

Dependency and Self-Criticism as Moderators of Interpersonal and Achievement Stress: The Role of Initial Dysphoria

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Previous research has suggested that dependency and self-criticism may increase adverse reactions to interpersonal and achievement negative life events. However, there has been insufficient attention to the rival hypothesis that these effects may result from preexisting symptoms. What appears to be a stress-enhancing effect for dependency or self-criticism may actually be a stress-enhancing effect for prior distress. This research was a prospective investigation of the role of preexisting dysphoria, dependency, and self-criticism in increasing negative reactions to interpersonal and achievement negative life events. Controlling for initial dysphoria in a prospective design, dependent subjects displayed greater increases in dysphoria following interpersonal events, but not achievement events. Highly self-critical subjects also exhibited greater increases in dysphoria following interpersonal events and displayed a trend for achievement events. However, dysphoric persons displayed greater increases in dysphoria following interpersonal, but not achievement events, suggesting that some of the observed effects for dependency and self-criticism could result from prior dysphoria. When the greater vulnerability of dysphoric persons to interpersonal events was controlled statistically, the ability of cognitive variables to predict reactivity to interpersonal events was reduced substantially.

KEY WORDS: dependency; self-criticism; stress; personality.

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Drawing from both cognitive (Beck, 1983) and psychodynamic models of the self (Blatt, D'Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1976), several researchers have investigated the hypothesis that persons differ on whether self-worth is derived primarily from interpersonal relations (sociotropy/dependency)² or achievement (autonomy/self-criticism) and that, as a result, persons differ in their vulnerability to different types of stressful life events. Interpersonal negative events are hypothesized to activate negative cognition and subsequent dysphoria among dependent persons, whereas negative achievement events are hypothesized to activate negative cognition and dysphoria among self-critical persons.

Although several studies of naturally occurring stressful events in adults have reported findings consistent with these hypotheses, there have been a number of inconsistent results as well, suggesting the need for further study and refinement. Hammen, Marks, Mayol, and deMayo (1985) found that dependent persons were more vulnerable to depressive reactions following interpersonal, but not achievement, life events, whereas the reactions of self-critical persons were less predictable. However, Hammen, Ellicott, Gitlin, and Jamison (1989) found the expected results for self-critical but not dependent persons. Robins and Block (1988) found that dependency was correlated with vulnerability to both interpersonal and achievement events, but that self-criticism failed to predict vulnerability to any negative events. In contrast, Zuroff, Igeja, and Mongrain (1990) found no evidence for any stress-enhancing effects for these constructs. Finally, Segal, Shaw, Vella, and Katz (1992) found that self-criticism enhanced only the relation between achievement stress and relapse in some analyses but that dependency was a much less consistent predictor of stress vulnerability.

One limitation of these studies is that most have ignored the potential role of prior symptomatology in the relation between dependence, self-criticism, and life events. The importance of controlling for initial symptomatology in prospective studies of personality and stress vulnerability has been emphasized (Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Depue & Monroe, 1985) because a significant portion of the stress-disorder relation can be accounted for by initial symptomatology. Controlling for prior symptoms (a) creates a residualized change score so that Time 1 person variables predict change in symptoms over time, and (b) controls for any tendency of chronically distressed persons to experience more negative life events or to interpret them more negatively (Cohen & Edwards, 1989).

²There is debate on whether dependency and sociotropy and self-criticism and autonomy represent exactly the same constructs (Blaney & Kutcher, 1991), although predictions regarding reactions to stressful events are identical for dependency and sociotropy and for self-criticism and autonomy. In this article, we use the terms dependency and self-criticism throughout, even when referring to articles that used the sociotropy/autonomy terminology.

However, controlling for initial symptoms does not address the rival hypothesis that a stress-enhancing effect for cognition is actually the result of a stress-enhancing effect for prior distress. Controlling for Time 1 symptoms does not control for stress-enhancing effects any more so than entering only a Time 1 cognitive variable in a multiple-regression analysis would detect stress-enhancing effects. Because stress-enhancing effects are detected with interaction terms in hierarchical multiple regression, assessing and controlling for the stress-enhancing effects of prior distress requires entering the Prior Distress \times Events interaction term prior to the Cognition \times Events interaction. To our knowledge, only Segal et al. (1992) and Zuroff et al. (1990) controlled for initial symptomatology, and no one has controlled for the Initial Distress \times Events interaction in studies of dependence, self-criticism, and life events.

