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ABSTRACT

Self-compassion involves treating oneself kindly, acknowledging that all humans experience suffering, and maintaining a balanced awareness of negative thoughts and feelings. Three studies ($N = 614$) examined the potential role of self-compassion in response to interpersonal rejection. Study 1 recruited a large, diverse internet sample and explored relationships between general perceived acceptance and several outcome variables (affect, depression, self-esteem), testing whether self-compassion moderates these relationships. Similarly, Study 2 tested whether self-compassion moderates the relationships between daily acceptance/rejection and outcome variables. Finally, Study 3 tested whether a self-compassion manipulation effectively promotes coping with rejection. Taken together, results reveal that self-compassion both predicts (Studies 1 and 2) and promotes (Study 3) relatively adaptive responses to rejection. These results suggest that a self-compassionate mindset may lessen the sting of rejection.

Remembering that "Everybody Hurts": The Role of Self-Compassion in Responses to Rejection

When your day is long
And the night, the night is yours alone
When you're sure you've had enough
Of this life, well hang on.
Don't let yourself go
'Cause everybody cries
And everybody hurts sometimes
-R.E.M

The above lyrics come from the song "Everybody Hurts," which was recently voted the most depressing song of all time (REM's Everybody Hurts voted most depressing song of all time, 2012). Even with these melancholy lyrics, the song was highly popular, reaching the Top 10 in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and France (Everybody Hurts, 2018). Why was such a sorrowful song so popular? Part of the song's appeal may be its inherent message of self-compassion, which, numerous studies suggest, promotes adaptive functioning. The present research examined whether self-compassion predicts or even influences responses to interpersonal rejection.

Self-compassion

Neff (2003) proposed that self-compassion brings the benefits of high self-esteem without the drawbacks. Self-compassion involves turning compassion inward, treating oneself the way that one would treat a friend or close loved one. Specifically, self-compassion comprises three facets, each of which is echoed in the song "Everybody Hurts": self-kindness (i.e. treating oneself with sympathy and understanding rather than self-criticism; "Take comfort in your friends"), common humanity (i.e. the recognition that all human beings suffer and are imperfect; "Everybody hurts … everybody cries"), and mindfulness (i.e. neither dwelling on nor suppressing negative self-relevant thoughts or feelings; "Now it's time to sing along …" rather than pushing away unpleasant thoughts).

Abundant research has established that self-compassion positively predicts healthy psychological functioning. For example, a recent meta-analysis established that self-compassion positively predicts various indices of well-being (Zessin, Dickhäuser, & Garbade, 2015). The value of self-compassion appears to be widespread, predicting relatively low levels of

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depression (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007), positive strategies for dealing with conflict (e.g., Yarnell & Neff, 2013), mastery goals in the face of failure (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005), and adaptive responses even to physical health threats (Terry, Leary, Mehta, & Henderson, 2013).

Although self-compassion appears to be a personality trait, recent experimental evidence suggests that it is also a mindset that people can learn to cultivate. Researchers have developed various self-compassion manipulations, supporting the notion that self-compassion is malleable. Interventions range from an intensive 8-week workshop (Neff & Germer, 2013) to reading or hearing a simple compassion-inducing statement (Adams & Leary, 2007; Breines & Chen, 2013). Other established manipulations involve brief writing tasks (Breines & Chen, 2013; Leary, Tate, Adams, Batts Allen, & Hancock, 2007). Thus, self-compassion appears to be both an individual difference variable and a mindset that is amenable to change.

Interpersonal rejection

Self-compassion appears to mitigate responses to a myriad of negative events; one highly aversive event that people experience universally is interpersonal rejection. Human beings possess a powerful need for social inclusion (Baumeister & Leary, 1995); thwarting this need to belong may result in dire consequences, interfering with the fulfillment of basic needs (Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004). For example, empirical evidence has demonstrated that people often respond to rejection with maladaptive interpersonal behaviors such as aggression (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006) and reduced prosocial behavior (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007). Not surprisingly, rejection may also lead to negative intrapersonal responses, such as lowered self-esteem (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) and increased negative emotions (Leary, Koch, & Hechenbleikner, 2001).

