recently published a self-compassion scale that focuses on engagement with self-compassion and self-compassionate action. Self-compassionate action may map well onto coded Reasoning and Problem Solving, for example.

This research uniquely allowed us to examine the process of self-compassion in our sample. We were not only able to observe which elements of self-compassion were expressed, but also which were notably missing (i.e., common humanity and self-kindness) from our sample when they thought about situations of failure and social rejection. Future studies can use a vignette-based approach to inform the focus and content of self-compassion interventions, tailoring them to the needs of the specific population. For instance, our sample would likely benefit from focusing on building a sense of common humanity, and learning how to be kind to themselves.

Implications and Conclusion.

I argue for the continued development, refinement, and use of the vignette measure and coding scheme. The field of self-compassion is relying almost exclusively on the SCS. Although this measure has been intensively studied, and researchers around the world are developing self-compassion research in compelling ways using the SCS, there is no self-compassion criterion that can be used to demonstrate that those who self-report that they are self-compassionate on the SCS are actually more self-compassionate in their daily lives. Although individuals may have some sense of their trait self-compassion, or their tendency to be self-compassionate in their day-to-day lives, several biases might be impacting their responses. Using the vignettes and coding
automatic thoughts allows us a window to look into how self-compassion may, or may not, manifest in situations of suffering.

By using the vignette measure, we were able to witness that only 13% of codeable responses to failure, and 6.5% of codeable response to rejection were self-compassionate. We were able to see that our sample was far more likely to think uncompassionate thoughts, or consider information seeking or problem solving, rather than spontaneously cogitating in a self-compassionate manner. Furthermore, we were able to disentangle what self-compassionate automatic thoughts actually looked like in our young adult sample. Instead of uniformly describing self-compassion through the close-ended lens of the SCS, we saw how each component of self-compassion was expressed in the thoughts of our participants. Mindfulness was most often characterized by accepting personal limitations in our sample, self-kindness manifested as self-encouragement, and over-identification appeared as grasping, craving, or wanting. Isolation appeared as portrayed in the SCS. Self-judgment appeared as described in the SCS, but was observed in levels of severity ranging from global negative thoughts about the self to more transient anger towards the self. Our application sample had a mean score on the SCS of 3/5, indicating a neutral score half way between almost never, and almost always having a sense of common humanity; however, when their automatic thoughts were coded, fewer than 1% of responses reflected a sense of common humanity. The coded responses to the vignettes provide a nuanced perspective on the self-compassionate content of automatic thoughts that is an illuminating companion to the SCS.
References


study in a large adolescent sample. *Personality and Individual Differences, 74,* 116-121. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.92.5.887


DOI: [10.1080/13576500444000317](https://doi.org/10.1080/13576500444000317)


Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

How old are you? ________________

What is your gender? ________________

Which of the following BEST describes your ethnic background? Please TICK ALL THAT APPLY.

- Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis
- White/European
- Black/Africa/Caribbean
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Filipino, etc.)
- Arab (Saudi Arabian, Palestinian, Iraqi, etc)
- South Asian (East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc)
- Latin American (Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Brazilian, Columbian, etc)
- West Asian (Iranian, Afghani, etc)
- Other (please specify)
Appendix B: List of Vignettes

For the following scenarios, we ask that you please tell us what your automatic thoughts would be in the given situations. We are looking for phrases or statements that describe your thoughts, not individual words like "good" or "ok" or a single emotion word. Please list three (3) automatic thoughts that you may have when:

1. Failing a test at school*
2. Struggling with an art project*
3. Striking out at a baseball game*
4. Getting picked last for teams at a soccer game *
5. Not being invited to your friend’s birthday party*
6. Being left out of a social conversation*
7. Not having a date for a dance
8. Not getting the job after an interview
9. Not being able to play a song on your instrument that you have been working on*
10. Being told by a stranger that your clothes are ugly
11. Tripping and falling in front of a group of your peers
12. Losing a sweater that your friend lent to you
13. Having a school photo or driver’s license photo taken that you dislike
14. Losing at your favourite video game*
15. A friend not wanting to go to a movie with you
16. Being rejected by someone you asked on a date*
17. Not having a friend request accepted on social media (e.g. Facebook)
18. No one liking a picture you posted on social media (e.g. Instagram)*
19. A friend does not answer a text message an hour after you know they read it*
20. Someone does not like the lunch you made them
21. Struggling with math homework*
22. Taking care of your friend’s dog and the dog ran away
23. Borrowing your friend’s phone and breaking it
24. Saying something mean about a friend and they overheard you

*Note. The 12 vignettes that were coded for the Application Sample are indicated with *
Appendix C: Self-Compassion Scale

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
2. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
7. When I’m down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
11. I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like.
12. When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
13. When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
16. When I see aspects of myself that I don’t like, I get down on myself.
17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
18. When I’m really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
19. I’m kind to myself when I’m experiencing suffering.
20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I’m experiencing suffering.
22. When I’m feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
23. I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
25. When I fail at something that’s important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
Appendix D: Level of Self-Criticism Scale