There is evidence that dysphoric persons respond with more depression following stressful life events than their more fortunate counterparts (Hammen, Mayol, DeMayo, & Marks, 1986; Lakey, Baltman, & Bentley, 1993; Monroe, 1982). Dysphoric persons may interpret events more negatively, respond with diminished social competence, or utilize less effective coping behaviors (Barnett & Gotlib, 1988). Because dependency and self-criticism may be correlated with dysphoria (e.g., Blatt et al., 1976; Robins & Block, 1988), stress-enhancing effects for these person variables may result from an increased vulnerability to life events by dysphoric persons. The research reported here is a prospective investigation of the extent to which dependency and self-criticism predict vulnerability to dysphoric reactions to interpersonal and achievement negative events. To examine the extent to which such effects can be accounted for by initial symptomatology or the interaction between initial symptoms and negative life events, both the Initial Dysphoria and the Dysphoria \times Life Events interactions were controlled.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Respondents were 133 students (41 men and 92 women) who completed all measures at Time 1 and Time 2 and participated in exchange for class credit. This represents 90% of the original group of participants who completed measures at Time 1. The average age was 18.7 years. Participants completed the battery of questionnaires in groups of 10 to 25.

The data reported in this article are part of a larger study of dysphoria, personality, and stressful life events. Lakey et al. (1993; study

2) previously reported that dysphoric persons experienced more subsequent negative events and displayed greater increases in symptoms following such events. The current article addresses the question of whether this increased vulnerability of dysphoric persons to negative events can account for any stress-enhancing effect of self-criticism and dependency.

Near the beginning of a semester (Time 1), participants completed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988) and 34 items from the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ; Blatt, D'Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1976). Approximately 10 to 12 weeks later (Time 2), participants completed the College Student Life Events Schedule (Sandler & Lahey, 1982), the BDI and the DEQ.

Assessment of Dysphoria

The BDI is among the most widely used measures of dysphoria in stressful life events research and was used in prior studies of dependency, self-criticism, and stress vulnerability (e.g., Hammen et al., 1985; Robins & Block, 1988). The reliability and validity of the BDI is well established (Beck et al., 1988). Respondents reported about symptoms occurring within the previous week. The internal consistency of the BDI in the present sample was $\alpha = .80$ at Time 1 and $\alpha = .84$ at Time 2. Ten-week test-retest reliability was $.78$.

Assessment of Dependency and Self-Criticism

In some studies of dependency and self-criticism, the conversion of continuous personality measures into categories has been arbitrary and persons with very similar scores sometimes have been classified into different categories.³ Following Robins and Block (1988) and Segal et al. (1992), we avoided the difficulties associated with categorizing participants by treating dependency and self-criticism as continuous variables.

We used 34 items from the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (Blatt et al., 1976) as a measure of dependency and self-criticism. The DEQ has promising construct validity and has been used in prior studies

³For example, in the Hammen et al. (1989) study clinically depressed subjects were classified into sociotropy or autonomy groups if their score on one scale was 4 or more points higher than their score on the other scale. Unipolar patients scored a mean of 62.1 on the sociotropy scale, with a standard deviation of 20, and a mean of 77 on the autonomy scale, with a standard deviation of 15.8. A patient could have scored above the mean on sociotropy (e.g., a score of 67) and below the mean on autonomy (e.g., a score of 72) and still be classified as autonomous.

of personality and stress vulnerability (Zuroff & Mongrain, 1987). The entire 66-item scale was not administered because of time limitations. We chose items reflecting the two constructs based on the factor analysis for women reported by Blatt, D'Afflitti, and Quinlan (1979) because we anticipated a predominantly female sample. Items were chosen if they had factor loadings on the dependency and self-criticism scales greater than .40. Thus, 32 items were excluded based on the following criteria: eight because they loaded on the efficacy factor, seven because they loaded on dependency and self-criticism only for men in the original factor analyses, and 16 because they did not load highly on any factor. One self-critical item was omitted because of a clerical error. Thus, of the 35 items with factor loadings greater than .40 on either the self-critical or dependency factors in the original female sample, 34 were included in this study. Because equal weighting of items performs as well as do factor weighting except perhaps when factor loadings are very stable (Dawes, 1979; Wainer, 1976), each item was weighted equally. To assess the validity of the short, unit-weighted scales of the current study, we computed correlations between them and the full scales scored using factor loadings as done by Blatt et al. (1976). In a separate college student sample, the correlations between the current and original scales were .94 for dependency and .92 for self-criticism.⁴

Although the selection of items was based on a factor analysis of a female sample, in the current sample, none of the effects differed for men and women and there were no mean differences between genders on the DEQ. Thus, following Blaney and Kutcher (1991) and Blatt, Quinlan, Chevron, McDonald, and Zuroff (1982), we report analyses that combine data for both men and women. Example items include "without support from others who are close to me, I would be helpless" (dependency) and "I often find that I don't live up to my own standards or ideals" (self-criticism). Participants responded to items on a 5-point scale with *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree* as anchors. The internal consistency for the dependency and self-criticism measures were $\alpha = .74$ and $.71$, respectively. Test-retest reliabilities were .69 for dependency and .65 for self-criticism.

