

BELIEVING YOU HAVE IT WORSE THAN OTHERS:
MAXIMIZATION- A COPING STRATEGY

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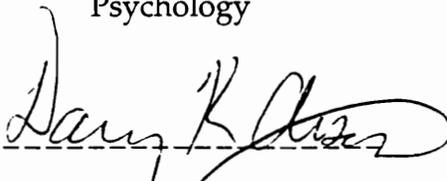
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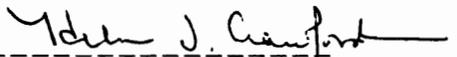
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Psychology

(ABSTRACT)

The present research examined the use of a heretofore unstudied coping strategy in which people maximize negative life events they have experienced. Maximization is defined as *the process of comparing oneself to others on the number or intensity of negative life events one is experiencing, with the goal of finding that one is experiencing more or worse negative life events in comparison to others.*

It was hypothesized that maximization arises, in part, from self-verification concerns. It should therefore be elicited when an individual's experienced distress is not validated by others following a stressful life event. In addition, it was proposed that maximization will occur at both the public and private levels. Two variables, adjustment and perceptions of embarrassment or stigma are proposed to moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization behavior.

An experiment was conducted using 83 undergraduate college students, (identified from mass testing), who scored either .80 standard deviations above (Positive Event condition, n=43) or .80 standard deviations below (Negative Event condition, n= 40) the mean on the Life Experiences Survey. During a group discussion with two confederates regarding the types of negative life events college students experience, participants were randomly assigned to receive one of two types of Feedback, Invalidation or No Feedback. In the Invalidation condition, participants received

information from the confederates that the confederates' negative life experiences were more difficult in comparison to the participants. Participants in the No Feedback condition received no information regarding the negative life events they reported during the group discussion.

The results suggest preliminary support for the proposal that the invalidation of distress following a negative life event(s) will elicit maximization behavior, both publicly and privately. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, compared to the other three conditions, were significantly more likely to report during the group discussion that their experiences were worse than the confederates. On a private measure of maximization, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, compared to the other three conditions, were significantly more likely to report that their experiences were worse than other Virginia Tech students. In addition, adjustment and perceptions of embarrassment significantly moderated the relationship between self-verification and maximization behavior, although the nature of the relationship differed for public and private behavior. Limitations of the experiment and future directions are discussed.

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Introduction

Two women who have recently undergone childbirth are discussing their labor. The women begin comparing notes; who their obstetrician was, what time contractions began, etc. As the discussion proceeds, the women begin to graphically discuss the details of their newborn's birth. As the interaction unfolds, it begins to seem as though the women are no longer comparing notes, but are actually competing to see who had the most difficult, painful experience. The women become engaged in a battle of one-upmanship, "...if you think that's bad, I had to ...".

This behavior, referred to here as maximization, is readily recognized by many. Indeed, similar scenarios are re-enacted in a number of Hollywood films. For example, Woody Allen often depicts a family gathered around the dinner table competing to see who suffers the most physical symptoms; another comedic scene in Jaws has Richard Dryfuss, Roy Schneider, and Robert Shaw comparing battle scars. Not only do we recognize this behavior in film, many have observed it in themselves and others. However, despite its common occurrence, relatively little is known about maximization.

The purpose of this dissertation is to take the initial steps in a program of research designed to gain a better understanding of maximization. A first step in this process is a definition of maximization behavior. Maximization is defined as *the process of comparing oneself to others on the number or intensity of negative life events one is experiencing, with the goal of finding that one is experiencing more or worse negative life events in comparison to others*. In order to achieve this goal the individual may exaggerate the

number or intensity of events experienced or minimize a comparison others' experiences.

Inherent in the definition of maximization is the process of comparing oneself to others. Thus, maximization can be conceptualized as a social comparison process. It is proposed that one of three social comparison goals can motivate maximization, 1) self-improvement, 2) self-enhancement or 3) self-evaluation. I suggest that these social comparison goals are elicited by the need to manage distress following a negative life event. Wood, Taylor, and Lichtman (1985) state that social comparison processes may play an important role in adjustment. Thus, maximization can be conceptualized as a coping strategy, guided by social comparison goals. It is proposed that these goals can give rise to one of four primary processes by which maximization occurs, 1) help-seeking, 2) downward comparisons, 3) self-handicapping, and 4) self-verification.

Help-seeking is a self-improvement process that may manage distress through the solicitation of support. Individuals may improve their situation through the receipt of emotional, tangible, and/or informational support. Maximization may ensure that potential support providers feel obligated to offer or provide support services. Downward comparisons and self-handicapping are both self-enhancement processes which may manage distress through an increase or protection of self-esteem. Maximization may increase self-esteem through downward comparisons on the coping dimension. That is, the individual may perceive that he/she is coping better in comparison to others even though he/she is experiencing more negative life events. Maximization as a self-handicapping strategy may ensure that

others take into account the individual's negative life experiences when making attributions regarding the individual's performance. If the individual succeeds, positive attributions to the individual will be augmented (i.e., he/she was able to succeed even in the face of trauma). If the individual fails, negative attributions to the individual will be discounted (i.e., he/she failed because of the negative life event). Self-verification is a self-evaluative process that may help individuals manage distress through the validation of their feelings and experiences. The individual may seek comparison information to evaluate the appropriateness of his/her distress. Maximization may ensure that the individual's distress is validated by comparison others. In summary, it is proposed that maximization is a coping strategy designed to meet one of three social comparison goals through one of four processes. (See Figure 1).

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Coping and stressful life events

The relationship between stressful life events and both physical and mental health has long been a topic of investigation in medical and psychological research (e.g., Cannon, 1929; Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Selye, 1956). However, more recently a substantial amount of this research has focused on the individual's use of coping strategies as a variable which moderates this relationship (e.g., Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moos & Billings, 1982; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Stressful life events may include both traumatic experiences and everyday hassles. These events may range

from loss of a loved one to a traffic jam. The use of coping strategies is an active attempt to alleviate or modify the distress experienced following the stressful event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The number of coping strategies examined has been vast in scope and range (e.g., social support, downward social comparisons, selective evaluation, finding positive meaning, imagining worse worlds, self-attributions, behavior change, problem-solving, cognitive reappraisal, avoidance, and distancing; Collins, Taylor, Skokan, 1990; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor, 1983; Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983; Thoits, 1986; Wills, 1983, 1987).

Interestingly, although I propose that maximization is a relatively common coping strategy, research examining this process is nonexistent. In light of previous research, it is not surprising that researchers have failed to examine maximization as a coping strategy. Indeed, what is surprising is that maximization occurs at all. Previous research indicates that individuals generally appear to view the world and themselves in a positive light (Taylor, 1989). They generally report that they are happier, have fewer problems, and have a brighter future compared to others (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Individuals typically rate themselves as superior to others on a wide range of desirable traits or abilities (e.g., Alicke, 1985; Brown, 1986; Campbell, 1986), and the opposite effect is observed for undesirable traits or abilities (Alicke, 1985). Based on this evidence, we would expect people to stress the positive, not negative, aspects of their lives.

The results of research examining coping strategies utilized by victims supports this prediction. A large number of coping strategies (e.g., downward comparisons, selective evaluation, imagining worse worlds, and positive

appraisal), minimize the negative and maximize the positive aspects of the traumatic event (e.g., Farina, Allen, & Saul, 1971; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor, 1983, 1989; Wills, 1987). Victims commonly report that the event could have been worse, that they appreciate their lives more, or that they are better people because of the negative life event. Rather than focusing on the negative aspects of victimization, victims tend to focus on the benefits or find positive meaning in the event (e.g., Taylor, 1983; Thompson, 1985). Thus, coping research has tended to focus on victims' use of minimization strategies, while strategies in which the victim maximizes his/her experience have been virtually ignored. Indeed, a widely accepted method of measuring coping strategies, the Ways of Coping Scale (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986), fails to include any measure which taps into the maximization process. A number of strategies measured by the Ways of Coping scale are the behavioral opposites of maximization (e.g., kept others from knowing how bad things were, made light of the situation, etc.).

In addition, there are a number of potential deleterious side effects of maximization which should inhibit this behavior. An excessive preoccupation with the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others may lead to the alienation of potential support providers. Social contact with individuals in distress is commonly avoided (Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1979). Indeed, support providers use a number of strategies to minimize victims' expressions of distress, 1) the avoidance of all discussion of distress, 2) distracting the individual, 3) changing the subject, 4) the minimization of any references to the situation or distress, or 5) the presentation of a positive outlook (Coyne, 1976).

One study found that individuals with a pessimistic outlook (e.g., "If something can go wrong for me it will") were more likely to be socially alienated (Scheir & Carver, 1985). Conversations with depressed individuals were rated as significantly more uncomfortable, distressing, and less enjoyable compared to conversations with non depressed individuals (Coates & Peterson, 1982). In addition, potential support providers behave as though they may "catch" what is causing the distress, and thus tend to avoid individuals who have experienced a negative life event (Dunkel-Schetter & Wortman, 1982; Katz, 1981; Jones, Farina, Hastorf, Markus, Miller, & Scott, 1984). If the individual in distress cannot be avoided, a common strategy is to derogate or blame them for their distress (Coates, Wortman, & Abbey, 1979; Coyne, 1976; Kleck, Ono, & Hastorf, 1966; Lerner, 1970, 1980). Thus, emphasis on one's victimization may alienate potential support providers. It might also be expected that an excessive use of maximization may lead to depression, low self-esteem, and a generalized expectancy for negative outcomes.

What, then, can account for the use of maximization? According to previous research it would seem that most individuals would be loathe to use this type of strategy. I propose that the benefits of maximization may often outweigh the potential negative side effects. The initial reaction of others to maximization may be sympathy and compassion, as long as maximization is an acute coping strategy and, not merely a chronic behavioral tendency. In addition, maximization may be more effective than other coping strategies in certain circumscribed contexts (detailed below). For example, if the goal is help-seeking, maximization may be a better strategy to

elicit support compared to other strategies such as distancing, denial, or positive construal. Maximization may ensure that potential support providers are aware of the individual's need for help, while other strategies may have the opposite effect.

In addition, although maximization appears to be in opposition to other coping strategies, this does not rule out the use of other strategies in conjunction with maximization. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define the coping process as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 141, emphasis added). The coping process may include a number of different coping strategies to meet the changing needs of the individual. Individuals may use more than one type of coping style concurrently to meet these different needs. For example, Taylor and Lobel (1989) found that while cancer patients chose to compare themselves to individuals doing worse than themselves, they chose to affiliate with those doing better. Individuals coping with stressful life events may choose coping strategies that appear to be in opposition, but are designed to meet different goals. Thus, individuals may maximize to achieve one goal, while selecting other strategies to meet other goals.

Theoretical Explanations of Maximization

As previously discussed, maximization can be conceptualized as a social comparison phenomenon. The goal of maximization is to have experienced more stressful life events in comparison to others. Therefore, maximization falls under the rubric of social comparison processes. Historically, social comparison theory focused on individuals' need to

evaluate their opinions and abilities (Festinger, 1954). Festinger (1954) proposed that in the absence of objective standards of comparison, individuals will evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to similar others. While research in the social psychological literature supports this notion (e.g., Trope, 1986; Scheier & Carver, 1983), it appears that social comparisons may serve a number of goals other than self-evaluation (e.g., Arrowood & Friend, 1969; Wood, et al., 1985; Wills, 1981). Recently, social comparison has been conceptualized as a strategy to meet three self-relevant goals of the individual, self-improvement, self-enhancement, and self-evaluation (Wood, 1989; Wood & Taylor, 1991). The goal of self-improvement is to improve one's ability or standing along the comparison dimension. The goal of self-enhancement is to maintain or increase self-esteem in esteem threatening situations. The goal of self-evaluation is to gather accurate information to evaluate one's ability or standing along the comparison dimension. I propose that the four processes underlying maximization are elicited by self-improvement, self-enhancement, or self-evaluation needs of individuals undergoing stressful life events.

Self-improvement.

Traditionally, social comparisons have met self-improvement needs through upward comparisons (Berger, 1977; Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Seta, 1982). Individuals may compare themselves to others who are better off so that they can model their behavior (e.g., observing what behaviors lead to success; Bandura, 1986; Seta, 1982), or increase their aspirations (e.g., if she can do it so can I; Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Taylor, et al., 1983). Following

stressful life events, individuals may want to improve their situation or ability to alleviate the distress or ensure that it won't happen again. For example, if an individual has failed a test, he or she may try to improve his or her study techniques to ensure that a failure does not re-occur. Eliciting social support is one maximization process believed to meet self-improvement goals following a stressful life event.

Help-Seeking Social Support. Social support is one process that may aid the individual in improving his or her current situation. Social support is defined as a sense of belonging to a reciprocal network and feeling loved, valued, and esteemed within that network. The positive relationship between social support and psychological well-being is the most consistent finding in the social support literature (Krantz & Moos, 1988; Lefcourt, Martin, & Saleh, 1984; Solomon, Mikulincher & Avitzur, 1988). Receiving help from support sources can be conceptualized as a form of coping. Thoits (1986) states that "social support might work like coping by assisting the person to change the situation, to change the meaning of the situation, to change his/her emotional reaction to the situation, or to change all three" (p. 417). The types of support which serve this function have been divided into three categories, 1) emotional support (e.g, concern, caring, empathy) 2) instrumental support (e.g., financial and household assistance), and 3) informational support (e.g., referrals, problems solving) (House, 1981)

Seeking social support is a common coping strategy when undergoing stressful life events (Folkman, et al., 1986). Social support can serve a number of functions from self-esteem maintenance to assistance with daily activities (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Thoits, 1986; Wills, 1983).

Support providers are typically very responsive to initial distress and may help alleviate the distress by showing concern and caring for the individual (Coates & Wortman, 1980). In addition, tangible or informational support may allow the individual to change the stressful situation.

However, social support sources (e.g., spouse, lover, relatives, friends, co-workers) can only be effective if the support network knows that an individual is in need or distressed. Thus, the help-seeking behavior of an individual in need is an important and integral part of the social support process. Individuals in need or distress may seek out others to aid in the reduction of stress caused by environmental events. One obvious help-seeking strategy is to openly express one's distress. However, as already noted, often the reaction of others to this display is to minimize the distress in inappropriate ways. For example, one woman with a spinal cord injury asked her doctor for help because of the pain she was experiencing. Her doctor replied that she was not really in pain, it was all in her head, thus she needed to quit complaining about it (Carr & Axsom, 1994). In the face of the minimization of their distress, individuals may need to escalate in order to receive the needed help. In this context, maximization may be a help-seeking strategy. Coyne (1976) suggests that "members of the social environment attempt to reduce the aversive behavior of depressed persons and alleviate guilt by manipulating them with nongenuine reassurance and support. At the same time, these same persons reject and avoid the depressed persons. ...To maintain their increasingly uncertain security and to control the behavior of others, depressed persons display more symptoms and convey more distress" (p. 187).

Another reason for maximization may be to ensure that others respond to one's distress with sympathy and caring. Following stressful events, individuals may maximize in order to emphasize the reasons for their distress, in other words, to "clarify others' reactions and to elicit more convincing support" (Coates & Wortman, 1980, p.152). One-upmanship may occur to convey the distress felt by the individual, which may not be readily apparent to the support provider. For instance, the support provider may not feel the distress is warranted based on the number or type of negative life events experienced by the distressed individual. Exaggeration or one-upmanship may be one strategy to ensure that potential support providers do believe the distress is justified.

The fact that stressful life events do not occur in a vacuum and others may also be experiencing the same or other events which cause them distress is a third reason which may necessitate maximization as a help-seeking strategy. Help-seeking may not work if others are experiencing more distress than the individual. Thus, maximization is one strategy to ensure that potential providers feel obligated to give help, because the individual appears to be in greater need.

Self-enhancement.

The majority of research on self-enhancement has focused on downward social comparisons (Wills, 1981). To feel better about themselves, individuals will typically compare themselves with others who are inferior on a particular dimension (Wills, 1981). Self-handicapping is another strategy which may meet self-enhancement needs. Self-handicapping may protect or increase self-esteem through control over internal attributions (Higgins &

Snyder, 1989) Two maximization processes may serve self-enhancement needs, excuse-making and downward comparisons on the coping dimension.

Downward comparisons. Based on social comparison information, it is difficult to understand how maximization, the upward comparison of stressful life events (i.e., comparing the self to others who have experienced less negative life events), is self-enhancing. In social comparison research upward comparisons were traditionally believed to lead to negative affect. By comparing ourselves to those who are better off, we make salient our own inadequacies. In fact, previous research has found that in conditions of failure, if possible, upward comparisons are avoided (Pleban & Tesser, 1981; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & LaPrelle, 1985).

Wills (1981) proposed that individuals confronted with situations that are threatening to their self-esteem use downward comparisons to feel better about their own situation (e. g., at least it's not that bad). A tremendous amount of literature examining downward comparisons following stressful life events supports this contention (e.g., Affleck, Tennen, Pfeiffer, & Fifield, 1987, 1988; Taylor, et al., 1983; Wood, et al., 1985). However, the individual may not always be in a position to pick and choose comparisons that are self-enhancing. In some instances, the social environment may force unwanted comparisons on the individual (Wood, 1989). For example, an individual may be confronted by others experiencing similar negative life events, but who are coping as well or better. In this situation a downward comparison is not possible. Therefore, the individual may use a "post-comparison" comparison to increase their self-esteem (Wood, 1989). That is, they may use maximization to be able to compare downward to others on their ability to

cope (i.e., I've experienced more negative life events than others and I am coping as well as them, therefore, I must be a better copier).

The individual may make an upward comparison with others on the number of negative life events experienced, but make a downward comparison on coping. The greater number of stressful life events should, according to Kelley's (1967) augmentation principle, enhance attributions to the individual's coping ability. For example, an individual may believe that he/she is experiencing more stressful life events, but perceive that he/she is coping better in comparison to others. This information should be self-enhancing. Not only is the individual coping better than others, but he/she is coping better in spite of the fact he/she has experienced more stressful events.

The reactions of others may also serve to increase the self-enhancing consequences of maximization. According to past research, participants typically respond favourably to individuals who have severe problems, but are coping successfully (Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991). Other individuals may increase the likelihood of maximization by verbalizing their positive appraisals (e.g, your such an incredible person, I couldn't have dealt with it).

Excuse-making. Excuse-making is a self-protective strategy that enables the individual to maintain or increase self-esteem in the face of a esteem-threatening situation. Maintaining control over the types of attributions the self or others make is one self-enhancement method. Excuse-making, according to Higgins & Snyder (1989), is a strategy that seeks to control attributions by decreasing the individual's causal connection to a negative outcome. Excuses shift "causal attributions for negative personal

outcomes from sources that are relatively central to the person's sense of self to sources that are relatively less central" (Snyder & Higgins, 1988, p. 23).

One excuse-making strategy of particular interest, self-handicapping, was first defined by Jones and Berglass (1978). Self-handicapping decreases the causal connection to negative outcomes through the active search or creation of performance impediments to create attributional ambiguity. The individual's connection to a negative outcome may be attenuated through Kelley's (1967) discounting principle. The presentation of additional causes external to the self may discount the individual's contribution to the negative outcome by attributing failure to the impediment. At the same time, the causal connection between any positive outcome and internal characteristics is strengthened through Kelley's (1967) augmentation principle. This outcome is similar to the self-enhancement process described in the previous section. If the individual succeeds, in spite of the impediments, the causal link between the individual and his or her performance is strengthened. The individual is able to succeed even in the face of a number of stressful life events.

Self-handicapping is elicited by situations in which the individual is uncertain of future success. Self-handicapping occurs subsequent to noncontingent success and prior to an evaluative situation. The individual unsure of his/her abilities may introduce one or more possible causal variables, presumed to be impediments to successful performance. These other causes may take the form of alcohol or other foreign substances (e.g., Berglas & Jones, 1978; Higgins & Harris, 1989), hypochondriasis (Smith, Snyder, & Perkins, 1981), lack of effort (e.g., Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1983;

Shepperd & Arkin, 1989), test anxiety (e.g., Smith, Snyder, & Handelsman, 1982), or negative life events (DeGree & Snyder, 1985).

Maximization can work as a self-handicapping strategy through the use or exaggeration of negative life events as an impediment to future performance. For example, a college student, Lisa, has succeeded on a past exam, but is unsure if the success was due to luck or her ability. In preparing for a subsequent exam, Lisa may tell others, or herself, that she is unable to concentrate because of the distress she is experiencing due to stressful life events. If Lisa fails the exam, she may discount her own contribution to the failure and blame her distress. If she succeeds, she may augment her own contribution and feel that she was able to succeed in spite of her distress.

Previous research on self-handicapping suggests that the experience of distress or negative life events is a socially acceptable explanation for poor performance (Baumgardner, Lake, & Arkin, 1985; DeGree & Snyder, 1985; Schouten & Handelsman, 1987). DeGree & Snyder (1985) gave participants the opportunity to use traumatic life events as a self-handicap, prior to feedback on a task in which performance was uncertain. Participants who believed that traumatic events were an acceptable handicap listed significantly more events than participants who were led to believe that these events were irrelevant to performance. Interestingly, the acceptable/not acceptable manipulation was conducted by giving instructions to participants in the not acceptable condition that past traumatic events were irrelevant to performance. The researchers assumed, correctly, that participants did not need instructions to tell them that prior traumatic events may be a hindrance to performance. Another example of this phenomenon is the public's

fascination with the rags to riches story. We admire these individuals because they are able to succeed in spite of the impediments to their success (e.g., impoverished environment). In addition, we are likely to attribute positive internal characteristics, such as an uncommon strength of character or intelligence, to individuals who have suffered through adverse conditions and persevered.

Self-evaluation.

Though maximization is proposed to meet self-improvement and self-enhancement goals, the focus of this initial investigation is on yet a third possible social comparison goal served by maximization behavior, self-evaluation. Traditionally, self-evaluative needs are met through social comparisons to similar others. By comparing oneself to others that are similar the individual may accurately evaluate his or her ability along a particular dimension (Festinger, 1954). I propose that self-consistency is one process that serves self-evaluative needs through maximization.

Self-verification. Self-verification is the process of seeking out information that is consistent with our self-concept and ignoring or down-playing inconsistent information (Backmann, 1988; Swann, 1983). People like to receive information from others and the environment that is consistent with or verifies their pre-existing beliefs about the self. Therefore, they are more likely to seek out, attend to, and recall information that is consistent with their self-concept, even when this information is negative (Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b).

Individuals are also more likely to seek out others who agree with their self-concept. In one study, participants were more likely to select

interaction partners whose appraisal of the participant was consistent with their self-concept (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). Individuals may also receive self-confirming information by seeking out others in a similar affective state. In one study, Coates & Peterson (1982) found that depressed individuals were significantly more likely to enjoy conversations with depressed compared to cheerful partners. They concluded in conjunction with Schachter (1959) that "misery likes miserable company". Perhaps individuals experiencing negative affect are more likely to have that affect validated when interacting with others experiencing similar affect. Schachter (1959) found that highly anxious individuals were more likely to want to be around other anxious individuals compared to nonanxious individuals. This effect was strongest when the others were experiencing similar affect. Participants may have been interested in waiting with someone experiencing similar affect because that validated their own emotions.

