

2017

The Effect of Emotionally Validating and Invalidating Responses on Emotional Self-Efficacy

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Gregory Witkowski

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

The Effect of Emotionally Validating and Invalidating Responses on Emotional Self-
Efficacy

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MS, Walden University, 2011

BA, Northern Arizona University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
General Education Psychology

Walden University

May 2017

Abstract

The power of abuse, either in childhood or in adulthood, is clear in many cases. Yet certain types of abuse are harder to detect and understand. Emotional invalidation is one type of abuse that is characterized by an incongruence or minimization of another person's emotions. This experimental study explored effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on people's level of emotional self-efficacy. Participants ($n = 230$) were recruited through Quest Mindshare using a survey created through SurveyMonkey, and randomly placed into 3 groups. All participants were given a survey that asked them to choose how certain pictures made them feel. In the experimental groups, experimenter feedback was either validating or invalidating. Following the survey, a measure of emotional self-efficacy was measured through the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES). An ANCOVA research design was used in order to determine if differences in participant's ESES scores existed between the 3 groups, while controlling for age. The results revealed that the group receiving the invalidating feedback scored significantly lower than did the control group on the ESES score. This finding supports previous research completed with emotional invalidation and involves an aspect of communication that pertains to many different settings and interpersonal relationships including, but not limited to, teachers and students, family members, and friends. This study also has positive social change implications in the mental health field by illuminating the role of invalidating feedback on emotional self-efficacy, a finding which may inform clinicians' work to bolster mental health in all individuals.

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The previous five years have been the hardest and most challenging in my life. Throughout it all there was one person that stood by my side, both figuratively and oftentimes literally. Christopher Owens, I owe a great debt to you for showing me love unconditional to my behaviors. You have kept me upright when many times I could have easily fallen over. Another who has been unwavering in the love she has shown is my mom Patty. There is no love quite like the love from a mother and I consider myself grateful enough to know that firsthand. Thank you mom for constantly seeing the potential and goodness within me. If it were not for both of these people, giving up on this endeavor would have been far too simple.

I also must acknowledge my chair. I understand how cliché creating an acknowledgment for the chair of a dissertation is. Yet I feel my situation greatly warrants it in a unique way. In the beginning when working with another, I came very close to quitting. My initial proposal turned out to be inadequate and all of the hard work and energy that I had put in was, ironically, invalidated. Then I met Dr. Patricia Loun and I got my second wind. Not only did she guide me and aid in the completion of this study but she taught me more than I thought I would ever learn during the process. Words will never quite do justice for how much I appreciate what she has done.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Back in 1969, David Gil discussed how it was common to overlook childhood injuries stemming from physical abuse. Gil (1969) argued for a closer inspection about such abuse and over the last several decades, more and more studies have been conducted illuminating the concept of childhood abuse. Abuse can have negative effects on a person, not only in the moment but also throughout the victim's lifetime (Tuscic, Flander, & Mateskovic, 2012). Abuse is not limited to physical attacks, it also includes other types of abuse, such as neglect, psychological maltreatment, and emotional abuse. While physical forms of child maltreatment can be easily defined, other nondirect types of abuse such as emotional abuse and psychological neglect can be more difficult to grasp yet are equally as devastating (Jud, Landolt, & Lips, 2010). Norwood and Murphy (2012) pointed out the importance of considering other forms of abuse when determining psychological factors associated with posttraumatic stress disorder. Sexual abuse has also been shown to have many different consequences throughout a person's lifetime that permeate in many different ways, such as emotional dysfunction, problematic interpersonal relationships, and inchoate coping skills (Black & DeBlassie, 1993). However, the impact of sexual abuse is not easily understood. Because of myriad variables such as memory repression, additional life stressors and negative experiences, interpretative perceptions, and the complexities involved with experiencing traumatic events, much about the effects of sexual abuse is still unknown (Stream, 1988; Walker, Holman, & Busby, 2009).

Emotional abuse can also be difficult to understand (DeGregoria, 1987). The American Humane Society (n.d.) describes emotional abuse as a pattern of negative behavior, where ignoring, isolating, verbal abuse, and/or neglect is evident. Hart, Brassard, Binggeli, and Davidson (2002) stated that emotional abuse is any action by a caregiver that sends across a negative message about a person's self-worth and being. Emotional abuse and psychological abuse are not as clearly defined as physical abuse. DeGregoria (1987) gave an example of the subjectivity of psychological abuse by showing how women with unorthodox gender roles and nontraditional gender role attitudes were more likely to report psychological abuse when reading over given vignettes as compared with women with more traditional perspectives. Psychological abuse tends to rely on many different factors including an individual's perception as well as their cultural background. Iwaniec (1997) pointed out that the prevalence of emotional abuse is much higher than once thought, citing Garbarino and Gilliam's research that stated emotional abuse as a separate entity in the 1970's. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website, a 2011 poll found that over 650,000 children were found to be victims of some form of maltreatment (Child Maltreatment, 2011). This statistic only includes victims who were referred through Child Protection Services.

Iwaniec (1997) described the difficulties in defining, explaining, and treating psychological abuse. Within the broad categories of psychological abuse, emotional abuse, and maltreatment lie specific forms and behaviors that lead to damaging effects. Neglect, discrimination, belittling, and criticism are all examples. More recent studies

support Iwaniec's claims regarding the prevalence of emotional abuse and the lack of clear understanding about this type of abuse (Foran, Heyman, & Smith Slep, 2014; Glaser, 2002; Stirling & Kerr, 2013).

In this study, I examined a specific example of emotional abuse called emotional invalidation. Linehan (1993) explored the concept of emotional invalidation, which occurs when a person is subjected to minimizing experiences throughout their childhood, thereby creating serious emotional dysregulation.

There is a dearth of studies on emotional invalidation, yet some studies have experimented with giving participants emotionally invalidating feedback with results showing decreased physiological changes (Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011) and increased aggression levels (Herr, Jones, Cohn, & Weber, 2015). Self-report studies showed both the power of perceived emotional invalidation and perceived emotional validation (Flickinger et al., 2016; Haslam, Arcelus, Farrow, & Meyer, 2012; Hong & Lishner, 2016). This bespeaks the power of communication in general, for as Wanzer, Eichhorn, and Thomas-Maddox (2016) pointed out, effective communication does not just improve interpersonal relationships but it goes far in improving a person's health and quality of life.

In this study, my intention was to experimentally examine a passive abuse tactic known as emotional invalidation. The purpose of this study was to illuminate additional adverse effects of emotional invalidation and conversely show the effect of emotional validation, both on emotional self-efficacy. I did this by using an intervention that gave participants either emotionally validating, emotionally invalidating, or zero feedback

after viewing emotion-evoking pictures. After the intervention, all participants completed an emotional self-efficacy scale.

This section includes a discussion of the background of emotional invalidation, an examination of the problem statement and purpose of the study, a discussion of the theoretical bases, an overview of the nature of the study itself along with definitions, assumptions, and limitations, and the potential significance of the study.

Background

Linehan (1993) explored the concept of emotional invalidation, which occurs when a person is subjected to minimizing experiences throughout their childhood, thereby creating serious emotional dysregulation. Linehan defined validation as when a therapist is able to convey to a person that their emotions and feelings are understood. Emotional *invalidation* is the opposite. Selby, Braithwaite, Joiner, and Fincham (2008) defined emotional invalidation as: "... pervasive criticizing, or trivializing of the communication of internal experiences, as well as repeated punishment of appropriate emotional expression coupled with intermittent reinforcement of extreme emotional displays" (p. 885). Krause, Mendelsen, and Lynch (2003) stated that emotional invalidation is behavior in which an emotional experience is treated with complete disregard. In a study done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) the authors followed Linehan's model, defining validation as a method by which a person encourages another to accept and understand their own emotional experience by not trying to change the emotion being felt.

In this study, I sought to understand emotional invalidation as an insidious form of abuse by studying the effects of both validating and invalidating feedback on emotional self-efficacy. I used the inverse of Linehan's model of validation to operationally define the type of invalidation used in the current study: A response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person's emotions or feelings are understood.

There has not been a lot of research conducted regarding emotional invalidation. Linehan's model has been primarily used to help those diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and as such, much of emotional invalidation has been limited to the treatment of and aspects of BPD. The basic principle of Linehan's model, as depicted by Linehan and Koerner (1993), is that the feeling of emotional invalidation stems from erratic and/or inappropriate reactions from family members. Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) provided inspiration for the current study by delving into further examinations of the passive abuse's effects. The authors provided feedback to participants that was quantified as emotional invalidation and noted the negative physical effects such as heart rate, skin conductance, and negative affect. Shenk and Fruzzetti found that invalidating responses negatively affected the participants.

I completed an experimental quantitative study in order to investigate the effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on emotional self-efficacy. I recruited a convenience sample of participants through an online panel called Quest Mindshare. I created a survey through SurveyMonkey, where all participants were randomly assigned into one of three different groups, either being given invalidating feedback, validating

feedback, or zero feedback. After the intervention, all participants completed the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES), which was designed by Kirk, Schutte, and Hine (2008) and used by Pool and Qualter (2012) in their study on improving emotional self-efficacy through a teaching intervention. In the current study I intended to bridge the gap between what is known of both emotional validation and invalidation and one's emotional self-efficacy .

Problem Statement

While the effects of overt forms of abuse, such as physical abuse, are profound, long-lasting, and oftentimes insurmountable (Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993), less overt forms of abuse, such as emotional abuse and psychological abuse, can be much more difficult to understand and manage yet equally as devastating (Jud, Landolt, & Lips, 2010). Even when overt abuse occurs, psychological abuse is often the damaging component felt from the subjective experience (Haj-Yahia, 1999; Follette, 1996). Both emotional abuse and psychological abuse have profound effects. Glaser (2002) presented a broad range of definitions that explain what constitutes emotional and psychological abuse, such as emotional unavailability, unresponsiveness, and insensitivity. Glaser stated that direct, or overt, harmful results are not required to categorize an incident as abuse.

Shapiro et al. (2014) showed that emotional vulnerability ensues when a person is subjected to childhood emotional abuse. In the study, the authors gave individuals several questionnaires relating to childhood abuse, depression, and life events. Noting a “defeat strategy,” the authors found that those who experienced emotional abuse (yet not

physical or sexual abuse) during childhood reported higher level of depressive symptoms when experiencing stressful life events (Sloman, 2000 as cited by Shapero, 2014, p. 10).

In addition, emotional abuse weakens a person's general self-efficacy (Jiahui & Aishu, 2014). Emotional abuse can be a pervasive burden that affects a great number of people. For example, in the study completed by Jiahui and Aishu that explored the relationship between childhood abuse and emotional self-efficacy, 40.2% of college students that were sampled suffered from emotional abuse in their childhood. Karakurt and Silver (2013) studied 250 people who were in intimate relationships and found a prevalence of emotional abuse, suggesting that "...identifying the sequence of events and factors that lead to emotional abuse is important" (p. 11).

One form of emotional abuse is emotional invalidation. Linehan (1993) explored the concept of emotional invalidation, which occurs when a person is subjected to minimizing experiences throughout their childhood, thereby creating serious emotional dysregulation. Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) followed Linehan's model, defining validation as a method in which a person encourages another to accept and understand their own emotional experience by not trying to change their emotions. By experimenting with validating and invalidating responses, Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) found that participants' emotional reactivity (seen through skin conductance, heart rate, and negative affect) was influenced significantly. In another experimental study, Herr et al. (2015) found that emotional invalidation led to an increase in aggression levels amongst those who have emotional difficulties. While these studies parallel the current study in their experimental design, I sought to ascertain if there are significant effects from receiving either

validating feedback, invalidating feedback, or no feedback during an emotion invoking survey on a specific area of self-efficacy called emotional self-efficacy.

The concept of self-efficacy was first defined by Albert Bandura in 1977 and has been augmented by many others (Schunk & Millen, 2012; Yeo & Neal, 2013; Zhou & Cam, 2016). Bandura (1977) stated that social factors contributed to individuals' self-efficacy. In the current study, I explored emotional invalidation with a specific dimension of self-efficacy called emotional self-efficacy, which is a person's perception of their ability to manage their emotions (Pool & Qualter, 2012) and their perception of "coping with negative emotions" (Muris, 2001, p. 146). A study done by Galla and Wood (2012) showed how low levels of emotional self-efficacy made students more vulnerable to anxiety before taking a test. Galla and Wood suggested a further investigation on ways that children can learn to better deal with their negative emotions. In a recent doctoral dissertation done by Pound (2015), she found that not having emotional support from others was correlated with increased difficulties in regulating ones' emotions . Pound collected levels of emotional support, emotional well-being, and perceived emotional invalidation, and by using a longitudinal analysis, showed that a) more support and less perceived invalidation equated to higher levels of emotional well-being, and b) emotional self-efficacy was a contributing factor between perceived support/invalidation and overall emotional well-being. Pound discussed how it would be beneficial to explore different types of supportive interactions and their influence as what constitutes support remains a subjective concept. Also, Pound noted a limitation in her design as it was not experimental, suggesting that future research manipulate the emotional support and

emotional invalidation variables in regard to emotional self-efficacy. If interpersonal support is a factor that contributes to positive levels of mental well-being (Lester & Mander, 2015; Merianos et al., 2013; Pound, 2015) and if feedback is an important moderator of self-efficacy and performance (Beattie, Woodman, Fakehy, & Dempsey, 2016), it may well be beneficial to attempt understanding more of the effects of both emotional validation and emotional invalidation. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of both emotional validation and emotional invalidation on emotional self-efficacy in order to fill a gap in the research. This gap was the scarcity of experimental research involving emotional invalidation and how it affects a person's emotional self-efficacy.

Purpose of the Study

I completed an experimental quantitative study in order to investigate the effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on emotional self-efficacy. I recruited a convenience sample of participants through Quest Mindshare and created a survey through SurveyMonkey. I assigned all participants randomly into one of three different groups, either being given invalidating feedback, validating feedback, or zero feedback. After the experiment, all participants completed the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES) that was designed by Kirk et al. (2008) and used by Pool and Qualter (2012) in their study on improving emotional self-efficacy through a teaching intervention.

The variables in the current study were as follows: one dependent variable (emotional self-efficacy postintervention score) and one independent variable with three conditions (validating, invalidating, or no feedback). Based upon the research questions

in the current study, I used an experimental quantitative design in order to test for differences between the three groups from the intervening variable. First, I completed statistical analyses using SPSS version 23 in order to consider some variables that might confound the impact of the intervening group and the dependent variable of ESES score. The linear regression tested for the relationship of age, an ANOVA tested for differences with race, and an independent samples *t*-test noted any correlations with gender on the dependent variable. The only significant differences found involved age, and so I completed an ANCOVA analysis with age as the covariate for the primary analysis. An ANCOVA allowed me to explain any difference in emotional self-efficacy scores between the three groups, while controlling for the covariate. I considered both gender and race since researchers have revealed gender and race differences on levels of emotional self-efficacy (Valois, Zullig, & Hunter, 2015; Zullig, Teoli, & Valois, 2014). Specifically, in regard to regulatory self-efficacy, or how well a person perceives they can manage negative emotions, women have lower scores than men (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino, & Pastorelli, 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). Furthermore, the perceived management of negative emotions were negatively correlated with age (Caprara, Caprara, & Steca, 2003; Caprara & Steca, 2005).

Research Questions

In considering the study that Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) completed with emotionally invalidating and validating feedback, and considering the importance that emotional self-efficacy plays, I asked the following question in the current study:

RQ1 What differences can be seen in post emotional self-efficacy scores based on interventions of emotionally validating feedback, emotionally invalidating feedback, and no feedback, while controlling for gender, age, and race?

- ◆ H_{1_0} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will not differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.
- ◆ H_{1_a} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.

Theoretical Framework

I used established theoretical concepts to support this study. I used the biosocial theory that Linehan and Schmidt (1995) elaborated on in order to understand emotional invalidation. Biosocial (or biopsychosocial) theory, as discussed by Millon in 1986 and then expanded upon by Linehan (1993), includes both the person and the environment as collaborative elements throughout development (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995). The theory states that when there is an instinctive and biological need for emotional expression and is then coupled with an invalidating environment, emotional dysregulation may ensue. Linehan and Schmidt (1995) stated that there is a biological need for validation, especially as people develop in childhood. This theory is aligned with the human needs theory, which posits that all human beings have certain needs that must be met in order to develop healthily and naturally (Loue, 2005). Maslow (1943) discussed the human needs

theory, stating that humans have physical, physiological, emotional, and psychological needs. The authors of the biosocial theory stated that emotional needs are crucial to human adaptation and evolution (Izard, 1992). With fulfilled emotional regulation needs, optimal functioning might occur which can be reflected through the concept of self-efficacy. Emotional invalidation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Albert Bandura (1977) discussed the self-efficacy theory, stating how we learn from past experiences and past accomplishments and that these lessons contribute to one's self-perceived efficacy. Bandura stated that convictions play a large role in meeting expected outcomes in situations and that external suggestions and social influence affect self-efficacy. Schunk and Pajares (2009) explored this theory and noted "self-efficacy can be influenced by... input from the environment (e.g. feedback from teachers, social comparison with peers)" (p. 36.). In this study, I explored this intrinsic link between the biosocial need for validation and the influence that others can have on the outcome of that need. This theoretical foundation has been explained in further detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I completed an experimental quantitative study in order to investigate the effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on emotional self-efficacy. I recruited participants using a convenience sample through Quest Mindshare. I created a survey using SurveyMonkey and randomly assigned all participants into one of three different groups, either being given invalidating feedback, validating feedback, or zero feedback. After the intervention, all participants completed the ESES, which was designed by Kirk

et al. (2008) and used by Pool and Qualter (2012) in their study on improving emotional self-efficacy through a teaching intervention.