Although ample research has illustrated the many and varying negative effects of interpersonal rejection, less research has examined factors that may lessen these effects. To date, empirical evidence has demonstrated that some variables may mitigate negative responses to rejection, including a sense of control, a friendly interaction with another person, or an opportunity to reflect upon a positive relationship (Twenge, Zhang, et al., 2007; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006). Self-compassion differs from these possibilities, as learning to respond to rejection with self-compassion may involve simply changing one's mindset about oneself.

The present research

The present research examined the potential role of self-compassion in responses to interpersonal rejection. The extant literature offers some hints that self-compassion may temper negative responses to rejection. For example, self-compassion predicts relatively adaptive responses to divorce (Sbarra, Smith, & Mehl, 2012), and induced self-compassion leads to less negative responses to various recalled negative events, including rejection (Leary et al., 2007). Despite these suggestive findings, no known self-compassion research to date has focused exclusively on interpersonal rejection. The current three studies present an initial examination of the link between self-compassion and responses to rejection. Study 1 utilized a large internet sample to test the hypothesis that the relationship between self-compassion and negative responses to rejection is relatively weak among people relatively high in self-compassion. Similarly, Study 2 used a daily diary procedure to test the hypothesis that the links between daily acceptance feelings and several outcome variables would be relatively weak among highly self-compassionate individuals. Study 3 went beyond the first two correlational studies by testing the prediction that experimentally manipulated self-compassion would increase adaptive responses to recalled rejection.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through Prolific (Prolific, 2014), an alternative to Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Recent empirical evidence suggests that Prolific recruits more diverse participants than does MTurk and yields high-quality data (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). According to an a priori power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), a sample of 395 would provide sufficient power (0.80) to detect the small effect of an interaction in a three-predictor model. I aimed to oversample in case of participant attrition or inattention. In accordance with Prolific's policies, participants received compensation roughly comparable to the minimum wage in the United Kingdom (UK). Four hundred forty-four participants (193 male [43.5%], 248 female [55.9%], and 3 "other" [0.7%]) completed the study, provided a correct completion code, and provided a valid Prolific ID. Participants came primarily from the UK (241; 54.3%) and United States (77; 17.3%), and 372

Table 1. Study 1: descriptive statistics.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Self-compassion	439	13	60	32.83	8.28
General belongingness	440	12	84	54.12	15.35
Self-esteem	440	13	90	55.58	17.33
Positive affect	440	10	50	27.81	8.58
Negative affect	439	10	46	21.79	8.19
Depression	439	20	77	39.46	11.87

Note: Ns vary due to missing data.

(83.8%) self-identified as White. Four participants failed one or both attention checks, leaving 440 for analysis.

Materials and procedure

Participants first completed a brief demographic measure. They then completed several measures in a randomized order with two attention checks embedded in two of the measures. The Brief Self-Compassion Scale (Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) consists of 12 items, each with 5-point response options of "almost never" to "almost always" ($\alpha = 0.86$). The General Belongingness Scale (Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012) measures general perceptions of achieved belongingness (e.g. "I feel connected with others") with 12 items, each with 7-point response options ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.95$). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a widely used 10-item measure of trait self-esteem. To capture nuance in responses, the version used in the present study had 9-point response options of "very strongly disagree" to "very strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.94$). The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) measures general positive and negative affect independently. Ten items measure positive affect ($\alpha = 0.91$), and 10 items measure negative affect ($\alpha = 0.89$) on a 1 ("very slightly or not at all") to 5 ("very much") scale. Finally, the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977) measures depressive symptoms with 20 items on a 1 ("Rarely…") to 4 ("Most of the time-…") scale ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Results and discussion

Data were inspected for outliers and non-normality; although four outliers (± 3 *SD* away from mean) were present (two on self-compassion and two on depression), the pattern of results remains the same with or without these outliers, so they were retained. All variables were roughly normally distributed, with skewness and kurtosis values below |1|. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics. As Table 2 illustrates, variables