Please read each statement carefully before answering. Please indicate how well each item describes you, using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I am very irritable when I have failed.
2. I have a nagging sense of inferiority.
3. I am very frustrated with myself when I don't meet the standards I have for myself.
4. I am usually uncomfortable in social situations where I don't know what to expect.
5. I often get very angry with myself when I fail.
6. I don’t spend much time worrying about what other people will think of me.
7. I get very upset when I fail.
8. If you are open with other people about your weaknesses, they are likely to still respect you.
9. Failure is a very painful experience for me.
10. I often worry that other people will find out what I'm really like and be upset with me.
11. I don't often worry about the possibility of failure.
12. I am confident that most of the people I care about will accept me for who I am.
13. When I don't succeed, I find myself wondering how worthwhile I am.
14. If you give people the benefit of the doubt, they are likely to take advantage of you.
15. I feel like a failure when I don't do as well as I would like.
16. I am usually comfortable with people asking me about myself.
17. If I fail in one area, it reflects poorly on me as a person.
18. I fear that if people get to know me too well, they will not respect me.
19. I frequently compare myself with my goals and ideals.
20. I seldom feel ashamed of myself.
21. Being open and honest is usually the best way to keep others' respect.
22. There are times that it is necessary to be somewhat dishonest in order to get what you want.
Appendix E: Test of Self-Conscious Affect-Adolescent

For the following items you will find descriptions of a variety of situations. After each situation, you will see several statements about different ways that people might think or feel.

As you read about each situation, really imagine that you are in that situation now. Imagine how you might think or feel. Then read each statement. Then indicate how likely it is that the statement would be true for you. 1 means that you are not at all likely to think or feel that way, and 5 means that you are very likely to think or feel that way.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We’re simply interested in your own thoughts and ideas about these situations.

1. You trip in the cafeteria and spill your friend’s drink.
   a) I would be thinking that everyone is watching me and laughing.
   b) I would feel very sorry. I should have watched where I was going.
   c) I wouldn’t feel bad because it didn’t cost very much.
   d) I would think: “I couldn’t help it. The floor was slippery.”

2. For several days you put off talking to a teacher about a missed assignment. At the last minute you talk to the teacher about it, and all goes well.
   a) I would think: “I guess I’m more convincing than I thought.”
   b) I would regret that I put it off.
   c) I would feel like a coward.
   d) I would think: “The teacher should have asked me about it first. It’s her job.”

3. While playing around, you throw a ball and it hits your friend in the face.
   a) I would feel stupid that I can’t even throw a ball.
   b) I would think: “Maybe my friend needs more practice at catching.”
   c) I would think: “It was just an accident.”
   d) I would apologize and make sure my friend feels better.

4. You and a group of classmates worked very hard on a project. Your teacher singles you out for a better grade than anyone else.
   a) I would think: “The teacher is playing favourites.”
   b) I would feel alone and apart from my classmates.
   c) I would feel competent and proud of myself.
   d) I would tell the teacher that everyone should get the same grade.

5. You break something at a friend’s house and then hide it.
   a) I would think: “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or replace it.”
   b) I would avoid seeing that friend for a while.
   c) I would think: “A lot of things aren’t made very well.”
   d) I would think: “It was only an accident.”
6. At school, you wait until the last minute to plan a project, and it turns out badly.
   a) I would feel useless and incompetent.
   b) I would think: “There are never enough hours in the day.”
   c) I would feel that I deserve a bad grade.
   d) I would think: “What’s done is done.”

7. You wake up one morning and remember it’s your mother’s birthday. You forgot to get her something.
   a) I would think: “It’s not the gift that matters. All that really matters is that I care.”
   b) I would think: “After everything she’s done for me, how could I forget her birthday?”
   c) I would feel irresponsible and thoughtless.
   d) I would think: “Someone should have reminded me.”

8. You walk out of a test thinking you did extremely well. Then you find out you did poorly.
   a) I would feel that I should have done better. I should have studied more.
   b) I would feel stupid.
   c) I would think: “It’s only a test.”
   d) I would think: “The teacher must have graded it wrong.”

9. You make a mistake at school and find out a classmate is blamed for the error.
   a) I would think: “The teacher does not like the classmate.”
   b) I would think: “Life is not fair.”
   c) I would keep quiet and avoid the classmate.
   d) I would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation.

10. You were talking in class and your friend got blamed. You go to the teacher and tell him the truth.
    a) I would think: “The teacher should have gotten the facts straight before he blamed my friend.”
    b) I would feel like I always get people in trouble.
    c) I would be proud of myself for being an honest person.
    d) I would think: “I’m the one who should get in trouble. I shouldn’t have been talking in the first place.”

11. You and your friend are talking in class and you get in trouble.
    a) I would think: “I should know better. I deserve to get in trouble.”
    b) I would think: “We were only whispering.”
    c) I would think: “The teacher is unfair.”
    d) I would feel like everyone in the class was looking at me and they were about to laugh.

12. You make plans to meet a friend. Later you realize you stood them up.
    a) I would think: “I’m inconsiderate.”
    b) I would think: “Well, they’ll understand.
    c) I would try to make it up to them as soon as possible.
    d) I would think: “Someone distracted me just before I was supposed to meet my friend.”
13. You volunteer to help raise money for a good cause. Later you want to quit, but you know your help is important.
   a) I would feel selfish and I’d think I am basically lazy.
   b) I would think: “I was pressured into helping.”
   c) I would think: “I should be more concerned about doing whatever I can to help.”
   d) I would feel very satisfied with myself.