I administered either emotional invalidation, emotional validation, or zero feedback via a short survey using five pictures from the Geneva Affective Picture Database (GAPED). The database consists of six different folders: human concern, animal cruelty, snakes, spiders, neutral pictures, and positive pictures. The pictures have previously been found to evoke both valence (positive emotions) and arousal (negative emotions; Dan-Glauser & Scherer, 2011). Because there was a connection between emotional self-efficacy and depression (Muris, 2001) and emotional self-efficacy and anxiety (Galla & Wood, 2012; Muris, 2002), three pictures came from the folders that elicited the most arousal—animal cruelty and human concern—and two pictures came from the positive pictures folder (see Appendix G). The two positive pictures were used to begin and end the intervention due to primacy and recency effects: Participants are more likely to remember both the first and the last items in a list. This was done in consideration of the safety of the participants. To ensure that an emotion was being validated or invalidated, participants selected how the pictures made them feel. For example, a picture of an abused dog gave options for the participant such as “sadness,” “anger,” and “guilt”. There was also an option to select no emotion felt. If a participant in the invalidating group selected a certain emotion stemming from a picture, invalidating feedback ensued. As noted, it was possible that a participant selected “I feel no emotion at all.” Because the study required an emotion to be felt, the number of times a participant selected “no emotion” was counted. In the validation and invalidation groups,

if a participant selected “no emotion” more than two times (or more than half of the total questions), I did not include their results in the main analysis. I documented the number of participants who chose this option. Using the operational definition of invalidating feedback stated previously, feedback was incongruent with the given emotion. For example, if a participant selected depression or sadness as the experienced emotion, one of the possible invalidating responses was “You feel that way? Really?” In the validating group, responses reflected understanding. For example, if sadness was selected as the felt emotion, one of the possible responses was “Many understand why you would feel that way.” In the control condition, no feedback was provided. Instead, the control group simply viewed the pictures and selected the emotion or nonemotion of their choice.

The variables in the current study were as follows: one dependent variable (emotional self-efficacy post intervention score) and one independent variable with three conditions (validating, invalidating, or no feedback). Based upon the research questions in the current study, I used an experimental quantitative design in order to test for differences between the three groups from the intervening variable. First, I completed statistical analyses using SPSS version 23 in order to consider some variables that might confound the impact of the intervening group and the dependent variable of ESES score. I used a linear regression analysis to test for the relationship of age, an ANOVA to test for differences with race, and an independent samples t-test to note any correlations with gender on the dependent variable. The only significant differences found involved age, and so I completed an ANCOVA analysis with age as the covariate for the primary analysis. An ANCOVA helped explain any difference in post emotional self-efficacy

scores between the three groups, while controlling for the covariate. I considered both gender and race since researchers revealed gender and race differences in regards to independent variables on levels of emotional self-efficacy (Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). Specifically, in regards to regulatory self-efficacy or how well a person can manage negative emotions, women were researched to score lower than men (Bandura et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). Age was considered due to previous research that found women and men's perceived management of negative emotions to be negatively correlated with one's age (Caprera et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005).

Key Concepts and Definitions

In this study, I operationally defined the following concepts:

Emotional Invalidation: As a form of psychological abuse, I considered emotional invalidation for this study as a response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person's emotions or feelings are understood. Validating and invalidating responses closely resembled the validating and invalidating responses that were used by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011).

Emotional validation: Understanding emotional validation is not only seen through the converse of emotional invalidation, but other similar concepts were included as well. As Kool, van Middendorp, Lumley, Bijlsma, and Geenan (2012) found, social support was found to be negatively associated with a lack of understanding. Also empathy, by definition, fits in with the converse of invalidation: "the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings" (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.). Fruzzetti, Shenk,

and Hoffman (2005) found that empathic, positive, and supportive interactions were synonymous with validating interactions. Thus, I considered emotional validation as feedback that was congruent with a person's emotional expression and that had attributes of either being supportive, understanding, positive, and/or empathic.

Psychological Abuse: I considered psychological abuse to be acts that negatively effect a person's mental, cognitive, emotional, and moral faculties, as outlined by Glaser (2002). For the purposes of this study, psychological abuse included emotional abuse, neglect, and any other form of abuse that can be distinguished from sexual or physical acts yet have similar negative effects on a person's mental, cognitive, emotional, and/or moral faculties. Emotional invalidation was considered a type of psychological abuse.

Assumptions

The impetus for the current study was to explore more about emotional invalidation, which can be considered a very covert and subtle form of abuse. Because the topic involves a form of psychological abuse, there is subjectivity inherent. Trickett, Mennen, Kim, and Sang (2009), for example, discovered how accounts of psychological abuse were discovered to be much more prevalent with maltreated children, ex post facto. The trouble stems from defining what might necessarily include psychological abuse and who might perceive incidents as abuse. Both DeGregoria (1987) and Doyle (1997) exemplified this subjective nature of psychological abuse. In order to relate the discussion on abuse with the current experiment, I made an assumption that qualified the manipulation of feedback with the covert and subtle form of psychological abuse, as outlined by the aforementioned definition of emotional invalidation. Another assumption

that I made in the current study was that participants who selected a given emotion actually felt the emotion chosen. The intent of the intervention was to either validate or invalidate an experienced emotion to see if there was an effect on their level of emotional self-efficacy. Since it is not plausible to measure the participants' state of emotion, I made an assumption. Furthermore, while I controlled certain covariates through the use of statistical analyses and an ANCOVA research design, controlling for all potential confounds was not practical. It must be assumed, then, that no other variables influenced the outcomes of the experiment. The assumptions listed here were necessary to the study in order to gather more information on the under-researched form of abuse known as emotional invalidation.

Scope and Delimitations

In the current study I made an attempt to study effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. While research has examined the concept of emotional invalidation within the context of childhood (Haslam, Mountford, Meyer, & Waller, 2008; Selby, Braithwaite, Joiner, & Fincher, 2008), the scope of the current study was broader, without the specific focus on childhood or invalidation from any specific caregiver or parent. Because I gleaned off of theories that consider the influence of other people in our lives that impact our own functioning (self-efficacy theory) and the existence and importance of both biological and environmental components to our functioning (biosocial theory), I chose this broader scope. Specifically, understanding more of the direct effects of emotional validation and invalidation in the form of feedback, as Herr et al.(2015) and Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011)

did, has allowed for further insight with the concepts. While the concept of emotional invalidation was primarily explored with those who have BPD, other populations were researched to be susceptible as well (Kool et al., 2009; Waller, Corstorphine, & Mountford, 2007). In order to expand the generalizability of the current study, then, I used minimal exclusive criteria. As with the work of Shenk and Fruzzetti in which college students were used, the population for the current study was a general population of Quest Mindshare users, with no requirements of previous invalidating childhoods or mental illnesses. The aim was to consider if there is influence on either emotionally validating or emotionally invalidating feedback, and not just on certain populations. Because of the potential sensitivity from providing invalidating feedback though, I made certain exclusions. All participants were screened for suicidal and homicidal ideations and were excluded from the study if ideations existed, as was done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011). In addition, participants were asked if they were experiencing current severe emotional difficulties which served as an additional exclusion criterion, in order to further the safeguard and consideration for potential risks.

Also of note, I made a consideration into including information on attachment theory. Bretherton (1992) detailed the theory that was originally coined by Bowlby and Ainsworth, which can be surmised as the need for people to have a positive relationship by a caregiver in their youth in order to properly develop. I ultimately excluded the discussion on attachment theory from the current study because of the aforementioned broader scope that was targeted. My intent in the current study, again, was to determine

if validating and invalidating feedback have influence on one's emotional self-efficacy, regardless of childhood experience.

Limitations

Limitations related to this study involved confounding variables that might have jeopardized the internal validity. I considered and analyzed covariates of both gender and race, based on prior research involving emotional self-efficacy (Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). In addition, I considered age as a potential covariate based on women and men's perceived management of negative emotions that were negatively correlated with one's age (Caprara et al., 2003; Caprara & Steca, 2005). Controlling for all potential variables within the study, even though gender, age, and race were considered, was not possible. Thus, a limitation of the current study was an inability to control for every possible confound.

In regards to the methodology, certain emotions must be invoked so that they can either be validated or invalidated. Because there was a connection between emotional self-efficacy and depression (Muris, 2001) and emotional self-efficacy and anxiety (Galla & Wood, 2012; Muris, 2002), the emotional pictures from GAPED attempted to evoke arousal. These pictures have already been found to evoke emotional responses (Dang-Glauser & Sherer, 2011).

As previously mentioned, abuse oftentimes relies on the perception of the perceiver and so validating responses had to adhere to the definition set forth: a response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person's emotions or feelings are understood. Again, though, one might perceive incongruence where

another may not. Therefore, this remains a limitation in the current study. In order to combat this limitation, invalidating and validating feedback closely resembled the responses used by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011). The validating responses that were used from the study in some form are as follows: “Most other participants have expressed the exact same feeling” and “I too would feel upset if I were the one completing the task” (p. 171-172). The invalidating responses that were used in some form are as follows: “I don’t understand why you would feel that way”, “There’s no need to get upset”, and “People were frustrated but not as much as you seem to be” (p. 172). All responses taken from Shenk and Fruzzetti’s study fit inline with the definition of emotional invalidation that I have conceptually delineated. I have also completed the current study entirely online. Therefore, no experimenter bias has jeopardized the outcome.

Significance

In the current study, I explored the effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on emotional self-efficacy that Pound (2015) recommended as an avenue of further research. Pool and Qualter (2012) reinforced the idea that emotional self-efficacy can be improved and is not a stable trait. The importance of continued research in regards to emotional self-efficacy can be seen in a study done by Choi, Kluemper, and Sauley (2013), in which emotional self-efficacy was found to predict stress levels, methods of coping, and overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, research pointed towards increased support being a positive factor towards one’s mental well-being (Lester & Mander, 2015; Merianos et al., 2013; Pound, 2015) and thus examining effects of both emotional validation and emotional invalidation may shed light on

potential ways that well-being can be both increased and ways that social influence can be detrimental. Applications from the current study are far-reaching, as social influence on another's self-efficacy can be seen in the workplace, in school, in parent/child interactions, and many other dyadic relationships.

Summary

Abuse has been shown to come in many forms. Physical abuse has the benefit of being visible in most cases, thus making it easier to acknowledge, limit, and treat. Sexual abuse has been shown to be both overt and covert. Research over the years have shown the many different effects that both physical and sexual abuse can have on a person throughout their lifetimes. Thinking in any way that these types of abuse are justified or are okay would be near impossible to defend. Similarly, psychological abuse has been shown to be just as devastating. Researchers have found that psychological abuse is often the damaging component taken away from acts of more overt abuse (Haj-Yahia, 1999; Follette, Polusny, Bechtle, & Naugle, 1996). Breaking down psychological abuse is not a simple process, as many different forms have been shown. One of those forms, emotional invalidation, has been linked with people who have BPD. This type of invalidation has been shown to create emotional problems in an individual that is felt throughout a lifetime. Because emotional invalidation has not been researched extensively, there is much to understand about the concept. Exploring more about its effects can help in its prevention and treatment.

As discussed, emotional invalidation was operationally defined as a response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person's emotions or

feelings are understood. This concept has been researched to show negative effects, yet never on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. Emotional validation, then, was operationally defined as the opposite of invalidation. Thus, the purpose of the study was to provide either validating, invalidating, or zero feedback to participants and then to measure their level of emotional self-efficacy, while controlling for age, gender, and race. The study was a quantitative study that used an ANCOVA research design, controlling for the covariate of age. Both the biosocial and self-efficacy theories served as a foundation into the concept of emotional invalidation and for the current study, as people are influenced by both biological and environmental factors. The intervention took place online using a survey created with SurveyMonkey and by recruiting participants from an online panel called Quest Mindshare. The instructions of the survey asked participants to look at pictures (meant to evoke certain emotions) and then to choose their emotional state. Based on the group that each participant was in, feedback was given. I made certain assumptions in the current study, as there is inherent subjectivity to any form of abuse, as well as an inability to accurately measure the participant's emotional state. Limitations existed, as not all confounds were able to be controlled for, but based on the design of the current study generalizability was potentially broad. Where other studies only include certain populations, I sought to include participants without requirements such as childhood experiences or mental illnesses.

Gaining information on potential effects of invalidation has allowed for more to be known about what constitutes abuse. With this knowledge, more can be understood about how people communicate with each other. It has allowed for greater insight into a

potentially common and insidious form of psychological abuse. For good reason, much has been researched about multiple forms of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. As Miller-Perrin (2013) pointed out, empirical studies contributing to a better understanding on abuse benefits everyone in ways of prevention and treatment. In addition to adding to our knowledge on covert abuse, understanding more on what benefits a person in regards to their emotional self-efficacy is important and therefore was a target of the current study. Emotional self-efficacy has shown to be an important factor in regards to a person's overall well-being and happiness and researching further potential ways of increasing a person's level is important. Prior to completing the current experiment, I completed a literature review into what has been discovered already regarding the relevant concepts and theories.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There are many different forms of abuse, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional. In the current study, I focused on emotional invalidation, which can be considered psychological or emotional abuse that is overt, such as bullying (Sweetingham & Waller, 2008), or covert, such as rejection (Yen et al., 2015). Where more overt forms of abuse, such as physical abuse, clearly contribute to negative consequences later in life (Maldonado, Watkins, & DiLillo, 2015; Whipple & Richey, 1997), more covert forms of abuse are harder to gauge. For example, sexual abuse has apparent negative effects (Paolucci, Genius, & Violato, 2001). Yet what constitutes sexual abuse remains unclear (Goodyear-Brown, Fath, & Myer, 2012). Psychological abuse, which for the purposes of the current study included emotional abuse, neglect, and emotional invalidation, is similarly difficult to conceptualize, acknowledge, and treat. Jud, Landolt, and Lips (2010) responded to Brailon and colleague's article about secondhand smoking and reinforced how covert childhood maltreatment can often go unnoticed and is highly misunderstood. If covert maltreatment is difficult to define and conceptualize, acknowledging relative effects or preventing future occurrences can be challenging.

The purpose of this study was to better understand an aspect of psychological abuse called emotional invalidation. Explored by Linehan (1993) in her work with people with BPD, emotional invalidation can be subtle and overlooked even by therapists. Fruzzetti, Shenk, and Hoffman (2005) noted how this type of abuse is very subtle and that careful observation is necessary to understand it. Emotional invalidation

in childhood contributed to dysfunction in adulthood (Selby et al., 2008; Krause, Mendelson, & Lynch, 2003), yet much is still unknown in regards to other effects of the abuse.

I created an experiment in the current study where I provided emotionally validating and invalidating responses as feedback after participants completed a short survey (the survey induced certain emotions using pictures from the GAPED. I measured participants' levels of emotional self-efficacy after the survey. Self-efficacy is an important factor to consider, as it has been shown to be significantly and positively correlated with a person's psychological well-being and affect, as well as a person's self-esteem (Dogan, Totan, & Sapmaz, 2013).

I designed the current study based on my discoveries in the literature review. In order to effectively organize the past research on the relevant topics within the current study, I analyzed both emotional invalidation and emotional self-efficacy studies in isolation and then in conjunction with one another.

An Impetus for Research: The Power of Abuse

Physical abuse is linked to many negative effects in adulthood, such as criminal behaviors and substance abuse (Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993) and personality disorders such as bipolar disorder (Sugaya et al., 2012). Childhood abuse was found to exist amongst children throughout the world, transcending gender, race, culture, and location (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzeendoom, & Alink, 2013). Sugaya et al. (2012) recommended continued research, so that prevention and

understanding can be improved. Even overt abuse such as physical abuse is difficult to understand.

In an early study, Whipple and Richey (1997) discussed and explored physical abuse within the context of disciplining. The authors stated that it was difficult to distinguish between abuse and nonabuse, how much spanking is too much, and what exactly constituted a spanking episode. They stated that spanking, when it relates to physical abuse, falls on a spectrum and that understanding where on the spectrum an example falls requires knowledge of many variables. Gershoff (2016) augmented Whipple and Richey's research, suggesting that even non-abusive forms of physical punishment create both physical and mental negative effects.

In the current study, I focused on psychological abuse. Haj-Yahia (1999) and Follette (1996) stated that psychological abuse is often the damaging component that is perceived when physical abuse occurs. Shapero et al. (2014) showed that emotional vulnerability, such as increased depression, ensues when a person is subjected to childhood emotional abuse. In the study, individuals were given several questionnaires relating to childhood abuse, depression, and life events. Noting a "defeat strategy," the authors found that those who experienced emotional abuse (not physical or sexual abuse) during childhood reported higher levels of depressive symptoms when experiencing stressful life events (Sloman, 2000 as cited by Shapero, 2014, p. 10).

In addition, emotional abuse weakened a person's general self-efficacy (Jiahui & Aishu, 2014). Emotional abuse can be a pervasive burden that affects more people than previously thought. For example, in the study completed by Jiahui and Aishu that

explored the relationship between childhood abuse and emotional self-efficacy, 40.2% of college students that were sampled suffered from emotional abuse in their childhood. Karakurt and Silver (2013) studied 250 people who were in intimate relationships and found a prevalence of emotional abuse in intimate relationships, suggesting that “...identifying the sequence of events and factors that lead to emotional abuse is important” (p. 11). The need for continued examination into what might help and hurt those who are affected from emotional abuse remains.