Table 2. Study 1: Correlation matrix.

|	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-compassion						
2. Belongingness	0.53					
3. Self-esteem	0.70	0.69				
4. Positive affect	0.46	0.45	0.63			
5. Negative affect	−0.48	−0.49	−0.60	−0.32		
6. Depression	−0.54	−0.67	−0.74	−0.56	0.72	

correlated with each other in expected ways. For example, self-compassion positively correlated with self-esteem and positive affect, and it negatively correlated with depression and negative affect. In addition, self-compassion correlated positively with general perceptions of belongingness. All correlations were less than |0.80|, all variance inflation factors (VIF) were less than 2.0, and all tolerance values were above 0.10, suggesting no concerns regarding multicollinearity.

To test the hypothesis that the relationships between perceived rejection (i.e. low belongingness) and the outcome variables (self-esteem, positive affect, negative affect, and depression) would be weaker among participants relatively high in self-compassion, I conducted a series of multiple regression analyses. I mean-centered self-compassion and belongingness, and then entered these and their interaction as predictors in a regression equation for each outcome variable. I then followed up interactions using the PROCESS tool in SPSS.

Partial support for the hypothesis emerged in analyses of negative affect and state depression. Specifically, self-compassion ($b = -0.32$, $\beta = -0.32$, $SE = 0.047$) and belongingness ($b = -0.17$, $\beta = -0.31$, $SE = 0.026$), negatively predicted negative affect; more importantly, the self-compassion by belongingness interaction also negatively predicted negative affect ($b = 0.004$, $\beta = 0.07$, $SE = 0.002$), with the full model explaining 32% of the variance in negative affect. Follow-up analyses revealed that, as Figure 1 indicates, the slope was steeper for participants relatively low (i.e. 1 *SD* below the mean) in self-compassion. A similar pattern emerged for depression, in a model that explained 50% of the variance. Specifically, self-compassion ($b=-0.39$, $\beta=-0.27$, $SE = 0.058$), and belongingness ($b=-0.40$, $\beta=-0.52$, $SE = 0.032$) negatively predicted depression; more importantly, the self-compassion by belongingness interaction also negatively predicted depression ($b = 0.005$, $\beta = 0.061$, $SE = 0.003$). Follow-up analyses revealed that, as Figure 2 indicates, the slope was steeper for participants relatively low in self-compassion. Thus, in line with predictions, participants high in self-compassion evinced a weaker link between perceived rejection
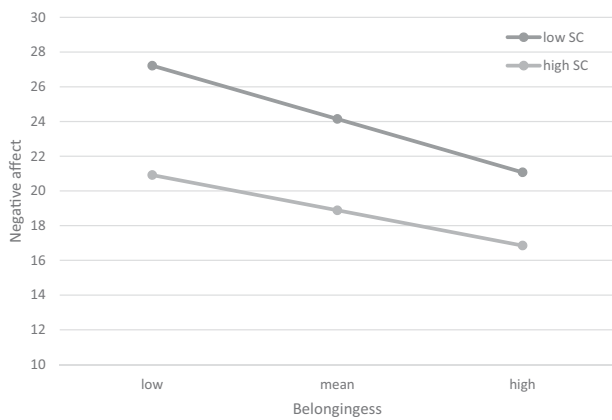
Figure 1. Interaction of Belongingness and Self-Compassion: Negative affect.
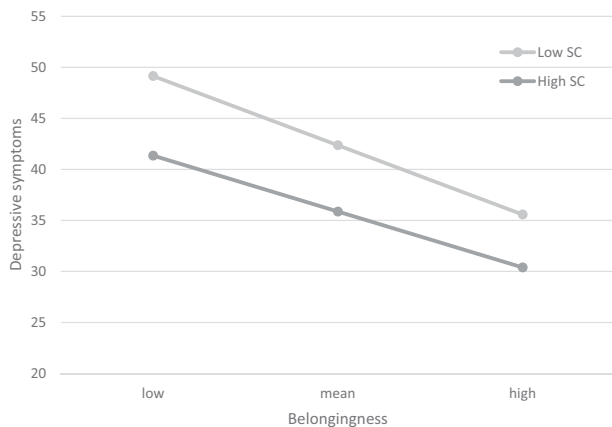
Figure 2. Interaction of Belongingness and Self-Compassion: Depressive symptoms.