14. Your report card isn’t as good as you wanted. You show it to your parents when you get home.
   a) I would think: “Everyone gets bad grades once in a while.”
   b) I would think: “I really didn’t deserve the grades, it wasn’t my fault.”
   c) Now that I got a bad report card, I would feel worthless.
   d) I would think: “I should listen to everything the teacher says and study harder.”

15. You have recently moved to a new school and everyone has been very helpful. A few times you had to ask for some big favors, but you returned the favors as soon as you could.
   a) I would feel like a failure.
   b) I would think: “Maybe this school doesn’t do enough to help new students.”
   c) I would be especially nice to the people who had helped me.
   d) I would think: “I am smart to ask for help when I need it.”
Appendix F: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle Strongly Agree. If you agree with the statement, circle Agree. If you disagree, circle Disagree. If you strongly disagree, circle Strongly Disagree.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

2. At times, I think I am no good at all.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
   Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
    Strongly Agree          Agree          Disagree          Strongly Disagree
Appendix G: The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire 2

Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate how true each statement is for you by circling a number next to it. Use the scale below to make your choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>never true</td>
<td>very seldom true</td>
<td>seldom true</td>
<td>sometimes true</td>
<td>frequently true</td>
<td>almost always true</td>
<td>always true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My painful experiences and memories make it difficult for me to live a life that I would value.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m afraid of my feelings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I worry about not being able to control my worries and feelings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My painful memories prevent me from having a fulfilling life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Emotions cause problems in my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It seems like most people are handling their lives better than I am.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Worries get in the way of my success.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Vignette Coding Manual

Compiled by: Aleece Katan and Dana Kondo

General Rules

• **Before you begin:** Be mindful of how you are feeling (i.e. your present thoughts and emotions) going into coding. When coding ambiguous statements, it is easy to project your own feelings into the thoughts. Don’t be afraid to take mindfulness breaks!

• **What’s the function?:** When choosing an appropriate code, ask yourself what you believe is the overall function and the meaning of the thought. What purpose does the thought serve?

• **Focus on one vignette at a time:** When coding individual thoughts, it is okay to gain context by looking at the individual’s other responses to the same vignette, however, do not look at the individual’s responses to other vignettes as different vignettes may evoke different emotional reactions.

• **Separating thoughts:** Be careful when separating individual thoughts to preserve the intended meaning. If sentences include conjunction words (e.g., because), typically these are coded as a single thought based on the overall function.
  - **Note:** Occasionally individuals will include complex thoughts, where it is clear that they meant the entire statement to be included as a single thought, however there is more than one clear function to the thought. In these cases the thought can be separated into two or more thoughts so that each function can be accurately coded.

• **Double coding:** Only resort to double coding a single thought when both codes can be equally justified. It is not necessary to double code a thought if both of the codes fall under the same general category (e.g., two codes under Mindfulness).

• **Uncodable:** If a thought can justifiably be placed into more than one category and if the categories are opposite in nature (e.g., mindful versus over-identifying) then it is uncodable
  - **Misinterpreted vignette:** If the individual misinterprets or appears to have not connected with the vignette, the thought is uncodable.
  - **Humour:** Thoughts that are intended to be humorous in nature are considered uncodable. Humour provides different functions for different people and as a result, cannot be coded into a single category.
  - **Single Words:** If an individual only provides a single word as a thought, it cannot be coded. Not enough context can be gained from one word to interpret what the overall function is.
    - **Be Careful:** This rule does not apply to single word exclamations that can be coded under Venting.

• **Syntax > Punctuation:** When coding a thought, the syntax trumps punctuation (i.e., if the punctuation does not correspond with the statement, then focus on the syntactical context)

• **Fight Heuristics:** Resist the urge to rely on heuristics (e.g., do not place all questions into “information seeking”)

§ **Be Careful:** This rule does not apply to single word exclamations that can be coded under Venting.
Introduction to the Vignettes

See below for some of the illustrated vignettes that had vignette-specific notes and common issues that arose throughout the coding process. Referring back to the original vignette can be advantageous when coding individual thoughts, as it allows you to re-familiarize yourself with the image displayed to participants. By referring to the vignette, it is easier to determine whether or not the individual is projecting their own emotions into the vignette, or whether they are commenting on subtle part of the image.

Please note: Depending on the participant’s gender identification, he or she was provided with a gender matched version of the vignette (i.e., the lead character was altered). The other features of the vignette remained consistent despite the gender of the character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Key Notes/ Common Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failing a test at school</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>This vignette evoked an array of responses, which seemingly depended on whether or not the individual valued or prioritized their education and grades. It is important to keep in mind that the vignette does not state the weighting of this test, and as such, does not imply that the individual will fail a course or their program. This is important to keep in mind when identifying catastrophic thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striking out at a baseball game</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>While striking out at baseball implies that the character is out of the game, it does not imply that they let their team down. Many participants tended to isolate themselves by feeling as though striking out brought down their entire team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting picked last for teams at a soccer game</td>
<td>The individual may use the term “they” to describe the team captains or the entire group of individuals. For this vignette, try to avoid placing emphasis on the pluralisation of this term as it may lead to mistakenly coding isolation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing at your favourite video game</td>
<td>Unlike other vignettes where choosing to restart may insinuate avoiding the experience, restarting in a video game is all you can do in this circumstance. For this vignette in particular, restarting is coded as Problem Solving.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being rejected by someone you asked on a date</td>
<td>In this vignette, if an individual asks, “Why don’t they like me?” it is assumed that they are not victimizing themselves, but are genuinely seeking information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No one liking a picture you posted on social media (e.g. Instagram)