One form of emotional abuse is emotional invalidation. Linehan (1993) explored the concept of emotional invalidation, which occurs when a person is subjected to minimizing experiences throughout their childhood, thereby creating serious emotional dysregulation. Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) followed Linehan’s model, defining validation as a method in which a person encourages another to accept and understand their own emotional experience by not trying to change their emotions. By experimenting with validating and invalidating responses, Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) found that participants’ emotional reactivity (seen through skin conductance, heart rate, and negative affect) was influenced significantly. In another experimental study, Herr et al. (2015) found that emotional invalidation led to an increase in aggression levels amongst those who had emotional difficulties. While these studies parallel the current study in their experimental design, I sought to ascertain if there were significant effects from receiving either validating feedback or invalidating feedback during an emotion invoking survey on a specific area of self-efficacy called emotional self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was first defined by Albert Bandura in 1977 and been augmented by many others (Schunk & Millen, 2012; Yeo & Neal, 2013; Zhou & Cam, 2016). Bandura (1977) stated that social factors contribute to individuals' self-efficacy. In the current study, I explored emotional invalidation with a specific dimension of self-efficacy called emotional self-efficacy, which is a person's perception of their ability to manage their emotions (Pool & Qualter, 2012) and their perception of "coping with negative emotions" (Muris, 2001, p. 146). A study done by Galla and Wood (2012) showed how low levels of emotional self-efficacy made students more vulnerable to anxiety before taking a test. Measures of both anxiety and emotional self-efficacy were completed by the students prior to them being given a mathematics test. One of the questions on the emotional self-efficacy scale included "How well do you succeed in becoming calm again when you are very scared." (p. 119). While controlling for gender, household income, and ethnicity, the authors found that a higher level of emotional self-efficacy protected against levels of anxiety on test performance. Galla and Wood suggested a further investigation on ways that children can learn to better deal with their negative emotions.

In a recent doctoral dissertation done by Pound (2015), she found that not having emotional support from others was correlated with increased difficulties in regulating ones' emotions. Levels of emotional support, emotional well-being, and perceived emotional invalidation were collected and studied using a longitudinal analysis that showed a) more support and less perceived invalidation equated to higher levels of emotional well-being, and b) emotional self-efficacy was a contributing factor between

perceived support/invalidation and overall emotional well-being. Pound discussed how it would be beneficial to explore different types of supportive interactions and their influence, as what constitutes support remains a subjective concept. Also, Pound noted a limitation in her design as it was not experimental, suggesting that future researchers manipulate the emotional support and emotional invalidation variables in regard to emotional self-efficacy. Lester and Mander, 2015, Merianos et al., 2013, and Pound, 2015 showed that interpersonal support to be a factor towards positive levels of mental well-being. Beattie, Woodman, Fakehy, and Dempsey, 2015 showed that feedback, such as verbal recognition, influenced performance. In addition, Verroen, Gutteling, and Vries (2013) showed how feedback was supportive in contrast to opposing in producing better outcomes (Verroen, Gutteling, & Vries, 2013). Because of these aforementioned studies showing the benefits of having a supportive influence from others, feedback can be considered an important moderator of self-efficacy and performance.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of both emotional validation and emotional invalidation on emotional self-efficacy in order to fill a gap in the research. This gap is the scarcity of experimental research on the topic of emotional invalidation and how it affects a person's emotional self-efficacy.

I completed a literature review to explore more of what has been researched with emotional invalidation, including both long lasting and short-term effects. The following section includes the literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

Through the process of this literature review, I used several avenues to collect data. PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES were the primary databases targeted, along with Academic Search Complete in order to expand the search outside the strict lens of psychology. Used as the primary search engine used was the library at Walden University. Google Scholar was used extensively as well which has provided a broad collection of articles from throughout the world which included many different databases.

Conceptions of psychological abuse can be difficult to adequately define and understand, as DeGregoria (1987) and Doyle (1997) both discussed. Emotional invalidation and validation are similarly subjective (Pound, 2015). Perhaps stemming from the subjective nature of the concepts, I noted a dearth of research in relation to the keywords emotional invalidation and emotional validation. Thus, I expanded the literature search using other terms. Using the research from Kool et al. (2009) in which they defined relative concepts to invalidation, I used synonyms of both validation and invalidation in the current literature review. Kool et al. studied invalidation with patients who suffered from fibromyalgia. The authors found that emotional invalidation that was perceived from caregivers constituted as both discounting and a lack of understanding. Discounting and a lack of understanding were tied to emotional invalidation in other studies as well (Kool et al., 2012; Wernicke, Huberts, & Wippert, 2015). Kool et al. (2009) delineated discounting into both denying and patronizing, and patronizing into lecturing and overprotecting. In sum, the aforementioned studies focused on the phrase

emotional invalidation and connected it to discounting, lack of understanding (and misunderstanding), denying, patronizing, lecturing, and overprotecting.

Similar to emotional invalidation, in order to fully gain an understanding of emotional *validation* I had to incorporate other synonyms as well. Kool et al. (2012) found that social support was negatively associated with a lack of understanding. Also, empathy can be considered the opposite of invalidation based on the Merriam-Webster definition: “the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). Fruzzetti et al. (2005) discussed how empathic, positive, and supportive interactions were synonymous with validating interactions as well. Thus, I have included social support, empathy, positivity, and understanding in the literature review on emotional validation.

I used the Walden library and Google Scholar to gather the most literature from the search results. Because emotional self-efficacy is a clearly defined concept that I explored in the current study, no other keywords were found to be appropriate in research, with the exception of general self-efficacy. One potential synonym for self-efficacy that has been used before has been emotional intelligence, but as Pool and Qualter (2012) highlighted, the two are not substantially equitable, as emotional intelligence encompasses many more aspects to emotional self-efficacy.

An attempt was made to gather the most recent literature in this review. Primarily, an advanced search in all search engines was completed with dates ranging from 2011 to the present. I included literature that was prior to 2011 as well though, to

ensure I included any research that was salient to the current study. Also, a search was completed looking for only peer-reviewed material to ensure that those studies were included in the review.

Theoretical Foundation

There are two theories that I expounded upon in this study in order to support the methodology. Firstly, a focus was the theory that was elaborated upon by Linehan and Schmidt (1995) called the biosocial theory because of the importance of the concept of emotional invalidation. In sum, this theory considers both biological and environmental factors that contribute to a person's well-being, thought processes, and behaviors. And secondly, I explored the self-efficacy theory as the perception of cognitive abilities is influenced from both biological and social factors.

Biosocial Theory / Biopsychosocial Theory

The biosocial theory is the idea of personality and functioning stemming from both biological and social influences. Linehan has been highlighted in this study because her work focused on a biosocial lens in regards to emotional invalidation. Specifically, Linehan was able to support the problematic existence of emotional invalidation as a detriment to a person. To elucidate the theory's use, I reviewed the past research.

The overarching biosocial theory considers two factors upon a person: biological and social aspects. Linehan (1993) considered the theory to be helpful in considering many effects upon a person, including operant and classical conditioning, emotion, temperament, and learning theories. Biopsychosocial theory, which for the purposes of this study can be considered synonymous with the biosocial theory as it expounds upon

the psychological development of a person amidst both social and biological influences, was delineated by Crowell, Beauchaine, and Linehan (2009). In the authors' delineation, BPD emerges from biological vulnerabilities accompanied with emotional lability. With reinforcement of unhealthy behaviors and patterns, certain traits and habits develop which ultimately constellate into a diagnosable illness, such as BPD. Crowell et al. described how the setting of this BPD emergence oftentimes takes place in a very invalidating environment in which the person tends to range in extremes: of emotional lability and emotional inhibition. Biosocial and biopsychosocial theories have had their roots in research outside BPD studies as well.

Described poignantly by Gilbert (1995), the term biopsychosocial theory dates back to 1939 where psychosomatic behaviors were explored within the contexts of counseling, physiology, and medical illnesses. Gilbert stressed an approach must not be singular in focus nor should dualism be more prominent when we consider the vast aspects of the human condition. Instead, Gilbert insisted on the interactions upon all aspects that make us human, including but not limited to culture, genetics, biology, and psychology. George Engel (1977) pushed the medical world to incorporate a psychosocial paradigm into its prevalent medical model, suggesting that a quantitative and objective perspective on how we perceive physical illness leaves out important aspects, such as the psychological and psychiatric perspectives. By tackling a long-standing debate during the time of the study of mind vs. body, Engel posited that by incorporating mental considerations into the medical model and physical considerations into the realm of psychiatry the clients would be better served. Schore (2015) discussed a

similar theme of combining multiple influences on brain processing in his book *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development*. Applying a psychoneurological basis as an undercurrent to emotional processing provided a continued expansive look into the myriad influences on the human being. Yet, as Gilbert pointed out, even with the aforementioned dualistic approaches, integrating the multifaceted biopsychosocial approach into clinical psychology has remained difficult.

Gilbert completed his study in 1995, but the biopsychosocial model has continued to be implemented in psychological research. For instance, Hakim-Larson and Nassar-McMillan (2012) presented a biopsychosocial presentation on understanding Arab Americans, factoring in genetic and cultural influences that might be helpful in understanding their psychological and physical functioning. Letteny, Krauss, and Kaplan (2012) exemplified how a physical disease ought to be perceived in a biopsychosocial manner, in-line with Schore's aim previously mentioned. In Letteny et al.'s research, parents with HIV were studied to examine which biopsychosocial factors led them to reveal their disease status to their children. Corroborating with a dualistic notion of import, both cultural and maturational factors tended to be the most prominent factors involved.

In research with emotional invalidation in a qualitative manner, Souza et al. (2011) examined women who suffered from chronic pelvic pain. The authors reasoning for this chosen lens was to incorporate the psychological factors that contribute to the physical pain experienced, thereby increasing the possibility of effective treatment and

overall client satisfaction. Where this particular study coincides with the problem statement in the current study is in the focus on the psychological effects working with our biological need for emotional expression. Implied, then, is our innate emotional needs which can be exemplified in several articles, such as an analysis by Plutchik (2001) based on evolutionary principles, in a discussion of the importance of emotion and pain within our societal context by Blascovich (1992), and in the article by Campos, Frankel, and Camras (2012) in which the authors described the adaptive purposes of emotion and emotional regulation based on a natural processing of either an internal or external event. Emotional regulation works in conjunction with emotional expression and emotional awareness, with biological factors requiring a measure of nurturance from another. Emotional invalidation can be seen as breaking the fundamental biosocial link towards healthy development. Or as Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) discussed, social support is an important key in helping a person manage and function with their emotions.

Self-efficacy Theory

When Albert Bandura wrote about self-efficacy in 1977, so much about the influence over our own abilities and skills was unknown. Giving credence to the behavioral paradigm, our abilities to perform or achieve were not merely inherent. Many factors contributed to the processes of our psyche and cognition. Self-efficacy theory explores the power of influence on our own perception of how well we can do given a certain task. Bandura (1977) discussed four main factors that contribute to having expectations about outcomes, or self-efficacy: “performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (p. 195). The salient factors for

the current study that Bandura discussed are vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, which he categorized as modeling and as “suggestion, exhortation, self-instruction, [and] interpretative treatments”, respectively (p. 195). In 1977, Bandura acknowledged, though, that “...social persuasion alone may have definite limitations as a means of creating and enduring sense of personal efficacy...” yet a bit more difficulty came with understanding the direct influence of social persuasion, making it more of an insidious factor than the rest. Bandura acknowledged that “It is therefore the interactive, as well as the independent, effects of social persuasion on self-efficacy that merit experimental consideration” (p. 198). Might subsequent research further illuminate social persuasion’s role with self-efficacy?

In the continued exploration of social influence on self-efficacy, Bandura, Adams, Hardy, and Howells (1980) examined how modeling overcoming a fear of snakes led to increased self-efficacy of people with the specific fear. Coping mechanisms and behaviors were influenced through the direct modeling done within the study.

While much of one’s self-efficacy in any given task depends on task-related factors, Gist and Mitchell (1992) discussed a multitude of determinants that affect one’s perception of self-efficacy. The authors recognized external factors, such as noise and group cohesiveness, as well as internal factors such as physiological states and mood. The foundation of self-efficacy theory, as outlined by Bandura in 1977, seems to hold firm in the allowance of many contributing factors, including social influence. Gist and Mitchell went on to explain, citing from Bandura (1998), how performance was seen to be directly influenced by a person’s level of arousal (either positive or negative). Self-

efficacy theory, in relation to the current study, served as a foundation to the potential influence people can have over others.

Concept of Emotional Invalidation

As previously noted, there is a dearth of research on the specific form of psychological abuse coined as emotional invalidation. The overarching concept of emotional abuse, though, has a wealth of research completed exploring effects, diagnosis, and treatment. Thus, a quick expanse of the concept of emotional invalidation, including terms such as emotional abuse and neglect, illuminated a bit more about what the study's key concept is. Stoltenborgh et al. (2013) echoed this dearth of research by completing a meta-analysis of studies showing the prevalence, or nonprevalence, of neglect. The authors noted that the lack of research was especially noticeable amongst low-resource countries.

Emotional invalidation is a subjective experience in which emotions are met with an incongruous response. As Linehan and Schmidt (1995) described, a person who is emotionally invalidated is left feeling that their personal and private experience is wrong or inaccurate. The concept of emotional invalidation was used in a longitudinal study done by Clements, Stanley, and Markman (2004) in which couples were queried prior to marriage and then followed for 13 years after. Two measures by which Clements et al. positioned their study upon were emotional validation and emotional invalidation. The authors defined emotional invalidation as "the percentage of time individuals spent insulting or acting in otherwise unsupportive ways toward the partner, such as making negative comments about the relationship or the partner, sarcastically commenting on the

partner's position, or engaging in "mind-reading" with negative affect (pg. 616). This definition corroborates with Linehan and Schmidt's description of an invalidating environment, as there is a lack of support, sarcasm, and negativity within interpersonal communication.

Another pertinent exploration of the concept of emotional invalidation is in a study by Waller et al. (2007). In this study, they recognized a higher prevalence of research that showed connections with eating disorders to sexual abuse while less research considered how much of an impact that emotional abuse can have. The authors suggested that when treating eating disorders, emotional abuse must be considered. In the study, Waller et al. focused on emotionally invalidating interactions that ended up being significant mediators to later negative symptoms. In the study, the authors provided examples of emotional invalidation. One bespoke a young girl who grew up in a home in which emotional expression was discouraged and criticisms were abound. Another described a girl who was not comfortable in expressing her emotions as she was often "in the way" and told that she was worthless. In both examples, the theme of incongruity with emotional expression was evident.

Linehan (1993) provided key examples of emotional invalidation, in the context of working clinically with people with BPD. One such example is when a therapist "points out that a response was functional in the past, but is not now" (p. 223). Another example was exemplified within transference and countertransference during the clinical sessions. If a client expresses the idea that the therapist is always mad at her, says Linehan (1993), and then is rebutted with a denial from the therapist, invalidation reigns.

In Relation to Neglect

As mentioned, the concept of emotional invalidation is best addressed with an expansive lens, including other actions that produce similar subjective results for the person. Neglect can be considered a form of emotional invalidation, as there may be a definite need for expression, say to give and receive love to a mother, yet that love is not reciprocated in an equal manner. Dubowitz, Black, Starr, and Zuravin (1993) encapsulated the concept of childhood neglect based on a couple of key components. Firstly, the actions of the parent are not necessary to be judged or analyzed in order for neglect to be considered. Instead, the subjective experience of the child is what matters. Secondly, the idea of neglect, which at its underpinning is constituted by needs that are not met, range on a continuum. Again, the subjective experience is emphasized. Understanding more of the effects of emotional invalidation hopefully allows this type of subtle abuse, and others like it, to be more prevalent in the research of professionals. Crawshaw (2009) assessed this very point by addressing psychological abuse in the workplace, denoting how difficult it is to adequately and accurately define what abuse and bullying is. Understanding more of emotional validation and emotional invalidation, through understanding their effects, hopefully allows professionals to, as Crawshaw said in reference to workplace harassment, “provide a precise nomenclature and engage in comprehensive empirical research of this complex phenomenon” (p. 266).

In Relation to Psychological Abuse and Maltreatment

Hart and Brassard (1987) discussed the impact, prevalence, and challenges with the concept of psychological maltreatment. Their study included various opinions,

research, analyses, and complications with defining the term and corraling its effects and subsequent interventions. While their study was completed in 1987, much of the same questions and discussions have been shown to remain in current research. Whether the importance is so great, the difficulty to understand adequately remains impregnable, or a combination of the two points remain, in which further research can only help to clarify. As O’Leary (1999) pointed out, psychological abuse usually precedes any physical act and as such deserves appropriate recognition in research and analysis. In a meta-analysis searching for prevalence of psychological/emotional abuse in childhood done by Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, and Van Ijzendoorn (2012), 363 out of 1,000 participants acknowledged that they were emotionally abused. The far-reaching implications of psychological abuse cannot be ignored.

The Parental Bonding Instrument, which measures the level of care that a person felt during their childhood, was used in several studies researching childhood abuse (Morgan, Brugha, Fryers, & Stewart-Brown, 2012; Young, Lennie, & Minnis, 2011; Johnstone et al., 2009; Bifulco, Bernazzani, Moran, & Jacobs, 2005). Pertinent items on this instrument included: “Could make me feel better when I was upset”, “Did not praise me”, “Tended to baby me”, and “Enjoyed talking things over with me” (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979).

In a similar fashion, the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire created by Bernstein and Fink attempts to target a wide variety of abuse in childhood (Meeyoung, Farkas, Minnes, & Singer, 2007). In a review of the questionnaire, Furlong and Pavelski were able to note how the scale differentiates between emotional and physical neglect, as well

as how it queries for emotional abuse. The reviewers noted that the emotional neglect subscale occupied five items out of the entire 28. Some of the questions included were as follows: “My family was a source of strength and support” and “I was happy as a child” (Bernstein & Fink, 1998). Spinhoven et al. (2014) reviewed the short form version of this questionnaire and concluded that it adequately depicted a wide view of childhood maltreatment but a semi-structured interview in conjunction with the questionnaire is recommended.