Assessment and Classification of Life Events

An important methodological consideration deals with the way in which events are classified as interpersonal or achievement in nature. Typically events are categorized by the experimenters or by a panel of

⁴We are grateful to David Zuroff of McGill University for providing the data for these analyses.

judges. However it is unclear whether the objective classification by experts corresponds to the subjective meaning of the events for respondents (Swindle, Heller, & Lakey, 1988). For example, a failed exam may be classified as an achievement event by researchers, but may actually represent an interpersonal failure for the respondent, especially if the student feels he or she has disappointed significant others. Similarly, researchers may classify events involving sexual intimacy as interpersonal, but some persons may view these achievement events. A cognitive perspective of dependency would predict that dependent schematics would be more likely to interpret events as interpersonal in nature, and that they would have greater vulnerability only to events interpreted as such. Thus, one could argue that participants should classify their own life events, although this could introduce biases. Taking middle ground, we asked participants to indicate in which of 13 roles each life event had its primary impact, and these roles were classified by the authors as either interpersonal (i.e., boyfriend/girlfriend, son/daughter, friend, spouse, brother/sister, grandchild, parent, and single guy/girl) or achievement (i.e., student, work, hobby/recreation) in nature.⁵ Respondents were permitted to indicate that an event had its impact in more than one role. Thirteen subjects indicated that events had their impact in more than one role, and if such an event could be classified as an achievement and an interpersonal event, we counted it as both. Assessing the roles in which life events have their primary impact has been used successfully in prior research (Lakey & Edmundson, 1993), which found that cognition regarding specific roles predicted subsequent stress vulnerability only within those specific roles. Thus, assessing life events in terms of roles appears to be a useful approach for classifying stressors. Life events were assessed by a 51-item short form of the College Student Life Events Schedule that focused on predominantly negative events (Sandler & Lakey, 1982). This scale has been found to predict psychological distress, to correlate with other measures of life events, and to be free of symptom and social desirability-related response biases (Lakey & Heller, 1985). Events referring to symptoms of depression were excluded. Respondents indicated whether any of the events occurred within the past 2 months (i.e., after the Time 1 assessment) and rated each event's impact as positive, neutral, or negative. Only negative life events were included in the current study.

⁵Events occurring in the roles of "member of a team or organization" and "role model" were not included in the analyses because the authors had difficulty classifying them as achievement or interpersonal in nature.

Table 1. Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------|------|
| 1. Time 1 Dysphoria | — | | | | | | | | 6.9 | 5.2 |
| 2. Time 2 Dysphoria | | .78 ^b | | | | | | | 6.1 | 6.0 |
| 3. Time 1 Dependency | | | .40 ^b | | | | | | 54.4 | 8.7 |
| 4. Time 2 Dependency | | | .39 ^b | .25 ^b | | | | | 52.5 | 10.0 |
| 5. Time 1 Self-criticism | | | — | .35 ^b | .39 ^b | .17 ^a | .28 ^b | | 40.4 | 9.1 |
| 6. Time 2 Self-criticism | | | | .69 ^b | .52 ^b | .37 ^b | .03 | | 39.3 | 9.8 |
| 7. Interpersonal events | | | | — | .47 ^b | .57 ^b | .18 ^a | | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| 8. Achievement events | | | | | — | .65 ^b | -.02 | .09 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| | | | | | | | .07 | .08 | | |
| | | | | | | | — | .53 ^b | | |
| | | | | | | | | — | | |

^a*p* < .05.

^b*p* < .01.

RESULTS

The correlations among the study variables are presented in Table I. Dependency and self-criticism were related significantly to dysphoria at both Time 1 ($r = .40$ and $.39$, respectively) and Time 2 ($r = .35$ and $.37$, respectively) and dependency and self-criticism were correlated significantly with each other ($r = .52$ at Time 1 and $r = .57$ at Time 2). There were no significant relations between Time 1 dependency or Time 1 self-criticism and the occurrence of subsequent achievement or interpersonal events, although more dysphoric persons reported higher levels of both types of events.

To determine whether self-criticism or dependency enhanced the relation between Time 2 dysphoria and negative interpersonal and achievement life events, a series of hierarchical multiple-regression analyses were performed. In these analyses, stress-enhancing effects were detected by Significant Dependency or Self-Criticism \times Life Events interaction terms when Time 1 dysphoria and the relevant main effects were entered previously in the model (see Cohen & Edwards, 1989). Significant interaction terms indicate that the slope of the relation between negative life events and changes in dysphoria varies according to the level of dependency or self-criticism. As displayed in Table II, dependency interacted with interpersonal negative life events in predicting changes in dysphoria, but did not interact with achievement events. An analysis of the slopes for the significant interaction indicated that the relation between negative interpersonal events and Time 2 dysphoria was stronger for persons with higher dependency scores (Fig. 1).⁶ A parallel analysis revealed that self-criticism interacted with interpersonal events and exhibited a marginally significant interaction with achievement events. Analyses of slopes indicated that the relations between interpersonal and achievement negative events and Time 2 dysphoria were stronger for persons with higher self-criticism scores (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

A second group of hierarchical multiple-regression analyses examined whether initial dysphoria interacted with interpersonal or achievement events and whether this could account for the interaction effects observed for dependency or self-criticism. These regression analyses were identical to those described previously, except that the Initial BDI \times Life Events interaction terms were entered before the Dependency or Self-Criticism \times Life Events interaction terms. These results are presented in Table III.