Another self-verification method is to elicit self-confirming information from others. Individuals who receive information that is inconsistent with their self-concept will go out of their way to change this information. Swann and Read (1981a) found that participants who believed a conversation partner held beliefs about them that was inconsistent with their self-concept engaged in exaggerated behaviors that would elicit self-confirming feedback. Note the similarity between this behavior and maximization. Following a stressful life event, individuals may compare themselves to others with the goal of receiving information consistent with their experienced distress. Individuals may use maximization as a method to change information that is inconsistent with their self-concept. If individuals

are experiencing distress, they may want others to validate their affective state. However, typically the response of others to distress is to try to attenuate negative affect, rather than verify it (Coates & Peterson, 1982; Coates & Wortman, 1980). Therefore, individuals undergoing distress may need to maximize to correct for this attenuation. If they receive information that suggests that their distress is unwarranted, they will be motivated to change this information. To achieve this goal, individuals may ignore the information or derogate the informer. However, social information of this kind is very powerful and difficult to ignore. In addition, if a friend is providing the inconsistent information it will be difficult to derogate or ignore them. Thus, the simplest route to changing this information may be to change the comparison others' attitude. This can be accomplished through maximization. Maximization may occur as a means to receive consistent information regarding the distress one is experiencing. Exaggeration or one-upmanship may be a strategy to ensure that one's distress is verified by others.

Moderators

The four processes underlying maximization (help-seeking, downward comparison, self-handicapping, and self-verification) are all plausible. It is premature at this point to suggest that any strategy is more important or better in explaining the maximization process. Following a stressful life event, any of the four processes that motivate maximization behavior may be activated. However, it is proposed that there are a number of variables which may increase the likelihood that maximization will occur following the activation of one of these processes. At least four variables may moderate the

occurrence of maximization behavior, 1) adjustment, 2) the embarrassment or stigma attached to the stressful life event, 3) the social comparison audience, and 4) perceived control over the negative life event. The direction of the effect of each moderating variable on maximization will depend on which of the four processes has been activated. For example, similar others may be more likely to accept a negative life event as an impediment to one's performance. It is predicted that the social comparison audience will have an inverse relationship with maximization when self-handicapping goals are activated, but a direct relationship when downward comparison concerns are activated. When self-handicapping goals are activated, similar others (i.e., individuals who have experienced a similar negative life event) may be more willing to accept that the stressful event is an impediment. Therefore, we would expect that maximization would be more likely when the audience is dissimilar. Individuals may need to maximize to convince dissimilar audiences that the stressful life events they have experienced are true impediments to performance. In contrast, when self-enhancement goals are activated, the impact of social comparisons should be greater if the other is dissimilar (see Wills, 1981, and Wood & Taylor, 1991, for review). That is, the more stressful life events the individual has experienced, in comparison to others, the greater the affective reaction. Therefore, we would expect that when comparison others are similar on the number of stressful life events, individuals will be more likely to engage in maximization to increase dissimilarity. For present purposes the discussion will be limited to the process which will be investigated, self-verification.

Adjustment. It is predicted that there is an inverse relationship between adjustment and maximization when self-verification goals have been activated. An individual experiencing distress may seek out others who will verify their distress. As previously discussed, if individuals experiencing distress receive information that is inconsistent with their self-concept (i.e., they shouldn't be experiencing distress) this information is likely to elicit maximization behavior. Individuals who are adjusting well who receive the same information (i.e., they shouldn't be experiencing distress) may be more likely to perceive that this information is consistent with their self-concept. Thus, it is predicted that the likelihood of maximization will increase as adjustment decreases.

Embarrassment or stigma attached to event. It is predicted that there is an inverse relationship between embarrassing or stigmatizing events and maximization when self-verification goals have been activated. First, following embarrassing or stigmatizing events, individuals typically choose coping strategies which minimize the event (Folkman, et al., 1986). The potential negative reactions of others may outweigh the benefits of maximization. Second, there is a direct effect of embarrassing or stigmatizing events on self-evaluative processes. Participants who were led to believe they would have to suck on oral devices, such as pacifiers or baby bottles, preferred to wait alone rather than with someone else (Sarnoff & Zimbardo, 1961). Finally, reactions of others in self-evaluative situations may be overly sympathetic or pitying, leading the individual to minimize the event. Therefore, it is predicted that the likelihood of maximization will increase as embarrassment or stigma decreases.

Social comparison audience. The social comparison audience is a third variable which may moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization, although the nature of this relationship was not addressed in the present research. It is expected that there is an inverse relationship between maximization and similarity when self-verification goals have been activated. Comparison others who have not experienced a similar negative life event may be more likely to invalidate the individual's distress, thus increasing the likelihood of maximization. Individuals experiencing stressful events choose to interact with others who are undergoing a similar experience (Schachter, 1959) and rate these interactions as more enjoyable (Coates & Peterson, 1982). Similar others are more likely to validate the individual's distress, thus decreasing the likelihood of maximization. Therefore, it is expected that the likelihood of maximization will increase as similarity decreases when the self-relevant goal is self-verification.

Perceptions of Control. Finally, perceptions of control is a fourth variable which may moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization, although again the nature of this relationship was not addressed in the present research. It is expected that there is a positive relationship between perceptions of control and maximization when self-verification goals have been activated. Others are more likely to make negative internal attributions to the individual following controllable compared to uncontrollable events (Weiner, 1987). Therefore, when perceived control is high, comparison others may be less likely to validate the individual's distress, thus increasing the likelihood of maximization. It is

expected that the likelihood of maximization should increase as perceptions of control decrease.

Alternative Explanations

The idea that individuals, under certain conditions, stress the negative aspects of their lives is not new. A number of previously established phenomena may lead individuals' to the belief that they are experiencing a large number of negative life events. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between maximization and previous explanations of this behavior. We have identified five similar but distinct processes, 1) pluralistic ignorance, 2) negative affect spill-over, 3) diagnostic based self-evaluation, 4) catastrophizing, and 5) an individual difference (e.g. negative affectivity). The most important distinction between maximization and these other processes is equifinality (Heider, 1959). The goal of maximization is that the individual has it worse in comparison to others. The individual may engage in a number of behaviors, such as one-upmanship, until this goal is reached. Believing one has it worse in comparison to others, may be the end result of each of the five other processes, but it is not the goal.

In addition, observable changes in state self-esteem may distinguish maximization from the five related processes. It is expected that maximization may lead to an increase in self-esteem, while the opposite should be observed following the other five processes. The validation of one's distress should lead to a reduction in tension caused by the receipt of information inconsistent with one's self-concept. The attenuation of tension may lead to more positive affect, which may indirectly affect state self-esteem. Catastrophizing, negative affect spill-over, and negative affectivity are

characterized by low self-esteem and negative affect. In addition, the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others should be threatening, unless this belief, as in the case of maximization, meets one of the three social comparison goals previously described. Thus, an increase in self-esteem following maximization may distinguish this behavior from the five other processes.

A third feature that distinguishes maximization is the social comparison inherent in the maximization process. Maximization is motivated by social comparison goals; maximizers compare themselves to others. The other processes, excluding diagnostic based self-evaluation, are not defined as comparison processes. While social comparison may play a role in some of these processes, it is not a defining feature. Therefore, the social comparison goals met by maximization distinguish this behavior from four of the five other processes. It should be stressed that maximization is not necessarily mutually exclusive from the other five processes. Any of the five processes may lead to maximization behavior. If the individual believes he or she has it worse in comparison to others and the specified conditions are present, maximization behavior may be observed.

Individual Difference/Negative Affectivity . One individual difference seemingly related to maximization is negative affectivity. Negative affectivity (NA) is characterized as the tendency to experience intense negative affect, across time and situations, in the absence of identifiable stressors (Tellegen, 1985; Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Individuals high in negative affectivity have a tendency to perceive their life or situation negatively (Taylor, 1989; Watson & Clark, 1984). High NA

individuals tend to have a negative self-concept, tend to be distressed, are more introspective and ruminative, and focus on failure rather than successes (Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). These individuals tend to score high on measures of trait anxiety, dispositional pessimism, depression, and neuroticism (Denollet, 1991; Long & Sangster, 1993; Marshal, Wortman, Kusulas, Hervig, & Vickers, 1992; Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). In addition, these individuals have a low self-concept which includes feelings of rejection, revulsion, and self-dissatisfaction (Watson & Clark, 1984). Watson & Clark (1984) suggest that these individuals tend to dwell upon and exaggerate failure and accept negative information about the self more readily than low NA individuals. This behavioral tendency is not domain-specific, but is a cross-situational tendency to interpret ambiguous situations negatively.

It has been suggested that high NA individuals select maladaptive coping strategies which increase physical and psychological distress (Denollet, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1986; Tellegen, 1985). Of particular interest, high NA individuals are more likely to complain during and following stressful life events (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). They report a larger number of physical symptoms, while their objective health does not appear to differ from individuals low on this trait (Denollet, 1991; Scheir & Carver, 1983; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Cardiac patients, who are high NA, were more likely to report a negative mood, physical symptoms, and a lower level of well-being compared to low NA cardiac patients (Denollet, 1991). In addition, these individuals are more likely to report a greater frequency and higher intensity of negative life events. Therefore, we would expect that stressing one's

negative status may occur in the absence of a specific negative life event, while maximization as a strategy should only occur following a negative life event.

Another feature that distinguishes maximization from negative affectivity is the length of time spent engaging in the behavior. Maximization is a coping strategy, selected by individuals to help them cope with stressful life events. In this sense, maximization is domain-specific, a coping strategy selected to help the individual manage experienced distress specific to a particular situation. Thus, we would expect that individuals should only engage in maximization under certain stressful life conditions. However, as already noted, not only should negative affectivity be observed across situations, but also in the absence of an external stressor.

Pluralistic Ignorance. One process seemingly related to maximization is pluralistic ignorance. Pluralistic ignorance is the belief that one's feelings are different from others even when one's outward behavior is the same (Allport, 1924). A common example of this process is the classroom. Students who do not understand material presented in class will often not raise their hands when the teacher asks for questions. These students often assume that everyone else understands the material because no one else raised their hand, ignoring the fact that they behaved in a similar fashion. McFarland & Miller (1990) suggest that the belief that one is different from others is stronger for internal unobservable traits. People have more information about their own thoughts and feelings. Because they do not have access to the thoughts and feelings of others, only others' behavior, they may falsely believe that others don't feel the same way.

Individuals may be led to believe that they are experiencing more stressful life events in comparison to others due to pluralistic ignorance. We do not always observe the stressful life events others experience. If someone is coping using a distancing strategy (i.e., trying not to let others see they are distressed) there is no "stress" to observe. Therefore, the individual may incorrectly conclude that because no stress is observed, no stress exists. This assumption may lead to the belief that we are experiencing more stressful events in comparison to others. A feature that distinguishes maximization from pluralistic ignorance is the differential effect of consensus information on these two processes. The receipt of information that other individuals are also experiencing a large number or high intensity of negative life events should attenuate a pluralistic ignorant belief that one has it worse in comparison to others (Miller & McFarland, 1991). However, this same information should have the opposite effect if this belief is due to self-verification.

Negative Affect Spill-Over Another explanation for the maximization phenomenon is the spill-over of negative affect. Individuals in a negative mood are more likely to recall negative information (Braney, 1986), perceive ambiguous feedback as having negative implications for the self (Ruehlman, West, & Pasahow, 1985; Veitch & Griffitt, 1976), generally have more negative thoughts and more difficulty suppressing negative thoughts (Wenzlaff, Wegner, & Roper, 1988). When an individual is in a negative mood, any event may be interpreted negatively. An individual may interpret a number of ambiguous events as stressful and conclude that he/she has it worse in comparison to others. However, two features distinguish maximization from

negative affect spill-over. First, maximization behavior will only be elicited following the invalidation of distress. Thus, negative mood (i.e., distress) is a necessary but not sufficient condition to elicit maximization. Second, based on a negative affect spill-over explanation it would be expected that the inducement of a positive mood should attenuate the belief one has it worse in comparison to others. While, this effect should not be observed for maximization behavior when self-verification goals have been activated.

Diagnostic based self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a comparison process in which individuals look to others to evaluate the appropriateness of their emotions. This can include evaluating, 1) the type of affect one is experiencing, how one should feel (e.g., anger versus dysphoria) and 2) the intensity of the experienced affect, how much one should feel (e.g., anxiousness versus paralysing fear).

Research on affiliative tendencies is one example of the self-evaluating process (e.g., Schachter, 1959; Teichman, 1973). Individuals confronted with a novel anxiety-provoking experience were six times more likely to express a desire to be with other individuals in the same situation. Schachter (1959) proposed that individuals when confronted with a novel experience compare themselves to others in the same situation to evaluate the appropriateness of their affective state.

Self-evaluation is an effective therapeutic method. It allows individuals to ventilate distress and gives them feedback regarding the normalcy of these feelings (Saravay, Lovette, Tanenbaum, McCartney, Rosenblatt, & Shapiro, 1988). Coates and Winston (1983) suggest that victims experience feelings of uniqueness or deviance. The role of affiliating with

similar others is to reduce this feeling. Coates and Peterson (1983) suggest that contact with similar others allows victims to see their experience as less unique. These individuals are able to discuss thoughts and feeling surrounding the negative experience, which similar others may validate and explain are normal.

However, self-evaluation may not always lead to the belief that one is normal. Similar others may suggest the individual's experience is indeed unique and more traumatic than their own. The self-evaluation process may lead the individual to believe that he/she has it worse in comparison to others. This feature distinguishes maximization from diagnostic based self-evaluation. The receipt of information from others that one's experience is unique and traumatic may lead to the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others due to diagnostic based self-evaluation. However, an individual experiencing distress due to negative life events, would perceive the same information as consistent with their self-concept. Therefore, the information that one should be experiencing distress would not elicit maximization behavior.

Catastrophizing Catastrophizing is conceptualized as a maladaptive coping strategy which increases subjective distress (Keefe, Brown, Wallston, & Caldwell, 1989; Keefe, Caldwell, Queen, Gil, Martiniez, Ogden, & Nunley, 1987; Rosentiel & Keefe. 1983). Catastrophizing involves exaggeration of the significance of a negative life event. Catastrophizing is a cognitive strategy comprised of negative self-statements, negative ideation, and negative imagery of oneself and one's environment (Chaves & Brown, 1987). Individuals engaging in catastrophizing typically believe their life is not

worth living and do not believe their current situation will improve. Catastrophizing is characterized by low self-esteem, depression, low perceived control, trait anxiety, and a generalized expectancy of negative outcomes (Chaves & Brown, 1987; Keefe et al., 1989; Sullivan & D'eon, 1990). Individuals who engage in catastrophizing generally focus on negative outcomes. They are overly concerned with the next catastrophe that may befall them. Thus, catastrophizing may lead to the belief that they have and will experience a large number of negative life events. However, a distinguishing feature from maximization is that this belief may focus on their lives in general, rather than one particular event.

Hypotheses

Because maximization is a new and as yet unstudied research topic, it is particularly important to specify a research program that will guide the empirical investigation of the maximization process. The first logical step in this program is collecting evidence to establish the existence of maximization as a coping process. Based on the discussion of maximization behavior, two conditions are necessary precursors. First, the individual must have recently experienced a negative life event. Second, one of the four processes underlying maximization must be activated. As an initial step in the investigation of maximization, one process was selected for study, self-verification. Maximization behavior following a negative life event will be examined when self-verification goals are activated. The second step in this program is to establish the conditions under which we are most likely to observe maximization. That is, what variables moderate the maximization process? A third step is to distinguish maximization from several related but

distinct processes. The first goal noted above is to establish the occurrence of maximization behavior. Toward this goal, one question that may be answered is what processes motivate maximization behavior as a coping process? Following a recent negative life event, certain conditions must be present which motivate the use of maximization behavior.

Hypothesis one addresses this question.

Hypothesis 1. Maximization will be elicited when the individual's experienced distress is not validated by others following a stressful life event, when self-verification goals are activated. Individuals experiencing distress following a negative life event may seek social validation to confirm their distress. However, if other individuals provide information that suggests the distress is invalid, the individual may maximize to receive information that is consistent with experienced distress. Therefore, when self-verification goals are activated, maximization should be observed when others provide information that invalidates the individual's experienced distress.

Once we have established that maximization can be motivated by self-verification goals, a second logical question is whether the individual truly believes he/she has it worse than others. Is the belief one has it worse in comparison to others internalized or merely for public display? The second hypothesis addresses this question.

Hypothesis 2. Maximization will be observed in public and private conditions. Maximization is not a strategy used merely for public display. The individual truly believes that he or she has it worse in comparison to others. This belief is internalized and becomes part of the individual's self-concept. It is predicted that maximization will be observed in both public and private

conditions. However, in certain situations, social norms may dictate that the individual not reveal the belief that he/she has it worse. Therefore, the public display of maximization may depend on the social environment and the motivating process.

Following the establishment of maximization behavior in public and private conditions, a third question is what variables may influence the likelihood of maximization. Four variables have been proposed to moderate the occurrence of maximization when self-verification goals are activated. For present purposes only two of these variables will be investigated, adjustment and the embarrassment or stigma attached to the event, both of which may be studied in the absence of any laboratory manipulation. Hypotheses 3 and 4 address the question of when maximization is most likely to occur following the activation of self-verification goals.

How well the individual is adjusting to the stressful life event is one variable that may be expected to influence the occurrence of maximization when self-verification goals are activated.

Hypothesis 3. Maximization should increase as adjustment decreases. When the individual is adjusting poorly, the likelihood of maximization will increase. Maximization may be elicited when the individual receives information that is inconsistent with the individual's distress. We expect that individuals coping poorly will be more likely to be experiencing distress. Therefore, the likelihood of maximization for self-consistency goals should increase when adjustment decreases.

The type of negative life event may influence the occurrence of maximization when self-verification goals are activated.

Hypothesis 4. Maximization should increase when the embarrassment or stigma associated with an event decreases. Following an embarrassing or stigmatizing event, maximization should decrease for self-verification goals. The reaction of others to an embarrassing or stigmatizing event may lead the individual to minimize the event. Therefore, maximization following embarrassing or stigmatizing events may decrease when self-verification goals are activated.

Is the belief that one has it worse an individual difference, such as negative affectivity? That is, do certain individuals have the tendency to believe that their lives, in general, are worse than others? Hypothesis 5 addresses this question.

Hypothesis 5. Maximization as a coping strategy may be used to manage distress following a stressful life event, therefore maximization is not merely the product of an individual difference such as negative affectivity. A defining feature of negative affectivity is the tendency to experience negative affect. This is true even when there is no identifiable stressor causing the negative cognitions. In contrast, maximization is a coping strategy elicited by stressful life events. Therefore, individuals high in NA should complain about their present life situation regardless of the presence of current stressors, while maximization as a coping strategy will only be observed following a stressful life event.

Overview of the Experiment and Subject Pool.

A mass testing session and subsequent experiment were designed to address the above noted hypotheses.

The purpose of the mass testing session was twofold. First, it was used to screen participants for the experiment. In order to properly investigate maximization, our potential sample had to meet a number of criteria. One criterion was that participants score below a predetermined cutoff on an established life events scale (i.e., the Life Experiences Survey). It was proposed that maximization is a coping strategy. Thus, it was expected that individuals who scored below a predetermined cutoff would be more likely to engage in maximization compared to participants who scored above a predetermined cutoff on the Life Experiences Survey. Second, the sample had to be large. For the experiment, 369 participants had to be screened to identify 83 participants who scored in the lower and upper 21st percentile on the Life Experiences Survey. A third criterion was that participants were undergoing similar negative life experiences. Control over extraneous variables is important for the study of any behavioral phenomenon, but particularly so when the phenomenon has never been produced in the laboratory. Therefore, I believed it was important to study participants undergoing similar negative life events, in order to attenuate variance which may arise from reactions to different events. The range of events on the Life Experiences Survey are vast in scope, thus we targeted a particular population, which should reduce the range of events these individuals experienced. While, it is acknowledged that this does not completely solve the problem of variance, it should have attenuated some of the noise created by reactions to different events. In order to meet these criteria in a feasible

manner college students were selected as the participant pool. The use of the Intro. Psych. participant pool made a large number of participants easily accessible. In addition, the stressful aspects of adjusting to college life have been well documented. Thus, the Intro. Psych. participant pool gave made available a large number of participants who recently experienced similar negative life events. The mass testing session was used to screen for participants who met the aforementioned criteria.

The second purpose of the mass testing, beyond the screening of participants, was to collect data that, in combination with data from the experiment, would allow us to look at the relationship between maximization and two moderating variables, 1) adjustment, and 2) the embarrassment or stigma attached to the event, and negative affectivity. This allowed hypotheses three, four and five to be addressed.

There were four goals of the experiment. First, I wanted to determine if the activation of self-verification goals following a recent negative life event(s) would elicit maximization. The second goal was to investigate the occurrence of maximization in both public and private conditions. Third, the effect of two moderating variables on maximization behavior were examined, adjustment and the embarrassment or stigma attached to the event. Finally, I wanted to differentiate maximization from the individual difference, negative affectivity. This allowed the five hypotheses to be addressed

Mass Testing

The Life Experiences Survey (Sarason, Johnson, & Siegal, 1978) was used as a screening device. Participants who scored .80 standard deviations below the sample mean or lower and participants who scored .80 standard

deviations above the sample mean or higher on the the Life Experiences Survey were selected as targets for recruitment for the experiment. The cutoff of .80 standard deviations was selected because it is strict enough to allow for the recruitment of participants in the upper distributions on the Life Experiences Scale, while lenient enough to allow for the recruitment of a large number of participants from a limited subject pool.

In addition, it was proposed that two variables may moderate maximization behavior, 1) recent adjustment and 2) the embarrassment or stigma attached to the event. Three measures were included to investigate the relationship between maximization and these two variables, respectively, 1) a subscale of the Adjustment to College Life Survey (Baker & Siryk, 1984), and five subscales of the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1983), and 2) a rating of the embarrassment associated with the events reported on the Life Experiences Survey. In addition, it was proposed that negative affectivity, the tendency to exaggerate and focus on failure, is one individual difference variable similar but not identical to maximization. A measure of negative affectivity, the Negative Affect subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS-NA, Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), was included that in conjunction with data from the experiment allowed for the discrimination of negative affectivity from maximization behavior. The effect of invalidation on maximization behavior was examined while controlling for scores on the PANAS-NA.

Method

Participants

Participants were 369 male and female freshmen enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses. Participants were volunteers who received one extra credit point toward their class grade.