A multi-version questionnaire that categorizes parental acceptance and rejection is aptly named the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 2005). Four scales help to categorize perceived childhood abuse: warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Questions on this questionnaire include: “Paid no attention when I asked for help”, “Went out of her way to hurt my feelings”, “Cared about what I thought, and liked me to talk about it”, and “Made me feel unloved if I misbehaved” (p. 96-97). This questionnaire has been used in many studies exploring childhood abuse symptomatology (Malik, 2012; Naz & Kausar, 2012; Bilgin, Cenkseven, & Satar, 2007). And in a meta-analysis exploring the research of parental acceptance and rejection in relation to psychological adjustment and personality, correlates were significant with hostility, emotional responsiveness and stability, self-esteem, and self-adequacy (Khaleque, 2013). This further emphasizes the power of perceived warmth and/or rejection that we get from our caregivers.

In an exhaustive and thorough discussion of emotional abuse, Iwaniec (2006) acknowledged emotional abuse as being highly problematic, ever-elusive to define, and

more and more prevalent in today's society. In presenting different examples, Iwaniec made evident the themes of emotional abuse which included: insecurity, feelings of loneliness, inner turmoil and distress, and a lack of assertiveness. What constituted emotional abuse, according to Iwaniec? Iwaniec emphasized the relationship between caregiver and child, stating criticisms, indifference, and hostility among some of the interaction types that can be considered as emotional abuse. Iwaniec went on to list negative actions, lack of interest, failed or misguided supervision, lack of sympathy, limited praise or encouragement, and an overall lack of acknowledgement of emotional needs of the child. The variety of actions that can be considered as emotional abuse stands to highlight the importance of understanding the subjective nature of such abuse, from the victim's perspective.

In a study that qualitatively explored abuse to elders, Buzgova and Ivanova (2009) delineated certain emotional abuse into two different categories, verbal abuse and threatening as "it refers to the use of words, acts, or other means to cause fear, humiliation, emotional stress, or anguish" (p. 112). The authors noted that this type of abuse is among the most insidious, frequent, and difficult to prove. Jang (2009) reverberated the idea of verbal abuse being a serious issue amongst the elderly, as the authors found in this qualitative study that verbal abuse and physical acts of abuse were ranked in an extreme view as compared to neglect and other forms of psychological abuse. It is interesting to note, though, that physical acts of abuse in this study were found to be perceived as a significantly higher level of abuse (Jang, 2009). Does the insidious nature of psychological abuse translate to perceived effects as well? To

reiterate Buzgova and Ivanova's position on psychological abuse, this type of abuse can be the most elusive in conveyance and therefore may even distort a victim's perception of it. This was exemplified by Doyle (1997) by her work done in assessing childhood emotional abuse. In reviewing survey results, she found that "in emotional abuse omission and commissions are inextricably fused" (p. 334). In other words, what is put forth on to the table may be sparing yet uniquely associated.

Doyle (1997) completed a study that assessed victims of childhood emotional abuse wherein survivors of such abuse were interviewed. Results from the interview identified several behaviors of what was constituted as emotional abuse. These behaviors included terrorizing, rejecting, ignoring, corrupting, isolating, degrading, tormenting, and fear-inducing. Specific examples from these behaviors are as follows: "Persistently telling a child she is not wanted", "Verbal abuse, derogatory name calling", "Never giving the child any emotional warmth or praise", and "Turning off light when girl tried doing homework" (p. 336.). In this study, Doyle surmised that childhood environments that are highly susceptible to emotional abuse occurring are those in which there are multiple stressors and a disruption of interpersonal relationships.

In grouping emotional abuse and neglect as psychological maltreatment, Glaser (2002) acknowledged several themes that are common throughout most of the research: Emotional abuse is difficult to adequately define and that malicious intent by the caregiver or provider is not required to constitute abuse. Glaser pointed out prior definitions of psychological maltreatment by The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, which include acts of terrorizing, exploitation, denying emotional

responsiveness, isolation, and neglect. Glaser pointed out that the difficulty with adhering to these definitional guidelines is that they focus on the acts or behaviors of either the victim or perpetrator. Instead, Glaser urged for consideration of the state of the child when considering what constitutes as emotional abuse or neglect. This supports the idea that malicious intent is not required nor can abuse be clear-cut and objective when classifying, opening the door to insidious behaviors and preventing them from falling between the cracks of observation. Glaser noted five different categories in which emotional abuse may exist: being subjected to emotional unavailability; having negative attributions placed upon a child; unorthodox, incongruous, or traumatic development; ignorance of boundaries and individuality; and a lack or neglect of social adaptation. Glaser pointed out that this categorization helps to determine a specific primary element to the abuse which can better guide interventions and treatment.

A relevant study was done by Lammers, Ritchie, and Robertson (2005). The authors explored emotional abuse as a matter of power. Emotional abuse, said the authors, involves a certain degradation and misuse of power and control over another. In this study, emotional abuse was analyzed through a lens of women in intimate relationships and their interactions with their partners. Even in this view, Lammers et al. commented on the insidious nature of the abuse and how much it permeates a person's everyday life.

A mixed methods study completed by Defrain, Skogrand, Skogrand, and Defrain (2003) exemplified the prevalence of emotional abuse, along with the various types of abuse that can concurrently be experienced. Ninety participants who believed that they

had transcended their own personal childhood trauma and were in a state of recovery were chosen for the study. The participants were asked to complete a checklist in regards to their individual experiences of trauma. Emotional abuse was the most frequent form of abuse experienced yet all participants noted that they experienced at least one other form of abuse, such as physical abuse or neglect, growing up. Other forms of abuse that were listed on the checklist were alienation, neglect, and discrimination. The authors went further than merely depicting which types of abuse were chosen by the participants. They allowed the participants to write details of what was experienced growing up. Some examples that were shared included a young girl watching her sister being slapped for not saying Grace correctly at the dinner table (even though the young girl vouched that she did say it properly), one person's experience with her father who would buy them pets when they did something right and shoot them when they did something wrong, leading to a great amount of confusion and anguish, and one person's account of being ambulatory in her bed and calling for help yet not receiving any, which ultimately led to her throwing up on herself and on the bed and then being physically attacked afterwards. Eye-opening and profound experiences that were challenging to even read were revealed in the study, yet one positive remark to note that was also collected by the authors is that 73% of the participants said that their childhood trauma actually made them better people. Understanding one's past can therefore have a positive effect. It is hopeful that understanding emotional invalidation in a clearer light can also have a positive effect amidst a sea of negative connotations. One other relevant piece of information from the study that correlated with the current study is that almost half of the participants reported

that at the time of being victimized, they did not feel the events were traumatic. A study done by Mbe (1994) corroborated this evidence, as it discussed how subtle abuse against disabled people can be disqualifying, at the time, as abuse. This supports the insidious and subjective nature that abuse can have.

Literature Review

As previously mentioned, concepts of different kinds of abuse can be difficult to adequately define and understand. Emotional invalidation and emotional validation is no different. Using the research from Kool et al. (2009), synonyms of both validation and invalidation were used in the current literature review. The Kool et al. studied emotional invalidation with patients who suffered from fibromyalgia and found that invalidation constituted as both discounting and a lack of understanding. Both discounting and a lack of understanding has been tied to emotional invalidation by others as well (Kool et al., 2012; Wernicke, Huberts, & Wippert, 2015). Kool et al. (2009) went on to break down discounting into both denying and patronizing and patronizing into lecturing and overprotecting. Thus, in completing the literature review, studies not only focused on the words “emotional invalidation” but also discounting, lack of understanding (and misunderstanding), denying, patronizing, lecturing, and overprotecting. Also, as Cranford (2004) researched, social undermining fits in with the conceptual definition of emotional invalidation and were used in searches. I have covered both effects of psychological abuse and maltreatment, as well as effects of emotional neglect. Conversely, an understanding of emotional validation demands an incorporation of other synonyms as well. As Kool et al. (2012) found, social support was found to be

negatively associated with a lack of understanding. Also empathy, by definition, fits in with the converse of invalidation: “the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). I conducted a discussion on neglect as well, as emotional neglect fits in with the definition of emotional invalidation.

Because the term “emotional invalidation” was coined by Linehan in her work with people with BPD, I began the review of the literature with her. First, I explored the concept of emotional invalidation, as it stands at the centerpiece of the current study. Also, I researched both emotional invalidation and emotional validation studies to cover the variables in the study appropriately.

The Makeup of Emotional Invalidation and/or Emotional Validation

In her book *Cognitive-behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*, Linehan (1993) described an invalidating environment in which people learn to mistrust their own emotions. Her suggestion to treat people who have grown up in such a lifestyle is for the therapist to elicit unconditional acceptance and validation to emotions expressed. Yet even Linehan acknowledged the difficulty in that because of the subjective and abstract nature of what constitutes emotional invalidation.

Unfortunately, a therapeutic approach based on unconditional acceptance and validation of the patient’s proves equally problematic and, paradoxically, can also be invalidating. If the therapist urges the patient to accept and validate herself, it can appear that the therapist does not regard the patient’s problems seriously. The desperation of the borderline individual is discounted in acceptance-based

therapies, since little hope of change is offered. The patient's personal experience of her life as unacceptable and unendurable is thereby invalidated (p. 222).

In Linehan's discourse on validation, she expressed difficulty in successfully exhibiting proper emotional validation while being a trained and licensed professional herself. What, then, might the difficulties be for a parent with no background in psychology? Or a teacher with students? The importance of understanding this subtle abuse becomes clear and a greater understanding of emotional validation seems relevant.

According to Linehan (1993):

The essence of validation is this: The therapist communicates to the patient that her responses makes sense and are understandable within her *current* life context or situation. The therapist actively accepts the patient and communicates this acceptance to the patient. The therapist takes the patient's responses seriously and does not discount or trivialize them. Validation strategies require the therapist to search for, recognize, and reflect to the patient the validity inherent in her responses to events. (p. 222-223).

Linehan went on to describe certain activities and skills that the therapist can utilize while in therapy to ensure proper validation. In working with people with BPD, Linehan stated that properly grasping validation is important because of the extreme range of emotional displays that are common amongst people with BPD. An invalidating environment throughout childhood has aided people with BPD to either exhibit emotional inhibition or intense emotional lability. Linehan described emotional invalidation as stemming from an invalidating environment, of which regular emotional reciprocity is

highly erratic and where emotional expression is responded to with minimization, criticism, neglect, or some other form of incongruous response.

Feeding off of Linehan's understanding of invalidating environments and emotional invalidation, Hong, Ilardi, and Lishner (2011) explored the relationship between those with an acknowledged victimization of childhood sexual abuse and perceived invalidation. The authors used two different scales in order to garner levels of perceived invalidation. One was called the Sexual Life Experience Questionnaire in which the authors added a set of questions in order to determine consequential perceived invalidation at the time of the reported abuse. The other scale was the Parental Acceptance and Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) which targeted the environment in which the participants grew up in. Both a specific (trauma related) and a general level of invalidation were garnered. The authors found that the event of childhood abuse did not adequately predict BPD symptoms but that the level of invalidation, both specific and general, did. Some of the questions on the PARQ that were made a focal point by the authors addressed lack of warmth, aggression, indifference and neglect, and rejection, all perceived by the victim of sexual abuse in childhood. This study illuminated the power that invalidation can have on a person as they develop into adulthood, furthering the need to understand the constituents of emotional invalidation as I hoped to do in this study.

Because of the dearth of literature found on emotional invalidation, few tools were utilized in conjunction with the concept. In a creative manner, Krause et al. (2003) took the Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale, which is a questionnaire made for parents to fill out about their reflective parenting, and adjusted it so that participants

could rate their caregiver's attitudes and behaviors towards their emotions while growing up. Examples of the questions include: "My mother/father would feel upset and uncomfortable because of my reactions"; "My mother/father would tell me that if I didn't stop, I wouldn't be allowed to go out anymore", and "My mother/father would tell me to quit over-reacting and being a baby". The authors categorized subgroups into punitive, minimization, and distress measures. Used in conjunction with this scale was the Psychological Abuse Scale that included questions such as "How often did your mother (father) embarrass you in front of others" and "How often did your mother (father) make you feel like you were a bad person."

Selby, et al.(2008) posited six different questions in attempting to obtain a level of emotional invalidation experienced in childhood. The questions were not taken from any standardized measurement scale but held a Cronbach's alpha of .86. The questions were presented on a Likert scale and consisted of the following: "Spoke to you with a warm and friendly voice", "Seemed emotionally cold to you", "Was affectionate with you", "Enjoyed talking things over with you", "Could make you feel better when you were upset", and "Seemed to understand your problems or worries" (p. 892).

Haslam et al. (2008) targeted the environment in which the person grew up in, selecting the Invalidating Childhood Environment Scale that was created by Mountford, Corstorphine, Tomlinson, and Waller (2005) to directly reflect an invalidating environment that Linehan (1993) addressed in her study with BPD. The scale asked participants to rate the following questions from 1 to 5, or never to all of the time respectively. Examples of the items asked in the scale are "My parents would become

angry if I disagreed with them”, “When I was anxious, my parents ignored this”, and “If I was upset, my parents said things like: ‘I’ll give you something to really cry about!’” (p. 56). The scale concluded with four different “family type” questions, which again were accompanied with instructions to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (not like my family to like my family all of the time, respectively). These questions depicted invalidating environments that were suggested by Linehan (1993) and give compliment to a family’s overall functionality. Some of the questions included asking often parents were available, how often parents were interested in their thoughts and ideas, and how often a parent supported emotions while growing up. To the best of my knowledge, this scale is the only one created with the specificity of emotional invalidation as Linehan first proposed it. If effects of invalidating responses can be seen to be damaging in its subtlest form, understanding additional responses and situations that might invalidate emotions might be an appropriate topic for future studies.

In more of a naturalistic setting, Foster, Caplan, and Howe (1997) observed and recorded couples talking about the loss of a job. After each interaction, each individual was independently queried about their partner’s responses. Some questions were as follows: “Compared to the usual difficult or stressful conversations between us, the amount of sympathy and understanding which my partner showed was...”, “How much did your spouse or partner provide you with encouragement, and “How much did your spouse or partner listen to you when you need to talk” (p. 287). The responses were then later coded using a rubric taken from the Codebook of Marital and Family Interaction which contains two categories: emotional validation and emotional invalidation. The

coding equated emotional validation with social support and emotional invalidation with undermining behavior. In a similar manner, Lindahl, Clements, and Markman (1997) used videotapes of parent and child interactions to gauge both affective atonement and emotional invalidation. The authors noted that emotional invalidation was the collection of the following behaviors, coded by System for Coding Affect Regulation in the Family: “emotional insensitivity, withdrawal, and negative affect” (p. 143). Before delving into studies in which researchers showed effects of emotional invalidation, I discussed the broader concept of psychological abuse below.

The Effects of Psychological Abuse / Maltreatment

Many negative long-term effects were discovered in regards to long-term effects of psychological abuse (Spertus, Yehuda, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003; Lansford et al., 2002; Briere & Runtz, 1990). Because I examined short-term effects in the current study, I completed the psychological abuse and maltreatment literature review in regards to short-term or immediate effects.

Paolucci, Genuis, and Violato (2001) completed a meta analysis that differentiated short-term and long-term effects of psychological abuse, showing negative results for both. Yet research, due to the aforementioned limitations relating to the subjective nature of emotional abuse, is not as prevalent and defined when it comes to short-term effects of such abuse. Because of that, I expanded the idea of short-term effects. Case in point, a study done by Chan, Brownridge, Yan, T, and Tiwari (2011) explored effects of Chinese children after they reported certain types of abuse including victimization, neglect, and violence. A mandate to the study was that abusive acts had to

be within the previous year that the study was done. The authors found that, as hypothesized, those who reported abuse had lower levels of self-esteem and a higher prevalence to the feeling of being threatened. Note, though, that this study included physical abuse as a moderating factor.

When considering psychological abuse, I factored in bullying. As explored by Marsh, Parada, Craven, and Finger (2004), bullying is a type of abuse that pervades a person's self-esteem and self-concept; their very worth and abilities. In self-reports, bullying was found to have immediate negative effects to those participating in studies (Schafer et al., 2004; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). Yet still, understanding immediate negative effects from a quantitative perspective is difficult and near impossible to achieve because of the profound ethical implications inherent.

I also researched emotional neglect, another form of psychological abuse, which can be considered similar in some ways to emotional invalidation. For instance in regards to emotional neglect, there was some type of failure to adequately address the emotional needs of a person (Stoltenborgh et al., 2013). The main impetus I had in completing the current study was to understand the effects of emotional invalidation in a clearer light, and thus the attempt at understanding all various forms of subtle abuse in a better way, like emotional neglect, is important. Gough and Stanley (2007) discussed neglect being a serious risk, possibly more so than any other type of abuse, and serves as an example of why a better understanding of the concept is needed. While long-term effects are abundant (Chapple, Tyler, & Bersani, 2005; Spertus et al., 2003; Pollak, Cicchetti, Hornung, & Reed, 2000), short-term effects are harder to gauge. Yet Teicher

and Samson (2016) were able to exemplify immediate brain changes, as children who were mistreated under the guise of neglect were studied. Teicher and Samson found many parts of the brain that were altered, including the prefrontal and orbitofrontal cortexes, with the amygdala showing increased responses when shown faces conveying emotions as well as a decrease in the striatal response when presented with an anticipatory reward. Yet even as of 2013, neglect remains under-researched, even though many suffer from the abuse (Stoltenborgh et al., 2013).

The Effects of Emotional Invalidation

Research that explores direct effects of emotional invalidation is few and far between. In a study that most closely resembles the current study and has served as an impetus for the current research, Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) partially experimented with the immediate effects of emotional validation and invalidation. To protect participants from potential risks, those who had active suicidal and/or homicidal ideations were excluded from the study (although none met that criteria). Each participant received information about the study and approved to partake. All participants were given information about their role in the study and were given consent forms. The researchers conducted the study by administering a mental arithmetic test, asking the participants their emotional state, and then by providing either validating or invalidating feedback to them. Measures of heart rate and skin conductance level were recorded (two measures of emotional reactivity). Results showed that “Participants in the invalidating condition had significantly increased heart rate” and “...displayed significantly higher SCL [skin conductance level’s] in comparison to those in the individuals in the validating condition”

(p. 177). While this study revealed some very important insight into the physical effects of emotional invalidation, no psychological or behavioral measures were conducted. I sought to branch off from Shenk and Fruzzettis' work in the current study by gauging a psychological measure of emotional self-efficacy. Also important to note that in this study analyses determined no other demographic factors attributing to the significant differences. Also, the authors used a test called the Validating and Invalidating Behaviors Coding Scale (VIBCS) in order to ensure that the verbal delivery of validating and invalidating responses were indeed taken as such.