⁶All graphs of interactions were constructed by converting continuous predictor variables to dichotomous variables using median splits. Means are for Time 2 dysphoria adjusted for Time 1 dysphoria.

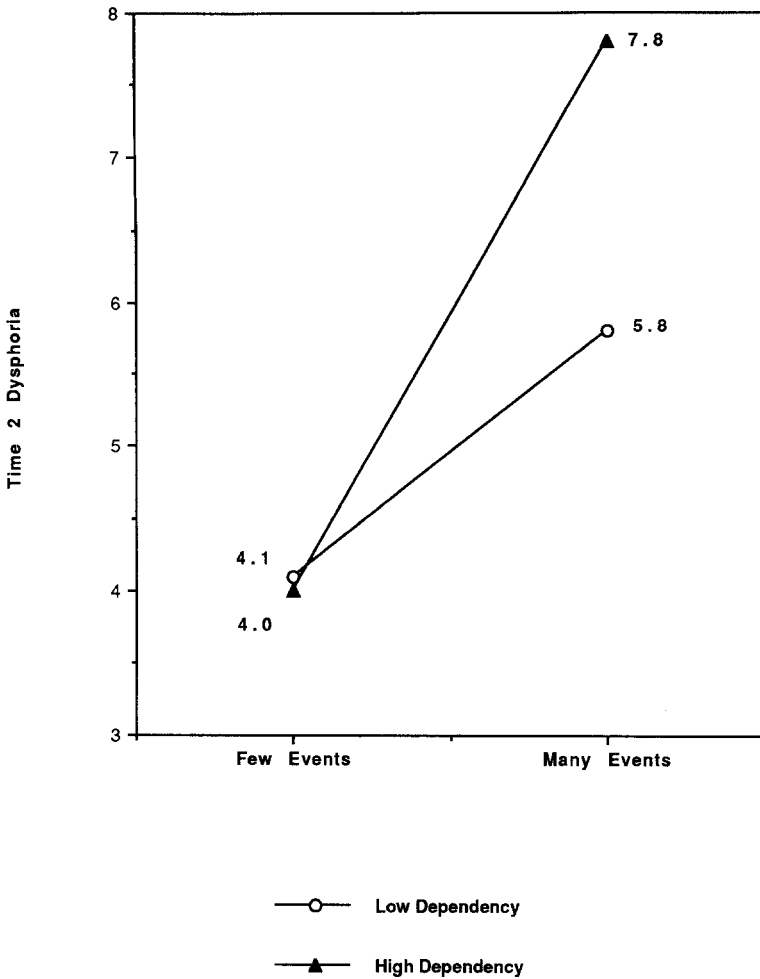


Fig. 1. Dependency × Interpersonal Events interaction in predicting Time 2 dysphoria.

Time 1 dysphoria interacted with interpersonal events, but not achievement events in predicting Time 2 dysphoria. Analyses of slopes indicated that the relation between interpersonal events and changes in dysphoria was stronger for persons with higher initial dysphoria levels (Fig. 4). Furthermore, when the Initial Dysphoria × Interpersonal Events interaction was controlled, the Existing Personality × Life Events interactions were altered as follows: (a) The Dependency × Interpersonal Events interaction was reduced in magnitude by about one-half, and was only margin-

Table II. Hierarchical Multiple-Regression Analyses Testing Dependency and Self-Criticism as Moderators of Interpersonal and Achievement Negative Life Events in Predicting Time 2 Dysphoria