Materials and Procedure

The mass testing sessions were run on a rolling basis. That is, 123 participants were run during the spring semester of 1995. A mean score on the Life Experiences Survey was obtained from this sample ($M = 379.8$). However, due to time constraints (the semester ended), only nine participants were recruited for the experiment from this particular sample. Therefore, the mean score obtained from this initial sample was used as our screening criteria for the recruitment of all other participants. The mean score on the Life Experiences Survey was not significantly different for participants run following spring semester ($M = 381.05$) compared to the initial 123 participants. Participants were run in groups of one to thirty. Each session was conducted in a large auditorium. This allowed participants to spread out and ensured a certain degree of privacy. Participants were told that the study was investigating life experiences of college students and individual differences that might influence these experiences. Participants were also told that a number of them, randomly chosen, would be asked to participate in a future study to collect more detailed information regarding the types of events college students experience. Therefore, so that they could be contacted in the near future, participants were asked to write a phone number on their informed consent form. (See Appendix L). Informed consent forms were collected and placed in an envelope separate from the questionnaires. Participants were then asked to fill out the questionnaires. Upon completion

of the mass testing, participants were asked to place their completed questionnaires in an envelope which was given to the experimenter.

Life Experiences Survey. The Life Experiences Survey was developed by Sarason, Johnson, & Siegal (1978). The Life Experiences scale, like its counterpart the Schedule of Recent Experiences (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), has been widely used in research for the measurement of life changes. The scale is divided into two sections. The first section asks participants to indicate what life events they have experienced within the past two months. This includes 59 events which are common to the general population, (e.g., the death of family member, loss of job, etc.). The second section asks participants to indicate what college life events they have experienced in the past two months. For purposes of this sample, in which the focal stressor is college experiences, the college life events section was expanded to include a larger number of college life events. Additional items came from two sources, consultation with a clinical psychologist at the Student Counseling Center, and Introductory Psychology students reports of negative life events they experienced following their enrollment at Tech. The college life experiences section included 41 events specific to college life, such as, failing a course, leaving behind girlfriend/boyfriend, etc. Students were asked to check each event they had experienced and to rate the a) valence (positive or negative) and b) the perceived impact of the event on a scale of -3 (extremely negative) to +3 (extremely positive). Participants' ratings on the impact scale were recoded on a scale from 1 to 7 (i.e., -3 was recoded as 1). A general change score was calculated by summing the impact ratings of the events experienced by the subject. Lower scores indicate a higher number of negative impact

ratings (i.e., more negative life events). The possible range of the general change score was from 0 to 700. In addition, students were asked to rate perceived embarrassment associated with the event on a scale from 1 (not at all desirable) to 6 (completely desirable). An embarrassment score was devised by summing all ratings of embarrassment. Test-retest correlations on the general scale for a 6-week period were .64 ($p < .001$), (Sarason, et al, 1978). See Appendix A.

Brief Symptom Inventory. The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI, Derogatis, 1983), is a general measure of distress. The BSI asks participants to indicate which of a list of symptoms they have experienced within the last seven days. Five subscales were selected from the BSI which tap into symptoms of somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity. We excluded three subscales, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism, as college life experiences are not generally believed to lead to these symptoms. The number of items for each subscale are 7, 6, 6, 5, and 4, respectively. Chronbach's alpha for the five subscales were .80, .85, .81, .78, and .74, respectively. Test-retest reliability for a two-week period were .68, .84, .79, .81, .85, respectively (Derogatis, 1983). See Appendix B. The sample mean of the current study ($M=23.13$) was comparable to the sample mean of other college student populations ($M=21.33$) (Cochran and Hale, 1985). As might be expected ratings on the Life Experiences Survey were related to ratings on the BSI ($r = -.70$, $p < .01$). That is, general distress increased as the number of negative life events participants reported experiencing increased.

Adjustment to College Life. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire developed by Baker and Siryk (1984) is a measure of

psychological adjustment to college life. The scale presents a number of statements which ask participants to indicate on a 9 point scale the degree to which each statement applies to them, from 1 (applies very closely to me) to 9 (doesn't apply to me at all). Two subscales were used, the social adjustment scale (which measures adjustment to social demands), and the general subscale (which measures adjustment to the transitions inherent in college life). Both the social adjustment scale and the general scale have a significant negative relationship with attrition (-.36 and -.40, respectively). Chronbach's alpha was .89 and .88, respectively (Baker & Siryk, 1984). See Appendix C. The sample mean of the current study ($M = 113.34$) was comparable to the sample mean ($M=124.3$) observed by Baker and Siryk (1984).

Negative Affectivity. The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) was developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) as a measure of the general experience of positive and negative affect. A subscale of the PANAS was used, the PANAS-Negative Affect Scale (PANAS-NA). The PANAS-NA scale is a ten-item self-report scale. Participants are asked to indicate the degree to which they experience ten negative mood descriptors in general, on a scale of 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). The alpha reliability of the PANAS-NA was .87 (Watson, et al, 1988). See Appendix D. The sample mean of the current study on the PANAS-NA ($M = 19.69$) was comparable to that observed by Watson, et al, 1988 ($M = 18.1$). As might be expected, in the current study, ratings on the PANAS-NA were related to reports on the Life Experiences Survey ($r = -.64$, $p < .01$). That is, as negative affectivity increased the number of negative life events participants reported experiencing increased.

Experiment

The experiment was designed to provide evidence that maximization behavior is elicited by the invalidation of one's distress following a negative life event. Participants were recruited from the mass testing session who scored at least .80 standard deviations above or below the sample mean on the Life Experiences Survey. The mean score on the Life Experiences survey was 379.8. Participants who scored 364.3 or lower and participants who scored 395.4 or higher, on the the Life Experiences Survey were selected as targets for recruitment for the experiment. Participants who scored 364.3 or lower constituted the Negative Event condition and participants who scored 395.4 or higher constituted the Positive Event condition. To examine the role of self-verification on maximization the validation of participants' distress was varied. Participants were assigned to one of two validation conditions. In the Invalidation condition, participants received information from two confederates, during a group discussion, that invalidated their negative life experiences. In the No Feedback condition, the confederates and the participants did not interact directly with one another. Thus, there was no opportunity for confederates to give participants information that overtly validated or invalidated their experiences.

A second goal of the experiment was to provide evidence that maximization occurs in both the public and private domains. To achieve this goal maximization behavior was measured under two conditions, public and private. Maximization behavior was measured in public during the group discussions. Following the group discussion, a thought-listing task and a self-report measure were included as private measures of maximization behavior.

Participants

Participants were 7 male and 33 female students from the mass testing who scored 364.3 or lower and 21 male and 22 female students who scored 395.4 or higher on the Life Experiences Survey. Three extra participants were recruited in the Positive Event Condition because of loss of data from the group discussion. Analyses for the group discussion were calculated with 80 participants, while all other measures were calculated with 83 participants. Participants were volunteers who received 2 points extra credit toward their course grade. Although, theoretically, gender differences were not predicted, as a precaution, an attempt was made to block randomize participants by gender. However, this was only possible for the Positive Event Condition. The large majority of participants who met the criteria for the Negative Event condition were females. Three males were in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and four males were in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition.

Procedure

Recruitment Procedure. Participants who scored in the upper and lower 21st percentile on the Life Experiences Survey were recruited by telephone for the experiment. Participants were told that they were randomly selected from people who took part in the mass testing. Participants were instructed that I wanted to collect more detailed information about their specific experiences prior to and during their stay thus far at Virginia Tech. They were told the the discussions would be run in groups of three, which would take approximately 5-10 minutes, and that following the discussions they would be asked fill out a few questionnaires and be debriefed. They were

instructed that the entire procedure would take approximately 1 hour to complete. Participants were also instructed that participation was completely voluntary and that their credit from the mass testing would in no way be jeopardized. Potential recruits who declined were thanked for their participation in the mass testing and given information about Student Services Counseling Center.

Discussion Group Procedure. Upon arrival to the lab, participants were first introduced to the two confederates. The experimenter then gave brief instructions for the informed consent form (See Appendix M). When the consent forms were signed, participants were instructed that the experimenter was interested in collecting detailed information regarding the types of events college students experience. Participants were instructed that the information collected during the discussion may be used during orientation for incoming freshman. In addition, the experimenter instructed participants that so far most of the group discussions had focused on more positive events and that in order to get a broader range of the types of events college students experience, it would be helpful if the discussion could focus on more negative events. The experimenter then turned on the audiorecorder. The nature of the group discussion was then varied according to the Feedback manipulation (for details see Manipulation of Feedback section).

In the group discussion, the confederates and the participant took turns discussing negative life events. The experimenter began the discussion by asking who would like to begin. Confederate one started with a discussion of the problems she was encountering due to large class size. Following this

discussion, the experimenter looked directly at the subject to encourage a response and asked if anyone else would like to go. The experimenter and the confederates waited 30 seconds to give the participant the opportunity to respond. Following the participant's response, confederate two began a discussion of a problem that was related to the participant's experience. Following confederate two's response, the participant was again given a chance to respond. This turn-taking pattern occurred four times, with the participant being given the opportunity to speak five times during the group discussion.

The confederates' responses were based on scenarios which describe problems college students commonly encounter, e.g., financial, academic, roommate, boyfriend, etc. Thus, if the subject discussed a problem regarding a roommate, the confederate whose turn it was then discussed a scenario from the roommate category. If the subject did not respond in 30 seconds, the confederate whose turn it was next discussed another scenario from the same category as that discussed by the other confederate. See Appendix F for confederate scenarios.

Self-report Procedure. Following the group discussion, participants were instructed that there were a few short questionnaires they needed to fill out. Participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires in private cubicles. They were also instructed that their questionnaires were completely anonymous, the questionnaires were assigned a code number which could not be connected to them. Participants then filled out the questionnaires in the following order, 1) the thought-listing task, 2) Maximization Scale, 3) the Feedback manipulation check, and 4) the Life Experiences Survey.

Experimenters and Confederates.

The experimenter was the author, a female graduate student, experienced in running the procedures and the debriefing. The confederates were 12 female undergraduates who were trained in their role as college students who had recently experienced a number of negative life events. To ensure that the confederates did not appear more frequently in any one condition, the frequency with which each confederate served in the four conditions was examined. The number of times each undergraduate played the role of confederate was fairly evenly distributed across the four conditions. The experimenter and the confederates were partially blind to the experimental conditions. Due to necessity they were aware of the Feedback condition for each participant but not the Type of Event condition.

Independent and Classification Variables

Type of Recent Life Event. Forty participants who scored .80 standard deviations below the sample mean on the Life Experiences Survey constituted the Negative Event Condition. Forty-three participants who scored .80 standard deviations below the sample mean on the Life Experiences Survey constituted the Positive Event Condition.

Manipulation of Self-Verification. Participants were randomly assigned to the Invalidation or No Feedback Condition. In the Invalidation Condition, during the group discussion confederates invalidated the participants' disclosure of their negative life experiences. Invalidation of the participants' experiences took the form of the confederates making statements such as, well nothing's worse than ..., or well at least you don't have... prior to the description of a negative life event scenario similar in category to that

discussed previously by the subject. See Appendix E for Experimenter and Confederate Script.

In the No Feedback Condition, the experimenter led the discussion of negative life experiences. Instructions for the discussion were the same as those followed in the Invalidation condition. The pattern of responses of the confederates were similar to the invalidation condition. However, the only interaction was between the experimenter and each individual. In addition, the invalidating statements used in the Invalidation Condition were not stated by confederates in the No Feedback Condition. The confederates only discussed negative life event scenarios that were similar in category to a negative life event previously discussed by the subject. Thus, participants did not receive information that invalidated their experiences. See Appendix F for Experimenter and Confederate Script.

Manipulation Check. Participants were asked to indicate on a self-report item the degree to which the confederates validated their distress, on a scale from 1 (completely) to 10 (not at all). In addition, as indirect measures of invalidation, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which the confederates were aware of their distress, and the degree to which the confederates sympathized with them, on a scale from 1 (completely) to 10 (not at all). A second measure of the manipulation was obtained from the thought-listing task. Invalidation was coded as any statement regarding the subject's perception that he/she was invalidated by the confederates during the group discussion. See Appendix G.

Dependent Variables

Maximization. Three dependent variables were used to measure maximization behavior, one public and two private. The public dependent variable was a behavioral measure taken during the group discussion. All group discussions were audiotaped. Five specific behaviors were measured during the group discussion. Two were direct measures of maximization behavior. The first was any statement which indicated that the participant's experience was worse in comparison to the confederates or other individuals (e.g., "I have a reading disability which makes it much more difficult for me to get good grades"). The second direct measure was any statement which indicated that the confederates' experiences were not that bad or not that bad in comparison to others (e.g., "You (the confederate) should be glad that you get any money from your parents, plenty of students have to work just to support themselves in school").

In addition, three measures of one-upmanship were collected during the group discussion. One-upmanship was defined as the discussion of an event in which the participant increased the number of difficulties he/she was encountering or increased the subjective distress encountered by these events. The first measure of one-upmanship was the discussion of an event that was similar in category to an event discussed by a confederate, but was more negative or of a greater intensity (e.g., Confederate: "My roommate won't turn off her alarm in the morning, so I have to get up and turn it off" Participant: "My roommate plays nintendo until two or three every morning and I have an 8:00 am. class every morning, so I have to actually go sleep in a friend's room, because my roommate keeps me up all night, when I can sleep in, she always makes alot of noise and wakes me up, even though I try to be

considerate of her"). The second measure of one-upmanship was the discussion of an event that was different in category from an event discussed by the confederate, but was more negative or of a greater intensity (e.g., Confederate: "The size of my classes makes it difficult for me to do well" Participant: "I was in an extremely mentally abusive relationship. It was very stressful, I had to go see a counselor" The third measure of one-upmanship was the discussion of an event previously discussed by the participant which was more negative or of a greater intensity (e.g., Participant-initially: "I have trouble sleeping, I just walk around outside a lot at night because I can't sleep." Participant-later: "I have insomnia, I just keep dwelling on all my problems, then I can't sleep, so I'll sleep during the day and miss my classes, which I then worry about, which adds to my worrying, so I can't ever sleep at night, and it's just happens over and over, I'm in this downward spiral and I don't know what to do about it".

A point was coded each time the participant engaged in any of these behaviors. An index of maximization was formed by adding all points together. In addition, a point was coded each time the participant discussed any event, either negative or positive. The total number of events the participant discussed during the group discussion was calculated by summing these points. Due to variation in the number of events the participants discussed, a ratio score was also calculated by dividing the number of maximizing statements by the total number of events.

Six undergraduates blind to the experimental conditions were trained to code the audiotapes. Three two-person teams independently coded one third of the audiotapes. Thus, each tape was coded twice by two different

coders. Discrepancies between coders were resolved by the author, blind to the experimental conditions. The percent agreement on these measures ranged from 81% to 100%. See Appendix H.

There were two private dependent measures of maximization. The first was a stream-of-consciousness thought-listing task (Pope, 1978). Participants were instructed to report any thoughts they had regarding the group discussion. They were instructed to write down each thought as it occurred from moment-to-moment and to try and convey any thoughts they currently had about the group discussion. They were instructed the task would take four minutes. Maximization behavior was coded as any statement which 1) indicated that the participant's experience(s) were worse in comparison to the confederates (e.g., "that girl doesn't know how hard a roommate can be"), 2) indicated that the confederates' experiences were not that bad (e.g., "Jennifer seemed kind of spoiled, she should get over the distance thing and park where she's supposed to and quit complaining").

A point was coded each time the participant engaged in any of these behaviors. A total score was computed by adding all maximization points together. Due to variation in the number of statements participants made, a ratio score was also calculated by dividing the number of maximizing statements by the total number of statements. In addition, three behaviors which measured participants' reactions to the confederates and the group discussion were coded. These included, 1) negative statements regarding the confederates (e.g., "the one girl at the end of the table seemed like a snot"), 2) statements regarding negative reactions to the sharing of experiences during the group discussion (e.g., "I felt very uncomfortable discussing my

experiences"), and, 3) statements regarding positive reactions to learning that others were sharing similar experiences (e.g., "I am really happy to know that other students are having the same types of problems in school I am. We have way too much work due at the same time, I have three tests & three research papers due this week which I haven't been able to start on").

Four undergraduates blind to the experimental conditions were trained to code the thought-listing protocol. Two two-person teams independently coded one half of the thought-listing measures. Thus, each thought-listing measure was coded twice by two different coders. Discrepancies between coders were resolved by the author, blind to the experimental conditions. The percent agreement between coders for the measures ranged from 83% to 100%. See Appendix I.

The second private dependent measure was a self-report measure, the Maximization Scale (MS), developed by the author to assess participants' belief that their negative life experiences make their lives more difficult in comparison to the confederates and other Virginia Tech students. The MS included 20-items which asked participants to respond on a scale of 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Extremely). Four items directly measured maximization, 1) the degree to which the events they have experienced are worse in comparison to confederate one, 2) the degree to which the events they have experienced are worse in comparison to confederate two, 3) the degree to which the events participants discussed during the group discussion are worse in comparison to other Virginia Tech students, and 4) the degree to which the events they did not discuss during the group discussion are worse in comparison to other Virginia Tech students. In addition, the scale included 16 items which

measured participants' perceptions of the interaction (e.g., the degree to which the participant was comfortable during the interaction) and participants' perceptions of the confederates (e.g., the degree to which the participant felt negative toward a confederate). See Appendix J.

Life Experiences Survey . Participants retook the Life Experiences Survey, so that information could be collected regarding events they had experienced subsequent to filling out the Life Experiences Survey during the mass testing. See Appendix A.

Debriefing

The debriefing was based on a procedure developed by Aronson, Brewer, & Carlsmith (1985). In the debriefing a number of steps were taken to ensure that participants did not feel naive or gullible. First, disclosure of the deception was gradual not abrupt and participants were given the opportunity to discuss their own suspicions, thus attenuating any feelings of gullibility. In addition, the experimenter communicated her concern for the participants by discussing the necessity for the deception and her own discomfort with the deception. Thus, participants may gain insight into the processes which motivate maximization behavior in themselves and others. Finally, the experimenter enlisted the help of the participant in improving the experiment, which allowed participants an additional avenue to admit that they were upset. In addition, participants were instructed that maximization is a common behavior. They were told that most individuals readily recognize and admit to engaging in maximization. This should have reduced participants' feelings of uniqueness and attenuated any embarrassment. The debriefing process also gave participants an avenue to vent any thoughts or

feelings they had as a result of the experimental procedure and gave the experimenter a chance to attenuate any negative affect experienced by participants (Aronson, Brewer, & Carlsmith, 1985). See Appendix K.

Results

Manipulation check. Participants' ratings of perceptions of invalidation were analyzed using a 2 (Positive vs. Negative Event) X 2 (Invalidation vs. No Feedback) analysis of variance. While the predicted Feedback main effect for ratings of confederates' invalidation was not significant, $F(1,79) = 2.33, p < .13$, the means were in the predicted direction (See Table 1). Participants in the Invalidation conditions ($M = 5.48$) rated the confederates' invalidation higher than participants in the No Feedback conditions ($M = 4.55$). One might also expect that the effect of invalidation would be strongest in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, due to the high degree of distress these participants were experiencing. The effect of the confederates' invalidation of the participants' distress in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition may not have been as strong because, overall, they were experiencing less distress compared to participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition. However, examination of the means in Table 1 makes clear that this was not the case.

 insert table 1 about here

A second potential check on the Feedback manipulation comes from participants' perceptions of invalidation from the thought-listing task. The main effect for Feedback as measured by the thought-listing task was not

significant, $F(1,79) = 1.04, p < .36$. However, using the same logic discussed in the preceding paragraph, this measure was also analyzed using a planned comparison. As indicated in Table 1, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition tended to be more likely to report feelings of invalidation compared to participants in the other three conditions, although this difference only approached significance, $t(79) = 1.78, p < .08$ (residual between group variance was not significant, $F < 1$, see Table 1).

Finally, the means for participants' ratings of confederates' awareness of their distress were in the predicted direction (Invalidation $M = 5.61$, No Feedback $M = 5.53$, see Table 1), (although, the Feedback main effect only approached significance, $F(1,79) = 2.36, p < .10$). As indicated in Table 1, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to perceive that the confederates were unaware of their distress compared to participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition. The Feedback main effect for participants' ratings of confederate sympathy was not significant, $F < 1$. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not more likely to perceive that the confederates were unsympathetic, as indicated in Table 1.

In summary, though mean differences were in the predicted direction, the Feedback manipulation did not have a significant effect on participants' perceptions of invalidation. Even participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, from whom one might expect the greatest sense of invalidation, were not more likely to feel invalidated by the confederates. Only one measure, perceptions of invalidation on the thought-

listing task, indicated that participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation may have felt more invalidated; however this difference was not reliable.

Dependent Variables

Maximization -Behavioral Measure . To test hypotheses one and two the five behavioral measures of maximization were analyzed individually using a planned comparison for each. As predicted, the mean number of statements in which the participant maximized his/her experience was significantly greater in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition compared to the average mean of the other three conditions, $t(76) = 3.09$, $p < .01$ (residual between group variance was not significant, $F(2,76) = 1.04$, $p < .20$). That is, participants who had experienced a large number or high intensity of negative life events and whose distress was invalidated were significantly more likely to verbalize that their experiences were worse than the confederates compared to participants in the other three conditions (see Table 2).

Planned comparisons for the four other behavioral measures were not significant. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to 1) minimize a confederate's experience, $t(76) = -1.15$, $p < .20$, 2) discuss an event in the same category as the confederate that was more negative or of a greater intensity $t(76) = 1.04$, $p < .30$, 3) discuss an event in a category different from the confederate that was more negative or of a greater intensity, $t(76) = -1.18$, $p < .30$, or 4) discuss an event that the subject had previously discussed that was more negative or of a greater intensity, $t(76) = 1.24$, $p < .30$ (see Table 2).

In addition, to determine if there were differences between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions in maximization behavior at the gross level, the index of the five behavioral measures was analyzed with a planned comparison. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to maximize compared to participants in the other three conditions, $t(76) = .97$, $p < .40$. (See Table 2). However, as Table 2 indicates, the means were in the predicted direction.

 insert table 2 about here

The ratios of each of the five behavioral measures by the total number of statements made during the group discussion were also analyzed with a planned comparison. The planned comparison of the ratio of the number of times participants reported that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates during the group discussion was significantly greater in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition compared to the average mean of the other three conditions, $t(76) = 3.11$, $p < 001$. A similar planned comparison on the ratio of the number of times participants discussed an event previously discussed but with a greater intensity approached significance, $t(76) = 1.70$, $p < .10$ (residual between group variance was not significant, $F(2,78) = 1.75$, $p > .05$). However, the planned comparisons for the other three behavioral measures were not significant, 1) the number of times participants minimized the confederates' experience, $t(76) = -1.07$, $p < .20$, 2) the number of times participants discussed an event similar to the

confederate but of a greater intensity, $t(76) = .98, p < .40$, and 3) the number of times participants discussed an event different from the confederate but of a greater intensity, $t(76) = -1.38, p < .20$. Thus, taking into account the number of total statements participants made during the group discussion did not have a marked effect on the results (see Table 3).

 insert table 3 about here

In summary, only one of the five behavioral measures collected during the group discussion was significant. Interestingly, this measure is the most direct maximization behavior. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to verbalize that their experiences were worse than the confederates during the group discussion compared to participants in the other three conditions. In addition, the second most direct measure of maximization, one-upping one's experiences, approached significance. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition tended to discuss more events that they had previously discussed with an increased intensity or negativity compared to participants in the other three conditions, although this difference was not reliable.