(i.e., high belongingness) and negative outcome variables[1].

Additional results revealed that self-compassion, ($b = 0.98$, $\beta = 0.47$, $SE = 0.074$), and belongingness, ($b = 0.49$, $\beta = 0.44$, $SE = 0.04$), uniquely and positively predicted state self-esteem. However, the interaction term made a negligible contribution, ($b = -0.001$, $\beta = -0.010$, $SE = 0.004$), and therefore, was not examined further. The full model explained 63% of the variance in state self-esteem. Similarly, self-compassion, ($b = 0.31$, $\beta = 0.30$, $SE = 0.051$), and belongingness, ($b = 0.17$, $\beta = 0.30$, $SE = 0.028$) uniquely, positively predicted positive affect. Again, though, the interaction term made a negligible contribution, ($b = 0.002$, $\beta = 0.037$, $SE = 0.033$), and a plot of conditional means clearly illustrated the two main effects, with no hint of an interaction. The full model explained 27% of the variance in positive affect.

In sum, Study 1 provided initial evidence that individual differences in self-compassion predict variability in the typical links between perceived belongingness and psychological outcome variables. Overall,

belongingness correlated positively with self-esteem and positive affect, and it correlated negatively with depressive symptoms and negative affect. However, the data provide suggestive evidence that self-compassion moderated two of these effects. Specifically, among people relatively high in self-compassion, the relationship between belongingness and negative outcome variables—namely, depressive symptoms and negative affect—was relatively weak.

Study 2

Study 1 illustrated a potential role of self-compassion in response to rejection, consistent with the possibility that self-compassion may protect people from the negative affective responses to rejection. Study 2 built upon these initial findings by examining links between self-compassion and several outcome variables in people's day-to-day lives. Study 2 tested the hypothesis that the relationship between daily acceptance feelings and various outcomes (state self-esteem, positive and negative affect) will be weaker for participants relatively high (vs. low) in self-compassion. In other words, highly self-compassionate individuals should be relatively less affected by how accepted/rejected they feel each day.

Method

Participants
Forty-two undergraduate participants completed online daily diaries over the course of two weeks and obtained extra credit in their Introductory Psychology course. Participants who completed diaries were also entered in a prize lottery. Thirty-nine of these participants had completed a brief measure of self-compassion (Raes et al., 2011) during a prescreening procedure at the beginning of the academic term; thus, subsequent analyses are based on the data of these 39 participants. Because of the conceptual and empirical overlap between self-compassion and self-esteem, participants also completed a one-item measure of trait self-esteem during prescreening (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001).

Materials and procedure
All participants attended an initial training session in which they learned how to complete online diaries. When participants logged in to their diaries, they first responded to the question "What event most affected how socially included or excluded you felt today?" followed by a prompt to describe the event briefly. The second page of the diary contained a question

Table 3. Study 2 HLM analyses predicting affective variables as a function of daily acceptance, moderated by self-compassion and self-esteem.

Outcome	Coefficient	Robust SE	r_p
State self-esteem			
L1: daily acceptance	3.07	0.36	0.82
L2 moderator: trait self-esteem	−0.47	0.35	−0.22
L2 moderator: self-compassion	−0.0036	0.087	−0.0068
Positive affect			
L1: daily acceptance	1.77	0.10	0.94
L2 moderator: trait self-esteem	0.11	0.10	0.22
L2 moderator: self-compassion	−0.053	0.026	−0.33
Negative affect			
L1: daily acceptance	−1.07	0.15	−0.76
L2 moderator: trait self-esteem	0.028	0.15	0.18
L2 moderator: self-compassion	0.024	0.030	0.13

Note: Coefficients represent unstandardized bs.

assessing the importance of the event, with a 7-point slider response that ranged from "Not at all" to "Very much." The next question assessed acceptance feelings, with a 7-point slider response that ranged from "Very rejected" to "Very accepted."