In another similar study, albeit a non-experiment, Hong and Lishner (2016) used self-reports of college students in regards to both general and trauma-specific invalidation. The authors found that intimate occurrences of general invalidation predicted several negative symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, and BPD characteristics. Other studies similarly found self-reported invalidation in childhood predicted negative symptoms later in life (Haslam, Arcleus, Farrow, & Meyer, 2012; Sturrock & Mellor, 2014; Yen et al., 2015). In a dissertation completed in 2015, Pound explored how emotional support played a role in emotional well-being. In part, she concentrated on studying emotional invalidation, finding that lower levels of self-reported emotional invalidation were connected with higher levels of emotional well-being. Pound gathered perceived emotional invalidation levels through questions aimed to measure times when one's emotions were minimized, criticized, or ignored. Pound pointed out that emotional invalidation, compared to social support studies, pale in

comparison and that researchers would be apt to study more of invalidation in terms of a person's well-being.

Similar with the operational definition of emotional invalidation detailed in this study, Cranford (2004) researched social undermining. Cranford used the definition of social undermining that was posited by Vinokur and van Ryn (1993) which in part defined it as either negative emotional affect towards a person or criticism. Cranford used the Social Undermining Scale which measured how often another person would use negative affect, criticism, and hindrance towards them. Measures were taken twice in a six week interval, and results indicated that social undermining predicted levels of depression. Taylor (2015), Wang, Pbert, and Lemon (2015), Oetzel et al. (2014), and Yoo and Frankwick (2013) showed similar results in different settings, as social undermining from others predicted negative symptoms.

Emotional Validation

While the focus of this study was emotional invalidation, one experimental group was given emotional validation, the opposite of invalidation. What influence does validating emotions have on a person, specifically in regards to emotional self-efficacy? I have discussed in the following section the converse to invalidation, or the benefits of emotional validation.

While Pound (2015) focused in part on emotional invalidation, she also examined social support. Emotional validation, which can be considered the converse of criticizing, minimalizing, misunderstanding, and invalidating, can be thought of in several different synonymous terms. Social support studies, empathy studies, and

validation studies are all pertinent to the current study. Pound measured emotional support in line with MacGeorge, Samter, and Gillihan (2005) where emotional support constituted listening attentively, sympathy, and an ability to express affection. Pound surmised emotional support as a level of feeling understood. This idea of feeling understood was also confirmed by Kool et al. (2012), as social support was strongly negatively associated with a lack of understanding as opposed to merely discounting. I also chose to use this economic description of the concept of emotional validation in the current study, in order to develop the intervention of positive feedback on emotional expression. Pound found that increased levels of perceived emotional support were associated with an increased level of emotional well-being. Pound also found that those who sought emotional support tended to have lower levels of emotional well-being and by expressing one's experiences and troubles positive affect increased. Both Kool et al. (2012) and Davis (2012) revealed similar results, showing support from others predicted better mental health. For Davis (2012), formerly homeless people were queried and information about mother and child interactions were collected. Davis found that the more supportive responses to children's expressed sadness and expressed anger led to the child having greater interpersonal and affective strengths.

In an experiment involving validation that was targeted to study levels of aggression, Herr et al. (2015) provided undergraduate students at a university who were struggling with emotional regulation with both invalidating and validating messages after a sad induction took place. The authors created two groups, one being those with greater than average difficulties in emotional regulation and the other being those who had

average or below average level of emotional regulation difficulties. The authors completed the sad induction using a computerized questionnaire that was designed by Robinson, Grillon, Sahakian (2012) in which participants were exposed to music. Once the sad induction took place, the authors measured levels of sadness after either validating or invalidating feedback was provided. Validating responses were in the form of an agreement of the sadness expressed. For example, the validating response was “That task makes a lot of people really sad” (p. 312). The invalidating response was “That doesn’t usually make people so sad.” (p. 312). Herr et al. found that with participants who were experiencing many difficulties in emotional regulation, validation predicted significantly less aggression as compared to the participants who were given invalidating responses. In this study, Herr et al. showed how regulation worsened after invalidating feedback, yet only one area was focused on: levels of aggression. The authors suggested that other emotions other than sadness should be researched to see what facilitates the aggressive emotion. More importantly, they concluded that those who suffer from a lack of properly regulating emotions will receive validating feedback from others and that ways to increase self-validation need to be investigated.

Emotional Self-Efficacy

My intent in the current study was to determine if emotionally validating and invalidating feedback had an effect on a person’s level of emotional self-efficacy. Understanding past research on a person’s emotional self-efficacy was important to complete first. Studies showed that higher levels of emotional self-efficacy can be associated with positive results, such as in higher test performance (Galla & Wood, 2012;

Tariq, Qualter, Roberts, Appleby, & Barnes, 2013), overall positive mood and emotional intelligence (Kirk et al., 2008), and higher rates of graduate employability (Pool & Qualter, 2012). In contrast, lower levels of emotional self-efficacy were found to be associated with negative results in regards to emotional irritation and exhaustion at work (Loeb, Stempel, & Isaksson, 2016), negative symptoms in adolescents (Muris, 2002), and alcohol and cigarette use (Zulliq et al., 2014). Jiahui and Aishu (2014) acknowledged the problem of childhood trauma and collected self-report measures from college students. Groups were set up, separating those who experienced physical neglect, emotional neglect, and a mixture of both, along with a control group that experienced no childhood trauma. The authors concluded that there was a moderate effect of childhood trauma on a person's level of regulating their emotions. More specifically, the group that experienced physical neglect had the lowest levels of emotional self-efficacy but all three groups had lower levels of emotional self-efficacy than did the control group. This reiterated my contention in the current study that while physical abuse may tend to dominate the research because of the severe and more transparent effects, covert abuse still creates damages that deserve to be explored further.

Palesh et al. (2006) sought to understand the relationship between emotional self-efficacy among mood disturbance, social support, and stressful life events. The authors had 82 women complete self-report measures on the aforementioned variables and then conducted a multiple regression analysis. Contrary to previous research, Palesh et al. did not find a correlation between perceived social support and lower levels of mood disturbance. Palesh et al. did find, though, that the women who reported greater mood

disturbances also had a lower level of emotional self-efficacy. Dogan et al. (2013) found similar results, as they studied university students from Turkey. Using self-report measures, the authors found that psychological well-being to be correlated to emotional self-efficacy. Furthermore, the authors concluded that having higher levels of emotional self-efficacy led to having higher self-esteem, which in turn led to participants reporting as happier. These findings can be seen to work in the reverse as well, as Merianos, Nabors, Vidourek, and King (2013) revealed. The authors found that by collecting self-report measures from college students, predictors of mental health and well-being were levels of self-esteem. Also, the more support students felt that they received from their families, the fewer days of mental health problems they reported. Also in converse to abuse and its lingering effects, research on support showed the opposite. Davis (2012) was able to show a strengthening in emotional regulation through support. Davis collected information from mother and child dyads that were formerly homeless. Davis (2012) found that the more support (invalidation) that a mother gave to their child, in regards to both anger and sadness, the more interpersonal, intrapersonal and affective strengths that the child reported. In another study that showed both the positive and negative effects of support or nonsupport, Han et al. (2005) studied breast cancer patients and their interpersonal relationships with physicians. The authors found that the more problems interacting with caregivers and lower levels of social support they reported, the higher levels of stress were found and the lower levels of emotional self-efficacy was reported.

These previous studies revealed a problem in which researchers would benefit to undertake: The import of understanding the direct impact of invalidation on emotional self-efficacy.

Forms of Validation and Invalidation on Emotional Self-Efficacy

Leading up to a discussion on why the current study is important and what specific gap currently exists within the research, I completed a review of studies with both variables. Using synonyms for both validation and invalidation along with emotional self-efficacy helped illuminate what was attempted and what is still left to be seen. For as Han et al. (2005) found out, breast cancer patients who had poorer social interactions with their providers predicted lower levels of emotional self-efficacy. The idea that an influence on one's emotional self-efficacy can be cultivated through social interactions lies at the very heart of self-efficacy theory and of what I have intended to discover in this study, as validation and invalidation are both examples of social interactions that could potentially influence one's level of emotional self-efficacy.

Interventions have been found to be effective in improving one's emotional self-efficacy. For instance, Kirk et al. (2008) found that through a writing exercise designed to maximize emotional expression, emotional self-efficacy levels were increased. Pool and Qualter (2012) found similar success in an intervention for undergraduate students that consisted of lectures, role-playing, journaling, videos, and group tasks that focused on the management, expression, understanding, and perception of emotions. The importance of a person's emotional self-efficacy cannot be overstated, as can be seen in a study done by Galla and Wood (2012) in which they highlighted the importance of one's

emotional self-efficacy with their research with elementary school students. Galla and Wood found that the higher the child's emotional self-efficacy, the less anxiety related problems interfered with their ability to take a test in school. Negative symptoms, such as aggression, depression, and anxiety were less amongst people of different countries (USA, Italy, and Bolivia) if emotional self-efficacy levels were higher (Caprara et al., 2008). In addition, higher levels of mood disturbance predicted lower levels of emotional self-efficacy (Palesh et al., 2006). In regards to emotional self-efficacy, the links are clear: more perceived support predicted higher levels of self-efficacy (Maldonado & Vaughn, 2013); rejection predicted lower levels of emotional self-efficacy (Niditch & Varela, 2012); there is a positive relationship between empathy and emotional self-efficacy (Totan et al., 2013); and bullying and victimization predicted lower levels of self-efficacy (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2011).

Research Gap

While abuse has continued to be researched in an attempt to gain a better understanding (Lammers et al., 2005; Defrain et al., 2003; Whiting & Lee, 2003; Saxton et al., 2001), limitations currently exist which prevent a more detailed understanding of the effects of such abuse. Taken in one of its most insidious and covert form, researchers have an opportunity to study the immediate effects on a person regarding emotional invalidation regardless of preexisting conditions, just like the study done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011). Emotional invalidation has been explored but mainly in relation to assumptive standards and mental illness. Areas of research have pinpointed damaging effects that an invalidating and abusive childhood can have and how it can be linked to

multiple negative sequelae, yet in long-term perspectives. Measurement tools, such as further experimentation, that are pinioned to a researcher's tool belt, at the very least, provide a small sample of examples of invalidating experiences and now it might be time to utilize such tools in an attempt to garner a better understanding about the influences of such abuse.

What is missing from the literature, and from the understanding of licensed professionals, teachers, and laypersons living in our society alike, is what potential effects an insidious and subtle abuse such as emotional invalidation have on a person's immediate perceived abilities. Furthermore, improving the manner in which teachers, parents, and professionals alike help others, whether it is with wellness, self-efficacy, test performance or other areas of performance, is a noble pursuit. How much influence does, say, a teacher have over their students? How much influence does a friend have over another friend or over the influence of a lover's word to their mate? The manner in which we communicate with each other demands to be brought to light in order to see if damage or negativity, even in the subtlest of ways, is being done. No attempts, to the best of my knowledge, have sought to examine the immediate effects of emotional invalidation on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. Thus, in the current study I explored potential effects of subtle invalidating and validating feedback on people's level of emotional self-efficacy.

Summary

While there is a wealth of research on physical and sexual abuse, difficulties still remain in defining and categorizing relative acts and behaviors that exist within more

subtle and covert abuses such as emotional and psychological abuse. A specific type of emotional abuse that is even harder to define and understand is emotional invalidation, in which effects mainly point to mediating factors and long-term problems. Physiological changes can be seen when a person is emotionally invalidated, yet what more might the abuse do to a person? Are subtle forms of abuse relegated only to the disabled and the mentally ill? If subtle forms of emotional abuse are more common than we might think, as McEachern, Aluede, and Kenny (2008) discussed, understanding the effects are of prime import. In the current study I sought to bridge the gap between what is known and what is still yet to be seen. The proposed methodology in the following chapter has hopefully allowed for that furthered insight.

Chapter 3

Introduction

While the effects of overt forms of abuse, such as physical abuse, are profound, long-lasting, and oftentimes insurmountable (Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993), less overt forms of abuse, such as emotional abuse and psychological abuse, can be much more difficult to understand and are equally as devastating as other more overt forms (Jud et al., 2010). The purpose of this study was to work toward understanding additional effects of a form of psychological abuse called emotional invalidation. As it was coined by Linehan (1993) in her description of an invalidating environment, emotional invalidation happens when a person's emotional experience is not met with understanding, whether it be through minimizing responses, neglect, or criticism. The intent in the current study mirrored a study done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) in which both validating and invalidating feedback was given and effects were measured. Unlike the study of Shenk and Fruzzetti in which physical effects were measured, I measured levels of emotional self-efficacy in the current study. I chose to gauge effects of emotional self-efficacy because it has been shown to be an important factor in one's ability to manage negative emotions (Muris, 2001) as well as an influence in both performance (Galla & Wood, 2012) and overall life satisfaction (Choi et al., 2013).

The following section includes the quantitative research methodology, outlining the experimental intervention. I addressed the covariates and confounds as well as the ethical issues to be considered. I covered the specific methodology, including instrumentation, demographics, and data analysis. In addition, I discussed the validity

and reliability of the current study, including steps to ensure ethical standards were met and credibility was maintained. The following section includes a detailed outline of the study to ensure that all considerations were taken and that participants were considered with the highest level of care.

Research Design and Rationale

The variables in the current study were as follows: one dependent variable (emotional self-efficacy post intervention score) and one independent variable with three conditions (validating, invalidating, or no feedback). I used an experimental quantitative design in order to test for differences between the three groups from the intervening variable. First, I completed preliminary statistical analyses to consider some variables that may have confounded the impact of the intervening group and the dependent variable of ESES score. A linear regression analysis tested for the relationship of age and ESES scores, an ANOVA tested for differences between race and ESES scores, and an independent samples *t*-test tested for correlations between gender and ESES scores. The only significant difference found was with age and ESES score. Based on these preliminary analyses, I completed an ANCOVA with age as a covariate for the primary analysis. An ANCOVA explained any difference in post emotional self-efficacy scores between the three groups, while controlling for the covariate. Gender and race were considered since researchers have revealed gender and race differences in regards to independent variables on levels of emotional self-efficacy (Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). Specifically, in regards to regulatory self-efficacy or how well a person perceives they can manage negative emotions, women score lower than men (Bandura et

al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). Age was considered due to previous research that the perceived management of negative emotions was negatively correlated with age (Caprera et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005).

I used Quest Mindshare to recruit the participants in the study. I created the survey itself using SurveyMonkey. Using SurveyMonkey's research tools called "block randomization" and "block logic", I randomly assigned all participants to one of the three groups. Once I assigned participants into one of the three groups, the survey began. All participants completed the ESES post intervention, which was used in previous studies (Pool & Qualter, 2012; Pool & Qualter, 2012). The ESES is a 32-item scale designed to measure an individual's ability to manage emotions and perceive and understand emotions in themselves and others (Kirk et al., 2008). Participants did not have any time constraints when completing the study.

In this study, I extended research by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) in which a MANOVA was used to determine differences between groups of validating and invalidating feedback. The study also extended Pound's study (2015), which used a linear model to ascertain correlations but did not go as far as to experiment with this study's proposed variables.

Methodology

Population

I recruited the participants through an online panel called Quest Mindshare owned by Cint Inc. The architect of the panel, Dr. Philip Garland, stated that the panel included participants with "demographics [that] are census representative in terms of gender, age,

and geographic region (personal communication, 2017). My aim was to expand the population so generalizability could be extended to more than just select minority populations, such as Herr et al. (2015) and Hong and Lishner (2015) did by using college students in their studies on emotional invalidation. Through the use of Quest Mindshare, I targeted a specific audience allowing the current study to be as generalizable as possible. Thus, I welcomed all users of the Quest Mindshare panel to participate..

Sampling and Sampling Procedures. In order to ensure the least amount of potential confounds that could interfere with the results of the independent variable on the dependent variable, I randomly assigned all participants to one of the three groups. The random assignment eliminated confounds of prior emotional self-efficacy levels so that group differences reflected the intervening variable's affect. The randomization into one of the three different groups was possible through SurveyMonkey's "block randomization" and "block logic," which allowed all participants to have an even probability of being selected for one of the three different groups. Before participants were put into groups, they had to first pass the exclusion criteria, which consisted of the following question: "Before we begin the survey, please select any of the following that you are currently experiencing" (see Appendix A). Participants had the ability to select "homicidal ideations," "suicidal ideations," and "severe emotional difficulties." This exclusion criterion resembled that of the study done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) in which individuals with suicidal or homicidal ideations were gauged before acceptance into the study was granted. If a participant did not meet the exclusion criterion and selected the other option of "none of the above," they were deemed appropriate to

continue with the study and then moved to the next page which was the informed consent. Upon agreeing to the informed consent, participants were randomly placed into one of the three groups and the survey began. In order to gauge the appropriate sample size, I completed a power analysis which depends upon the effect size, alpha level, and power level. As Ali (2012) pointed out, proper care must be taken to ensure no bias occurs in the sampling. Pool and Qualter (2012) sought to determine if a teaching method improved a person's emotional self-efficacy and used 134 participants in their study. They found that the intervention groups compared to the control group had an average effect size of .42 (across the four subscales of the ESES). In an experiment with emotional validation and invalidation on physical effects, effect size was found to be large (Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011). Thus, using a medium effect size of $F = .25$, a standard alpha level of $p < .05$, and a power level of .80, G*Power statistic software provided a required sample size of 179 for the entire study. This means 180 total participants to have an equal random sample of 60 participants in each group.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited participants from an online panel of members by the name of Quest Mindshare. The panel's director notified the members of my study via email. If members of Quest Mindshare decided to participate, they clicked the link in the email that brought them to the SurveyMonkey website. Once there, the first page asked all participants the exclusion criteria question (see Appendix A). If they met the criteria (by selecting "none of the above"), they proceeded with the study by first reading and agreeing to the informed consent. Participants began the study if they agreed to the

informed consent, which resulted in the assignment into one of three groups: A being the validating group, B being the invalidating group, or C being the control group or no feedback group. First, participants were asked demographic questions that pertain to the current study: age, gender, and race. Once answered, participants were presented with a series of pictures that they were asked to respond to (see details below). Based on which group they were in, participants received either validating, invalidating, or zero feedback. Upon completion of the intervention, the ESES was administered. Upon completion of the ESES, all participants were given a debriefing (see Appendix B). The debriefing consisted of an explanation of the study and reasoning for the pictures as well as an explanation of both emotional validation and emotional invalidation and why it was given in the form of feedback. I collected all data through the SurveyMonkey website and saved them for analysis.