Maximization- Thought-listing Measure . Only one participant reported that his/her experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates on the thought-listing task. While this individual was in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, the overall low occurrence of this behavior precluded the use of any meaningful statistical analyses to

determine if this difference is statistically reliable (see Table 4). Thus, no valid conclusions can be drawn regarding the number of times participants reported they had it worse in comparison to the other confederates due to the relative absence of this behavior. Suffice it to say, that one individual whose distress was invalidated following a negative life event was the only one observed to engage in this behavior.

To test hypotheses one and two the private measure of the number of times participants minimized the confederates' experience on the thought-listing task was analyzed using a planned comparison. The mean number of statements which minimized confederates' experience for the Negative Event/Invalidation condition was not significantly greater than the average mean of the other three conditions, $t(79) = .88$, $p < .40$. However, a significant one way analysis of variance $F(3, 79) = 2.65$, $p < .05$, indicated the need for analysis using Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison test. Participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to minimize the confederates' experiences compared to participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition, $p < .05$. Thus, contrary to hypotheses one and two, participants who had experienced a large number of high intensity of positive life events and whose distress was invalidated were significantly more likely to minimize others' experiences compared to participants who had experienced a large number of high intensity of negative life events and whose distress was not invalidated (see Table 4).

insert Table 4 about here

A gross overall measure of maximization from the thought-listing task was not formed. Due to the relative absence of behavior observed for the first thought-listing measure (i.e., maximization), an index would be essentially redundant with the minimization measure.

The ratio of the number of statements participants made that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates on the thought-listing task was not analyzed due to the problems, discussed above, with the overall low occurrence of this behavior. The ratio of the number of minimization statements to the total number of statements was analyzed with a planned comparison. The proportion of minimization statements reported by participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition was not significantly greater compared to the average proportion of the other three conditions, $t(79) = .47$, $p < .60$. However, Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison test indicated that the proportion of minimization thoughts reported by participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition was significantly greater in comparison to the other three conditions, $p < .05$.

In summary, as Table 4 indicates, only one participant who was in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition reported more thoughts regarding how his/her experiences were worse than the confederates. In addition, participants in the Positive Event/ Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to minimize the confederates' experiences in comparison to participants in the No Feedback conditions.

Maximization-Self-report measure. To test hypotheses one and two, the four maximization items from the self-report measure were analyzed separately using a planned comparison. Participants in the Negative

Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to report that their negative experiences were worse in comparison to confederate one, $t(79) = 1.50, p < .20$, or confederate two, $t(79) = 1.20, p < .30$ (see Table 5).

However, in both cases the means were in the predicted direction, suggesting that participants who had experienced a negative life event(s) and whose distress was invalidated were more likely, compared to participants in the other three conditions, to perceive that these events made their lives more difficult than the confederates. An index of participants' comparison on negative life events to both confederates was formed ($r = .90$). A planned comparison was used to determine if there were differences in participants' responses for the index between the the Negative Event/Invalidation conditions and the other three conditions. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to perceive that the events they were experiencing were worse than the confederates compared to participants in the other three conditions, $t(79) = 1.41, p < .20$, although, as with the comparisons to the individual confederates, the means were in the predicted direction.

Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to report that the events they discussed during the group discussion were worse generally in comparison to other Virginia Tech. students,

$t(79) = -.08, p < .90$ (see Table 5). However, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to report that events they did not discuss during the group discussion made their lives generally more difficult than other Virginia Tech students, in comparison to

the other three groups, $t(79) = 4.46$, $p < .001$ (residual between group variance was not significant, $F < 1$).

In summary, one self-report measure was supportive of hypotheses one and two. Participants who had experienced a large number or high intensity of negative life events and whose distress was invalidated were significantly more likely to perceive that their experiences not discussed in the group were worse in comparison to other Virginia Tech. students. These participants also rated the experiences they reported during the group discussion as worse in comparison to each of the confederates' experiences, although these differences were not reliable.

insert table 5 about here

Participants' Responses to Confederates and the Group Discussion.

There were no a priori predictions regarding the participants' responses to the confederates and the group discussion from the thought-listing task. Therefore, these measures were analyzed with a 2 (Invalidation/No Feedback) X 2 (Negative Event/Positive Event) analysis of variance. The Feedback and Type of Event main effects for the number of negative statements participants made regarding the confederates were not significant, $F(1, 79) = 2.25$, $p < .10$, and $F(1,79) = .35$, $p < .60$, respectively. However, the direction of the means indicated that participants who had experienced a large number or high degree of negative life events and whose distress was invalidated tended to make more negative statements regarding the

confederates compared to participants in the other three conditions, although this difference was not reliable (see Table 6).

The Feedback main effect for participants' perceptions of the negativeness of the group discussion was not significant, $F(1,79) = .58, p > .20$. However, there was a main effect for Type of Event, $F(1,79) = 5.95, p < .01$. Participants in the Negative Event conditions ($M = .38$) were significantly more likely to report negative reactions to discussing their experiences in the the group discussion compared to participants in the Positive Event conditions. ($M = .05$) Referring to Table 6, it appears that individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition tended to report more of these types of thoughts compared to the other three groups.

Finally, there were no effects for the number of statements regarding positive reactions to learning that others shared similar experiences (see Table 6). In summary, of the three measures of participants reactions' to the confederates and the group discussion on the thought-listing task, significant differences were observed for only one. Participants in the Negative Event conditions were significantly more likely to report negative reactions to reporting their experiences during the group discussion compared to participants in the Positive Event conditions.

insert table 6 about here

There were no a priori predictions regarding the self-report items which measured participants' reactions to the discussion and the confederates. Therefore, these items were analyzed using a 2

(Invalidation/No Feedback) X 2 (Negative Event/Positive Event) analysis of variance. Indices of these measures were computed for questions regarding participants' perceptions of confederate one, confederate two, and the group discussion, $\alpha = .86, \alpha = .76, \alpha = .55$, respectively. Due to the low reliability of the index of participants' perceptions of the group discussion, three items which were not highly correlated with any of the other self-report items regarding the group discussion (i.e. $r < .30$) were dropped from the analysis; 1) the degree to which the interaction seemed pleasant, 2) the degree to which the interaction seemed dull, and 3) the degree to which the participant felt comfortable during the interaction. The three items that were interrelated, ($\alpha = .83$), were kept to form an index of participants' perceptions of the group discussion; 1) the degree to which the interaction seemed awkward and forced, 2) the degree to which the interactions seemed strained, and 3) the degree to which the individual felt anxious.

The analysis of variance for participants' reactions toward confederate one revealed only a significant Feedback main effect, $F(1,79) = 4.17, p < .05$. Participants in the Invalidation conditions ($M = 3.5$) were significantly more likely to rate confederate one negatively compared to participants in the No Feedback conditions ($M = 3.30$). Analysis of participants' reactions toward confederate two indicated a significant interaction between Invalidation and Type of Event, $F(1,79) = 5.05, p < .05$. A subsequent Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison test indicated that participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to rate confederate two negatively compared to participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition (See Table 7). For participants' reactions to the

group discussion, the main effect for Type of Event was significant, $F(1,79) = 6.94$, $p < .01$, while the Feedback main effect approached significance $F(1,79) = 2.06$, $p < .08$. These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between Feedback and Type of Event, $F(1,79) = 4.17$, $p < .05$. Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison test indicated that participants in the Positive Event/No Feedback condition were significantly less likely to rate the interaction negatively compared to the other three groups (see Table 7).

 insert table 7 about here

Adjustment . It was predicted that adjustment moderates the relationship between self-verification and maximization. Hypothesis three states that when self-verification goals are activated, the likelihood of maximization should increase as adjustment decreases. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), moderator effects are denoted by a significant effect of the interaction between the moderating variable and the independent variable, while controlling for the effects of the moderator and the independent variable. Therefore, hypothesis three was tested with a hierarchical multiple regression model. Two predictors were entered into the regression equation, adjustment and the contrast between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions. Ratings on the adjustment measures were treated as a continuous variable and assignment to the Negative Event/Invalidation condition versus the other three conditions was treated as a categorical variable and effect coded. First, the contrast and adjustment were entered into the equation simultaneously; the interaction

between the contrast and adjustment was entered second. A moderating role of adjustment would be indicated by the interaction between the contrast and adjustment accounting for variance above and beyond that of the individual variables. The hierarchical regression procedure was utilized twenty-one times. The two separate measures of adjustment (the overall score of the BSI and the SACQ) were each used three times, once for each of the measures of maximization for which the planned comparison was significant. In addition, a hierarchical regression procedure was utilized for the five subscales of the BSI; depression, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, and somatization. The five subscales of the BSI were each used three times, once for each of the measure of maximization for which the planned comparison was significant.

The Brief Symptom Inventory Questionnaire. The interaction between the contrast and the overall BSI did not lead to a significant increase in variance explained for the behavioral measure of maximization, $F < 1$, or for the ratio of the behavioral measure of maximization, $F < 1$, while the increase in variance explained for the self-report measure only approached significance, (4%), $F(1,79) = 3.27, p < .07$ (see Table 8).

 insert table 8 about here

Because the increase in variance explained by the interaction term approached significance for the self-report measure, a plot of the interaction between the overall BSI and the contrast was examined to determine the exact nature of the interaction. The interaction was examined by creating a

categorical variable of higher versus lower distress from the continuous ratings on the overall BSI. Participants who scored above the sample mean on the BSI ($M = 23.13$) were classified into a higher distress group and individuals who scored below the sample mean were classified into a lower distress group. This resulted in a 2 (Negative Event/Invalidation condition vs. the other three conditions) X 2 (High distress vs. Low distress) classification. As can be seen in Figure 3, the moderating effect of adjustment on maximization was in the opposite direction of hypothesis three. As adjustment increased, the tendency to maximize in private following invalidation also increased. Perhaps, individuals who are adjusting well to negative life events are more likely to privately maximize compared to individuals adjusting poorly. This tendency to maximize in private may help account for better adjustment. That is, maximization may be an effective coping mechanism, thus the use of maximization following invalidation may lead to better adjustment compared to individuals who do not select this strategy.

 insert figure 3 about here

The interaction between the contrast and the depression subscale of the BSI significantly contributed to the total variance explained of the self-report measure of maximization, (12%), $F(1,79) = 13.69$, $p < .01$. However, the interaction between the contrast and the depression subscale of the BSI did not lead to a significant increase in the total variance explained for the behavioral measure, or the ratio of the behavioral measure, both F 's < 1 (see

Table 9). These findings suggest that adjustment is a significant moderator of self-verification processes for private maximization behavior.

 Insert table 9 about here

To determine the nature of the moderating effect of depression on maximization behavior, the interaction between the depression subscale and the contrast of the self-report measure was plotted (see Figure 4). The interaction was examined by creating a categorical variable of higher versus lower distress from the continuous ratings on the depression subscale of the BSI. Participants who scored above the sample mean on the depression subscale of the BSI ($M = 5.32$) were classified into a higher distress group and individuals who scored below the sample mean were classified into a lower distress group. This resulted in a 2 (Negative Event/Invalidation condition vs. the other three conditions) X 2 (High distress vs. Low distress) classification (see Figure 4). The graph suggests that, as with overall levels of adjustment, individuals experiencing a lower degree of depression were more likely to maximize privately compared to individuals experiencing a higher degree of depression.

 Insert figure 4 about here

The interaction between the contrast and the interpersonal sensitivity (IS) subscale of the BSI significantly contributed to the total variance explained of the self-report measure of maximization, (10%), $F(1,79) = 10.30$, p

< .01 (see Table 10). The interaction between the contrast and the IS subscale of the BSI did not lead to a significant increase in the total variance explained for the behavioral measure $F < 1$, while the increase in variance explained of the ratio of the behavioral measure approached significance, (4%), $F(1,79) = 2.90, p < .10$ (see Table 10).

insert table 10 about here

To determine the nature of the moderating effect of the interpersonal sensitivity on maximization behavior, the interaction between ratings on the IS and the contrast on the self-report measure of maximization was plotted. The interaction was examined by creating a categorical variable of higher versus lower distress from the continuous ratings on the interpersonal subscale of the BSI. Participants who scored above the sample mean on the interpersonal subscale of the BSI ($M = 4.54$) were classified into a higher distress group and individuals who scored below the sample mean were classified into a lower distress group. This resulted in a 2 (Negative Event/Invalidation condition vs. the other three conditions) X 2 (High distress vs. Low distress) classification (see Figure 5). Consistent with findings of the overall BSI scale and the depression subscale, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition who were high in interpersonal sensitivity were less likely to maximize in private compared to individuals low in interpersonal sensitivity (See Figure 5).

insert figure 5 about here

The hierarchical multiple regression procedure for the three other subscales of the BSI, anxiety, hostility, and somatization did not yield significant results for any of the three significant measures of maximization. The interaction between the contrast and the anxiety, hostility, and somatization subscales did not contribute to a significant proportion of the total variance explained for the behavioral measure of maximization, for the ratio of the behavioral measure of maximization, nor for the self-report measure of maximization, all F 's < 1.

In summary, ratings of depression and interpersonal sensitivity significantly moderated the relationship between self-verification and maximization, but only for the self-report measure of maximization. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition experiencing a small number of depression symptoms were significantly more likely to maximize compared to participants experiencing a higher number of these symptoms. A similar pattern of results was observed for scores on the interpersonal sensitivity subscale. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition who reported a smaller number of interpersonal sensitivity symptoms were more likely to maximize in private compared to participants experiencing a larger number of these symptoms. Similarly, the same pattern was observed for the overall measure of the BSI, although this pattern was not statistically reliable.

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. The interaction term between the SACQ and the contrast led to a significant increase in the total variance explained for the ratio of the behavioral measure, (8%), $F(1,76)$

= 6.69, $p < .01$. As predicted, adjustment to college life significantly moderated the effect of invalidation following a negative life event(s) on maximization behavior in public. However, in contrast to results using the BSI, the interaction between the SACQ and the contrast did not lead to a significant increase in total variance explained for the self-report measure of maximization, (2%), $F(1,79) = 1.46$, $p > .20$ (see Table 11).

insert table 11 about here

Next, a plot of the interaction between the SACQ and the contrast for the ratio of the behavioral measure was examined. The interaction was examined by creating a categorical variable of higher versus lower distress from the continuous ratings on the SACQ. Participants who scored above the sample mean on the SACQ ($M = 113.34$) were classified into a higher distress group and individuals who scored below the sample mean were classified into a lower distress group. This resulted in a 2 (Negative Event/Invalidation condition vs. the other three conditions) X 2 (High distress vs. Low distress) classification (see Figure 6). The moderating effect of adjustment on invalidation following a negative life event(s) was in the predicted direction. As can be seen in Figure 6, participants who were adjusting poorly were more likely to maximize in public following invalidation compared to participants who were adjusting well.

insert figure 6 about here

Embarrassment or stigma . We predicted that the nature of the stressor also moderates the relationship between self-verification and maximization. Hypothesis four states that when self-verification goals are activated, the likelihood of maximization will increase when embarrassment or stigma associated with the event decreases. To test hypothesis five the three significant measures of maximization were analyzed with a hierarchical multiple regression procedure. Two predictors were entered into the regression equation, participants' ratings of perceived embarrassment associated with the events they had experienced and the contrast (Negative Event/Invalidation vs. the other three groups). Embarrassment or stigma was treated as a continuous variable and the contrast was treated as a categorical variable and effect coded.

Results of the hierarchical regression procedure for all three measures of maximization lend partial support for hypothesis four. The interaction term lead to a significant increase in the total variance explained, while controlling for embarrassment or stigma and the contrast, for the behavioral measure of maximization (5%), $F(1,76) = 3.90, p < .05$, for the ratio the behavioral measure, (10%), $F(1,76) = 7.50, p < .01$, and for the self-report measure, (9%), $F(1,79) = 8.35, p < .01$ (see Table 12). As predicted, following a negative life event(s), embarrassment or stigma moderated the effect of self-verification on maximization behavior.

 insert table 12 about here

However, examination of a plot of the interaction between the contrast and ratings of embarrassment or stigma indicated that the moderating effect was only in the predicted direction for the self-report measure of maximization. The interaction was examined by creating a categorical variable of higher versus lower perceived embarrassment from the continuous ratings of embarrassment on the Life Experiences Survey. Participants who scored above the sample mean on the number of events they perceived were embarrassing ($M = 44.25$) were classified into a higher embarrassment group and individuals who scored below the sample mean were classified into a lower embarrassment group. This resulted in a 2 (Negative Event/Invalidation condition vs. the other three conditions) X 2 (High Embarrassment vs. Low Embarrassment) classification (see Figure 7). Participants who were more likely to rate the negative life event(s) they had experienced as embarrassing or stigmatizing were less likely to maximize on the self-report measure following invalidation compared to participants who perceived a lower degree of embarrassment or stigma. The moderating effect for the behavioral measures of maximization were not in the predicted direction (see Figure 8). Participants who rated the negative event(s) they experienced as highly embarrassing or stigmatizing, were more likely to maximize during the group discussion, compared to participants who perceived a high degree of embarrassment or stigma.

insert figures 7 & 8 about here

Negative Affectivity . Hypothesis five states that maximization is a coping strategy used to manage distress, therefore maximization is not merely the product of an individual difference such as negative affectivity. The belief that one has it worse in comparison to others, when due to negative affectivity, should be present even in the absence of negative life events. Random assignment to conditions should rule out an alternative explanation that participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition engaged in maximization more because of negative affectivity. However, to ensure that scores on the PANAS-NA did not significantly differ in any of the four experimental conditions, the PANAS-NA was analyzed with a 2 (Negative Event vs. Positive Event) X 2 (Invalidation vs. No Feedback) analysis of variance. As expected, these results indicated that there were no significant differences in negative affectivity between the four conditions (see Table 13; all F 's < 1).

 insert table 13 about here

Another approach to examine hypothesis five was to use a hierarchical multiple regression procedure to determine if negative affectivity accounted for maximization behavior. Two predictors were entered into the regression equation, a dummy variable carrying the contrast between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions, and negative affectivity. The contrast was treated as a categorical variable and effect coded; rating on the PANAS-NA Scale was treated as a continuous variable. Negative affectivity was entered first, followed by the contrast variable to

determine the proportion of variance accounted for by the contrast variable while controlling for negative affectivity. This procedure was done three times, once for each of the three measures for which the previous planned comparisons indicated that maximization was significantly more likely in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, 1) the behavioral measure of maximization, 2) the behavioral ratio measure of maximization behavior to total statements, and 3) the self-report measure of participants' perceptions that the experiences they did not discuss during the group discussion were worse in comparison to other Virginia Tech. students.

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression procedure on the number of times participants maximized their experiences during the group discussion supports hypothesis five. The addition of the contrast variable to the regression equation, while controlling for negative affectivity, led to a significant increase in the total variance explained, (9%), $F(1, 76) = 6.71, p < .01$. In addition, negative affectivity was not a significant predictor of the behavioral measure of maximization, $t < 1$. In summary, the contrast was a significant predictor of maximization behavior even while controlling for negative affectivity (see Table 14).

Similar results were found for the ratio of maximization statements by total number of statements during the group discussion. The contrast led to a significant increase in the variance explained (9%), $F(1,76) = 7.36, p < .01$. In addition, negative affectivity did not significantly contribute to the total variance, prior to the addition of the contrast to the regression equation, $t < 1$. As predicted, negative affectivity was not a significant predictor of

maximization behavior, while the contrast significantly contributed to the total variance while controlling for negative affectivity (see Table 14).

Results for the private self-report measure of maximization also support hypothesis five. The contrast led to a significant increase in the total variance explained (20%), $F(1,79) = 18.25, p < .001$. In addition, negative affectivity did not significantly contribute to the regression equation, $t < 1$ (see Table 14).

In summary, for all three measures the contrast explained a significant proportion of the total variance above and beyond that explained by negative affectivity. In addition, negative affectivity was not a significant predictor of the observed maximization behavior. Based on these results, it is unlikely that negative affectivity is an alternative explanation for the observed maximization behavior. It appears that while individuals high in negative affectivity may exhibit behaviors similar to maximization (i.e., focusing on negative outcomes), the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others may be elicited by a process that can be distinguished from negative affectivity.

 insert table 14 about here

Nuisance Variables

Overall, the results of the experiment provide at least some support for the prediction that the invalidation of distress following a negative life event will elicit maximization behavior. However, we could be more confident that self-verification processes lead to maximization if significant differences

between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three groups had been observed for all of the direct measures of maximization. Because maximization is a newly studied phenomenon and this is a novel paradigm, any number of uncontrolled variables may have increased error variance, thereby decreasing effect sizes. Two obvious problems with the experiment were 1) not being able to control completely for gender through block randomization, and 2) the large number of confederates (12). Therefore, both gender and the confederates were analyzed post-hoc to determine what, if any, contribution they may have had on the dependent measures.

Gender. There were no theoretical reasons for expecting that gender would influence maximization behavior. However, because all the confederates were women and we were unable to block randomize in the Negative Events condition, the effect of gender was examined for the direct measures of maximization behavior with a 2 (Invalidation vs. No Feedback) X 2 (Negative Event vs. Positive Event) X 2 (Women vs. Men) analysis of variance.

There were no effects of gender for the number of times participants maximized during the group discussion, for the number of times participants discussed an event different from the confederate but of a greater intensity, or for the number of times participants minimized the confederates experience during the group discussion. However, there was a significant three-way interaction for the number of times participants reported an event that was similar to a confederate, but more negative or of a greater intensity, $F(3,74) = 4.05, p < .05$ (see Table 15). Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison test indicated that Women in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition were

significantly less likely to discuss a similar event that was more negative compared to participants in the other three conditions (all p's < .05).

Differences in the means for the number of times participants increased the intensity of an event discussed previously between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions could not be analyzed statistically. As Table 15 indicates, the absence of this behavior in five of the eight cells and the resulting lack of variance precludes the use of statistical analyses (see discussion of the direct measure of maximization on the thought-listing task). However, Men in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, by far, were more likely to engage in this behavior compared to the other conditions.

In summary, gender appeared to have an effect for two of the behavioral measures of maximization. Women in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition were significantly less likely to engage in one-upmanship, while men in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition appeared to be more likely to engage in one-upmanship. Overall, these findings suggest that the impact of gender on public maximization behavior was relatively minor and inconsistent.

insert table 15 about here

Gender did not have a significant effect on any of the private measures of maximization (i.e. the two thought-listing measures and the four self-report items).