On Instagram, a “like” is a term used to describe a person physically liking an image (it’s a button). For this reason, when discussing “likes,” it is difficult to delineate whether the individual is referring to this physical act of liking an image, or describing others’ preference for the photo. Therefore, it is critical to look at the context of the thought to further clarify how the individual is using the word.

A friend does not answer a text message an after hour you know they read it

When coding this vignette, it is imperative to keep in mind socially constructed rules among this sample regarding texting. Note, the vignette shows that the text has been read. In the university aged sample, reading but not responding to a text is frequently taken to be rude as it is thought to be a deliberate act of ignoring someone.

M1 Acknowledging Experience
- **Category explained**: This category consists of individuals identifying their emotional state or commenting on their experience, based on the vignette.
- **What You See is What You Get**: Observations are based solely on the vignette, and the individual does not go beyond what is pictured (e.g. “They are not texting me.” when the vignette states that the text is not answered).
- **Note**: Adjectives or emotion words that are preceded by words such as “so/really/very” are still considered a part of this category (e.g., “I feel very upset”).
- **Hint**: This category frequently contains items that begin with “I feel…” or “This is...” to describe the individual’s present thoughts.

Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?
Kristen Neff defines mindfulness as the ability to maintain a balanced perspective, such that the individual is able to observe and accept any mental or emotional experiences as they arise, as opposed to over-identifying or suppressing these phenomena.
M2 Accepting Personal Limitations

- **Category explained**: The individual is acknowledging or accepting their lack of abilities in a specific area or activity (e.g., math, art, sports). The person is aware of their incapability.
- **Be careful**: There is a distinct difference between acknowledging one’s personal limitations, and making a self-judgment. For instance, stating “I am horrible at drawing” or “I am not good at soccer” is admitting that one is not good at a particular activity. In contrast, making global statements such as “I am a failure” or “I am terrible at socializing” signifies that one is over-identifying, and making judgments about the self (i.e. coded as self-judgment).
- **Hint**: Statements that include “it’s okay” tend to indicate the individual’s acceptance.

M3 Accepting Experience

- **Category explained**: The individual goes beyond simply acknowledging the scenario and indicates that they are content with the outcome. The general nature of these statements should feel as if the individual is embracing the situation and is at peace with it.
- **Hint**: Statements that include “it’s okay” tend to indicate the individual’s acceptance.

M4 Acknowledging Personal Responsibilities

- **Category explained**: The individual is identifying their role in yielding the outcome of the event. For instance, acknowledging one’s role in failing a test could be stating, “I did not study,” or “I could have studied more.” The individual is accepting their responsibility for their failure or stating that they contributed to the outcome in a non-judgmental manner.
- **Be careful**: Any indication that the individual is grasping at what could have been different (e.g., “I should have studied more”) indicates that they are not accepting responsibility for their actions, which places this thought in O1 Grasping.

**Over-Identification**

**What is over-identification?**
Over-identification is the process by which an individual becomes so preoccupied with their subjective experience and emotions that they are unable to adequately rationalize about their current situation. Over-identification primarily consists of two separate functions: pushing away or holding on too tightly. Instead of letting emotions naturally come and go or accepting an experience as it is, these operations begin to dominate one’s perception of events.

**O1 Grasping (Wishing/Wanting/Worry)**

- **Category explained**: The individual is holding or “clinging” onto specific emotions or a different outcome, failing to accept the present emotions or circumstances. This may be expressed through wishful thinking (e.g., “I wish I didn’t have to write this test.”) or by worrying about a future event (e.g., “I hope I don’t fail the next test.”)
- **“Why can’t I do this?”**: This frustration in the individual’s inability to perform a specific activity insinuates that the individual wishes that he or she were able to behave in a different manner. For example, stating, “Why can’t I draw?” suggests that the individual does not accept their current abilities, as they are wishing for a different outcome.
Be careful: If this is phrased more broadly, such as “Why can’t I do anything right”, this is no longer considered as part of the Grasping category, as the individual is engaging in self-victimization (i.e., coded as I2 Self as Victim)

- **Initial Disbelief**: Initial disbelief regarding an outcome is considered grasping, as it is the opposite of acknowledging and accepting the experience, as is.

- **Hint #1**: Wishing/Wanting thoughts can *typically* be followed by saying “well you didn’t/did”. For example: “I wish I wore makeup for the photo.” could be proceeded by “well you didn’t”.

- **Hint #2**: Many of the thoughts placed within this category *typically* include terms such as, “could have/would have/should have”

- **Grasping vs. Pressure to Achieve**: It is important to note the overall function of the thought when deciding between these two codes. When torn between Pressure to Achieve and Grasping (e.g., “I should have worked *harder*”), Pressure to Achieve trumps Grasping, as it has an element of grasping within it.