Details of the Intervention

The current study was a quantitative experimental study that included an experiment in order to see the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Thus, I completed an explanation of the intervention in detail. All three groups viewed five pictures from the GAPED (see Appendix F). The pictures within the database were used by Dan-Glauser and Scherer (2011) because they elicited emotions based on either valence (positive feelings) or arousal (negative feelings). The five pictures were chosen from three of the six different categories: human concern, animal cruelty, and positive pictures (two from the animal cruelty group, one from human concern, and two from the positive pictures folder). The categories that were omitted for

use were the neutral pictures, spiders, and snakes. Neutral pictures were omitted because the aim of the study was to evoke emotions. Both the spiders and snakes were omitted because while they created arousal, they also created valence. Both the human concern and the animal cruelty categories were found to evoke the most arousal and the least valence. I selected the pictures in the categories randomly, although I did not choose pictures that were overly graphic out of respect for ethical considerations of the participants. Furthermore, the pictures ran in an order that allowed for both primacy and recency effects (again, a choice based on ethical considerations of the participants). One positive picture was used in the beginning and one positive picture was used at the end of the survey. After viewing each picture, the participants were asked to select their emotional state, or nonemotion, after the viewing. The zero feedback group simply viewed pictures and selected an option that most closely aligned with their given emotion, or nonemotion. Both the validation and invalidation groups were provided feedback once an option was selected. In the validation group, feedback consisted of emotional validation which aligned with the operational definition stated herein: “feedback or a response that is congruent with a person’s state of emotional expression and that has attributes of either being supportive, understanding, positive, and/or empathic.” See Appendix C for the validating responses that were used. In the invalidation group, feedback consisted of emotional invalidation previously outlined as “a response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person’s emotions or feelings are understood.” See Appendix D for the invalidating responses that were used. Because the study required an emotion to be felt, I counted the number of

times a participant selected “I feel no emotion at all”. In the validation and invalidation groups, if a participant selected “I feel no emotion at all” more than two times (or more than half of the total questions), I did not count their results in the main analysis. I documented the number of participants who chose this option.

Instrumentation

I used one instrument in the current study: the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (see Appendix E). I contacted the creators of the scale and they confirmed that the scale is free to use by students engaged in research. Created by Kirk et al. (2008), the scale has been differentiated from measures gauging emotional intelligence in that it is a “type of emotional intelligence in its own right, somewhat distinct and having separate utility...” (Kirk et al., 2008, pg. 435). Kirk et al. revealed a 53% variance between emotional intelligence and emotional self-efficacy that displays the connectedness but uniqueness inherent in the scale. Kirk et al. confirmed the validity, with significant associations found between their scale and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale and measures of emotional intelligence found in the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test. The authors found reliability in a 2 week test-retest measure, showing .86 correlation with a .001 significance level (Kirk et al., 2008). Pool and Qualter (2012) examined the scale and noted that it contrasted between measures of emotional intelligence by focusing more on a person’s judgment of their abilities as opposed to direct skills. Pool and Qualter (2012) suggested that the ESES is more appropriate to use in studies than measures of emotional intelligence in which the aim is to measure a person’s confidence in their emotional functioning. In previous research, the ESES has

been used to gauge the success of a teaching intervention on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy (Pool & Qualter, 2012). The authors studied both men and women college students from various degrees in which age was found to be a significant difference between test groups using a repeated measures ANCOVA.

The ESES consists of 32 questions that are measured on a Likert scale, from 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (quite confident). An example question is "Change your negative emotion to a positive emotion". The scores are continuous and scored based on the total sum of the 32 questions. The highest score possible, then, is 160 and the lowest is 32.

Operational Definitions

In this study, I made the independent variable adhere to operationally defined concepts of both emotional validation and emotional invalidating. Definitions of both are:

Emotional Invalidation: As a form of psychological abuse, I considered emotional invalidation for this study to be a response that is incongruent with a given emotion and that fails to show that a person's emotions or feelings are understood. Validating and invalidating responses closely resembled the validating and invalidating responses that Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) used.

Emotional validation: I defined emotional validation to include more than the converse of emotional invalidation. As Kool et al. (2012) found, social support was found to be negatively associated with a lack of understanding. Also empathy, by definition, fits in with the converse of invalidation: "the feeling that you understand and

share another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). Fruzzetti et al. (2005) found that empathic, positive, and supportive interactions were synonymous with validating interactions. Thus, I considered emotional validation to be feedback or a response that is congruent with a person’s stated emotional expression and that has attributes of either being supportive, understanding, positive, and/or empathic.

The dependent variable was a person’s level of emotional self-efficacy, which I operationally defined as such:

Emotional self-efficacy: As discussed by Kirk et al. (2008), the emotional self-efficacy scale (ESES) is a viable measure of a type of emotional intelligence that gauges a person’s abilities in managing others and their own emotions, as well as gauging their perception on how well they are able to use their own emotions. The scale consists of 32 questions that are measured on a Likert scale, 1 to 5, or “not at all confident” to “quite confident”. An example question is “Change your negative emotion to a positive emotion”.

Data Analysis

I used SPSS software version 23 in order to analyze the data for the current study. Using the Frequencies option within the SPSS software, I found and analyzed missing data in order to clean the data. The research questions that I answered within the current study are as follows:

RQ1 What differences can be seen in post emotional self-efficacy scores based on interventions of emotionally validating feedback, emotionally invalidating feedback, and no feedback, while controlling for gender, age, and race?

- ◆ H_{1_0} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will not differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.
- ◆ H_{1_a} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.

First, I completed statistical analyses using SPSS version 23 in order to consider some variables that might confound the impact of the intervening group and the dependent variable of ESES score. The linear regression tested for the relationship of age, an ANOVA tested for differences with race, and an independent samples t-test revealed any correlations with gender on the dependent variable. The only significant differences I found involved age, and so I completed an ANCOVA analysis with age as the covariate for the primary analysis. An ANCOVA helped explain any difference in post emotional self-efficacy scores between the three groups, while controlling for covariate. I considered both gender and race since researchers have revealed gender and race differences in regards to dependent variables on levels of emotional self-efficacy (Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). Specifically, in regards to regulatory self-efficacy, which is how well a person perceives they can manage negative emotions,

women were researched to score lower than men (Bandura et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). I considered age due to previous research that found women and men's perceived management of negative emotions were negatively correlated as one aged (Caprera et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005).

Threats to Validity

Externally, I paid considerations to the manner in which participants were chosen for placement in each group. I recruited participants through Quest Mindshare and I used the SurveyMonkey survey and website to randomly assign all participants into one of the three groups. Participants had to meet certain inclusion criteria before being allowed to continue with the study (see Appendix A). If they were appropriate for the study (selecting only "none of the above"), they proceeded and were asked to read and sign the informed consent. The exclusion criteria helped to eliminate the confound of pre-existing mental function in that any participants who were experiencing emotional difficulties were excluded from the study, thereby reducing pretesting validity concerns. Also to eliminate external threats to validity, I provided all participants, regardless of group, the same introduction to the study.

Internally, the operational definitions of the relevant variables played a key role. In the study, I tested emotional invalidation on emotional self-efficacy. To ensure that emotional invalidation was actually being tested, I used specific responses that mirrored past studies and that directly fulfilled the operational definitions created of emotional validation and emotional invalidation. In regards to maturation, I completed only one testing phase in the current study and as such, maturation did not threaten validity. In

regards to experimental mortality, I would have replaced any participant that failed to complete the entire study, yet none met that criterium.

Ethical Procedures

The study involved providing some participants with emotional invalidation. Furthermore, I exposed all participants to pictures that were meant to evoke different emotions. Some of the pictures may have created unpleasant feelings. Because of that, I took extreme care and consideration for all participants. Firstly, before any intervention began, I tested all participants for experiencing either suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, or severe emotional difficulties. If any participant checked that they were experiencing any of the aforementioned things, they were excluded from completing the study and were brought to a page that recommended seeking help from a professional or calling 911. The exclusion of both suicidal and homicidal ideations mirrored a previous study done by Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) and screening for those who were experiencing emotional difficulties had been requested by Walden's IRB. Furthermore, I gave all participants, regardless of group, a debriefing that explained the study (see Appendix B). I included special wording in the debriefing to ensure that the group that was exposed to emotional invalidation did not have any lingering negative effects. I provided instructions of what to do if there were was. I also gave all participants an informed consent that highlighted participants' freedom to quit the study at any point if they so chose.

I have kept all data online within the SurveyMonkey website and I also transferred the data to my personal computer and into the SPSS version 23 software. All

participants were anonymous with no information being attached to any names. Upon completion of the study, I deleted all information.

Summary

In the current study, I hoped to shed additional light on a form of subtle abuse called emotional invalidation. The research design was a quantitative experimental one, with a power analysis revealing the need for 180 participants being placed into one of three groups: validating group, invalidating group, and no feedback group (control). I exposed participants from all three groups to pictures from the GAPED. I determined potential covariates of age, race, and gender as necessary or not to use within the study, and I used an ANCOVA research design. I recruited participants from the Quest Mindshare member database. Group assignment sampling was a probability sample, done through the SurveyMonkey website by the tools “block randomization” and “block logic”. Using a power analysis from G*Power, I revealed a desired sample size of 180, which broke down to 60 participants in each group. I used the SurveyMonkey software in order to generate the intervention, as well as to direct all participants to take the ESES upon completion of the intervention (which served as the dependent variable within the study). In order to ensure ethical consideration, I provided all participants with an informed consent and a debriefing upon completion of the study. Because the invalidating group was exposed to invalidating feedback, I provided a debriefing that outlined the purpose of using emotional invalidation so that care and ethical consideration were priorities. In order to address internal validity, I mirrored all feedback that represented the independent variables from a previous study (Shenk and Fruzzetti, 2011),

and satisfied the operational definitions outlined herein. To ensure external validity, random assignment was necessary so that all participants had an equal chance of being a part of one of the three groups and that pre-existing conditions did not weigh unequally in one group over another. The research design and process listed herein preempted any and all outcomes from the design itself and served as a concise plan to analyze the data collected.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Because of the dearth of research regarding the effects of emotional invalidation, I examined this type of subtle abuse in the current study. The purpose of this study was to see if emotionally invalidating and emotionally validating feedback had any effect on a valuable measure of psychological functioning called emotional self-efficacy. The procedure included having all participants view pictures and then select how the pictures made them feel. After selecting their emotion, feedback was provided either in the form of invalidation, validation, or none. All participants then proceeded to complete the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES). Because research has shown that there are variables that influence a person's level of emotional self-efficacy, it was necessary to control for age, gender, and race (Bandura et al., 2003; Caprara et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005; Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). Therefore, I considered the aforementioned variables in the research question, which is as follows: What differences can be seen in post emotional self-efficacy scores based on interventions of emotionally validating feedback, emotionally invalidating feedback, and no feedback, while controlling for gender, age, and race? The assumption of the null hypothesis was that there would be no differences between the three groups, while controlling for age, gender, and race. The alternative hypothesis was that there would be differences after the covariates were controlled. In the current chapter, I completed a recount of the data collection procedures and intervention process, along with a thorough breakdown of the

results including descriptive statistics and statistical analysis findings. I also presented pertinent tables and figures in order to augment the findings shown herein.

Data Collection

Data collection was completed through an online panel called Quest Mindshare. The engineer of the panel, Dr. Philip Garland, recruited participants by sending out an email to members. After I provided the survey, which was created through SurveyMonkey, Dr. Garland employed the survey to members who decided to participate on January 23rd, 2017 and collected 230 responses ending on January 27th, 2017. While the original power analysis specified 180 participants, the additional participants were approved by the IRB and analyzed in order to increase the statistical power of the experiment. There were no other discrepancies in the data collection procedures in comparison to the plan that was presented in Chapter 3.

Baseline Demographic Characteristics

I welcomed all demographics to participate during recruitment and I randomly assigned all participants to one of the three different groups. In screening the data, there was one respondent that declined to agree to the informed consent. There was also one respondent that reported homicidal ideations as well as severe emotional difficulties. Both of these participants did not participate in the study and did not factor in to the baseline descriptive statistics. The remaining 228 participants who chose to participate in the study indicated three demographic identifiers: race, gender, and age. The majority of the respondents indicated their race as White (71.5%). The other racial identifiers included 11% as Black or African American, 7.9% as Hispanic or Latino, 6.6% as Asian

or Pacific Islander, .9% as Native American or American Indian, and 2.2% as Other. The Other category included one respondent who identified specifically as “Puerrtorican,” one who identified as “European,” two who identified as “mixed,” and one other that identified as “K.” There was also a close ratio of men and women in each group (53.1% identified as women and 46.9% identified as men). In regard to age, the baseline descriptive characteristics of age include one respondent who reported their age as “1.” After removing this respondent from the descriptive information (which is discussed later in this chapter) the mean was 41.71 years with a range of 49 and a median of 41 years.

Representation of the Sample

Based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Commerce (2015), racial identities in the sample reflected the overall population of the United States. According to U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau data taken in 2015, 77.1% of American citizens are White, 13.3% are Black or African American, 17.6% are Hispanic or Latino, 5.6% are Asian, and 1.2% are American Indian or Alaska Native. Similarly, women represented roughly half of American citizens or 50.8% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015). Thus, the sample that was collected from Quest Mindshare was representative of the United States population.

Preliminary Analyses of Covariates

In line with the proposed research question, I ran preliminary analyses of the demographic variables to see if there were associations between any of the potential variables and the dependent variable. Three variables were considered which were based on supporting research involving ESES scores: race, gender, and age.

Race. One factor that has been shown to have influence on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy is a person's race (Valois et al., 2015; Zullig et al., 2014). I conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis using SPSS software version 23 in order to determine if there were significant differences in the mean scores of the Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES) test on participants' identification of their race. The results from the ANOVA analysis revealed no significant differences of race on ESES score, $F(5, 222) = .733, p = .599$.

Gender. Another factor that has been found to have an influence on a person's emotional self-efficacy is gender (Bandura et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). I conducted a two tailed independent samples *t*-test using SPSS software version 23 in order to determine if there were significant differences on ESES scores between men and women. The results from the *t*-test revealed that there was not a significant difference in the scores of men ($M = 115.55, SD = 21.802$) and women ($M = 117.21, SD = 23.519$); $t(226) = -.549, p = .584$.

Age. Age has also been found to influence a person's emotional self-efficacy (Caprera et al., 2003; Caprera & Steca, 2005). I completed a simple linear regression analysis using SPSS software version 23 to see if a person's age predicted participant's ESES score. As is explained in the following section in regards to the cleaning of the data, I omitted the respondent that answered "1" to their age from this analysis. The results from the linear regression revealed a significant prediction equation, $F(1,225) = 6.464, p = .012$, with an R^2 of .028. Participants' predicted ESES score is equal to $128.433 - .290$ (age) points when age is increased by years. Participant's ESES score

decreased .290 points for every one year increase in age. Results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Regression Results of Age on ESES Scores

Model		Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	3252.034	1	3252.034	6.464	.012 ^b
	Residual	113200.521	225	503.113		
	Total	116452.555	226			

a. Dependent Variable: ESES Total

b. Predictors: (Constant), Age

Because I discovered that age was significantly correlated with ESES scores, I conducted a one-way ANOVA in SPSS version 23 in order to see if there were age differences between groups. Also, I completed a Fisher's LSD post-hoc test in order to explore all pairwise comparisons of means. The results from the ANOVA, as shown in Table 6, revealed that there were no statistically significant differences of age between groups, $F(48,178) = 1.089, p = .338$.

Results of the preliminary analyses involving the proposed covariates show that neither gender nor race influenced participants' ESES scores and therefore I omitted both from further analysis. Age, though, was shown to be a significant predictor of ESES and therefore I included it in the analysis of effects as a covariate on ESES totals across groups using an ANCOVA research design.

Intervention Fidelity

The survey, including the intervention of the validating and invalidating responses, were administered as planned without any problems. There were no adverse events or circumstances experienced. The only change to note was the amount of participants that were recruited. Initially, a power analysis indicated a required number of 180 participants. This was conveyed to the engineer of the online panel but additional respondents were provided anyway, totaling 230. The use of the additional participants was ultimately approved by Walden's IRB.

Presentation of Results

In order to clean the data further, I took additional considerations. As stated in Chapter 3, I did not use respondents in the final analysis if they answered "I feel no emotion" for more than half of the intervention questions (or a total of three). There was only one respondent who fit into that exclusion criterion and thus I eliminated their responses from the final results. In addition, there was one respondent that listed their age as being "1" year. Due to this incomplete data, I omitted their responses from the analysis. From the remaining 226 respondents, 87 were randomly assigned to the invalidation group, 71 to the validation group, and 68 to the control group. In order to ensure the independence of each group, or as Morris and DeShon (2004) described as allowing the focus to be on the group differences in regards to the variances opposed to other factors, I made each group equal. Since the control group had the least amount of participants, I cut down the number of participants for each group to 68. That resulted in the last 19 participants in the invalidation group to complete the survey and the last three

participants in the validation group to complete the survey to be omitted from final analysis. The total sample size was 204 participants, with 68 participants in each of the three groups.