Confederates. A second factor that may have influenced maximization behavior is the different confederates. To examine the possibility that the different confederates may have had an overall effect on the measures, first, participants' ratings of invalidation between confederates on the self-report measure was analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance. There were no significant differences in participants' perceptions of invalidation between the different confederates who acted as confederate one, or confederate two, all F 's < 1 . That is, the different confederates did not have a significant effect on participants' perceptions of invalidation.

In addition, the public and private measures of maximization were analyzed with a one way analysis of variance to determine if the different confederates had a differential effect on any of these measures. The different confederates who role-played as "confederate one" did have a significant effect on the self-report item for participants' ratings of the degree to which their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate one, $F(7, 76) = 2.23$, $p < .05$, and confederate two, $F(7, 76) = 2.30$, $p < .05$ (see Table 16). Subsequent Duncan's post-hoc multiple comparison tests indicated that participants were more likely to perceive that their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate one and two when one particular confederate role-played as "confederate one".

 insert table 16 about here

The frequency with which this particular confederate appeared in the four different conditions was examined to determine if this confederate was

more likely to appear in any one condition, particularly the Negative Event/Invalidation condition. There were no differences in the number of times the confederate appeared in the four different conditions. In addition, the mean ratings of the participants' perceptions that their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate one and two were higher for participants in the Negative Event conditions compared to participants in the Positive Event conditions (see Table 17). Thus, it appears that when this particular confederate role-played as "confederate one", participants in the Negative Event conditions were more likely to perceive that their experiences were worse in comparison to confederates one and two.

insert table 17 about here

To determine if the different confederates who role-played as confederate two had a differential effect, the maximization measures were analyzed with a one way analysis of variance. The different confederates had a significant effect on participants ratings of the degree to which their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate two on the self-report item, $F(9, 76) = 2.26, p < .01$ (see Table 18). A Duncan's post-hoc comparison test indicated that when two confederates role-played as "confederate two" participants were significantly more likely to perceive that their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate two.

insert table 18 about here

The frequency with which the first "confederate two" was likely to appear in any given condition were relatively similar for all four conditions. In addition, an examination of the mean ratings on the self-report item for this confederate indicated that participants were equally likely to perceive that their experiences were worse in comparison to this confederate regardless of condition (see Table 19). The second "confederate two" did not appear in either of the Invalidation conditions. An examination of the mean ratings of the self-report item indicated that participants' perceptions that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederate were particularly high for participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition (see Table 19).

insert table 19 about here

In summary, overall the large number of confederates did not appear to have a significant effect on the majority of the maximization measures. However, one particular confederate who role-played "confederate one" did have a significant effect on participants' ratings on the self-report item, which indicated their experiences were worse in comparison to both confederates one and two. In addition, two confederates who role-played as "confederate two" had a significant effect on participants' perceptions that their experiences were worse in comparison to these confederates as indicated on the self-report item. It appears that responses on the two self-report measures may have been elicited by characteristics of particular confederates and not the Feedback manipulation. The differential effect of these confederates on the two most

direct self-report ratings may account for the weak effect of the Feedback manipulation and thus, the nonsignificant findings for these items.

Internal Analysis.

One factor that may have reduced the effect size of maximization was the relative weakness of the Feedback manipulation. Although the means for invalidation, measured on both the self-report item and the thought-listing item, were in the predicted direction, the differences between the Invalidation condition and the No Feedback condition were not significant. Thus, the impact of invalidation may not have been strong enough to elicit maximization behavior across all measures of maximization. To explore this possibility, an internal analysis was conducted whereby participants were reassigned to the Feedback conditions based on their ratings of confederates' invalidation on the self-report measure. Participants whose responses were above the midpoint on the self-report item of invalidation (i.e., ratings of 6 or higher on the self-report manipulation check) were assigned to the Invalidation condition, while participants whose responses were below the midpoint (i.e., ratings of 5 or lower on the self-report manipulation check) were assigned to the No Feedback condition. Assignment based on participants' responses resulted in 10 participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, 30 participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition, 20 participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition and, 23 participants in the Positive Event/No Feedback condition.

To test hypotheses one and two, a planned comparison was used to re-analyze the direct behavioral measures of maximization. There were no significant differences between conditions for the number of times

participants reported that their experiences were worse than the confederates or the number of times participants minimized the confederates' experiences during the group discussion, $t(79) = -.11$, $p < .98$, $t(79) = -1.34$, $p < .20$, respectively (see Table 20). However, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to increase the intensity or negativity of events previously discussed by them compared to participants in the other conditions, $t(79) = 2.41$, $p < .01$ (see Table 20). In contrast, participants in the Invalidation/Negative Event condition were significantly less likely to report an event that was in a different category from the confederate, but more negative or of a greater intensity, $t(79) = -2.14$, $p < .05$ (see Table 20). In summary, individuals who perceived their distress was invalidated following a negative life event were significantly more likely to engage in one-upmanship for events which they had previously discussed, while they were significantly less likely to engage in one-upmanship for events that were different from topics discussed by the confederate.

 insert table 20 about here

A planned comparison was next used to re-analyze the minimization measure on the thought-listing task. There were no significant differences on the number of times participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition minimized the confederates' experiences compared to the other three conditions, $t(79) = 1.12$, $p < .30$, on the thought-listing task (see Table 21). Thus, post-hoc reassignment of participants to the Feedback conditions did

not lead to greater effects for the two maximization measures on the thought-listing task.

insert table 21 about here

Finally, the four self-report measures of maximization were re-analyzed using planned comparisons. The two self-report items for which participants compared themselves to the two confederates were both significant. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to indicate that their experiences were worse in comparison to confederate one, $t(79) = 3.35$, $p < .001$, and confederate two, $t(79) = 3.25$, $p < .01$, compared to participants in the other three groups (see Table 22). Similarly, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to report that the experiences that they did not discuss in the group discussion made their lives more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students, compared to participants in the other three groups, $t(79) = 3.17$, $p < .01$ (see Table 22). In addition, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to perceive that the events they did discuss during the group discussion made their lives more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students, although this difference was not reliable, $t(79) = 1.54$, $p < .10$.

insert table 22 about here

In summary, contrary to our expectations, reassignment to the Feedback conditions did not increase the effect sizes of the public behavioral measures or private thought-listing measures. However, reassignment did have a significant effect on the private self-report items of maximization. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to believe that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates and other Virginia Tech. students. Thus, the self-report items strongly support the prediction that an individual's perception of invalidation following a negative life event(s) will elicit maximization behavior or maximization cognitions.

Discussion

The present research provided evidence for a novel coping strategy which heretofore has been virtually ignored in the coping literature. In contrast to coping researchers' current focus on the minimization of negative life events, the findings suggest that following a negative life event individuals may also maximize their negative life experiences. The maximization process has been defined as *the goal of finding that one is experiencing more or worse negative life events in comparison to others*. The present study demonstrated that individuals will engage in a variety of behaviors in order to reach this goal. Participants were observed reporting that their experiences were worse in comparison to others, both publicly and privately. During the group discussion participants engaged in one-upmanship by increasing the intensity of negative life events they had previously discussed.

Moreover, the nature of evidence from the present research lent preliminary support for the proposal that situational variables may influence coping behavior, in general a strategy not taken by coping researchers. Knowledge regarding situational influences on specific coping responses following a negative life event(s) is of fundamental importance for both clinical and social psychologists to better understand reactions to negative life events. A large portion of the coping research, thus far, has been descriptive in nature, often focusing on responses of victims to lists of different coping behaviors (i.e., Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979; Taylor, et al., 1984). In addition, theory-driven coping research has focused on individual cognitive variables which may influence different coping behaviors, such as appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), attributional style (Peterson & Seligman, 1984), or world views (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Taylor, 1983). However, other than the affiliation (e.g., Schacter, 1959) and help-seeking literatures (e.g., Nadler, 1987), research has tended not to examine specific situational variables which elicit observable coping behaviors. The current study, in contrast, directly examined a situational variable which led to an observable coping response. The results of the present research offer at least some support for the proposal that maximization, a coping strategy, is elicited in situations in which others invalidate one's distress following a negative life event(s). Knowledge regarding situations which are more likely to elicit specific coping behaviors can only lead to a better understanding of the coping process. The present research is a step in this direction.

The Elicitation of Maximization Following Invalidation

The first goal of the present research was to demonstrate that the activation of self-verification processes following a negative life event(s) will increase the likelihood of so-called maximization behavior. The results are encouraging as an initial step in better understanding this heretofore ignored coping strategy. Consistent with predictions, individuals whose distress was invalidated following a recent negative life event(s) were significantly more likely to engage in maximization behavior in comparison to individuals who either did not have their distress invalidated or who had not experienced a negative life event(s).

A second goal of the experiment was to investigate the occurrence of maximization in both public and private conditions. Following the invalidation of distress, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to engage in maximization, at least on some measures, both publicly (during the group discussion) and privately (the self-report measure of maximization). First, we obtained significant results for the most important and direct public measure of maximization behavior, the number of times participants maximized during the group discussion. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to exhibit maximization behavior publicly during the group discussion. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition made significantly more statements regarding how their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates during the group discussion compared to participants in the other three conditions. In fact, on average, 9% of the total statements made by these individuals during the group discussion were maximization statements.

In addition, the results of the second most direct public measure of maximization, the number of times participants increased the intensity of an event previously discussed, an example of one-upmanship, approached significance. When the total number of statements made during the group discussion was taken into account, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were four times as likely to increase the intensity of an event they had previously discussed compared to individuals in the Positive Event conditions, and twice as likely as participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition.

Second, only one participant exhibited maximization behavior privately on a thought-listing task. The participant in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition reported thoughts on the thought-listing task which indicated that his/her experiences were worse than the confederates.

Finally, participants whose distress was invalidated following a negative life event were significantly more likely to engage in maximization behavior privately on a self-report measure of maximization. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to indicate that their experiences made their lives more difficult in comparison to confederate one and two, although these differences only approached significance. In addition, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to indicate that events they did not discuss during the group discussion made their lives more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students. This finding indicates that it is not necessarily the invalidation of a specific experience, per se, which leads to maximization, but of one's distress in general. Perhaps the events

participants discussed during the group discussion were not the experiences which were causing the most distress. Most likely participants felt obligated, because of our cover story, to discuss experiences that they perceived would be informative for incoming freshman. For instance, one student explained during the debriefing that he "tried to choose areas that would be relevant to new freshman at Tech". Thus, the majority of topics discussed were directly related to academics. In fact, a number of participants even related events that had happened to them as freshman, but were no longer a problem for them. Therefore, the negative life events which were causing the most distress may not have been covered in the group discussion. This may explain why participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to maximize regarding events not discussed in the group discussion.

Participants' Response to the Confederates and the Group Discussion

One interesting finding was the negative reaction of participants in the Invalidation conditions toward the confederates. Participants in the Invalidation conditions were significantly more likely to dislike the confederates. This finding is consistent with previous research investigating strategies employed by individuals to maintain self-consistency (e.g., Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b). Individuals who are unable to elicit self-confirmatory feedback from interaction partners may engage in a number of other strategies in order to maintain self-consistency (Swann & Read, 1981a, 1981b). One strategy to reduce the threat of information that is inconsistent with one's self-concept is to devalue those from whom one received the inconsistent information (Harvey, 1962; Wilson, 1962). The main effect for Feedback was

surprising because we did not anticipate that individuals in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition would continue to seek self-confirmatory feedback regarding distress from previous negative life events. However, even though participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition may not have been currently experiencing distress, the receipt of information that previous negative life events should not have been distressful may have resulted in feelings of inconsistency. Because participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were currently experiencing distress, they may have been more certain regarding their belief that their distress was valid. Efforts to maintain self-consistency are stronger when individuals are high versus low in certainty regarding a given self-conception (Swann & Ely, 1984). Therefore, we would expect that efforts to maintain self-consistency would be stronger for individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition compared to the Positive Event/Invalidation condition. The results lend some support for this prediction. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were consistently more likely to respond negatively toward the confederates on both the thought-listing and self-report items compared to the participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition, although this pattern was not statistically reliable. This pattern suggests that participants in the Invalidation conditions who received information that was inconsistent with their belief that past or current distress was valid, may have devalued the confederates as a means other than maximization, to maintain self-consistency. In addition, perhaps because individuals currently experiencing distress (i.e., the Negative Event/Invalidation condition) were more likely to be certain that their

distress was valid, the tendency to devalue the confederates may have been stronger for these individuals.

While participants in the Invalidation conditions were more likely to respond negatively to the confederates, participants in the Negative Event conditions were more likely to respond negatively to the group discussion. The negative reaction of the participants in the Invalidation conditions to the confederates may have been in response to the receipt of inconsistent information from the confederates. The negative reaction of the participants in the Negative Event conditions to the group discussion may have been in response to the self-disclosure during the group discussion. Previous research has found that the disclosure of information regarding negative life events leads to increased arousal and negative moods immediately following disclosure (Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988). The inducement of arousal and negative mood is more likely to lead to negative evaluations of social situations (see Clark & Williamson, 1989, for a review). Thus, the disclosure of negative life events during the group discussion may have led participants in the Negative Event conditions to perceive that the group discussion was a negative experience. It should be noted that although participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition perceived that the group discussion was a negative experience, they tended to be more likely than the other three conditions to report thoughts regarding positive reactions to learning that others were having similar experiences, although this was not statistically reliable. This suggests that while the interaction itself may have been a negative experience for participants in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition, the receipt of information that others were

having similar experiences made these individuals feel better about their own experiences. This is consistent with research that finds that sharing concerns with others having similar experiences is a positive experience in itself (Taylor, Falke, Mazel, & Hilsberg, 1986; Taylor, Falke, Shoptaw, 1986). For individuals in the Negative Event/No Feedback condition, the group discussion may have had effects similar to an informal support group.

Moderating Variables

A third goal of the present research was to examine the effect of two moderating variables on maximization behavior, adjustment and embarrassment or stigma associated with a negative life event. Results indicated that adjustment and embarrassment or stigma significantly moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization, although the direction of this relationship is different for public versus private behavior.

Adjustment. The two adjustment measures, the BSI and the SACQ, appear to significantly moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization. As predicted, participants who were adjusting poorly (measured by the SACQ) were more likely to maximize during the group discussion when their distress was invalidated compared to individuals who were better adjusted. As expected, the effect of invalidation on public maximization behavior is stronger the more distress one is experiencing.

In contrast, when we look at the significant moderating effects of the overall BSI, the depression subscale of the BSI, and the interpersonal sensitivity subscale of the BSI on the self-report measure of maximization, the effect is in the direction opposite of the prediction. Participants in the

Negative Event/Invalidation condition who were adjusting well versus poorly were more likely to perceive that their lives were more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students. Thus, individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition who were adjusting poorly (compared to individuals adjusting better) were more likely to maximize in public but less likely to maximize in private.

One explanation for the differential effect of adjustment on the public versus private measure of maximization may be that individuals experiencing a high degree of distress are more motivated to engage in efforts to maintain self-consistency. Therefore, as we observed, individuals experiencing a higher degree of distress were more likely to maximize during the group discussion. These individuals may have achieved self-verification goals, either through behavioral maximization, during the group discussion, or through other self-verification strategies, such as derogating the confederates. Self-verification may have no longer been a goal for these individuals when they responded to the private measure of maximization.

However, a second explanation may be that maximization is a more effective strategy when used in private. Individuals who only engage in maximization in private may be more sensitive to the negative reactions of others to the open display of distress. Perhaps individuals who only engage in maximization privately are less likely to alienate potential support providers, which may lead to better adjustment. These individuals may be more sensitive to normative standards of social behavior. They may not have felt comfortable maximizing their experiences with individuals with whom they were not familiar. These individuals may be more sensitive to

the negative reactions of others who openly display distress (Silver, Wortman, & Crofton, 1990). Individuals who often engage in maximization publicly may be more likely to alienate those whose very support they seek. Private maximization may enable individuals to maintain self-consistency without the negative side effects. The participants who maximized privately may be more likely to receive social support which may lead to better overall adjustment. Interestingly, consistent with this explanation, participants who were having less interpersonal problems were more likely to maximize in private. This finding lends support for the proposal that individuals who maximize in private may experience less interpersonal difficulties and less depression. Future research should address the causal relationship between adjustment and public versus private maximization behavior.

Embarrassment or stigma. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to maximize publicly during the group discussion when perceptions of embarrassment or stigma were high, but more likely to maximize in private on the self-report item when perceptions of embarrassment or stigma were low. The direction of the moderating relationship of embarrassment or stigma associated with an event on public behavior vs. private maximization behavior is highly surprising. Previous research has suggested that individuals experiencing embarrassing or stigmatizing events typically fear social disapproval or avoidance (Coyne, 1976). It was predicted that individuals experiencing these types of events are not likely to discuss them with others, much less engage in maximization. Therefore, we might expect that individuals experiencing embarrassing events might maximize in private in order to avoid social

disapproval. What, then, can account for the finding that following embarrassing or stigmatizing events, participants were more likely to maximize in public? Perhaps embarrassing events are more likely to lead to a higher degree of distress. These individuals may have been more likely to perceive that the confederates' invalidation was inconsistent with their self-conceptions and, thus, efforts to minimize this inconsistency (i.e., engage in maximization) were more likely for these individuals. If individuals experiencing embarrassing or stigmatizing events are more likely to experience distress, and thus maximize more, why was a similar pattern of results not observed for the private maximization measure? One explanation, described above, may be that efforts to maintain self-consistency were stronger for these individuals. Therefore, they may have engaged in other self-verification strategies prior to their response to the question regarding comparisons to other Virginia Tech students (this self-report item was the last measure participants responded to). Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition evaluated both the confederates and the group discussion negatively (measured by self-report items which preceded the self-report maximization item). Perhaps, these individuals were able to meet self-verification goals by means of these other strategies. Thus, by the time they responded to the self-report item which asked them to indicate the degree to which their negative life events were more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students, self-verification was no longer a goal.

In summary, there is initial support for the proposal that the invalidation of distress following a negative life event increases the likelihood of maximization behavior both publicly and privately. In

addition, both adjustment and embarrassment or stigma moderate the relationship between self-verification and maximization, though not necessarily in the direction initially expected. Individuals who were adjusting poorly or felt embarrassed or stigmatized by the negative life events they had experienced were more likely to maximize publicly, but less likely to maximize privately.

Alternative Explanations

The finding that participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to maximize suggests that the invalidation of distress elicits maximization behavior. However, this conclusion may be premature due to the lack of significant Feedback main effects for the manipulation check measures (i.e., the three self-report items and the thought-listing item). There is some concern that the observed results are due to some variable or process other than self-verification.

The fourth goal of the experiment was to differentiate maximization from the individual difference, negative affectivity. Thus, the first and most obvious alternative explanation that can be ruled out is negative affectivity. The Negative Event/Invalidation condition was not significantly higher on the PANAS-NA compared to the other three conditions (i.e., random assignment worked). The contrast between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions contributed to a significant proportion of the total variance for all three maximization measures, while controlling for negative affectivity. This suggests that negative affectivity is not an alternative explanation for the observed maximization behavior. In addition, the beta weight for the PANAS-NA was not significant. Individuals

high in negative affectivity were not significantly more likely to engage in maximization behavior. Individuals high in negative affectivity are not more likely to perceive that their experiences are worse in comparison to others, and thus, negative affectivity is not a plausible explanation for the observed results.

A second alternative explanation may be negative affect spill-over. Individuals experiencing distress due to a negative life event may be more likely to experience negative affect. Individuals experiencing negative affect are more likely to retrieve other negative memories (Bower, 1981). Thus, individuals experiencing distress due to a negative life event(s) may be more likely to remember other recent negative life events and perceive that their experiences are worse in comparison to other people. Therefore, it is possible that individuals experiencing negative affect following a negative life event may be more likely to maximize. In the present study, individuals in the Negative Event conditions may have been more likely to be in a negative mood due to the number of negative life events they were experiencing compared to individuals in the Positive Event conditions. Based on a negative-affect spill-over explanation, participants in the Negative Event conditions may have been more likely to maximize. In addition, the receipt of information that is inconsistent with one's self-concept has been found to lead to an increase in negative affect (Elliot & DeVine, 1994). Individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to receive inconsistent information. Thus, we might expect that these individuals would experience the greatest degree of negative affect compared to the other participants. However, if maximization is simply due to negative affect spill

over we would expect that participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition would be more likely to retrieve negative life events in comparison to participants in the other three conditions. Results from the behavioral measures during the group discussion and the thought-listing task do not support this proposal. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were not significantly more likely to discuss negative life events during the group discussion or on the thought-listing task. In addition, if invalidation itself or the experience of negative life events leads to negative affect, negative affect spill-over should increase the likelihood of maximization in participants in the Invalidation conditions and the Negative Event conditions. Negative affect spill-over would lead to a Feedback or Type of Event main effect for the observed maximization behavior. In addition, it might be argued that a composite effect of two significant effects (i.e., Feedback and Type of Event) may result in the observed maximization behavior. However, the residual between group variance was not significant indicating that the observed maximization behavior is not the result of a composite effect. Thus, the pattern of results suggest that negative affect spill-over is not a plausible explanation for the observed maximization behavior.

A third alternative explanation, previously discussed, is another coping strategy, catastrophizing. As with negative affect, we may expect that individuals in the Negative Event conditions may be more likely to engage in catastrophizing behavior, compared to individuals in the Positive Event conditions. We may even go so far as to suggest that individuals in the Negative Event conditions are more likely to be catastrophizers. Catastrophizers are more likely to focus on negative outcomes and engage in

negative imagery of the self and the environment (Chaves & Brown, 1987; Sullivan & D'eon, 1990). Therefore, catastrophizers may have been more likely to rate the impact of experiences on the Life Experiences Survey as negative. These individuals may have been more likely to have been classified in the Negative Event conditions compared to participants who were classified in the Positive Event conditions. If maximization is simply a behavior exhibited by catastrophizers we would expect that participants in the Negative Event conditions would be more likely to maximize compared to individuals in the Positive Event conditions. In addition, we would not expect significant differences in maximization between the two Negative Event conditions. Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to maximize compared to participants in the other three conditions. Thus, catastrophizing cannot account for the observed pattern of results.

Pluralistic ignorance is another possible alternative explanation for the results of the present study. Pluralistic ignorance may lead to maximization because individuals experiencing distress are not always overtly aware of the negative life events others are experiencing. Thus, they may falsely conclude that they are experiencing more negative life events in comparison to others. However, Miller & McFarland (1991) propose that the receipt of consensus information can diminish pluralistic ignorance beliefs. Thus, the receipt of information that others are also experiencing negative life events would reduce the belief that one is experiencing more events in comparison to others, and thus reduce the likelihood of maximization behavior. In the present experiment, participants in all four conditions received consensus

information that others were also experiencing a high number of negative life events. The participants were made aware of the fact that others (the confederates') were experiencing a number of negative life events. This information should have reduced the belief that participants were experiencing more negative life events in comparison to others, if this belief derived from pluralistic ignorance. In fact, in the Invalidation conditions, the knowledge that others' were also experiencing negative life events should have been made even more salient by the confederates' invalidating comments (e.g., well, that's not as bad as my experience). A pluralistic ignorance explanation would predict that individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition would have been less likely to maximize compared to individuals in the other conditions, due to the information they received during the group discussion. Thus, pluralistic ignorance cannot account for the results of the present study and may be ruled out as an alternative explanation.