The third page of the online diary contained measures of the three outcome variables. A 10-item state version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) assessed participants' self-feelings of the day, with 7-point slider responses ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." Finally, participants completed a brief measure of current affect (Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen, 2002), consisting of three positive and three negative items measured on a 5-point scale (1 = "Very slightly or not at all"; 5 = "Very much").

Results and discussion

Participants completed 245 diaries (range: 1–15). Because entries were nested within participants, I used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM, version 6.02) to analyze the data. Daily acceptance feelings were the Level 1 (i.e. within-person) variable, and trait self-compassion and self-esteem were Level 2 (i.e., between-person) variables. Trait self-esteem was included to permit a conservative test of the hypothesis that any contribution of self-compassion will be distinct from that of self-esteem. Acceptance feelings were group-mean centered, and trait self-compassion and self-esteem were grand-mean centered. Self-reported importance of the event did not moderate any of the effects; therefore, I do not discuss this variable further.

Table 3 summarizes the results of the three HLM analyses. Not surprisingly, daily acceptance strongly predicted all outcome variables. More important, and consistent with predictions, a modest cross-level interaction indicated that the relationship between daily

acceptance feelings (i.e. low rejection feelings) and positive affect was weaker among participants relatively high in self-compassion. Thus, high self-compassion uniquely predicted a relatively weak link between acceptance feelings and positive affect. Contrary to predictions, the effect sizes of the interactions for negative affect and state self-esteem were trivial.

In sum, Study 2 provided partial support for the hypothesis. Results demonstrated a weaker link between daily acceptance/rejection feelings and positive affect among individuals relatively high in self-compassion. These results are consistent with the possibility that highly self-compassionate people are less affected by daily fluctuations in perceived acceptance.

Study 3

Studies 1 and 2 provide promising evidence that self-compassion moderates the relationship between perceived acceptance and affective responses. Of course, the correlational nature of these studies precludes a direct test of the hypothesis that self-compassion actually *lessens* negative responses to interpersonal rejection. Study 3 offered a direct test of this hypothesis, using a previously established self-compassion manipulation (Leary et al., 2007). Specifically, Study 3 tested the prediction that participants momentarily induced to experience a self-compassionate mindset after recalling a rejection experience would report higher state self-esteem and positive affect and lower state depression and negative affect than would participants in a self-esteem or control condition. Including a self-esteem condition permitted testing the possibility that any apparent effects of the self-compassion manipulation were due solely to the overlap between self-compassion and self-esteem.

Method

Participants

Undergraduate students participated in exchange for extra credit in their introductory psychology courses. An a priori power analysis indicated that a sample of 159 would provide sufficient power (0.80) to detect a medium effect (based on results of Leary et al., 2007). However, after two semesters, 135 participants had completed the study. Although this sample size provided a less than ideal level of power (0.73), it was larger than that used in the original study (Leary et al., 2007), which featured an additional experimental condition not used in the present study.

Materials and procedure

Participants completed the experiment either individually or with another participant present. After providing informed consent, participants completed the study on computers with privacy screens, using MediaLab software. Computer instructions first directed participants to write about a time when they felt intensely rejected in some way (Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004). Instructions indicated that participants should write about the event in enough detail to relive the event momentarily. Research has established that such reliving procedures elicit responses similar to those found after real-time rejection (Pickett et al., 2004). After participants wrote about a rejection event, they were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions (Leary et al., 2007). In the *self-compassion condition,* three prompts directed participants to write about the rejection in ways that correspond with the three facets of self-compassion (i.e. self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness). In the *self-esteem condition,* prompts directed participants to write about their positive qualities, how the rejection was not their fault, and how the rejection does not indicate anything about who they are. In the *control condition,* instructions directed participants to "really let go" and explore their emotions in response to the rejection.