- **Grasping vs. Avoiding Experience**: It is important to delineate these categories when individuals are insinuating that they are contemplating stopping or removing themselves from the activity or experience. When an individual states “I want to quit.” or “I do not want to do this anymore.” it is considered grasping, as it is still a want and does not imply that they will stop the task. In contrast, coding the thought of Avoiding Experience would require an explicit reference to disengaging from the proposed circumstance (e.g., “I should quit.” or “I am going to stop playing.”)

- **Grasping vs. Fearing Other’s Reactions**: If it is equally considered Fearing Other’s Reactions (Y) and Grasping (O1) then Y trumps O1.

**O2 Avoiding Experience**

- **Category explained**: The individual is not willing to engage in the experience, so they avoid it by either explicitly opting to do something else (e.g., “I am just going to do X instead.”) or completely disengaging (e.g., “I give up.”)

- **“Taking a break”**: Taking a break is a unique form of avoiding that is *not* coded in this category, since a break insinuates that the individual plans to return to the activity. A break from something undesirable with the intention of returning in a better state of mind is considered self-care.

  - **Note**: If the individual says they are taking a break for a *specific* reason, this is considered problem-solving (e.g., “I’ll take a break so I can go get inspiration for my artwork.”)

- **Hint**: Using the word “instead” often indicates the person is leaving the present experience for something they would rather be doing (e.g., “I’ll just go watch TV instead.”)

- **Substance Use**: Using substances as an escape for not having to directly cope with a situation qualifies as avoidance (e.g., “I’ll just go get high.”)

- **When Is It Enough to be Avoiding?**: Asking if something can be avoided (e.g., “Can I stop now?”) or wanting to avoid something (e.g., “I don’t want to do X.”) is not direct enough for it to be clear the individual will actually stop what they are doing. When the individual uses words such as “probably” or “should,” this begins to suggest they are serious about avoiding the experience and can be coded in this category.
• **Fearing Other’s Reactions vs. Avoidance:** Worrying about how other people will respond and not directly stating that an action will be taken to escape this fear will only get coded as Fearing Other’s Reactions (e.g., “I’d want to hide it from everyone.”)

O3 Avoidant Devaluing
• **Category explained:** The individual is actively attempting to mitigate the impact of the experience, and does so by denigrating the experience in some manner, such as by talking it down or brushing it off.
• **Why do I even bother?** While this may sound like the individual is engaging in a process of self-victimization, the overall function is to devalue the task at hand (think: Why do I even bother with this because it is so invaluable).
• **Hint #1:** The thoughts may be prefaced by “this is so useless,” thus indicating that the individual is devaluing the activity or experience.
• **Hint #2:** Thoughts followed by “anyway” may be indicative of brushing off an adverse or challenging experience (e.g., “I didn’t want to be friends with them anyway.”)

O4 Self-Protection Externalizing
• **Category explained:** The individual is responding to a situation in a defensive way or blaming someone/something else in order to preserve their personal beliefs about the experience. Their immediate thought is to look to sources outside of the self and dismiss any potentiality that they had a part to play in the outcome.
• **It’s not me, it’s you:** If the initial feeling of the thought is that the individual is playing the blame game or pointing a finger at anyone or anything besides themselves, then the self-protection externalizing category should be considered.
• **Be careful:** It is important to consider whether the individual is blaming an outside source or is attempting to look at the situation from another point of view. Just because a thought includes a reason that does not have to directly include the individual who is answering, does not necessarily mean they are blaming another. Ask yourself if the reason the individual has given would bring them closer to another or push them away. If they are pushing away, the thought belongs in O4 Self-Protection Externalizing. If it could bring them closer, then we need to consider C2 Perspective Taking.
  - **Note:** If it is unclear whether the individual is intending to push away or bring closer, the thought is considered uncodable.

O5 Directed Hostility
• **Category explained:** The individual is evidently exerting unnecessarily hostile statements or actions towards another individual or object.
  - Directed hostility can be identified as explicit, destructive behaviour towards an object (e.g., “I am going to break the controller.”) Note: Merely stating that one wants to break something results in it being coded as Grasping.
  - Directed hostility may appear milder towards a person (e.g., “You idiot.”), but can be identified as aggressive statements directed towards another person.
• **Venting vs. Directed Hostility:** To determine which category swearing should be coded as, determine whether or not the swearing is directed towards a subject (i.e., Directed Hostility) or whether it is just an expression without an intended target (i.e., Venting).
O6 Other Over-Identification

- **Category explained:** This category is used when the individual is demonstrating general aversion to the experience OR is ruminating on an emotion or event. Instead of accepting the situation, the individual will project something beyond what is provided in the vignette, typically by either shutting down the experience or dwelling on it.

- **Hint #1 “I can’t”**: When an individual says they “can’t” do something, they are closing the door on the possibility that there could have ever been any other outcome. (e.g., “I can’t do art.” Everyone can do art, they just might not be able to do it well).

- **Hint #2 “I hate”**: Similar to “I can’t”, when individuals “hate” something, it often serves a similar function of shutting down the experience.