A final alternative explanation is diagnostic based self-evaluation. It is possible that individuals in the Negative Event condition may have been more likely to seek out information from others (i.e., the confederate) to determine the appropriate or "normal" amount of distress they should have been experiencing. However, as with pluralistic ignorance, the individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to receive information from the confederates that their distress was not valid. Thus, in terms of diagnostic based self-evaluation, it would be expected that individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition would be less likely to maximize compared to individuals in the Negative Event/No

Feedback condition. As this prediction is not consistent with the findings, we may also rule out diagnostic based self-evaluation as an alternative explanation.

In summary, none of the alternative explanations discussed offer compelling accounts for the results of the present research.

Limitations of the Present Research

While the findings of the present study lend preliminary support for the proposed theory, there are at least two problems, both related to the strength of the maximization effect. First, the number of actual participants who engaged in maximization behavior during the group discussion and on the thought-listing task was small. Only 5 individuals, 25%, in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition, compared to 3 individuals, 5%, in the other three conditions combined actually maximized one or more times during the group discussion. In addition, only 1 participant, 5% compared to none, 0%, in the other three groups actually maximized on the thought-listing task. Therefore, because so few participants actually engaged in maximization behavior, we must be careful not to make grandiose conclusions regarding our manipulation and its effect on maximization behavior.

Second, although there was general support for the hypotheses, a number of the measures we expected to be significant were not. A number of reasons may account for the nonsignificant findings, 1) the significant effect of confederate one on two of the self-report items, 2) the measures may not tap into maximization, 3) self-presentation of participants, and 4) the weak manipulation. These problems will be discussed in turn.

Different Confederates. First, let us examine the effect the different confederates who role-played "confederate one" had on participants' ratings of comparisons to confederate one and two. It appears that when one particular confederate role-played as "confederate one", participants in all four conditions were significantly more likely to rate that the negative life events they were experiencing were worse in comparison to confederate one and two. Unfortunately, this particular confederate role-played as confederate one for 31 participants. In addition, two confederates who role-played as "confederate two" had a significant effect on participants' ratings on the self-report item which indicated that their experiences were more difficult in comparison to confederate two. When these two individuals role-played as "confederate two", participants in all four conditions were significantly more likely to perceive that their experiences were more difficult in comparison to confederate two. It should be noted that these two individuals were typically paired with the confederate who role-played as "confederate one" and had a significant effect on participants' maximization behavior. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the effect of the two confederates is due to their own behavior, or a carry-over of the reaction to confederate one. In any case, it appears that three different confederates had a significant effect on participants' responses to two self-report measures of maximization. This raises an important question regarding the effect of different confederates on the measures of maximization. Is there a particular behavior, other than invalidation, exhibited by these three confederates which tends to elicit the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others? Differences in the confederates' behavior during the group discussion may have weakened the

Feedback manipulation. The participants may have been responding, in part, to the behavior of particular confederates rather than just the manipulation. This problem must be avoided in future research.

Measures of Maximization. A second limitation is that some of the measures of maximization may not have adequately tapped into the maximization construct. As this was an initial laboratory investigation into maximization behavior, the behaviors selected as operationalizations of maximization may not have been the most valid. For example, during the group discussion, participants in all four conditions were equally likely to discuss events which were similar to the confederate but of greater intensity. Most likely this finding is a result of the confederates discussing problems common to all college students. Thus the participants were more likely to recall similar experiences. In addition, the experiences discussed by the confederates were not very serious ones (e.g., I got a B on an exam I needed an A on), so even when participants discussed minor experiences they were more negative than the confederates. Thus, the number of times participants discussed similar events to the confederates with an increased intensity was not a good measure of one-upmanship within the context of this experiment.

A second behavioral measure for which the planned comparison was not significant and the means were not in the predicted direction was the number of times participants discussed an event that was different from the confederates but of a greater intensity or more negative. Interestingly, participants in the Positive Event conditions were more likely to discuss these types of events compared to participants in the Negative Event conditions. Often, individuals from the Positive Event conditions would state that they

could not really think of anything negative to say. These individuals for the most part perceived that college life was a positive experience. The topics discussed by the confederates were not problems that these individuals had encountered. These individuals had to search for negative experiences and would often discuss problems that friends had encountered, thus they were more likely to be different from those discussed by the confederate. In addition, as already stated, due to the intensity of the topics discussed by the confederate, many of the events discussed by participants were coded as more negative. Thus, the number of events discussed by the participants that were different from the confederate but with an increased intensity may not have been a good measure of one-upmanship behavior.

Finally, both the behavioral and thought-listing measures of minimization,(i.e., indicating that the confederates' experience was not that bad) appeared to tap into negative reactions to the confederates' problems rather than the belief one has it worse. Participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation group were more likely to minimize the confederates' experiences, for both the behavioral measure and the thought-listing task. One explanation for this finding may be the negative reaction of non-victims to individuals who display poor coping (Coates, et al., 1979; Dunkel-Schetter, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1987). Participants in the Positive Event condition, for good reason, perceived that the problems of the confederates were quite minimal. Participants often reported that the confederates should quit complaining about such trivial problems. Participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition were not experiencing a large number or high intensity of negative life events and thus may have had trouble sympathizing

with the confederates, particularly when the confederates invalidated the participants' own experiences. In addition, the confederates' highlighting of their negative life experiences in the Invalidation condition, may have led the participants to perceive that the confederates were having difficulty coping with trivial problems. Participants would often offer suggestions to the confederates regarding ways to change their current situation. However, due to the script, the confederates' responses to these suggestions were to reply that they had already tried that. Past research suggests that nonvictims' feelings of helplessness regarding victims' distress, or efforts to help victims that do not lead to changes in distress often result in negative reactions toward the victim (Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karuza, Coates, Cohn, and Kidder, 1982; Silver, et al., 1990). Support providers are more likely to extend help and respond favorably to individuals who present themselves as coping well with negative life events (Coates, et al., 1979; Dunkel-Schetter, et al., 1987; Winer, Bonner, Blaney, & Murray, 1981). Potential support providers often respond negatively toward individuals who openly express distress (Dunkel-Schetter, et al., 1989; Coates, et al., 1979; Winer, et al., 1981). Thus, due to the reaction of the confederates to the participants' suggestions, the participants may have felt helpless and thus, frustrated during the group discussion. These feelings may have led the participants in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition to feel contempt for the confederates and, thus the minimization of their problems.

Therefore, the minimization measure collected both during the group discussion and on the thought-listing task may have been tapping into

others' responses to individuals' display of poor coping, and not necessarily maximization.

Self-Presentation. A final problem encountered was that most participants in the experiment were reluctant to engage in maximization, both publicly and privately. Most of us know that expressing to others, particularly ones we don't know, that we have it worse in comparison to them will elicit negative reactions. From experience, many individuals have learned that presenting a positive attitude regarding negative life events is more likely to lead to a positive response from others, while presenting a negative attitude toward these events is more likely to lead to negative responses from others (Silver, et al., 1990; Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1979). Victims report that often they do not self-disclose information regarding their distress or experiences, even when they feel the need to, in order to avoid upsetting or scaring away potential support providers (Dunkel-Schetter, 1984; Meyereitz, Yarkin-Levin, & Harvey, 1988). Thus, there is social pressure on individuals experiencing negative life events to present themselves and their situation in a positive light. For self-presentational reasons, individuals are reluctant to explicitly express maximization behavior, particularly with others with whom they are not familiar. Indeed, a number of participants, during the debriefing, denied ever engaging in maximization behavior, while concurrently maximizing about the confederates. For instance, one participant reported that "No, I've never acted that way (maximized), but I can't believe that girl was whining about a B in her class, when I struggle just to get Cs and Ds". Thus, often for self-presentational purposes, individuals

whose distress is invalidated may not publicly express their belief that their problems are worse in comparison to others.

The self-regulation of maximization behavior may also occur in private. Individuals who are made self-aware are more likely to regulate their private behavior in order to "maintain a self-image that is consistent with their attitudes and moral values" (Baldwin & Holmes, 1987, p. 1088). The thought-listing task very likely led to increased self-awareness, as the participants had to concentrate on their thoughts. If these individuals held negative attitudes about maximization behavior, it is highly unlikely that they would engage in maximization even in private. Thus, although, participants whose distress was invalidated following a negative life event may have believed that their experiences were worse in comparison to others, they may have been reluctant to engage in maximization behavior privately, as these individuals may still have been constrained by the same normative standards of behavior. One participant reported on the thought-listing task, "One (confederate) complains about her roommate partying too much, why not ask for a new roommate? I feel bad here I am slamming this poor girl". This self-presentational strategy does not preclude the belief that one has it worse in comparison to others. Participants may still have perceived that their experiences were worse in comparison to others, but they may have been reluctant to engage actively in this behavior. This may explain why so few participants engaged in maximization. The largest effect sizes observed were on the self-report measures of maximization, particularly for the internal analyses. However, the means on the self-report items were all below the midpoint. On the self-report items, participants were forced to compare

themselves to others, thus the belief one has it worse in comparison to others could be expressed in a more subtle manner.

Weak Feedback Manipulation. Finally, another limitation of the research was the weak Feedback manipulation. One problem encountered throughout the experiment was resistance from the confederates to invalidating participants. The confederates were very uncomfortable invalidating any participants, but particularly if the participant was describing a painful experience. The confederates were told that following the participants discussion of a negative life event, they were to immediately say their invalidating comment, almost cutting the participants off. However, for the most part, the confederates would hesitate before invalidating the participant, so the invalidating comment did not necessarily appear to be directed toward the participant but to the group as a whole. In addition, because the confederates felt uncomfortable invalidating the participants, they would often say the invalidating statements in an innocuous way (e.g, quietly or looking away from the participant). A number of times during the debriefing participants in the Invalidation conditions revealed that either they didn't even hear the invalidating statements or they did not feel invalidated by the confederates. Thus, it is not surprising that the invalidation manipulation was not completely effective.

A second explanation for the weak invalidation manipulation may be that, as already discussed, there are a number of strategies that individuals employ, other than the behavioral elicitation of self-confirming feedback, to maintain self-consistency. Participants who felt uncomfortable engaging in maximization due to self-presentational concerns may have selected other

strategies to maintain self-consistency. One such strategy is to only recall social information which confirms one's self-conception (Swann & Read, 1981a). Thus, perhaps participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition only recalled information from the group discussion which confirmed their belief that their distress was valid. Therefore, they may have been less likely to report that the confederates invalidated their distress. In support of this conclusion, only 10 of the 40 participants in the Negative Event Conditions indicated that the confederates invalidated their distress, while all participants, except one, in the Positive Event/Invalidation condition perceived that their distress was invalidated. Responses to the self-report manipulation item may have been the result of a strategy other than maximization to maintain self-consistency.

Internal Analysis. Due to the weak manipulation, an internal analysis on the maximization measures was conducted. Participants were reassigned to the Feedback conditions based on responses to the manipulation check. It was predicted that this reassignment would result in greater effect sizes for the maximization measures. The prediction was correct for three measures of maximization; the internal analysis resulted in significant differences between the Negative Event/Invalidation condition and the other three conditions on one behavioral measure and two self-report measures of maximization.

Participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to discuss events during the group discussion which they had previously discussed, but with an increased intensity or negativity, a direct measure of one-upmanship. Participants in the Negative

Event/Invalidation condition were also significantly more likely to perceive that the events they were experiencing were more difficult in comparison to confederates one and two. In addition, as with the previous analysis, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were more likely to perceive that events they did not discuss in the group made their lives more difficult in comparison to other Virginia Tech students.

In addition, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to indicate on the thought-listing task that the group discussion was a negative experience. On the self-report measures, they were also significantly more likely to rate the interaction and confederate two more negatively compared to the other three groups. Thus, when the analyses were based on participants' perceptions of invalidation, there was even stronger support for the proposal that the negative reactions of participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition may reflect a strategy other than maximization to maintain self-consistency.

There is one caveat to our conclusions; participants in the Negative Event conditions who reported that their distress was not invalidated by the confederates (i.e., they were reassigned to the Negative Event/No Feedback condition) were more likely to maximize (i.e., indicate that their experiences were worse than the confederates) during the group discussion. As the internal analyses precludes drawing any conclusions regarding causality, participants' behavior during the group discussion may have had an effect on their subsequent responses to the self-report item of the manipulation check. Perhaps the use of maximization during the group discussion was effective in eliciting self-confirmatory feedback. During the group discussion, typically

maximizing comments from the participants resulted in direct validation from the experimenter. In addition, the confederates may have indirectly validated the participants by nodding their heads as though in agreement with the participant and by not engaging in one-upmanship with the participants. If maximizing behavior resulted in validation from the experimenter and the confederates, it is not surprising that these individuals did not feel invalidated during the group discussion. In support of this conclusion, four of the five individuals in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition who engaged in maximization during the group discussion were reassigned to the Negative Event/No Feedback condition based on their responses to the self-report manipulation check. The majority of individuals who maximized during the group discussion reported that they were not invalidated by the confederates.

Future Directions

Future research on maximization must address the problems encountered in the present research. A logical next step in the program of study would be to find a stronger way of invalidating participants during the group discussion. Using a smaller number of confederates who feel comfortable invalidating individuals experiencing distress would reduce random error. Second, it would be useful to find a way to allow participants to drop self-presentational concerns and feel comfortable engaging in maximization behavior. In the present study, so few participants overtly engaged in maximization that it is difficult to make definitive conclusions regarding the processes which may elicit this behavior. To begin with, participants must feel comfortable interacting with the confederates.

Previous research has found that working toward a common goal in which all members of a group are needed leads to social cohesion (Sherif, 1956). This type of paradigm may be useful in investigating maximization behavior. In addition, it may be more ecologically valid if the confederates could begin a discussion of negative life events that appears spontaneous and part of the flow of normal conversation. Thus, the focus of the discussion would not be on negative life experiences and participants may discuss events that are truly distressing them and not ones for which they think will be helpful for college freshman, as in the present study. Perhaps in this type of environment, invalidation from the confederates would be stronger and participants would feel more comfortable engaging in maximization behavior.

A second direction for future research is to determine if, following the receipt of information that one's distress is not valid, individuals use strategies other than maximization to maintain self-consistency. The findings of the present research suggest that participants may have engaged in self-confirming strategies other than maximization to maintain the self-conception that their distress was valid. In addition, future research may address the difference between maximization as a coping strategy and maximization as simply another self-verification strategy. Does the use of maximization lead to better adjustment following a negative life event, or do individuals who engage in maximization continue to experience distress because they are able to maintain the belief they have it worse in comparison to others as part of their self-conception? As discussed previously, it has been proposed that four different processes may lead to maximization. Should maximization be conceptualized as one construct, a coping strategy, or should

it be conceptualized as one of many behaviors which are the end result of four separate and distinct processes?

The results of the present study raise a number of questions. Due to the limitations of the study it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the processes which may elicit maximization behavior. However, based on the results, we can conclude that maximization is a valid construct; individuals do perceive that their lives are more difficult in comparison to others. In addition, individuals were observed actively engaging in maximization and one-upmanship. A small number of participants told the confederates that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates. Participants were also observed increasing the intensity of negative life events they had previously discussed in the group discussion. Participants reported that their experiences were worse in comparison to the confederates and other Virginia Tech students. In support of the hypotheses, participants in the Negative Event/Invalidation condition were significantly more likely to engage in these two behaviors. The findings suggest that the invalidation of distress following a negative life event may lead to the belief that one's experiences are worse in comparison to others.

The finding that the invalidation of distress following a negative life event may lead to the perception that one's experiences are worse in comparison to others is particularly intriguing in light of research on positive illusions (Taylor & Brown, 1988). In comparison to others, individuals are more likely to perceive that their lives are better, that they are happier, that they are more likely to experience positive life events, and, most importantly that they are less likely to experience negative life events

(Freedman, 1978; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Weinstein, 1980, 1982, 1984). In addition, individuals experiencing negative affect or threat typically compare themselves to people who are worse off (see Wills, 1981). Indeed, a common coping strategy following a negative life event is the use of downward social comparisons (Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979; Taylor, et al., 1983, Wood, 1989). Following a negative life event, victims typically compare themselves to others who are worse off than them. Indeed, if downward comparisons to actual people are not readily available, individuals often create images of hypothetical others who are worse off (Taylor, et al., 1983). In addition, the maximization by others of the victims' experience is perceived by victims as upsetting and unhelpful (Dakof & Taylor, 1990; Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Lehman & Hemphill, 1990). Thus, based on previous research it is particularly surprising to find victims engaging in this behavior themselves. However, while minimization is a common coping response, minimization from others is perceived as particularly unhelpful (Dakof & Taylor, 1990; Lehman, et al., 1986; Lehman & Hemphill, 1990). Perhaps both of these strategies are used in different situations to maintain a state of self-consistency. When others maximize the individuals' experience, this information may be inconsistent with the individual's level of distress and may result in minimization strategies. When others minimize the victims' experience, maximization strategies may be more likely to elicit information that is consistent with the individual's level of distress. In addition, the individual's level of distress itself may fluctuate daily, resulting in an interaction between one's current level of distress and environment. The use of these two strategies may depend on how well the

individual is coping with the event and the reaction of others to the individual. The findings of the present research underline the need for coping researchers to move away from the current focus of descriptive studies. Future research must begin to examine the situations and the underlying processes (e.g., self-verification) which elicit different coping strategies in order to better understand the coping process. This knowledge may provide health-care workers and support providers with information to increase people's adjustment following negative life events.

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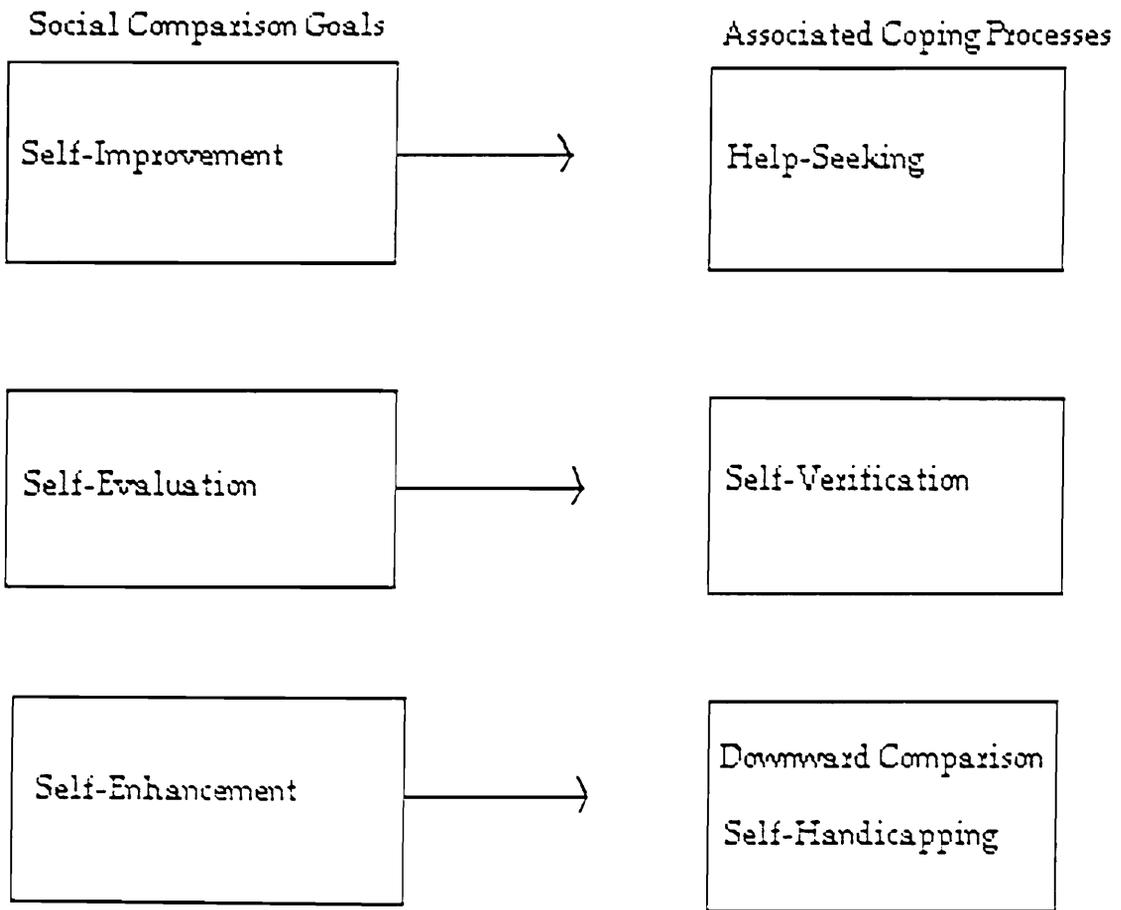


Figure 1. Three Social Comparison Goals and the Associated Coping Processes Which Motivate Maximization Behavior

	POSITIVE EVENT	NEGATIVE EVENT
INVALIDATION	N = 21	N = 20
NO FEEDBACK	N = 22	N = 20

Figure 2. Study One Research Design

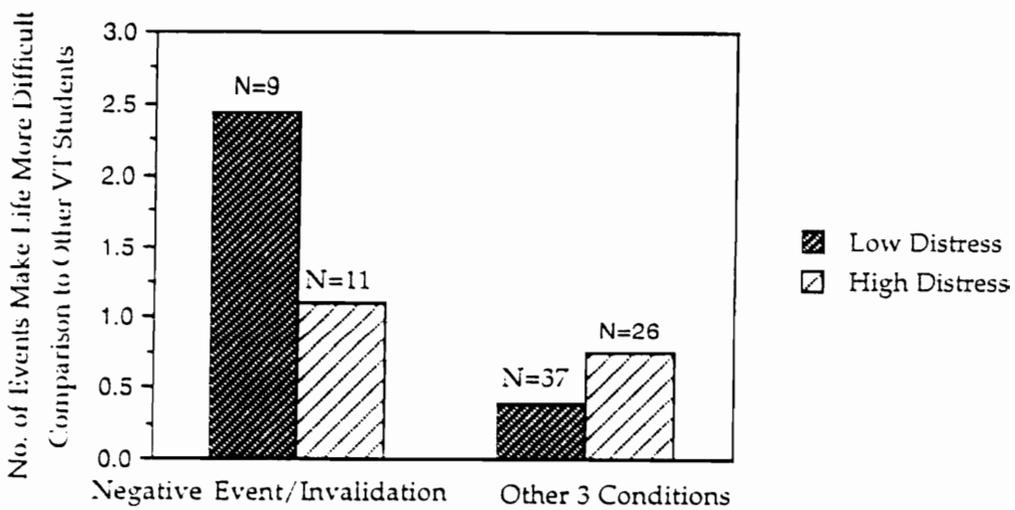


Figure 3. Interaction Between the Overall BSI and the Contrast of the Number of Event Participants' Felt Made Their Life More Difficult in Comparison to other VT students