After completing the two writing tasks, participants completed a series of dependent measures, which were state forms of the outcome measures used in Study 1. Specifically, participants reported their current positive and negative affect (Watson et al., 1988), state self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), and state depression (Radloff, 1977)[2]. At the conclusion of the study, a research assistant debriefed each participant, encouraging participants to recall a time that they felt very socially accepted.

Results and discussion

An inspection of participants' writings revealed that nearly all participants closely followed instructions. One participant claimed not to have experienced rejection; however, results do not change appreciably when omitting the data from this participant, so data from all participants were retained in the analyses that follow. Inspection of the individual dependent variables revealed no outliers or non-normality. The four DVs (state self-esteem, state depression, and positive and negative affect) substantially correlated with each other ($|M| = 0.63$, range: –0.38 to 0.78). To maximize power in this slightly underpowered sample, I created a composite dependent variable in which I standardized the DVs, reversed the sign of the negative DVs so that high scores on the composite indicated positive affective responses, and then averaged them. Because I had *a priori* hypotheses, I ran two planned contrasts testing (1) the difference between the self-compassion and control condition and (2) the difference between the self-compassion and self-esteem condition. (See Furr & Rosenthal, 2003, for a description of the advantages of using contrasts rather than omnibus tests for theory-testing.)

Results revealed that, as predicted, participants reported a more positive affective response in the self-compassion condition ($M = 0.12$) than in the control condition ($M = -0.22$), t (131) = 1.91, $r_{contrast} = 0.16$. Descriptive U_3 provides another way of looking at the data; specifically, it indicates the percentage of participants in one experimental condition with values that exceed the mean of another condition (Valentine, Aloe, & Lau, 2015). This analysis revealed that 67.39% of participants in the self-compassion condition reported positive affect higher than the mean in the control condition. However, the difference between means in the self-compassion condition and the self-esteem condition ($M = 0.08$) was trivial, $r_{contrast} = 0.019$, although, the means were in the predicted direction. Only slightly more than half (54.35%) of participants in the self-compassion condition reported positive affect higher than the mean in the self-esteem condition.

In sum, Study 3 revealed that when participants "relived" an experience of interpersonal rejection, their current reactions were more positive if they were induced to recall the experience with a self-compassionate mindset, rather than a "cathartic" mindset. Although the self-compassion condition produced responses descriptively more positive than did the self-esteem condition, this difference was only slight. However, because self-compassion appears to be a healthier alternative to self-esteem (Neff, 2011), viewing rejection through a self-compassionate lens may ultimately be a more adaptive response than is coping with rejection by bolstering self-esteem. Indeed, the prompts in the self-esteem condition may elicit defensiveness (e.g. " … interpret [the rejection] in a way that makes you feel better about yourself.")

General discussion

Three studies provided converging evidence that self-compassion plays a role in adaptive responses to interpersonal rejection. With a large, diverse sample, Study 1 found that the typical links between perceived

belongingness and negative outcome variables were attenuated among highly self-compassionate individuals. Similarly, Study 2 found that over the course of two weeks, self-compassion predicted a relatively weak correspondence between daily perceptions of acceptance and daily positive affect. Study 3 built on these correlational results, finding that experimentally induced self-compassion increased positive responses to recalled rejection. Although not all studies found notable effect sizes across all outcome measures, substantial findings emerged at least once for each outcome variable; thus, the results collectively suggest the promise of self-compassion in buffering people against the negative responses to rejection.

Strengths and limitations

The present research had several strengths. First, the three studies used three different, complementary methodologies. The first two studies established a foundation for testing a causal relationship between self-compassion and responses to rejection, and the third study directly tested for causal effects. Second, the research offered novel evidence of a potential benefit of self-compassion by focusing exclusively on responses to rejection. Third, Studies 2 and 3 provided a strong test of the unique contributions of self-compassion by controlling for or comparing against self-esteem.