- **Multiple “O’s”**: Sometimes we see a thought that is clearly an example of the individual over-identifying with the vignette, but we can justify putting it in more than one of the over-identification categories. When this occurs, the thought can be coded only as O6 Over-Identification Other.

- **“It’s gonna be bad”**: Individuals who automatically assume the worst and make negative future predictions beyond what is depicted in the vignette.
  - **Note:** If the negative future prediction is extreme or irrational, it is considered O7 Catastrophizing.

O7 Catastrophizing

- **Category explained:** The individual is projecting irrational predictions of negative outcomes or jumping to extreme conclusions that are outside of the vignette.

- **Be careful #1:** While catastrophic thoughts are often future oriented (e.g., “I’m going to fail out of school.”) this is not always the case.

- **Be careful #2:** Use your best judgment when deciding what is considered catastrophizing and what can be considered a “worry” (i.e., Grasping). Keep in mind that catastrophic thoughts are irrational in nature (e.g., responding to being rejected for a date with, “I’m going to be lonely forever.”)

- **Note:** Catastrophizing statements are usually an extreme form of another function (e.g., Isolation, Judgment) and thus justifying a double code.

**Self-Kindness**

What is Self-Kindness?

Consistent with Neff (2003b), self-kindness is defined as the process of extending feeling of warmth and gentleness towards the self during moments of suffering or failure. When identifying self-kindness items, channel statements that you would say to a friend who is going through a difficult time.

**K1 Liking Self**

- **Category explained:** The individual is explicitly expressing fondness towards the self. Despite the pictured scenario, the individual continues to view the self from a positive perspective (e.g., “I may not excel at art, but I do excel at other things.”)

**K2 Self-Encouragement or Positive Thinking**

- **Category explained:** The individual is providing the self with support, confidence or motivation during the pictured scenario. This form of support may be expressed as a
silver-lining (e.g., “At least I don’t have to wake up early”), or an active attempt to uplift one’s spirits (e.g., “You will get it next time!”).

- **Be careful:** When an individual is engaging in positive thinking or identifying a silver lining in a difficult circumstance, the individual must not be deluding themselves and instead have a realistic perspective.

- **Hint:** Self-encouragement items are things that you can typically say to a friend to help them feel better during difficult experiences.

- **Self-encouragement vs. Pressure to Achieve:** This distinction is necessary when a thought is stated for the purpose of motivation. A thought is considered to be self-encouraging if it is motivation just to complete the task or to keep trying (e.g., “I can or I will do better.”) This example illustrates a positive prediction made by the individual for the purpose of motivating or encouraging the self to persist. However, if it is motivation to perform better or to improve the self (e.g., “Have to, need to, or got to do better.”), then it is considered pressure to achieve.
  - **Hint:** The presence of the word “enough” may signal pressure to achieve because the individual has set some bar or standard for themselves.
  - **Practice makes perfect:** This is one of the only instances whereby “perfect” is not associated with pressure to achieve, and is considered self-encouragement. This phrase is broadly used to convey that persistent practice of an activity leads to improved abilities, and is not commonly used in an attempt to strive for perfection.

**K3 Self Care**

- **Category explained:** This category captures thoughts that represent an active attempt to extend feelings of warmth towards the self, and caring for the self in the present moment. Acts of self-care can vary from being concrete (e.g., “I am going to take a bubble bath to relax.”) to being more general (e.g., “I am going to take a break.”)

- **Hint:** When deciding whether a thought is considered self-care, imagine how a compassionate parent would care for a young child.

- **“Taking a Break”:** If an individual states that they would just take a break, in the absence of any further explanation (e.g., “I would take a break.”), then it is considered Self-Care. However, if they provide a reason as to why they are taking a break (e.g., “Take a break to get inspired.”) then it would be considered problem solving. Furthermore, if they insinuate that they are giving up and do not plan to return to the task following their break, this would be considered avoiding experience.

**J Self-Judgment**

- **Category explained:** This category captures global negative views of one’s self-worth. These are general statements about an individual’s dissatisfaction with the self.

- **The Broader the Better:** It is important to remember that judgments are extremely broad. When an individual mentions their resentment regarding a specific component (e.g., “I suck at drawing.” or, “I’m horrible at socializing.”), then acceptance of personal limitations must be considered.
• **Statements vs. Questions:** Judgments are final. When participants judge themselves, there is certainty in what they are saying. If a thought is phrased as a question, then self as victim should be considered first (e.g., “I am not good at anything.” versus “Why am I not good at anything?”)

**J2 Proto-Self Judgment**

• **Category explained:** When considering proto-self-judgment, not only is the primary feeling being dealt with, but additionally, the individual is firing a ‘second arrow’ when they also direct further negative emotions at themselves. This second reaction tends to be the individual reprimanding or scolding the self.

• **Be Careful:** It is important to note that this category contains “I feel” statements that are not acknowledging experience. “I feel” statements go beyond acknowledging experience when the feelings are negative and directed toward the self (e.g., “I feel disappointed in myself.” “I feel mad at myself.”)

**Common Humanity**

**What is common humanity?**
Common humanity is the ability to recognize that being imperfect and failing is part of life, and is an experience shared by all humans. These imperfections make us human; knowledge of this shared human experience can be used to attenuate feelings of isolation during difficult circumstances.