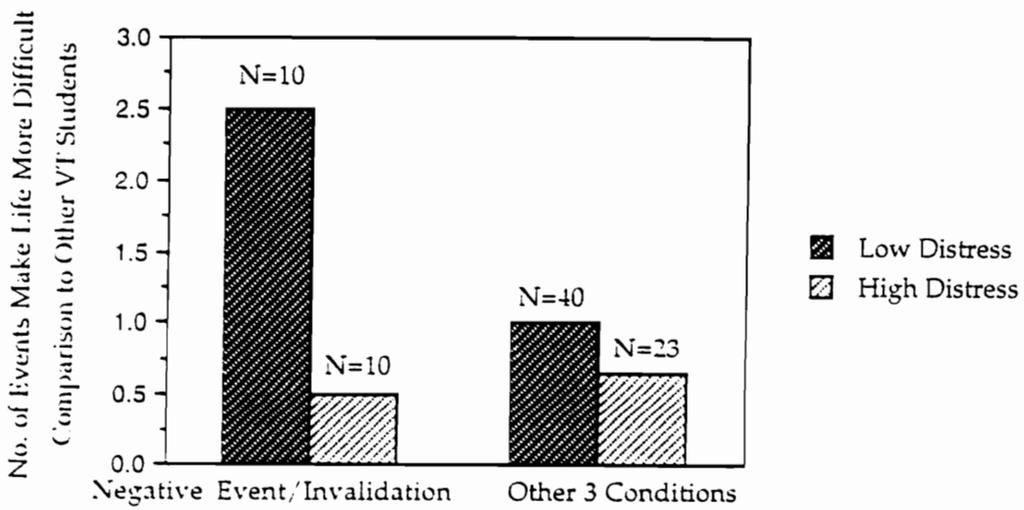


Figure 4. Interaction Between the Depression Subscale of the BSI and the Contrast for the Number of Event Participants' Felt Made Their Live More Difficult in Comparison to other VT students

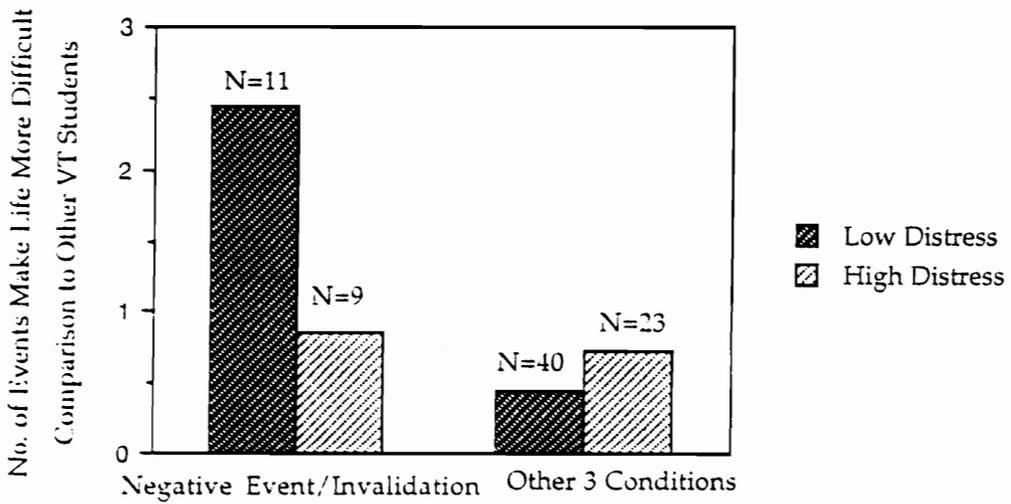


Figure 5. Interaction Between the Interpersonal Sensitivity Subscale of the BSI and the Contrast for the Number of Event Participants' Felt Made Their Live More Difficult in Comparison to other VT students

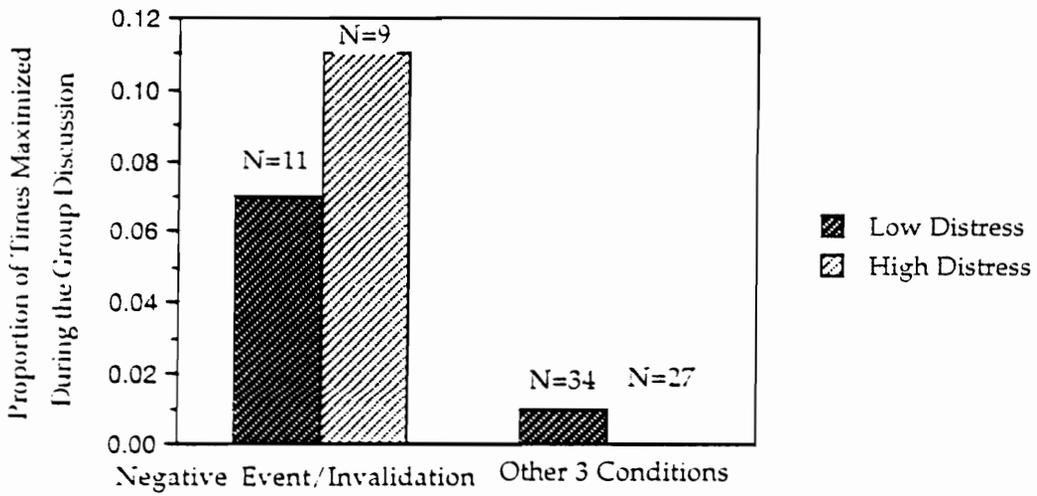


Figure 6. Interaction Between the SACQ and the Contrast for the Proportion of Times Participants Maximized During the Group Discussion

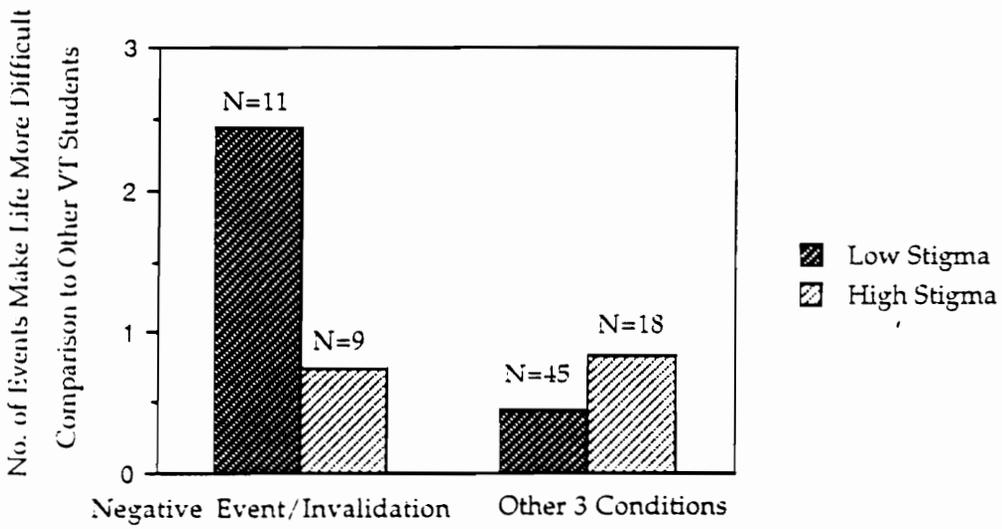


Figure 7. Interaction Between Perceived Embarrassment and the Contrast for the Number of Times Participants Maximized During the Group Discussion

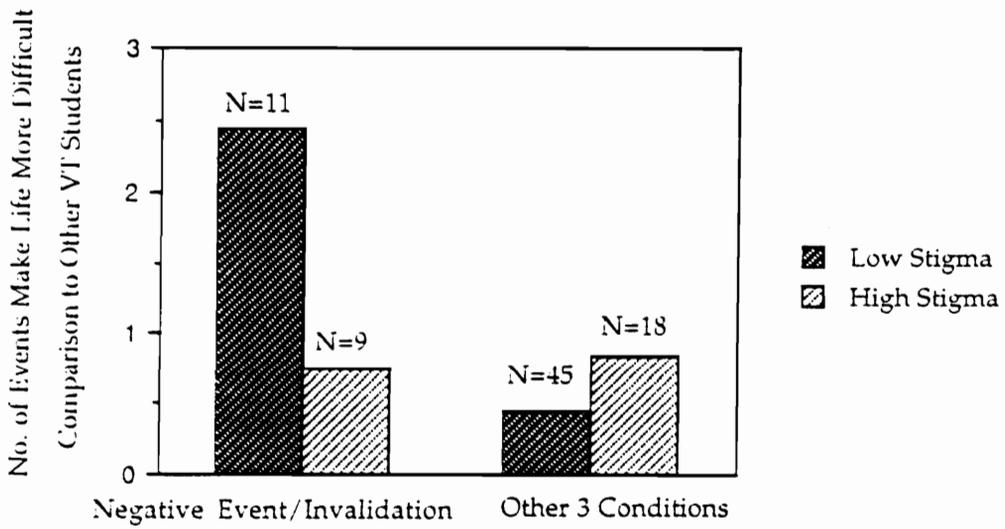


Figure 8. Interaction Between Perceived Embarrassment and the Contrast for Participants' Perceptions Their Lives were More Difficult in Comparison to other VT students

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Ratings of ConfederatesInvalidation-Manipulation Check

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Measure								
Validation of distress	5.20	2.80	5.76	2.63	4.10	2.70	5.00	2.88
Awareness of distress ^a	6.30	2.86	6.90	2.76	5.30	3.01	6.00	2.57
Sympathetic of distress ^a	5.30	2.64	6.00	2.28	5.55	2.313	5.52	2.60
# of statements regarding perceptions of invalidation ^a	.55	1.14	.05	.21	.20	.41	.05	.22

^aHigher numbers indicate higher ratings of invalidation

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Behavioral Measures of Maximization

Type of Event	Feedback								
	Invalidation				No Feedback				
	Negative			Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Range	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
# times maximized during group discussion	0-2	.37*	.68	.05	.22	.05	.22	.05	.22
# times minimized during group discussion	0-2	.05	.22	.25	.55	.10	.30	.16	.37
# events similar to confederate-greater intensity	0-6	1.52	1.07	1.4	1.04	1.55	.95	1.63	1.34
# events different from confederate-greater intensity	0-3	.26	.45	.35	.59	.40	.82	.68	.19
# events previously discussed by participant-greater intensity	0-1	.11	.31	.00	.00	.10	.30	.00	.00
Behavioral index		2.37	1.73	1.65	2.06	2.25	1.37	1.89	1.52

* Mean significantly different from other 3 conditions at $p < .05$

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Ratio of the Behavioral Measures of Maximization

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
ratio-# times maximized during group discussion	.09*	.18	.01	.06	.00	.00	.01	.04
ratio-# times minimized during group discussion	.01	.05	.09	.23	.02	.06	.03	.08
ratio- # events similar to confederate, greater intensity	.41	.36	.30	.38	.40	.31	.26	.28
ratio- # events different from confederate, greater intensity	.06	.10	.11	.18	.07	.14	.17	.21
ratio# events previously discussed by participant greater intensity	.04	.05	.00	.00	.02	.06	.00	.00

* Mean significantly different from other 3 conditions at $p < .05$

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for the Private Thought-listing Measures of Maximization

Type of Event	Feedback								
	Invalidation				No Feedback				
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive		
Range	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Maximization	0-1	.05*	.22	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Minimization	0-4	.55	1.05	.72 ^a	1.20	.10 ^b	.31	.23	.54
Ratio of maximization		.02	.06	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Ratio of minimization		.08	.15	.12	.19	.02	.08	.04	.10

* = $p < .10$

means with different subscripts significantly different at $p < .05$

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for the Direct Self-Report Measures of Maximization

Type of Event	Feedback								
	Range	Invalidation				No Feedback			
		Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Comparison to confederate one ^a	0-7	3.45	2.06	2.00	2.02	2.89	2.55	2.90	2.19
Comparison to confederate two ^a	0-7	3.25	2.29	2.27	2.14	2.78	2.65	2.57	2.03
Index of comparison to confederates	0-7	3.35	2.03	2.13	2.05	2.84	2.58	2.73	1.87
Comparison to VT students-events discussed in group	0-5	.80	.833	.71	1.27	.80	.83	.95	1.09
Comparison to VT students-events not discussed in group	0-6	1.75*	1.74	.38	.59	.85	.75	.50	.51
Index of comparison to other VT students		2.55	2.01	1.09	1.64	1.65	1.04	1.45	1.31

* mean significantly different from other three conditions at $p < .05$

^aHigher numbers indicate higher degree of maximization

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants' Responses to the Confederates and the Group Discussion for the Thought-listing Measures

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Negative statements regarding confederates	.25 ^a	.78	.09 ^a	.30	.00 ^b	.00	.04 ^b	.21
Negativeness of group discussion	.55 ^a	1.14	.05 ^b	.21	.20 ^a	.20	.05 ^b	.21
Positiveness of group discussion	.55	.82	.50	.80	1.60	.36	.52	.68

means with different superscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Participants Responses to Confederates and the Group Discussion for the Self-Report Measures

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dislike of confederate one ^c	3.55 ^a	1.15	3.45 ^a	1.46	3.13 ^b	.85	3.36 ^b	1.11
Dislike of confederate two ^c	3.81 ^a	1.19	3.39	.93	3.27 ^b	1.02	3.52	.92
Dislike of interaction ^c	2.85	1.56	2.64	1.54	1.33 [*]	1.99	2.97	1.13

c Higher numbers indicate more negative rating

* indicates mean significantly different from other three conditions at $p < .05$
means with different superscripts indicate means significantly different at $p < .05$

Table 8

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the BSI as a Moderating Variable on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Interaction between the contrast and the BSI			
r ² change	.0002	.0006	.04
r ² change statistics	F(3,76) = .02 p > .80	F(3,76) = .05, p > .80	F(3,79) = 3.27, p < .10
Beta-BSI	-.008	-.002	-.04
Beta statistics	t(78) = -.07 p < .90	t(78) = -.02 p < .90	t(81) = -.04 p < .90
Beta-Contrast	.34	.31	.70
Beta statistics	t(78) = 1.79 p < .10	t(78) = 1.61 p < .10	t(81) = 4.02 p < .001
Beta-Interaction	.03	.04	-.30
Beta statistics	t(78) = .14 p < .80	t(78) = .22 p < .80	t(78) = -1.80 p < .10

Table 9

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the Depression Subscale of the BSI as a Moderating Variable on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Interaction between the contrast and the Depression subscale of the BSI			
r ² change	.002	.01	.09
r ² change statistics	F(1,76) = .17 p > .60	F(1,76) = .97 p > .30	F(1,79) = 8.89 p < .01
Beta-Depression	-.001	-.05	-.08
Beta statistics	t(76) = -.01 p < .90	t(76) = -.43 p < .60	t(79) = -.83 p < .40
Beta-Contrast	.39	.24	.86
Beta statistics	t(76) = 1.95 p < .05	t(76) = 1.37 p < .20	t(79) = 5.26 p < .001
Beta-Interaction	.07	.16	-.48
Beta statistics	t(76) = .41 p < .60	t(78) = .98 p < .30	t(79) = -2.98 p < .01

Table 10

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the Interpersonal Sensitivity Subscale of the BSI as a Moderating Variable on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Interaction between the contrast and the IS subscale of the BSI			
r^2 change	.01	.04	.10
r^2 change statistics	$F(1,76) = .67$ $p < .30$	$F(1,76) = 2.89$ $p < .10$	$F(1,79) = 10.30$ $p < .01$
Beta-IS	.02	.08	-.05
Beta statistics	$t(76) = .17$ $p < .90$	$t(76) = .68$ $p < .50$	$t(79) = -.48$ $p > .60$
Beta-Contrast	.26	.14	.79
Beta statistics	$t(76) = 1.63$ $p < .10$	$t(76) = .89$ $p < .40$	$t(79) = 5.45$ $p < .001$
Beta-Interaction	.13	.27	-.46
Beta statistics	$t(76) = .82$ $p < .40$	$t(76) = 1.70$ $p < .10$	$t(78) = -3.20$ $p < .01$

Table 11

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of the SACQ as a Moderating Variables on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Interaction between the contrast and the SACQ			
r^2 change	.03	.08	.02
r^2 change statistics	$F(1,76) = .268$ $p < .10$	$F(1,76) = 6.06$ $p < .001$	$F(1,79) = 1.45$ $p < .20$
Beta-SACQ	.01	.08	.13
Beta statistics	$t(76) = .13$ $p > .80$	$t(76) = .74$ $p > .40$	$t(79) = 1.18$ $p > .20$
Beta-Contrast	-.8	-1.54	1.3
Beta statistics	$t(76) = -1.14$ $p < .20$	$t(76) = -2.11$ $p < .05$	$t(79) = 1.80$ $p < .10$
Beta-Interaction	1.23	1.89	-.87
Beta statistics	$t(76) = 1.16$ $p < .10$	$t(76) = 2.58$ $p < .01$	$t(79) = -1.20$ $p > .20$

Table 12

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Perceptions of Embarrassment or Stigma as a Moderating Variable on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Interaction between the contrast and perceptions of embarrassment			
r ² change	.05	.10	.09
r ² change statistics	F(1,76) = .390 p < .05	F(1,76) = 9.66 p < .01	F(1,79) = 8.35 p < .001
Beta-Embarrassment	.10	.17	-.01
Beta statistics	t(76) = .90 p < .30	t(76) = 1.64 p < .20	t(79) = -.10 p < .90
Beta-Contrast	.10	.05	.80
Beta statistics	t(76) = .59 p < .50	t(76) = .35 p < .70	t(79) = 5.05 p < .001
Beta-Interaction	.33	.50	-.45
Beta statistics	t(76) = 1.97 p < .05	t(76) = 3.10 p < .003	t(79) = -2.90 p < .005

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on the PANAS-NA

Type of Event	<u>Feedback</u>			
	Invalidation		No Feedback	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Negative	2.09	1.03	1.96	.42
Positive	1.99	.99	1.84	.40

Table 14

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Contrast on the Significant Direct Measures of Maximization While Controlling for the PANAS-NA

Predictor Variables	Behavioral Measure	Ratio Behavioral Measure	Self-Report Measure
Contrast, controlling for PANAS-NA			
r ² change	.09	.09	.20
r ² change statistics	F(1,76) = 6.71, p < .01	F(1,76) = 7.36, p < .01	F(1,79) = 18.25, p < .001
Beta-PANAS-NA	.03	.06	.13
Beta statistics	t(76) = .22 p < .30	t(76) = .52 p < .60	t(79) = 1.18 p < .20
Beta-Contrast	.30	.45	.31
Beta statistics	t(76) = 2.59 p < .01	t(76) = 2.71 p < .008	t(79) = 4.27 p < .001

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations of the Two Direct Behavioral Measures of Maximization Categorized by Gender

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
Measure	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
# times discussed similar event-greater intensity								
Females	1.75		.20*		1.75		1.50	
Males	.67		1.80		1.00		.64	
# times discussed event previously discussed-greater intensity								
Females	.06		.00		.13		.00	
Males	.33*		.00		.00		.00	

* indicates means significantly different from other conditions at $p < .05$

Table 16

Means of Two Direct Self-Report Measures of Maximization Categorized by Confederate One

Confederate	con1	con2	con3	con4	con5	con6	con7
Comparison to confederate one	1.80	1.33	1.67	3.63*	0.00	2.10	3.20
comparison to confederate two	2.43	1.33	2.33	3.77*	0.00	1.81	2.86

* indicates mean significantly different from other conditions at $p < .05$

Table 17

Means and Frequency of Confederate One

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Confederate 4								
Comparison to confederate one	4.67	6	4.50	8	3.00	8	2.63	8
Comparison to confederate two	4.83	6	4.50	8	3.25	8	2.75	8

Table 18

Means of the Direct Self-Report Measure of Maximization Categorized by
Confederate Two

Confederate	con1	con2	con3	con4	con5	con6	con7	con8	con9
Comparison to confederate two	2.86	1.75	1.33	3.40	1.25	3.68*	4.60*	1.40	2.31

* indicates means significantly different at $p < .05$

Table 19

Means and Frequencies of Two Confederates who Role-Played ConfederateTwo

Type of Event	Feedback								
	Invalidation				No Feedback				
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive		
Confederate	Mea	N	Mea	N	Mea	N	Mea	N	
	n		n		n		n		
Comparison to confederate two									
Con6	3.40	5	3.29	7	3.33	9	3.00	4	
Con7	0	0	6.50	2	0	0	3.33	3	

Table 20

Means and Standard Deviations of the Direct Behavioral Measures of Maximization Following Reassignment to the Feedback Conditions

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
# times maximized	.10	.32	.06	.24	.24	.58	.05	.22
# times minimized	.00	.00	.28	.57	.10	.31	.14	.36
# times discussed similar event-greater intensity	1.80	1.13	.78	1.40	1.51	1.33	1.19	1.50
# times discussed different event-greater intensity	.00*	.00	.61	.85	.45	.74	.43	.60
# times discussed event previously discussed- greater intensity	.20*	.42	.00	.00	.07	.26	.00	.00

* indicates mean significantly different from the other three conditions at $p < .05$

Table 21

Means and Standard Deviations for the Direct Thought-listing Measures of Maximization Following Reassignment to the Feedback Conditions

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
# times maximized	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.18	.00	.00
# times minimized	.20	.62	.18	.52	.08	.29	.14	.47

Table 22

Means and Standard Deviations for the Direct Self-Report Measures of Maximization Following Reassignment to the Feedback Conditions

Type of Event	Feedback							
	Invalidation				No Feedback			
	Negative		Positive		Negative		Positive	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Comparison to confederate one	4.90*	1.45	2.60	2.28	2.59	2.26	2.30	2.03
Comparison to confederate two	4.80*	1.93	2.40	2.18	2.41	2.33	2.43	2.01
Comparison to VT students-events discussed in group	1.30	.82	.94	1.16	.63	.76	.74	1.21
Comparison to VT students-events not discussed in group	1.80*	2.09	.44	.51	1.13	1.07	.44	.59

* indicates mean significantly different from the other three conditions at $p < .05$

Appendix A

Recent Life Experiences

Listed below are a number of events which sometimes bring about change in the lives of those who experience them and which necessitate social readjustment. Please check those events which you have experienced in the past two months and indicate the time which you have experienced each event. Be sure that all check marks are directly across from the items they correspond to.