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Because of four respondents that were eliminated from the study, and in an attempt to ensure greater independence in each of the three groups as outlined above, the overall number of participants that I factored into the study's main analysis went from 230 to 204. Baseline demographic statistics among the three groups in regard to race, gender, and age can be viewed below in Table 2, 3, and 4, respectively. And in regard to age, a mean of 42.05 years was shown for all groups and only a difference of 1.68 years was seen as a mean throughout the three different groups.

Table 2

Race Statistics Across Groups

		Race						Total
		Other (please specify)	White	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Pacific Island er	Native Asian / American or American Indian	Total
Group	Invalidation	4	45	9	5	3	2	68
	Validation	0	48	8	6	6	0	68
	Control	1	54	5	6	2	0	68
	Total	5	147	22	17	11	2	204

Table 3

Gender Differences Across Groups

		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Group	Invalidation	31	37	68
	Validation	32	36	68
	Control	28	40	68
Total		91	113	204

Table 4

Age Statistics Across Groups

Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Invalidation	41.47	68	14.022
Validation	42.13	68	12.645
Control	42.54	68	12.780
Total	42.05	204	13.106

Preliminary ANCOVA Assumptions

As proposed in Chapter 3, I completed an ANCOVA with the intervention group as the independent variable and with age being the covariate, on the dependent variable of ESES score. Yet before running an ANCOVA to test for differences among the three different groups, I completed preliminary analyses of assumptions. Specific basic requirements were met, according to Lund Research Ltd (2013), which included having one continuous dependent variable, one categorical independent variable that includes two or more groups, and one continuous covariate. Furthermore, seven other

assumptions had to be met in order to utilize this research design, which are outlined below (Lund Research Ltd, 2013):

- Assumption of no outliers: There should not be any significant outliers in the data.
- Assumption of linearity: The covariate should be linearly related to the dependent variable at all independent levels.
- Assumption of homogeneity of regression: There should be no significant interaction between the covariate and the independent variable.
- Assumption of normality: The dependent variable should be normally distributed between all levels of the independent variable.
- Assumption of homoscedasticity: There should be equality between error variances between all levels of the independent variable.
- Assumption of homogeneity of variances: There should be equality of the residual variances between all levels of the independent variable.

Completed tests to ensure these assumptions were met follow below.

Test for outliers. In order to make sure there were no extreme scores that could distort the findings, I completed an assessment of outliers. I created a histogram using ESES scores and can be seen in Figure 1 below. Through visual observation of the histogram, and because there were no cases of standardized residuals with ± 3 standard

deviations, I determined that there were no outliers in the data. Therefore, all of the 204 proposed cases were kept in the main analysis.

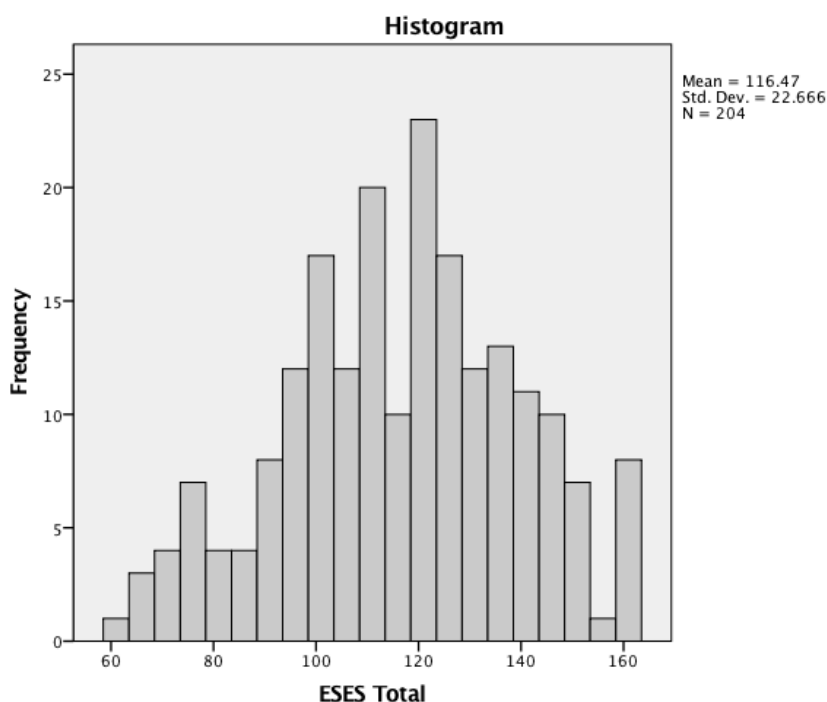


Figure 1. Histogram of ESES Scores

Test for linearity. Testing the assumption for linearity requires creating a scatterplot and visually observing the best fit lines across the data points. This ensured that there was a linear relationship between the covariate of age and the dependent variable of ESES test scores for all three levels of the independent variable. For the current data, it can be viewed that there was not a linear relationship between age and ESES scores in all three groups, as shown in Figure 2. Typically, this discovery would violate the assumption of linearity for an ANCOVA. Yet, as further explained in the following section, factors including sample size and homogeneity of regression slopes alleviated the concerns of nonlinearity.

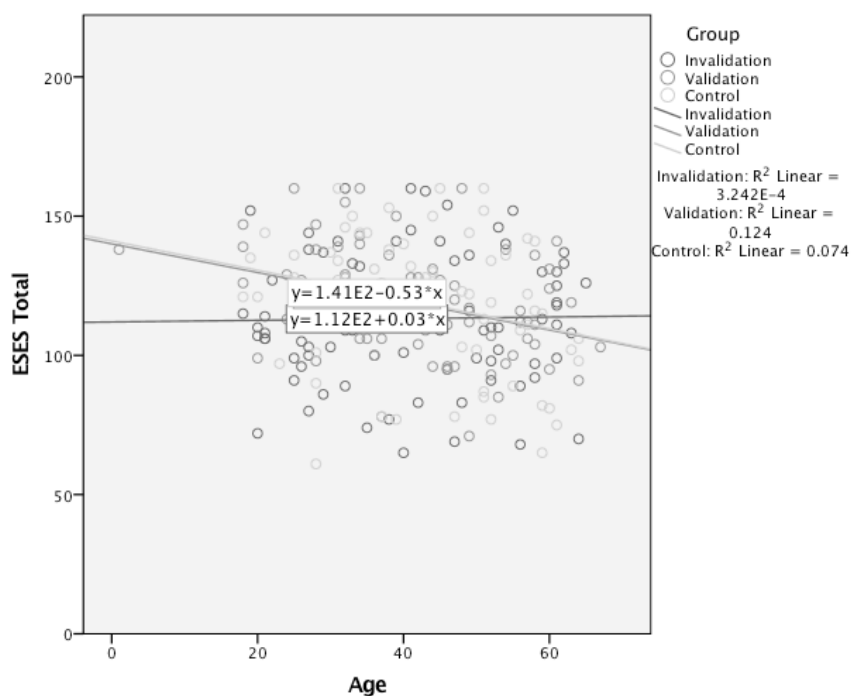


Figure 2. Scatterplot for Linearity of Age and ESES Scores on Group

Test for homogeneity of regression slopes. In testing for linearity, I discovered that age created a nonlinear relationship with participants' ESES score. In testing further, I completed an assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes to ensure that there was not a statistically significant interaction between age and the intervention groups. The results of this showed that there was indeed homogeneity of regression slopes as the interaction term was not statistically significant, $F(2, 198) = 2.360, p = .097$. Because of this statistical measure I assumed that the data met the assumption for homogeneity and linearity for the ANCOVA analysis.

Test for normality. To ensure that ESES scores were normally distributed throughout each of the three intervention groups, I completed a test of normality. This

was completed by creating a set of values that represent a ratio of predicted values to actual values, or what are called standardized residuals, and then conducting a Shapiro-Wilk test. I found that standardized residuals for the interventions to be normally distributed ($p > .05$).

Test for homoscedasticity. I completed the next test to ensure homoscedasticity. Testing for homoscedasticity ensures that the variances between the different levels of the independent variable are equal. I created a scatterplot to ensure that the variances of ESES score were indeed equal between each of the intervention groups and that errors did not increase significantly in any one direction (as seen in Figure 3). I assumed homoscedasticity through visual inspection of the standardized residuals plotted against the predicted values.

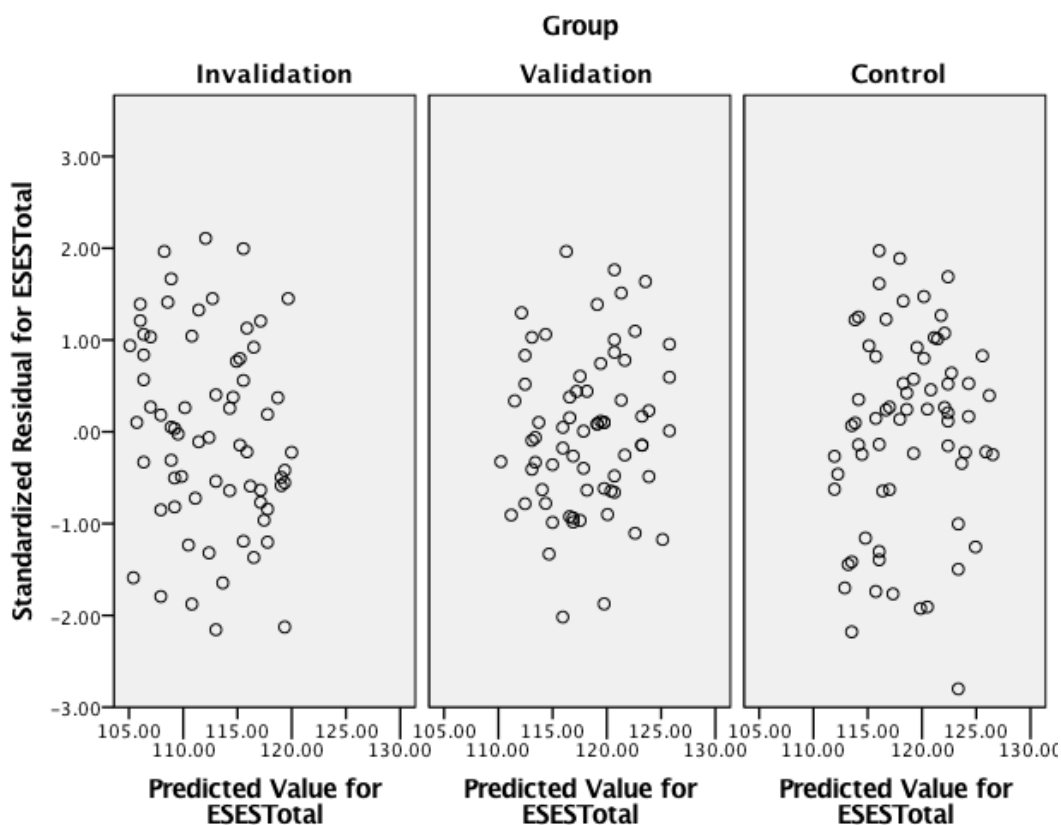


Figure 3. Scatterplot Of Variances Across Groups

Test for homogeneity of variance. To further ensure the data represents a good fit with the proposed statistical test, I completed a test for homogeneity of variance. This ensures that the variance of residuals is equal for the different levels of the independent variable. I determined that there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance ($p = .154$).

Main Analysis

The purpose of the current study was to answer the following question: What differences can be seen in post emotional self-efficacy scores based on interventions of

emotionally validating feedback, emotionally invalidating feedback, and no feedback, while controlling for gender, age, and race? The resulting hypotheses are:

- H_{1_0} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will not differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.
- H_{1_a} : The emotional validation, emotional invalidation, and no feedback groups will differ on a post intervention measure of emotional self-efficacy while controlling for gender, age, and race.

To address the research question and either reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis, I completed an analysis of the data using SPSS version 23 using an ANCOVA research design.

Descriptive results showed ESES scores of the 204 participants with unadjusted means (data without the factor of age) in each group as follows: invalidation group ($M = 112.54$), validation group ($M = 118.12$), and control group ($M = 118.74$). In order to examine ESES scores with age factored in, adjusted means reveal the following: invalidation group ($M = 112.552$), validation group ($M = 118.160$), and control group ($M = 118.996$). I completed a one-way ANCOVA test using SPSS version 23 to determine the effect of the intervention (validating and invalidating feedback) on participant's ESES scores, while factoring for age. By considering the main effects of group and age and the interaction of Group x Age on ESES scores, the ANCOVA design revealed significant effects (Table 5). First for the covariate of age, $F(1,198) = 8.198, p = .005$, and then for

group after controlling for age, $F(2,198) = 3.494, p = .034$. This means that there was a significant effect of the intervention on ESES score after controlling for the significant influence of age. The interaction of Group x Age on ESES scores failed to reveal a significant difference, $F(2,198) = 2.360, p = .097$. A plot showing the difference between adjusted means can be seen below in Figure 4.

Table 5

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	7393.314 ^a	5	1478.663	3.022	.012	.071
Intercept	304916.977	1	304916.977	623.079	.000	.759
Group	3420.148	2	1710.074	3.494	.032	.034
Age	4011.645	1	4011.645	8.198	.005	.040
Group * Age	2310.018	2	1155.009	2.360	.097	.023
Error	96895.446	198	489.371			
Total	2871397.000	204				
Corrected Total	104288.760	203				

a. *R* Squared = .071 (Adjusted *R* Squared = .047)

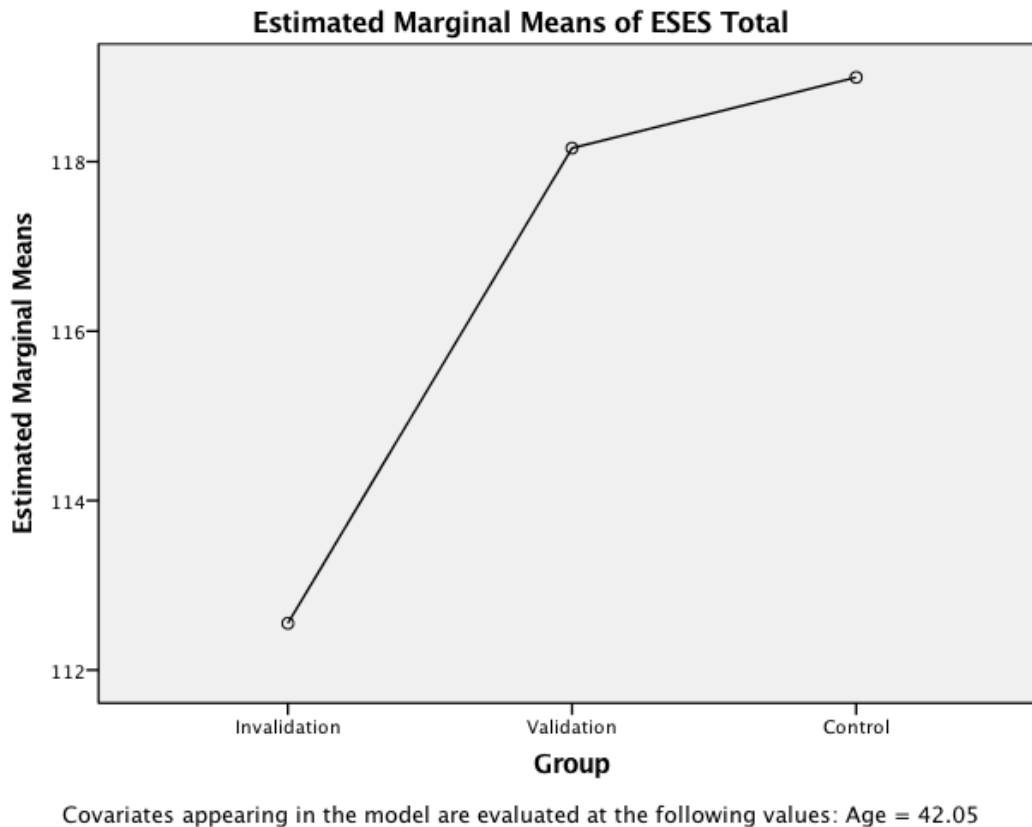


Figure 4. Plot of Adjusted Means of ESES Scores Across Groups

Contrast Analysis. In determining differences between groups, I made contrasts with both the validating and the invalidating group being compared to the control group. Using the adjusted means, planned contrasts revealed a mean difference between the invalidation group and the control group of $M = -6.532$ and that the invalidation group, $p = .022$, 95% CI [-53.995, -4.227] had significantly lower ESES scores than the control participants. Conversely, planned contrasts failed to reveal a significant difference between the validation group on the control group, $p = .908$, 95% CI [-27.722, 24.664].

Conclusion

In the current study, I sought to see how a person's emotional self-efficacy score was affected after invalidating and validating feedback. The feedback consisted of phrases that either conveyed a lack of understanding of an emotion, such as "You feel that way? Really?" or feedback that conveyed an understanding of the emotion stated, such as "Yes, many share that same feeling." In analyzing the data through an ANCOVA research design, I revealed significant effects of the invalidation intervention on ESES score and of age on ESES score. Therefore, it was possible to reject the null hypothesis. Even with the association between age and emotional self-efficacy, as previous research demonstrated (Caprara et al., 2003; Caprara & Steca, 2005), the results showed that invalidating feedback of emotional states had an immediate effect on a person's emotional self-efficacy score. There was no effect from the validating feedback on ESES score. The following discussion section outlines the results in greater detail and addresses implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The current study involved exploring the effects of emotional invalidation and emotional validation on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. The study consisted of an experiment involving participants viewing five pictures and then choosing their emotional state after. Depending on the group each participant was randomly placed into, either invalidating, validating, or zero feedback was presented. After the pictures, all participants completed the ESES.