| | Step | <i>R</i> | <i>R</i> ² change | <i>F</i> change | <i>p</i> |
|---|---|----------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Dependency and Interpersonal Events | | | | | |
| 1. | Time 1 Dysphoria | .78 | .61 | 205.12 | .00 |
| 2. | Time 1 Dependency | .79 | .01 | 2.67 | .10 |
| 3. | Interpersonal events | .80 | .03 | 9.36 | .00 |
| 4. | Dependency × Interpersonal Events interaction | .81 | .02 | 6.74 | .01 |
| Dependency and Achievement Events | | | | | |
| 1. | Time 1 Dysphoria | .78 | .61 | 205.12 | .00 |
| 2. | Time 1 Dependency | .79 | .01 | 2.67 | .10 |
| 3. | Achievement events | .79 | .01 | 4.13 | .04 |
| 4. | Dependency × Achievement Events interaction | .80 | .00 | 0.11 | .74 |
| Self-Criticism and Interpersonal Events | | | | | |
| 1. | Time 1 Dysphoria | .78 | .61 | 205.12 | .00 |
| 2. | Time 2 Self-criticism | .79 | .01 | 3.09 | .08 |
| 3. | Interpersonal events | .80 | .03 | 10.35 | .08 |
| 4. | Self-Criticism × Interpersonal Events interaction | .83 | .05 | 18.80 | .00 |
| Self-Criticism and Achievement Events | | | | | |
| 1. | Time 1 Dysphoria | .78 | .61 | 205.12 | .00 |
| 2. | Time 1 Self-criticism | .79 | .01 | 3.09 | .08 |
| 3. | Achievement events | .79 | .01 | 3.83 | .05 |
| 4. | Self-Criticism × Achievement Events interaction | .80 | .01 | 3.67 | .06 |

ally significant ($p = .078$), (b) the relation between self-criticism and interpersonal events was also diminished, but remained statistically significant, and (c) the Self-Criticism × Achievement Events interaction was strengthened and achieved conventional levels of significance.

Finally, one wonders whether the Time 1 Dysphoria × Interpersonal Events interaction would remain significant if entered after the Personality × Events interaction. When the Dependency × Interpersonal Events interaction was entered beforehand, the Time 1 Dysphoria × Events interaction remained significant, although reduced substantially in magnitude (R^2 change = .01; F change = 4.23; $p = .04$). When the Self-Criticism × Interpersonal Events interaction was entered beforehand, the Time 1 Dysphoria × Interpersonal Events interaction was no longer significant (R^2 change = .00; F change < 1; $p = .55$).

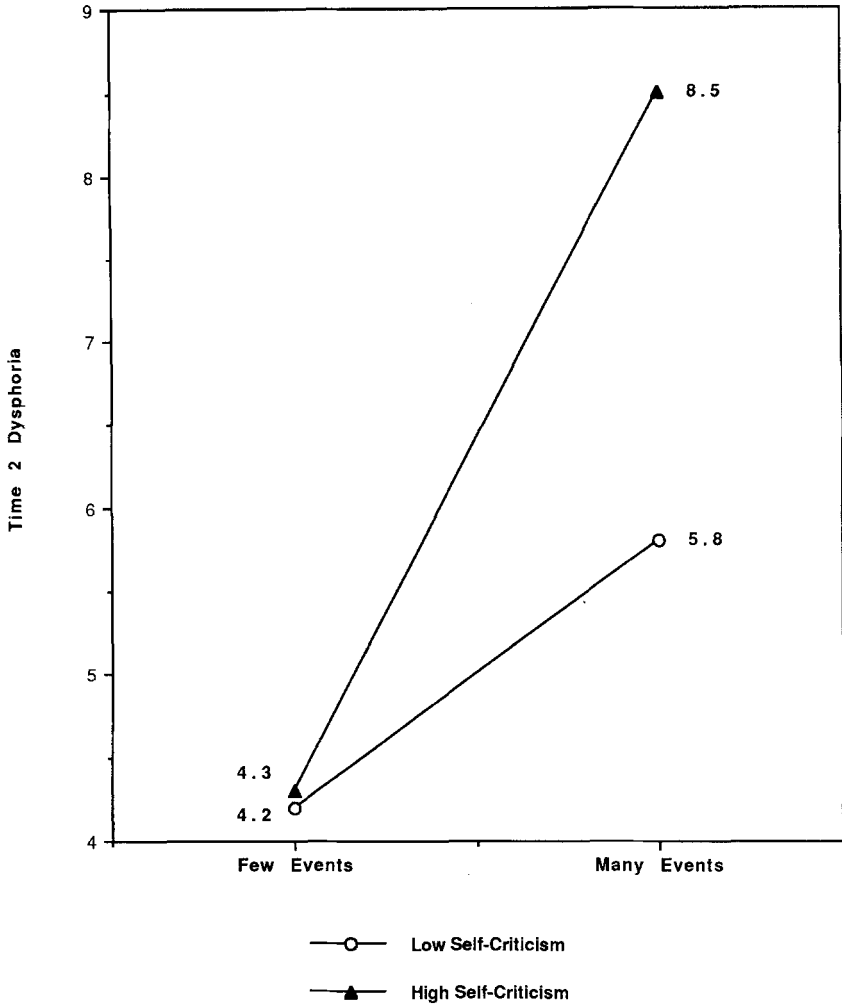


Fig. 2. Self-Criticism \times Interpersonal Events interaction in predicting Time 2 dysphoria.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study were that (a) controlling for initial dysphoria, high dependency levels predicted greater increases in dysphoria following interpersonal stressful events, but not following achievement events, (b) high self-criticism levels also were associated with greater increases in dysphoria following interpersonal events and displayed a strong trend toward achievement events, (c) high initial dysphoria scores predicted