**C1 Common Humanity**

• **Category explained:** Thoughts coded as Common Humanity represent an active attempt to be inclusive of others; the individual acknowledges that they are not alone in their experience and are just like everybody else. Moreover, thoughts of Common Humanity may demonstrate that the individual acknowledges their value, and that they are worthy of love and affection, just like all other human beings.

**C2 Perspective Taking for the Purpose of Connection**

• **Category explained:** The individual attempts to view the present situation from the viewpoint of others for the purpose of bringing themselves closer to others, either symbolically or literally.

• **Self-Protection Externalizing vs Perspective Taking:** Be careful to note the inferred function underlying the thought to try to determine whether the individual is pushing others away, or bringing them closer. If the individual is blaming another person and therefore pushing them away, this is an example of Self-Protective Externalizing.

• **Social Reasoning vs. Perspective Taking:** This distinction is imperative for the social rejection vignettes. When an individual is merely thinking about the situation at hand, and attempting to provide plausible explanations for what could have led to the outcome (e.g., “We are not close friends.”) this is considered a form of social reasoning.

**C3 Loving Kindness/Wishing Others Well**

• **Category explained:** The individual is genuinely wishing for the well being of others, despite their personal experience (e.g., “I hope they had fun.” despite not being invited to a party).
What is Isolation?
This category is the opposite of common humanity, whereby an individual feels as though they are alone in their experience, such that they are the only one who is struggling with a task or in an event.

I1 Isolation
- **Category explained:** As previously stated, thoughts coded as ‘Isolation’ indicate that the individual feels as though they are alone in the experience, and therefore disconnects from others. These thoughts typically have the overarching theme of “me versus everyone else” and may have an element of self-blame for the isolation the individual is experiencing.
- **Isolation vs. Information seeking:** Occasionally, isolating thoughts will be phrased as a question, such as “Do they all hate me?” In these instances, the question seems rhetorical in nature and the thought separates the self from others.

I2 Self as Victim
- **Category explained:** The individual places themself at the center of the problem, typically feeling as though this problem frequently targets them in particular. The individual feels that they are deficient or lacking in some regard, which contributes to the negative outcome.
- **Hint:** This category can also be thought of as “What is wrong with me?” or “Why me?”. Automatic thoughts typically reflect the individual’s belief that the problem is in fact them, and therefore they are unable to connect with others.
- **“Why can’t I do anything right?”**: When a sentence begins with “Why can’t/am I”, if what follows is a global judgment (e.g., “Why am I so dumb?”) it is considered Self as Victim. However, if what follows is a specific skill or ability (e.g., “Why can’t I draw?”), then this is an example of grasping (see O1).
  - **Be careful:** “I can’t to this right.” is an example of O6 as the individual is immediately shutting down a specific activity without question, and in doing so, is ultimately pushing it away.
- **“What did I do?”**: When an individual immediately blames the self when there is nothing in the vignette to suggest that they are at fault for the outcome, then it is considered self-victimization.
  - **Be careful:** This is subtly different from questioning whether or not they did something wrong (e.g., “Did I do something wrong?”). Even though these thoughts sound similar, an individual asking whether or not they are to blame is evidence of information seeking, as this may be asked neutrally with the intention of obtaining an answer. This is also different from accepting personal responsibilities as the individual is going beyond the pictured scenario to introduce self-blame.
- **“I figured this would happen”**: Unless an explicit reason is provided as to why the individual predicted this outcome (e.g., “I figured this would happen because I didn’t study.”), which would move it into accepting personal responsibilities, this follows a self-as-victim narrative. Other variations of this statement may include, “Well this is Typical.” or “Of course this would happen to me.”
I3 Self-Protective Isolation/ Narcissism

- **Category explained:** Unlike the other forms of isolation in which the individual is separating themselves from others, typically through some form of self-deprecation, the present category also functions to isolate the individual, but does so by the individual placing themselves above others.
- Examples: “I don’t get rejected.” “I know I’m not the problem.”
- **Hint:** Picture a person standing on a pedestal above everyone else. If the statement is consistent with something this person on the pedestal would say talking down to everyone else around them, or bragging about their capabilities, there is a strong chance the statement belongs in this category.

**Reasoning**

*What is reasoning?*

This category aims to capture thoughts that reflect an explicit attempt to further make sense of a challenging experience. The individual is searching for possible explanations that led to the outcome.

- **For failure vignettes:** For these vignettes, any of the following reasoning codes will reflect thoughts that could be said without any emotion underlying it. Imagine if a robot or any other emotionless being saying it - if it works, then it most likely belongs in one of the following categories.
- **For social rejection vignettes:** These thoughts may not remain as emotionally neutral as in the failure vignettes. Social rejection is a highly emotional experience, and as such, it would only be natural to reason or seek information pertaining to these experiences with some emotion behind it.