The impetus for this research study was to explore the subtle and covert abuse called emotional invalidation. Linehan (1993) discussed emotional invalidation as a failure to respond to a person with understanding after an emotion was expressed. Because abuse like emotional invalidation tends to be harder to define yet is just as impactful (Foran et al., 2014; Glaser, 2002; Stirling & Kerr, 2013), and because experimental studies have shown that emotionally invalidating feedback can have negative effects on a person's level of aggression (Herr et al., 2015) and a person's heart rate, skin conductance, and affect (Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011), I completed an exploration into an additional effect of the subtle abuse. In particular, either validating, invalidating, or no feedback was presented to participants in response to emotionally evocative pictures. Participants completed the ESES to measure post-intervention emotional self-efficacy.

The results of the current study, analyzed through an ANCOVA research design, revealed significant effects from the invalidating feedback compared to providing no

feedback at all. There was no significant difference found between the group that was provided validating feedback and the control group. Also, I determined that age was a significant predictor of ESES score and so I included it as a covariate.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study indicated that invalidating feedback decreased a person's emotional self-efficacy, while controlling for age. The findings confirm myriad previous studies that have shown emotional invalidation has led to different negative effects. Age was also seen as having a significant influence on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. Caprara and Steca (2005) showed that older men perceived it to be more difficult to manage negative emotions. In both men and women, perceived efficacy to express positive affect decreased with age (Caprara et al., 2003).

Emotional Invalidation

It is important to highlight past research that has found emotional invalidation to have a negative effect on a person. Haslam et al. (2012), Hong and Lishner (2016), and Sturrock and Mellor (2014) found that self-reported invalidation in childhood resulted in negative effects later in life. In an experimental study, Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) found that providing participants with invalidating feedback negatively affected their levels of emotional reactivity (as tested through skin conductance, heart rate, and emotional affect). In another experimental study completed by Herr et al. (2015), participants' levels of aggression increased after emotionally invalidating feedback was given. In both the Herr et al. and Shenk and Fruzzetti studies, effects of emotional invalidation were seen immediately after the intervention, which explains why scores of emotional self-

efficacy measured immediately after the intervention in the current study resulted in a statistical difference between the invalidating group and the control group. The aforementioned studies and the current study looked at emotions in different ways. Both the Herr et al. and Shenk and Fruzzetti studies measured physiological effects of invalidating feedback in regards to emotional responses. In the current study, I measured a person's perceived ability to manage their emotions. The connection to both is evident, because as Bandura (1982) explained, one's self-perceptions of their abilities directly influence their behaviors, thoughts, and emotional arousal patterns. Discovering that invalidating feedback had an immediate negative effect on perceived self-efficacy coincides with the previously researched negative physiological effects of invalidation. Thus, one might expect to see similar physiological negative effects like increased heart rate and increased negative affect from the participants in the current study alongside their decreased ESES scores if those relevant measurements were taken.

Emotional Abuse

The fact that invalidation, in the form of feedback, had an immediate negative effect on emotional self-efficacy reinforces the perception that emotional abuse can be characterized as having an insidious nature. For example, Crawshaw (2009) noted that workplace bullying is difficult to adequately and accurately define. Crawshaw depicted a situation in which an employee was excluded from team meetings and was then belittled when bringing the issue up. Crawshaw explained that this "unintentional" harassment might not meet the understanding or definition of what bullying is, yet it should not be overlooked. Dubowitz et al. (1993) similarly noted the difficulty in defining childhood

abuse, as the subjective experience of the child is what matters when trying to determine if abuse actually took place. Iwaniec (2006) discussed the subjective nature of emotional abuse by highlighting several negative actions that were obtained from children experiencing emotional abuse, yet noted that their perceptions came down to the relationship between child and caregiver that ultimately predicted the abuse. The intervening feedback in the current study was provided by an anonymous source, as opposed to a primary caregiver. Thus, the current findings extend previous research that has shown negative effects of emotional abuse stemming from primary caregivers in childhood (Krause et al., 2003; Selby et al., 2008). It is not enough, then, to only consider the impact that loved ones have on emotional self-efficacy. It cannot be said with certainty what emotional abuse *is* or *should be*, without fully taking into consideration the subjective experience of the victim. It is for that reason that the invalidating feedback used in the current study was based on previous research and, as outlined when creating the operational definition of emotional invalidation, represented a response that was incongruent with the emotion expressed.

Emotional Self-Efficacy

As Bandura (1977) discussed, a person's self-efficacy, or a person's self-appraisal of how well they can function in regard to thoughts, behaviors, and the management of emotions, plays a vital role in how one ultimately behaves. Bandura (1982) noted that one's perceptions of their abilities could prevent someone from even attempting to complete a task. Many studies researched this phenomenon, particularly in regard to what affects a person's perceived ability to manage their emotions. In a study done by

Jiahui and Aishu (2014), childhood trauma (specifically physical neglect) was seen as being a moderating factor to a person's level of emotional regulation. Psychological well-being and mood were both shown to predict a person's level of emotional self-efficacy (Dogan et al., 2013; Palesh et al., 2006). The higher the level of psychological well-being and mood, the higher the level of emotional self-efficacy was seen. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no previous research has demonstrated a direct influence of emotionally invalidating feedback on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. Seeing additional effects on a person's emotional self-efficacy is of important consideration, as emotional self-efficacy was shown to be a factor in a person's test performance (Galla & Wood, 2012; Tariq et al., 2013), in overall mood and emotional intelligence (Kirk et al., 2008), and in a person's employability (Pool & Qualter, 2012). The influence of emotional invalidation on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy demonstrated in the current study may serve as a catalyst to exploring what other effects emotional invalidation might have on a person

Theoretical Implications

The underpinnings of the current study, in regard to emotional invalidation, were both the biosocial theory and the self-efficacy theory and how they emphasize the power of social influence (Linehan & Schmidt, 1995; Bandura, 1977). For example, it was shown that interpersonal support contributes positively to a person's level of mental well-being (Lester & Mander, 2015; Merianos et al., 2013; Pound, 2015). Also, as Beattie et al. (2016) discovered, feedback provided to a person is an important moderator between performance and self-efficacy. In working with people diagnosed with BPD, Crowell et

al. (2009) discovered that biological vulnerabilities reinforced with emotional lability and unhealthy behaviors combined to create borderline personality diagnoses. The current findings reflected this social influence by showing how feedback from an anonymous source could negatively and immediately influence a persons' emotional self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) had doubts regarding the sole impact that social persuasion could have on a person's lasting level of efficacy, yet this study's findings, in conjunction with previous research, revealed the potential for a greater impact than Bandura may have even considered. The theoretical implications discussed are not limited to mental health diagnoses. For instance, Galla and Wood (2012) showed how low levels of emotional self-efficacy allowed students to be vulnerable to anxiety before taking a test. What I did not address in the current study was if invalidation could impact a person's level of general self-efficacy, however, this could be true.

Limitations of the Study

As noted in Chapter 1, one limitation to the current study involved the subjective nature of emotional invalidation. What one perceives as invalidation might not be invalidation to another. This can be seen in a more overt abuse like spanking. Whipple and Richey (1997) demonstrated the subjective nature of spanking in order to discipline a child. The authors showed that what one considered as too much or too hard and what was defined as a spanking episode was found to be subjective. Even more pertinent to emotional invalidation, DeGregoria (1987) demonstrated that perceived psychological abuse depended upon a woman's cultural perspective. In the current study, an attempt was made to adjust for this subjectivity by operationally defining the concept of

emotional invalidation and the corresponding feedback based on previous research that used invalidating feedback (Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011) and by previous research that defined the concept. All of the invalidating feedback that can be found in Appendix D demonstrated a clear lack of understanding or incongruence with an emotional response made by the participant. As a group, this feedback was associated with lower levels of emotional self-efficacy. Ultimately, though, what was considered invalidation by each participant remains subjective.

What defines emotional invalidation is an emotion being felt by an individual. It was not possible to prove that emotions were indeed felt due to the pictures presented to the participants. This coincides with the subjective nature of many studies that involve emotional abuse. An assumption had to be made that the respondents actually did experience an emotion in response to the pictures. To combat this limitation, participants were allowed to select from four different emotional choices. They were also given a fifth option that said "I feel no emotion at all." Without measuring a person's physiological reaction, as Shenk and Fruzzetti (2011) did, not having proof of an emotional reaction remains a limitation of the current study.

Many factors coalesce to form a person's culture and personality. Because of that, it is possible that other variables that I did not account for could have contributed to the influence on ESES score. In an attempt to combat this possibility, I used randomization to create the groups. Each participant had an equal chance at being in one of the three groups. This randomization was reflected in the variables that were considered, as the distribution of age, race, and gender was even throughout the three

groups. While an attempt was made to consider extraneous influence on the dependent variable, it was not possible to factor in all confounds and thus it is important to note this limitation of the current study.

Recommendations

As mentioned previously, the findings of the current study augment previous research in regard to the power that invalidating feedback can have in an immediate and negative manner (Herr et al., 2015; Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011), in how emotional abuse remains difficult to define and objectify (Crawshaw, 2009; Fruzzetti et al., 2005; Jiahui & Aishu, 2014), and in the role of social persuasion on a person's level of perceived emotional functioning. Therefore, future research can expand on the concept of emotional invalidation. For instance, expanding the intervention to include additional pictures and additional feedback may create a bigger influence on a person's ESES score. It is possible that an expanded intervention might reveal differences in the validation group compared to the control group as well.

Another recommendation for future studies would be to see if the effect that was found in the current study has a long-lasting effect. A longitudinal design might reveal how far-reaching the impact of emotional invalidation is and how far the effects might last. In a similar fashion but in a nonexperiment, Clements et al. (2004) demonstrated how emotional validation and invalidation contributed to the outcomes of marriages over a 13 year span.

Additionally, experimenting with a more diverse sample might be helpful. While the United States was reflected in the current study's sample, other countries with

differing demographics might reveal additional findings. Other variables such as a person's country of origin, socioeconomic status, education level, and marital status, for example, might help to further illuminate the concept of emotional invalidation.

Finally, exploring what different forms that emotional invalidation can have might be an important avenue of research. While there has been research that has measured emotional invalidation, they have typically been confined to childhood experiences (Bernstein & Fink, 1998; Parker et al., 1979; Rohner, 2005) or feedback that was received from parents or primary caregivers (Krause et al., 2003; Selby et al., 2008). Yet, as Iwaniec (2006) pointed out, so much of what can be considered as emotional abuse is highly subjective and contextually dependent. There have been, though, direct observations which have been used that take into account partners' responses (Foster et al., 1997) and parental feedback (Lindahl et al., 1997). Extending the research to include additional forms that emotional invalidation can take, such as what I demonstrated in the current study, could provide greater insight into the covert abuse.

Implications

The findings from the current study have implications that can be considered in many different settings and contexts. The vast majority of people on this planet rely on communication in their everyday lives, whether it is with a friend, family member, or coworker. As Wanzer et al. (2016) pointed out, effective communication has the power of increasing one's connections with others and one's personal well-being. Thus, the findings herein can be relevant and pertinent to all cultures, demographics, and personalities. The findings in the current study exemplify the immediate power of what

feedback can have on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. A few words said to a friend, lover, student, or child can have a powerful influence in the current moment and in guiding future experiences with a person (Wanzer et al., 2016). In the professional setting, academia, or in a hospital or business, providing feedback to others can play a big role in regards to productivity and compliance. Totan et al. (2013) demonstrated the power of this, specifically in regards to empathy, finding that empathy predicted a higher level of emotional functioning. Thus, knowing invalidating feedback to emotional responses can have an immediate and negative impact on a person's functioning is an important consideration. In the personal setting, a choice to either uplift and encourage or minimize and undermine another person can impact the quality of the relationship. As I demonstrated in this study, it is not necessary to have an intimate relationship with another person to negatively impact them. What is also important to note, which Glaser (2002) discussed, is that malicious intent is not required to create harm to another person. How much does a person negatively impact the people they encounter on an everyday basis, quite possibly without even knowing about it? How often does one abuse another simply based on the words they choose?

Conclusion

Most in today's society communicate with a variety of different people each and every day. Emotions will be expressed throughout these many interactions that one has, whether it be with friends, partners, coworkers, and even strangers. Imagine a world in which each encounter that one had with another person, regardless of connection or relationship, promoted positivity and confidence. Imagine if people chose the words they

used carefully in order to encourage one another, help one another, to uplift and inspire. The power of words has this ability but without knowing the damage they can create leaves one blind to the negative influence they have. Opportunity rests within each response to the emotions that others convey and acknowledging the power and influence that people ultimately have on one another becomes ever-important. In the current study, I explored this power and influence, as I provided participants with invalidating, validating, or no feedback after being shown emotion-evoking pictures. What was discovered was that emotionally invalidating feedback negatively affected a person's perception of how well they can regulate and manage their own emotions. Because this ability is linked to other important areas of ones' life, acknowledging how one responds to another should not be ignored. Regardless who one talks to, the puissance that one holds can influence a person's confidence in how well they can manage their emotions. This places an extraordinary power in each and every person. Do you seize the opportunity of using words that validate another or do you invalidate the person, thereby potentially creating a negative ripple effect on that person's self-perception? The choice is there for all to recognize.

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Appendix A: Preliminary Questionnaire

1. Before we begin the survey, please select any of the following that you are currently experiencing:

Suicidal thoughts

Homicidal thoughts

Severe emotional difficulties

None of the above

Appendix B: Debriefing for All Groups

You have just completed a study that tests the impact of emotional invalidation on a person's level of emotional self-efficacy. The study required you to view some emotion-evoking pictures that were taken from the Geneva Affective Picture Database. Some of the pictures may have been disturbing and/or upsetting. After viewing the pictures, some of you received feedback that was incongruous or opposite of the emotion you felt. Because of that, you may have felt criticized, minimized, and/or misunderstood. Please know that the responses from your selections were not meant in malice and were in fact at the heart of the current study: a study that hopes to shed light on how we communicate with each other and the impact we have with our words. Some others received feedback that showed support and understanding of the emotion that was selected. Again, this was done to see how much impact we can have through our words to others. It is of the view of this researcher and of Walden University to ensure that no harm comes from the completion of this study. If you feel any negative impact after completing the study we encourage you to reach out to someone. If you have any questions or would like to talk about the study in any form, you can contact myself (Gregory Witkowski, 520-891-6735, gregory.witkowski@waldenu.edu) or my chair (Patricia Loun, patricia.loun@waldenu.edu). You can also reach Walden University IRB by calling 1-800-925-3368 extension 312-1210.

Thank you very much for your participation in the current study.

Appendix C: Validating Responses

1. “Yes, many share that same feeling.”
2. “Many understand why you would feel that way.”
3. “I can see why you would feel that way.”
4. “Your chosen emotion is very typical, many feel the same.”
5. “You are not the only one who feels that very same way.”

Appendix D: Invalidating Responses

1. “Hmmm... Really? Many others don’t feel the same.”
2. “That’s strange. Why would you feel like that?”
3. “That’s a very odd reaction to that picture.”
4. “The emotion you chose seems a bit off, don’t you think?”
5. “You feel that way? Really?”

Appendix E: The Emotional Self-Efficacy Scale

Please rate how confident you are that, as of now, you can do the following

After reading each item please indicate your response by marking the appropriate number

1. Not at all confident
2. A little confident
3. Moderately confident
4. Quite confident
5. Very confident

1. Correctly identify your own negative emotions 1 2 3 4 5
2. Help another person change a negative emotion to a positive emotion 1 2 3 4 5
3. Create a positive emotion when feeling a negative emotion 1 2 3 4 5
4. Know what causes you to feel a positive emotion 1 2 3 4 5
5. Correctly identify when another person is feeling a negative emotion 1 2 3 4 5
6. Use positive emotions to generate novel solutions to old problems 1 2 3 4 5
7. Realise what causes another person to feel a positive emotion 1 2 3 4 5
8. Change your negative emotion to a positive emotion 1 2 3 4 5
9. Correctly identify your own positive emotions 1 2 3 4 5
10. Generate in yourself the emotion another person is feeling 1 2 3 4 5
11. Know what causes you to feel a negative emotion 1 2 3 4 5
12. Regulate your own emotions when under pressure 1 2 3 4 5
13. Correctly identify when another person is feeling a positive emotion 1 2 3 4 5
14. Get into a mood that best suits the occasion 1 2 3 4 5
15. Realise what causes another person to feel a negative emotion 1 2 3 4 5
16. Help another person to regulate emotions when under pressure 1 2 3 4 5
17. Notice the emotion your body language is portraying 1 2 3 4 5
18. Use positive emotions to generate good ideas 1 2 3 4 5
19. Understand what causes your emotions to change 1 2 3 4 5
20. Calm down when feeling angry 1 2 3 4 5
21. Notice the emotion another person's body language is portraying 1 2 3 4 5
22. Create emotions to enhance cognitive performance 1 2 3 4 5
23. Understand what causes another person's emotions to change 1 2 3 4 5
24. Help another person calm down when he or she is feeling angry 1 2 3 4 5
25. Recognize what emotion you are communicating through your facial expression
1 2 3 4 5
26. Create emotions to enhance physical performance 1 2 3 4 5
27. Figure out what causes you to feel differing emotions 1 2 3 4 5
28. Regulate your own emotions when close to reaching a goal 1 2 3 4 5
29. Recognize what emotion another person is communicating through his or her facial expression 1 2 3 4 5
30. Generate the right emotion so that creative ideas can unfold 1 2 3 4 5
31. Figure out what causes another person's differing emotions 1 2 3 4 5

32. Help another person regulate emotions after he or she has suffered a loss 1 2
3 4 5

Appendix F: Picture Survey Sequence