Table III. Hierarchical Multiple-Regression Analyses Controlling for the Initial Dysphoria \times Events Interactions

| | Step | <i>R</i> | <i>R</i> ² change | <i>F</i> change | <i>p</i> |
|---|---|----------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Dependency and Interpersonal Events | | | | | |
| 4. | Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction | .82 | .02 | 7.86 | .01 |
| 5. | Dependency \times Interpersonal Events interaction | .82 | .01 | 3.15 | .08 |
| Dependency and Achievement Events | | | | | |
| 4. | Initial Dysphoria \times Achievement Events interaction | .79 | .00 | 0.09 | .76 |
| 5. | Dependency \times Achievement Events interaction | .79 | .00 | 0.06 | .80 |
| Self-Criticism and Interpersonal Events | | | | | |
| 4. | Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction | .82 | .02 | 6.45 | .01 |
| 5. | Self-Criticism \times Interpersonal Events interaction | .83 | .03 | 12.06 | .00 |
| Self-Criticism and Achievement Events | | | | | |
| 4. | Initial Dysphoria \times Achievement Events interaction | .79 | .00 | 0.11 | .74 |
| 5. | Self-Criticism \times Achievement Events interaction | .80 | .02 | 5.44 | .02 |

greater increases in dysphoria after interpersonal, but not achievement, events, (d) controlling for the Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction, the stress-enhancing effect for dependency on interpersonal events was reduced substantially and became only marginally significant, and (e) when the relevant Dysphoria \times Events interactions were controlled, self-criticism displayed stress-enhancing effects for both interpersonal and achievement events.

The most important finding in this study was that a large part of the stress-enhancing effects for dependency and self-criticism for interpersonal events overlapped with the Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction. This raises the possibility that previous demonstrations of stress-moderating effects for dependency, in part, reflects the Initial Dysphoria \times Events interaction. Interestingly, the Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction was substantially reduced when the effects of the Personality \times Events interaction were removed. It remained significant when the Dependency \times Events interaction was controlled, but was completely eliminated by the Self-Criticism \times Events interaction. This raises the question of which interaction should take precedence? This depends on which al-

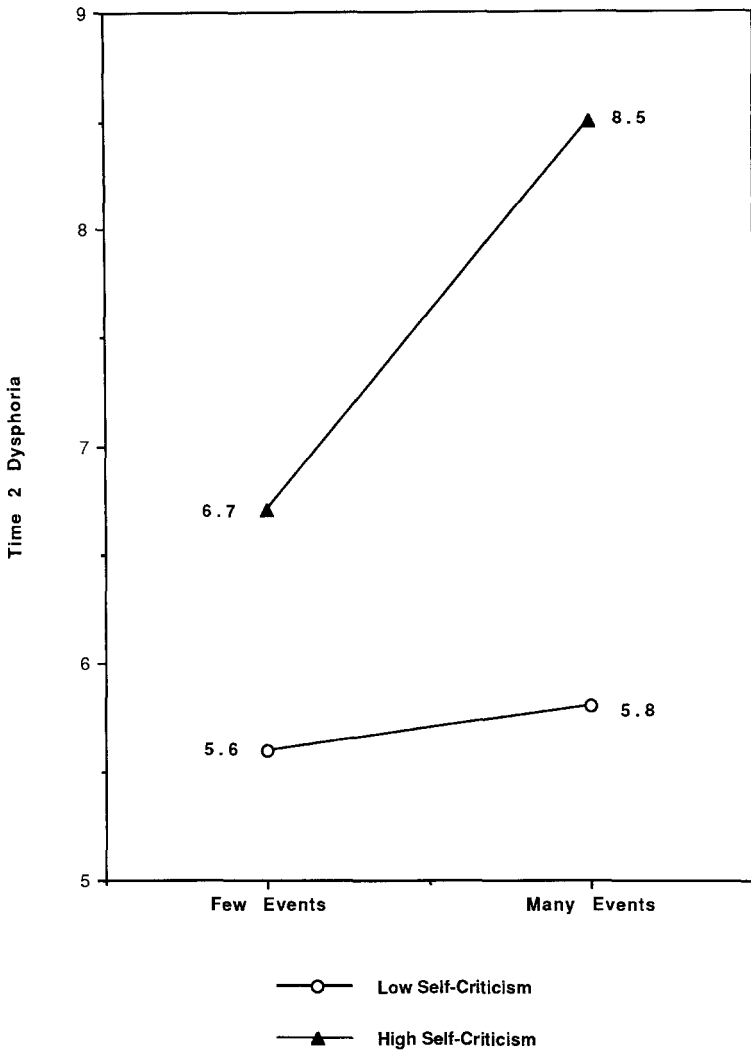


Fig. 3. Self-Criticism \times Achievement Events interaction in predicting Time 2 dysphoria.

