

DOES EGO THREAT INCREASE PARANOIA?

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the current research was to test whether an ego threat increases paranoia, whether the increase in paranoia was mediated by state self-esteem, and whether the increase in paranoia was moderated by the personality characteristics of agreeableness and or neuroticism. Participants in the ego threat condition completed a very difficult “intelligence test” and were told that they scored poorly on it. There were four behavioral and questionnaire measures of paranoia including: a measurement of the distance participants sat from the experimenter during the debriefing, how much they trusted a stranger in a video, how much they liked/trusted the experimenter, and the Suspiciousness subscale of the Schizotypal Personality Questionnaire (SPQ-S; Raine, 1991). Overall, the results provide mixed support that ego threat increases paranoia. In addition, males tended to display more paranoia in response to the ego threat than did females. However, the increase in paranoia does not appear to be mediated by state self-esteem. Participants low in agreeableness tended to score higher on the paranoia measures in the ego threat condition than in the control condition. These findings suggest that ego threat can increase paranoia and that the effect of ego threat on paranoia is moderated by levels of agreeableness.