**S Information Seeking**

- **Category explained:** As the name implies, this category captures thoughts whose function is to gain further information or clarification regarding an experience or the outcome of an event.
- **Hint:** Thoughts coded as information seeking are *typically* phrased as questions, and as such, can be reasonably answered.
  - **Be careful:** While there are many questions coded as Information Seeking, avoid the assumption that everything followed by a question mark belongs in this category. Remember that the punctuation used by an individual may not be correctly used, or that some statements may be rhetorical questions.
- **Information Seeking vs. Problem Solving:** Information seeking is the process of gathering information prior to acting, whereas problem solving is a more active stance that offers a viable solution to the problem at hand. Accordingly, information seeking does not involve any planning to solve the problem.
- **How does this look different depending on the vignette:** Most commonly, responses to failure vignettes that are indicative of information seeking are emotionally neutral, whereas responses to social rejection typically have more emotional undertones. That said, it is easy to project our own emotions into someone else’s thoughts, so while there may be an emotional undertone, these thoughts should not feel as though the individual is over-identifying with the situation.
P Problem Solving

- **Category explained:** This category consists of thoughts that demonstrate an effort to solve a problem, whether that be thinking of a possible solution or explicitly stating what one will do to solve the problem.

- **Be careful:** For this category, it is imperative to identify that the function of the thought is to solve the problem, and to avoid making value judgments. If the thought’s purpose is to solve a problem, even if it is dangerous or illegal (e.g., stealing or cheating), it still may count as problem-solving if it solves a problem.

- **Pressure to Achieve vs. Problem Solving:** Sometimes things that sound like pressure to achieve may reasonably function to solve a problem. For instance, saying, “I need to study more” despite the presence of the word “need,” provides a viable solution to failing a test. In order to distinguish which categories these thoughts go into, ask yourself whether the individual is setting a standard or bar for themselves that they need to attain to be okay. Are they saying that they are inadequate and are required to improve to a certain standard? If so, this is considered pressure to achieve. However, aiming for self-improvement without setting a personal bar is not pressure to achieve necessarily, as it lacks the sense of constriction and pressure that is present in these items.

R Reasoning

- **Category explained:** Reasoning typically precedes information seeking and problem solving, and involves the individual weighing different options or considering different sides of the issue, in the absence of action to solve a problem or seeking new information.

- **Be careful:** As with the other reasoning categories, some social reasoning examples may be easily confused for other categories, such as I2, due to the emotional connotation. However, if the individual is reasonably examining a different perspective on the issue, then it belongs in this category. For social reasoning in particular, if it begins to sound over-identified, check whether or not it better aligns with the guidelines of O6.

Y Fear Others’ Reactions

- **Category explained:** Fearing others reactions is a specific combination of isolation and pressure to achieve. The critical component in this code is the requirement of fear/worry/anxiety associated with the anticipation of others’ reactions. The individual may display this anxiety by either explicitly stating it or implicitly demonstrating it.

- **Beyond Grasping:** The important element to consider when coding statements in this category is the social aspect. Unlike grasping, these worries are specifically associated with other people. If a statement can reasonably be coded as both O1 Grasping and Y Fear Other’s Reaction, it gets coded only in this category.

- **Trying to Hide:** Many people will try to escape their aversive feelings by hiding something from others (e.g., “I’ll just never show this to anyone.”) The presumed reason driving this action is extensive worry about what others will think. These statements go the additional step by planning to avoid the situation as a result of this fear. As a result, these statements are coded as both O2 Avoiding Experience and Y Fear Others’ Reactions.

Z Internalization of Failure or Judgment

- **Category explained:** This category captures the changing of an individual's beliefs due to a specific experience. There must be clear indication that prior to the incident of focus,
the individual held a more positive view of the self or extension of the self (e.g., a photo they have taken); however, the experience of failure or social rejection has caused them to change their perspective, or at least begin to question their beliefs.

- **Hint:** “I must” statements are a good indication that an individual has changed their viewpoint as a result of the experience (e.g., “I must not be that smart.”). “I guess” statements are less definitive, but still often have a similar theme (e.g., “I guess I’m not that smart.”)

### X Pressure to Achieve

- **Category explained:** When an individual indicates that they are attached to the outcome of doing better and reaching a certain standard that is **personal** and **specific**. This feeling of striving for improvement goes beyond merely wanting to do better and extends into an intensity that qualifies as a need. Thoughts are generally future oriented.

- **Hint:** X Pressure to Achieve has multiple keywords that can help identify when a thought may be coded in this category including: “need to,” “have to,” and “got to.”

- **Be Careful:** While most of the “needs” belong in Pressure to Achieve, certain vignettes evoke responses where a need may belong in Problem Solving (e.g., “I need to start over.” may be a problem solving response in certain situations).

- **Determination and Motivation:** When encountering determination and motivation, it is important to consider the context of the thought. If there is bar that has been set, these mechanisms still serve the purpose of applying pressure to an individual, however if there is no apparent standard to be met in the statement, then K2 Self-Encouragement should be considered.

- **Pressure to Achieve Trumps Grasping:** There is an element of grasping within pressure to achieve thoughts, so if a thought can be coded as both X Pressure to Achieve and O1 Grasping, always code for X Pressure to Achieve.

### V Venting

- **Category explained:** Venting is a brief display of intense emotion, not directed at a specific target. Expressions do not carry any substantial meaning and serve the sole purpose of allowing the individual to release their initial frustrations.

- **Be Careful:** Inappropriate language standing on its own almost always qualifies as venting, however as soon as there is any indication that swearing is directed at someone or something, O5 Directed Hostility needs to be considered.