ternative hypothesis one is trying to reject. The main alternative hypothesis for the negative cognition–distress relation and for personality and social support moderators of stressful life events is that they are mere symptoms of disorder (Barnett & Gotlib, 1988; Cohen & Edwards, 1988; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Rejecting this alternative hypothesis requires that stress moderators display effects above and beyond those demonstrated by dysphoria.

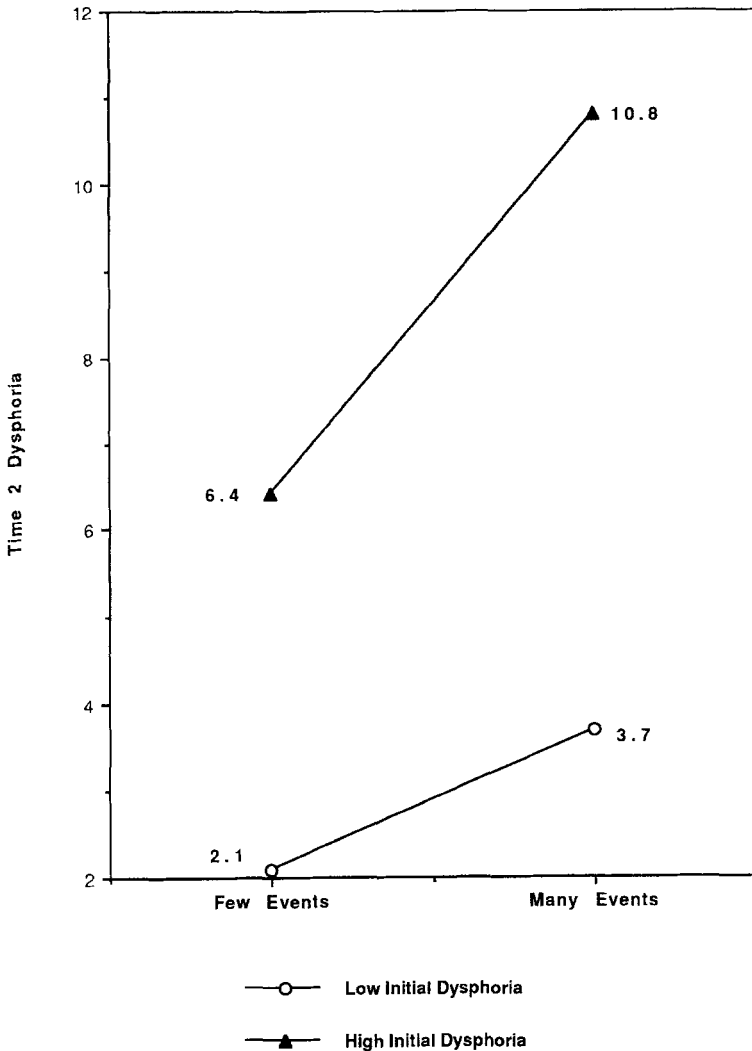


Fig. 4. Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Events interaction in predicting Time 2 dysphoria.

Nonetheless, controlling for the Initial Dysphoria \times Events interaction represents a very conservative means of testing the stress-enhancing effects of dependency and self-criticism. It is noteworthy that despite the conservatism of this design, the Dependency \times Interpersonal Events interaction remained marginally significant. Further, the stress-enhancing effects for self-criticism on interpersonal events remained strong when the Dysphoria

× Events interaction was controlled, and the stress-enhancing effect for dysphoria was completely eliminated when the effects of self-criticism were removed. This clearly rules out initial dysphoria as an explanation for the Self-Criticism × Interpersonal Events interaction in this study, although this interaction is clearly inconsistent with the congruency hypothesis as well.

The role of initial dysphoria as a stress moderator has implications not only for the study of dependency and self-criticism, but for the study of personality and social support as well. Because the constructs that have shown the most promise as stress moderators (locus of control and perceived social support; Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Cohen & Wills, 1985) are also related to dysphoria, one must wonder whether these effects are partly results of Initial Dysphoria × Life Events interactions. Future studies of stress moderators should take this rival hypothesis into account.