Despite these strengths, the present research also had several limitations. First, Study 3 was slightly underpowered. Despite this, the study still found an effect of experimentally induced self-compassion. Second, each study relied on participants' self-reports. However, each study also offered ways to assess participant attentiveness and comprehension. Specifically, Study 1 materials included attention checks; Study 2 included a space for participants' open-ended descriptions of daily events, which permitted examination of whether participants followed instructions; and Study 3 used two writing tasks, which similarly permitted inspection of participants' responses to assess fidelity to the instructions. Third, each study examined delayed responses to rejection, rather than to rejection in the moment. However, according to the Temporal Need Threat Model of Ostracism (Williams & Nida, 2011), individual differences in responses to exclusion tend to emerge not in its immediate aftermath (i.e. the reflexive stage), but rather after some delay (i.e. the reflective state). Nevertheless, future research may examine whether self-compassion mitigates immediate responses to rejection.

Implications and future directions

The present research makes a theoretical contribution to both the self-compassion and social rejection literatures. Specifically, the present results suggest that coping with rejection may be added to the list of outcomes that self-compassion positively predicts or influences (Zessin et al., 2015). Self-compassion may aid in coping with rejection by—at least, indirectly—restoring the four fundamental needs that exclusion threatens: belongingness, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence (Williams & Nida, 2011). For example, treating oneself with kindness may temporarily raise self-esteem, recognizing one's connectedness to humanity may bolster belongingness and provide a sense of meaningful existence, and dispassionately observing one's negative thoughts and feelings may restore a sense of control. Future research may examine whether the three elements of self-compassion indeed restore these four fundamental needs.

The present research also has practical implications, both for practitioners and the general public. The present results suggest that learning to practice self-compassion may benefit individuals by improving their ability to cope with rejection, in addition to bringing other benefits. Similarly, practitioners who deal with clients suffering from chronic rejection may include self-compassion as part of their therapeutic practice. Empirical evidence already supports the effectiveness of self-compassion training as part of treatment (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Study 3 examined the utility of a simple writing task; future research may test whether other self-compassion inductions also successfully influence coping with rejection. For example, writing a self-compassionate letter to oneself after a rejection experience might lessen its sting, or keeping a self-compassion journal may help one cope with repeated rejection (Self-Compassion Exercises by Dr. Kristin Neff, n.d.). In addition, future research may examine whether self-compassion also decreases negative behavioral responses to rejection, such as aggression and self-defeating behaviors.

Future research may also test whether self-compassion outperforms other strategies that facilitate coping with rejection. One potentially adaptive response to rejection is simply to seek other sources of acceptance (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007); however, such alternative outlets for acceptance may not always be available. In addition, individuals who strongly fear negative evaluation may be loath to seek acceptance from others. Similarly, although recalling a positive attachment experience may alleviate negative

responses to rejection, this strategy may work only for individuals with a secure attachment style (Yaakobi & Williams, 2016). In contrast, cultivating a self-compassionate mindset in the face of rejection requires no actual or recalled contact with others.

Conclusion

Across three studies, empirical evidence suggests that trait self-compassion predicts relatively adaptive responses to rejection, and that induced self-compassion actually *promotes* adaptive responses to rejection. Future research may continue to examine the power of self-compassion to decrease negative responses to rejection, using different self-compassion manipulations and examining various outcomes. The present studies are an initial step in understanding the role of self-compassion in coping with rejection. The promising results suggest that when experiencing rejection, people may benefit by remembering that "everybody hurts."

Acknowledgments

Data availability

Data for all studies are available on the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/pbdvx/?view_only=ca9f43c4cd9 e4df291dd2362774341a6.

Notes

1. At the request of an anonymous reviewer, I also examined whether the pattern of results differed when creating separate subscales for the negative ($\alpha = 0.85$) and positive ($\alpha = 0.78$) self-compassion items. The pattern of results did not differ substantially (although, the descriptive difference between slopes was more pronounced for the negative items), consistent with recent research supporting the superiority of models treating self-compassion as a single factor (Neff et al., 2019).
2. For exploratory purposes, Study 3 also included two items assessing whether participants believed that they had learned anything (Zhang & Chen, 2016) from their rejection experience. Because these two items did not correlate highly with each other and did not yield notable effects, I do not discuss them further.

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