Although other research has found evidence that dysphoria predicts negative reactions to stressful events (Hammen et al., 1986; Lakey et al., 1993; Monroe, 1982), this research has not distinguished among different types of events. Our results suggest that the stress-enhancing effects of dysphoria may be specific to interpersonal stressors. Although we did not predict this effect, it is consistent with a large body of research and theory on dysphoria, depression, and interpersonal functioning. For example, interpersonal therapy for depression places great importance on depressed persons' vulnerability to interpersonal disruption (Klerman & Weissman, 1982). Within the context of Beck's cognitive theory of depression, both Hokanson, Hummer, and Butler (1991) and Gotlib (1983) provided evidence that depression is associated with more negative interpretations of interpersonal feedback. Coyne (1976) emphasized the role of depression in provoking negative reactions from others and this process has been documented for subclinical dysphoria as well (Gurtman, 1986). Similarly, numerous studies have demonstrated that dysphoria and clinical depression are associated with less effective interpersonal problem solving (e.g., Fisher-Beckfield & McFall, 1982; Marx, Williams, & Claridge, 1992). Thus, there appear to be a host of potential processes that could explain how dysphoric persons may be more vulnerable to increased symptoms following stressful interpersonal events.

Beyond the effects of initial dysphoria and the Dysphoria × Life Events interactions, there was evidence that self-criticism prospectively predicted vulnerability to both interpersonal and achievement events. The Self-Criticism × Achievement Events interaction is consistent with that observed by Hammen et al. (1989) and Segal et al. (1992) although the present research did not find evidence that self-criticism moderated achievement events specifically.

There was also evidence for dependency specifically enhancing the effects of interpersonal events, although this was only marginally significant ($p < .078$) when the Initial Dysphoria \times Interpersonal Life Events interaction was controlled. We leave it to the reader to decide whether to apply the more lenient alpha level in this case as there is a clear *a priori* prediction for such an effect. This effect for dependency in predicting vulnerability to interpersonal events is consistent with the results of Hammen et al. (1985), and Robbins and Block (1988), and in one of four analyses presented by Segal et al. (1992). In contrast, Hammen et al. (1989) did not find a stress enhancing effect for dependency and Robbins and Block found interactions between dependency and achievement events as well. Although the stress-enhancing effect of dependency for interpersonal events in the present study was weaker than in some other studies, the current investigation is alone in controlling the Initial Dysphoria \times Events interaction which appears to be an important factor.

The lack of more specific effects for self-criticism and dependency could result from the fact that the two variables were more highly correlated than desired ($r = .52$ at Time 1), perhaps resulting from our use of a short form of the DEQ. To address this, each stress-enhancing analysis presented in the results was repeated controlling for the stress-enhancing effects of the other cognitive variable. For example, in analyses testing the stress-enhancing effects for self-criticism, the relevant Dependency \times Life Event interactions were included as controls. However, these controls did not alter the results in any meaningful way, suggesting that the findings were not influenced strongly by the correlation between dependency and self-criticism. In addition, the different pattern of results for dependency and self-criticism in moderating achievement events is inconsistent with the view that the two constructs are too highly correlated to have provided evidence for event-specific vulnerability.

There is some inconsistency in the literature on whether dependency and self-criticism predict vulnerability to their hypothesized specific class of events. Although many studies have found some evidence for such congruence effects (Hammen et al. 1985; Hammen et al. 1989; Segal et al. 1992; the present research), they have differed in terms of whether dependency or self-criticism demonstrated the effect. No study appears to have demonstrated such effects consistently for both constructs. This should not be too surprising, given the frequency of inconsistent results found in the general research literature on personality as a stress moderator (Cohen & Edwards, 1989; Swindle et al., 1988). However, it is unclear what accounts for the inconsistency. Certainly the wide range of assessment devices, research designs, and samples utilized in each of these studies has

contributed. Yet the inconsistent pattern suggests there may be limitations to the technical and conceptual approaches that have driven research in this area.

From a technical viewpoint, we suspect that a major problem is in classifying event as interpersonal or achievement in nature. Swindle et al. (1988) expressed skepticism that researchers can capture the personal meaning of events for subjects. We attempted to allow more respondent input into our classification of events by asking participants to indicate in which role each event had its primary impact, although we cannot claim that this approach was more effective than other methods. Future work should explore additional ways of classifying life events.

At a conceptual level, one of the implicit assumptions underlying this work is that narrowing the domain of personality and life events assessment will afford greater precision in predicting vulnerability to life events (Swindle et al., 1988). Although this would be predicted from research on the cross-situational consistency of behavior (Epstein & O'Brien, 1985; Mischel & Peake, 1982) and on the attitude-behavior relation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), there is reason to question this assumption. Lakey and Edmundson (1993) directly compared domain-specific measures and aggregate measures of negative role evaluations in their ability to predict prospective reactions to stressful life events. Contrary to expectations, although cognition regarding a specific role acted as a stress moderator only for that specific role, the aggregate measures were superior to domain-specific measures in making these predictions. Thus, there may be no specific advantage to narrowing the domain of personality and life events assessment.

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