Also, for each item checked below, please indicate the extent to which you viewed the event as having either a positive or negative impact on your life at the time of the event occurred. That is, indicate the type and extent of impact that the event had. A rating of -3 would indicate an extremely negative impact. A rating of -2 would indicate a moderately negative impact. A rating of -1 suggests a somewhat negative impact. A rating of 0 suggests no impact either positive or negative. A rating of 1 suggests a slightly positive impact. A rating of +2 indicates a moderately positive impact. A rating of +3 would indicate an extremely positive impact.

In addition, for each item checked below, please indicate how much control you had over the occurrence of the event. That is, how much control do you think you had over whether or not the event occurred. A rating of 1 suggests that you had no control over whether the event happened, a rating of 4 suggests you had moderate control over whether the event happened, and a rating of 7 suggests you had complete control over whether the event happened.

Also, for each item checked below, please indicate the degree to which you believe the event was embarrassing or stigmatizing. That is, how embarrassed or stigmatized did you feel when the event occurred. A rating of 1 suggests that you did not feel embarrassed or stigmatized at all, a rating of 4 suggests that you felt moderately embarrassed or stigmatized and a rating of 7 suggests that you felt extremely Embarrassed or stigmatized.

1. Marriage

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive			
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3		
No Control				Complete Control				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

2. Detention in jail or a comparable institution

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3
No Control				Complete Control	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7

3. Death of spouse

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3
No Control				Complete Control	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7

4. Major change in sleeping habits (much more or much less sleep)

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3
No Control				Complete Control	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7

5. Death of a close family member
a. mother

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3
No Control				Complete Control	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7

b. father

Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3
No Control				Complete Control	
1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. brother	Extremely Negative			Extremely Positive			
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. sister	Extremely Negative			Extremely Positive			
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. grandmother	Extremely Negative			Extremely Positive			
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. grandfather	Extremely Negative			Extremely Positive			
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. other (specify)	Extremely Negative			Extremely Positive			
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Major change in eating habits (much more or much less food intake)	Extremely Negative -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Extremely Positive +3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Foreclosure on mortgage or loan	Extremely Negative -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Extremely Positive +3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Death of a close friend	Extremely Negative -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Extremely Positive +3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Outstanding personal achievement	Extremely Negative -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Extremely Positive +3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Minor law violations (traffic ticket, disturbing the peace, etc.)	Extremely Negative -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Extremely Positive +3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. <i>Male</i> :wife/girlfriend's pregnancy	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive							
	-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3							
	No Control	Complete Control							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
	Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
12. <i>Female</i> : Pregnancy	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive							
	-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3							
	No Control	Complete Control							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
	Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
13. Changed work situation (different work responsibility, major change in working conditions,working hours, etc)	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive							
	-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3							
	No Control	Complete Control							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
	Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
14. New job	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive							
	-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3							
	No Control	Complete Control							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
	Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
15. Serious illness or injury of close family member. a. father	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive							
	-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3							
	No Control	Complete Control							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							
	Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed							
	1 2 3	4 5 6 7							

b. mother

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3	
No Control	Complete Control	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	

c. sibling

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3	
No Control	Complete Control	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	

d. grandparent

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3	
No Control	Complete Control	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	

e. spouse

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3	
No Control	Complete Control	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	

f. other (specify)

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3 -2 -1	0 +1 +2 +3	
No Control	Complete Control	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	
1 2 3	4 5 6 7	

16. Sexual difficulties
- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Extremely
Negative | Extremely
Positive |
| | -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 | |
| | No Control | Complete Control |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| | Not Embarrassed | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
17. Trouble with employer
(in danger of losing job,
being suspended, etc.)
- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Extremely
Negative | Extremely
Positive |
| | -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 | |
| | No Control | Complete Control |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| | Not Embarrassed | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
18. Trouble with in-laws
- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Extremely
Negative | Extremely
Positive |
| | -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 | |
| | No Control | Complete Control |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| | Not Embarrassed | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
19. Major change in financial status
(alot better or alot worse off)
- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Extremely
Negative | Extremely
Positive |
| | -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 | |
| | No Control | Complete Control |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| | Not Embarrassed | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
20. Major change in closeness
of family members (increased
or decreased closeness)
- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Extremely
Negative | Extremely
Positive |
| | -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 | |
| | No Control | Complete Control |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| | Not Embarrassed | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |

21. Gaining a new family member (through birth, adoption, etc.)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Extremely Negative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Extremely Positive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-3</td> <td>-2</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>+2 +3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">No Control</td> <td colspan="3">Complete Control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Not Embarrassed</td> <td colspan="3">Extremely Embarrassed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> </table>	Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3	No Control			Complete Control			1	2	3	4	5	6 7	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive																																
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3																																
No Control			Complete Control																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
22. Change of residence	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Extremely Negative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Extremely Positive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-3</td> <td>-2</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>+2 +3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">No Control</td> <td colspan="3">Complete Control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Not Embarrassed</td> <td colspan="3">Extremely Embarrassed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> </table>	Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3	No Control			Complete Control			1	2	3	4	5	6 7	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive																																
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3																																
No Control			Complete Control																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
23. Marital separation from mate (due to conflict)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Extremely Negative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Extremely Positive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-3</td> <td>-2</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>+2 +3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">No Control</td> <td colspan="3">Complete Control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Not Embarrassed</td> <td colspan="3">Extremely Embarrassed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> </table>	Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3	No Control			Complete Control			1	2	3	4	5	6 7	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			1	2	3	4	5	6 7
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No Control			Complete Control																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
24. Major change in church activities (increased or decreased attendance)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Extremely Negative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Extremely Positive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-3</td> <td>-2</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>+2 +3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">No Control</td> <td colspan="3">Complete Control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Not Embarrassed</td> <td colspan="3">Extremely Embarrassed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> </table>	Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3	No Control			Complete Control			1	2	3	4	5	6 7	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			1	2	3	4	5	6 7
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No Control			Complete Control																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
25. Marital reconciliation with mate	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Extremely Negative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Extremely Positive</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-3</td> <td>-2</td> <td>-1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>+2 +3</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">No Control</td> <td colspan="3">Complete Control</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Not Embarrassed</td> <td colspan="3">Extremely Embarrassed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6 7</td> </tr> </table>	Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3	No Control			Complete Control			1	2	3	4	5	6 7	Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			1	2	3	4	5	6 7
Extremely Negative					Extremely Positive																																
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2 +3																																
No Control			Complete Control																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed																																		
1	2	3	4	5	6 7																																

26. Major change in number of arguments with mate (alot more or alot less arguments)
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
27. Married male: Change in wife's work (loss of job, beginning new job, etc.)
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
28. Married female: Changes in husband's work (loss of job, beginning new job, etc.)
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
29. Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
30. Borrowing more than \$10,000 (buying a home, business, etc.)
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

31. Borrowing less than \$10,000
(buying car, tv, school loan, etc.)

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32. Being fired from job.

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33. *Male*: Wife/girlfriend having
an abortion

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

34. *Female*: Having an abortion

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

35. Major personal illness or injury

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

36. Major change in social activities
e.g., parties, movies, visiting
(increased or decreased participation)
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
37. Major change in living conditions
of family (building new home
new neighborhood, remodeling, etc.)
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
38. Divorce (yourself or parents)
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
39. Serious injury or illness of close friend
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
40. Parents retired from work.
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

41. Ending of formal schooling	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive					
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Embarrassed	Not Embarrassed			Extremely			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Separation from mate (due to work, travel, etc)	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive					
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely	Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Engagement	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive					
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely	Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Leaving home for the first time.	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive					
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely	Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Reconciliation with boyfriend/ girlfriend	Extremely Negative	Extremely Positive					
	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	No Control			Complete Control			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Not Embarrassed			Extremely	Embarrassed		

Other recent experiences which have had an impact on your life. Please specify

46. _____

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

47. _____

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

48. _____

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 2

1. Felt isolated

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Feel you don't have anyone to talk to

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Feel overwhelmed by amount of schoolwork

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Feel anxious that you won't do well on exams

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Feel like you're not smart enough

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|-----------|
| 6. Feel homesick | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |
| | Negative | | | | | | Positive |
| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| | No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Feel insecure about yourself socially | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |
| | Negative | | | | | | Positive |
| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| | No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Feel pressure from parents to do well academically | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |
| | Negative | | | | | | Positive |
| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| | No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Feel you don't measure up | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |
| | Negative | | | | | | Positive |
| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| | No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Left behind a girlfriend/boyfriend | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |
| | Negative | | | | | | Positive |
| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| | No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------|---|----|----|----|-----------------------|
| 11. Felt like you don't fit in | Extremely
Negative | -3 -2 -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Extremely
Positive |
| | No Control | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Complete Control |
| | Not Embarrassed | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 12. Miss your friends at home terribly | Extremely
Negative | -3 -2 -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Extremely
Positive |
| | No Control | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Complete Control |
| | Not Embarrassed | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 13. Felt like you want to quit school and go back home. | Extremely
Negative | -3 -2 -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Extremely
Positive |
| | No Control | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Complete Control |
| | Not Embarrassed | 1 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | | 1 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Felt uncomfortable with diversity on campus | Extremely
Negative | -3 -2 -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Extremely
Positive |
| | No Control | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Complete Control |
| | Not Embarrassed | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 15. Your roommate has a different sexual orientation than you do | Extremely
Negative | -3 -2 -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Extremely
Positive |
| | No Control | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Complete Control |
| | Not Embarrassed | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Extremely Embarrassed |
| | | 1 2 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 16. Just ended relationship with boyfriend/ | Extremely | | | | | | Extremely |

girlfriend

Negative			Positive			
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control			Complete Control			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed			Extremely Embarrassed			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Your roommate has political beliefs that clash with you own
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|----|
| Extremely Negative | | | Extremely Positive | | | |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

18. Feel like everyone has friends but you
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|----|
| Extremely Negative | | | Extremely Positive | | | |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

19. You run out of money before the end of the month
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|----|
| Extremely Negative | | | Extremely Positive | | | |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

20. Feel like your roommate leaves you out of social activities that you'd like to be a part of
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|----|----|----|
| Extremely Negative | | | Extremely Positive | | | |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | Complete Control | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

21. You feel uncomfortable bathing in the public
bathrooms at your dorm

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1
0	+1	+2
+3	+2	+3
No Control	Complete Control	Complete Control
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	6	7
Not Embarrassed	Extremely	

Embarrassed

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

22. You're not sure how your going to pay
for tuition next semester

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1
0	+1	+2
+3	+2	+3
No Control	Complete Control	Complete Control
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	6	7
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

23. Feel unattractive

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1
0	+1	+2
+3	+2	+3
No Control	Complete Control	Complete Control
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	6	7
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

24. Afraid others won't like you

Extremely Negative		Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1
0	+1	+2
+3	+2	+3
No Control	Complete Control	Complete Control
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	6	7
Not Embarrassed	Extremely Embarrassed	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

25. You didn't get into any sororities or fraternities that you rushed
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
26. Feel pulled between Tech and home
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
27. Feel like you can't get a date
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
28. Afraid you may have to drop out of school because of your finances
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 7 |
29. You hate your roommate
- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Extremely Negative | | | | | | Extremely Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

30. Feel like a leper socially

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

31. Failing a course

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

32. Being evicted from dormitory or other place of living

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

33. Failing an important exam

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

34. Feel like everyone else in class knows what's going on but you

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

35. Changing to a new school

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

36. Joining a fraternity or sorority

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

37. Academic probation

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

CADETS

38. Feel constantly harassed

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

39. Feel like you have no rights

Extremely Negative						Extremely Positive
-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
No Control				Complete Control		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Embarrassed				Extremely Embarrassed		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

40. Feel pressure to stay in, when you want to quit
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|---|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
41. Afraid you're not going to make it
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|---|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Extremely
Negative | | | | | | Extremely
Positive |
| -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 |
| No Control | | | | Complete Control | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Not Embarrassed | | | | Extremely Embarrassed | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Appendix B

BSI

Below is a list of problems people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and circle the number to the right that best describes HOW MUCH THAT PROBLEM HAS DISTRESSED OR BOTHERED YOU DURING THE PAST 7 DAYS INCLUDING TODAY. Circle any one number for each problem and do not skip any items. If you change your mind, erase your first mark carefully. If you have any questions please ask them.

HOW MUCH WERE YOU DISTRESSED BY:

	not at a little		moder-quite		extremely
	all	bit	ately	a bit	
1. Nervousness or shakiness inside	0	1	2	3	4
2. Faintness or dizziness	0	1	2	3	4
3. Feeling easily annoyed or irritated	0	1	2	3	4
4. Pains in heart or chest	0	1	2	3	4
5. Suddenly scared for no reason	0	1	2	3	4
6. Temper outbursts that you could not control	0	1	2	3	4
7. Feeling lonely	0	1	2	3	4
8. Feeling blue	0	1	2	3	4
9. Feeling no interest in things	0	1	2	3	4
10. Feeling fearful	0	1	2	3	4
11. Your feelings being easily hurt	0	1	2	3	4

HOW MUCH WERE YOU DISTRESSED BY:

	not at all	a little bit	moder- ately	quite a bit	extremely
12. Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you	0	1	2	3	4
13. Feeling inferior to others	0	1	2	3	4
14. Nausea or upset stomach	0	1	2	3	4
15. Trouble getting your breath	0	1	2	3	4
16. Hot or cold spells	0	1	2	3	4
17. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body	0	1	2	3	4
18. Feeling hopeless about the future	0	1	2	3	4
19. Feeling weak in parts of your body	0	1	2	3	4
20. Feeling tense or keyed up	0	1	2	3	4
21. Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone	0	1	2	3	4
22. Having urges to break or smash things ‡		0	1	2	3
23. Feeling very self-conscious with others ‡		0	1	2	3
24. Spells of terror or panic	0	1	2	3	4
25. Getting into frequent arguments	0	1	2	3	4
26. Feeling so restless you couldn't sit still ‡		0	1	2	3
27. Feelings of worthlessness	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix C

SACQ

The items on this form are statements that describe college experiences. Read each one and decide how well it applies to you at the present time (within the past few days). For each item, circle the asterisk at the point in the continuum that best represent how closely the statement applies to you. Circle only one asterisk for each item. To change an answer, draw an X through the incorrect response and circle the desired response.

Applies very
Closely to me Doesn't Apply
to me at all

-
- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I feel that I fit in well as part of the college environment | * * * * * |
| 2. I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at college | * * * * * |
| 3. I know why I'm in college and what I want out of it | * * * * * |
| 4. I am very involved in social activities in college | * * * * * |
| 5. I am adjusting well to college | * * * * * |
| 6. I have several close ties at college | * * * * * |
| 7. Lonesomeness for home is a source of difficulty | * * * * * |
| 8. I enjoy living in a college dormitory (Please omit if you do not live in a dormitory) | * * * * * |
| 9. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at college | * * * * * |
| 10. I am getting along very well with my roommate(s) (Please omit if you do not have a roommate) | * * * * * |
| 11. I feel that I have enough social skills to get along well in the college setting | * * * * * |
| 12. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college | * * * * * |

Applies very
Closely to me

Doesn't Apply
to me at all

-
13. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at college * * * * *
14. I haven't been mixing too well with the opposite sex* * * * *
15. I have been feeling lonely a lot at college lately * * * * *
16. I feel I'm very different from other students at college in ways I don't like * * * * *
17. On balance, I would rather be home than here * * * * *
18. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college * * * * *
19. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether and for good * * * * *
20. I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from college and finishing later * * * * *
21. I have some good friends or acquaintances at college with whom I can talk about any problems I may have * * * * *
22. I am quite satisfied with my social life at college * * * * *

Appendix D

PANAS

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on the average.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely
	<input type="checkbox"/> interested		<input type="checkbox"/> irritable	
	<input type="checkbox"/> distressed		<input type="checkbox"/> alert	
	<input type="checkbox"/> excited		<input type="checkbox"/> ashamed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> upset		<input type="checkbox"/> inspired	
	<input type="checkbox"/> strong		<input type="checkbox"/> nervous	
	<input type="checkbox"/> guilty		<input type="checkbox"/> determined	
	<input type="checkbox"/> scared		<input type="checkbox"/> attentive	
	<input type="checkbox"/> hostile		<input type="checkbox"/> jittery	
	<input type="checkbox"/> enthusiastic		<input type="checkbox"/> active	
	<input type="checkbox"/> proud		<input type="checkbox"/> afraid	

Appendix E

Experimenter & Confederate Script-Invalidation Condition

Waiting Procedure.

When subjects enter the lab, the confederates will already be seated in a waiting room. The experimenter should introduce the confederates to the subject. The experimenter will give the subject and confederates an extra credit form and give instructions to fill out the form with their name, id, two credits, and the date. When all three have finished filling out the extra credit form the experimenter should begin instructions for the experiment.

Informed Consent Form Procedure

EXPERIMENTER: ' First, I need you to read and sign an informed consent form

Basically it states that you agree to participate in a group discussion about the types of events you have experienced while at Virginia Tech. The discussion will last five- ten minutes and then you all will fill out a few questionnaires.

I do want to stress that your participation is completely voluntary, so if at any time during the discussion or while you are filling out the questionnaires, you decide this isn't what you had expected or you feel uncomfortable, you may leave and you will still receive the two points extra credit.

In addition,. I didn't mention this on the phone, but I do like to audiotape the discussions, just so I don't lose any information. Does anyone have a problem with that?

Allow them to read and sign the consent forms and then collect them.

Discussion Group Procedure

EXPERIMENTER: "O. K. before we begin, I do want to let you know, that although it may seem a little strange, I read the instructions. That's just to make sure the instructions are the same for all the group discussions. As I've already said, I am interested in gathering detailed information about the types of experiences college students have encountered while at Virginia Tech. As you know, on the College Life Experiences Survey, we already collected information about the specific types of experiences you have had. However, that only gave us information about the types of events you experienced, but not how those events may differ for each individual. We realize that college life can be very stressful, you have to deal with the stresses of academic pressures, social pressures, and financial pressures. In addition, events outside of school can make dealing with the everyday pressures more difficult. Today what we would like to do is have each of you talk about the specific experiences you have undergone and any types of thoughts or feelings you had at that time. We would like to know what effect these experiences have had on you, both good and bad.

State this, don't read- One of the things we may do is use this information for incoming freshman during orientation, just to give them an idea of the types of events they may encounter. Now, I am interested in both positive and negative experiences, however, so far most of the discussions have focused

mainly on positive events, so today I'd like to focus on negative experiences, so I can have a broader range of the types of events college students encounter.

Start record on the audiotape and place in middle of table

When seated ask "Does anyone want to begin?"

Use blank sheet of paper to record in written format the events discussed by both the confederates and the subject

CONFEDERATE 1: "Well, I've had a lot of trouble adjusting to the size of my classes here. All my classes have 80 or more people in them, and all my professors talk so fast, if you miss something important they say or don't understand something I feel uncomfortable asking any questions. And then after class they're always so stand-offish, they make me feel stupid to ask any questions. I don't know anyone in my classes so I can't get notes from them, and I feel like I'm falling behind"

Experimenter should write down what confederate is saying.

EXPERIMENTER "So the size of your classes makes it more difficult for you to do well in your classes? Anyone else?"

Experimenter should look around room and fix gaze on subject

Both confederates and the experimenter should wait quietly for 15 seconds for the subject to speak.

SUBJECT

CONFEDERATE 2 " NO, (Select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

EXPERIMENTER: Anyone else?

WAIT 15 SECONDS FOR SUBJECT TO RESPOND

SUBJECT

CONFEDERATE ONE: Immediately almost cutting subject off, "Well nothings worse than(select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

Again both confederates should wait 15 seconds for subject's response

EXPERIMENTER: Anyone else?

SUBJECT

CONFEDERATE 2 "Yeah well (select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed, however if subject is still on same category, switch to another category, roommate problems, if this has not already been discussed, if it has switch to problems with friends)

EXPERIMENTER: Anyone else?

WAIT 15 SECONDS FOR SUBJECT'S RESPONSE

SUBJECT

CONFEDERATE ONE "well, at least you don't have my problem (select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

EXPERIMENTER: Anyone else?

SUBJECT

EXPERIMENTER (Checks watch) " OK we're about out of time and I still need you to fill out a couple questionnaires before you leave, are there any other experiences any of you would like to talk about before we wrap this up?"

Instructions for questionnaire

EXPERIMENTER:"O.K., I just have a couple questionnaires that I'd like you to fill out before you leave. I want to let you know that these questionnaires are completely anonymous, we have assigned a code number to each questionnaire and your informed consent forms are kept in a separate room in a locked file cabinet, so that any information that I collect today cannot be linked to your name or who you are. In addition, you will fill out the questionnaires in private cubicles, so you can feel comfortable to be as honest as possible" O.k., I 'll take each of you back separately Look at subject "(Subject's name), if you want to follow me and then I'll come back and get (one Confederate's name)

Take subject to front cubicle and give thought listing instructions

EXPERIMENTER: "What I would like you to do now, is a thought listing task. When the tasks begins I'd like you to write down thoughts that you are having at this time about the group discussion. I would simply like you to indicate what is going through your mind about the group discussion. I would like you to write down any thoughts that occur to you. Write down each thought as it occurs from moment to moment and please convey any information that you can on your thoughts at that moment. The task will

take four minutes. When the four minutes is up I will come back in and ask you to stop writing."

Experimenter should start stopwatch and tell subject to begin.

The experimenter should then go back and take each confederate separately to their cubicles.

When the subject's four minutes is up, the experimenter should give the subject the rest of the questionnaires.

EXPERIMENTER "I just have a few questionnaires that I'd like you to fill out. These are questions about your thoughts and feelings about the group discussion and your college life experiences so far. In addition, we would like you to retake the life experiences survey, just as a reminder, on the Life Experiences Survey, only respond to events that have happened to you in the past two months and please indicate next to the event when it happened, within the past month or one-two months ago. When you finish the questionnaires, you may bring them back to me at the table"

SCENARIO CATEGORIES

FINANCIAL CATEGORY

1. I've racked up 50 dollars worth of parking tickets. I have to park my car in the cage, and it's so far away, so I've been parking in front of my dorm. Now, I have to ask my parents for the money and I know they're gonna be pissed about it. But I don't know what to do because I can't keep getting tickets but I don't want to park at the Cage everyday. They need to have a better parking system here."

2. I have trouble with expenses at the end of the month. My parents only give me \$200.00 every month. So by the middle of the month I've already run out of money. I keep telling them I need more money, but they won't give me any more. Then when my friends want to go out and party, I don't have any money to spend. It's embarrassing.

SOCIAL CATEGORY

1. My friend had a party and didn't invite me. I had to hear about it from another friend of ours. So I called her because I thought maybe she just hadn't been able to get in touch with me, but she never even brought it up. I'm so mad, I don't know why she'd do that, we haven't been fighting or anything.

2. My boyfriend keeps telling me he'll call me and he never does.

3. I'm dating this guy who wants to get more serious than I do. I've met somebody else, but this guy won't take the hint. He keeps calling me all the time to go out, and I don't know how to tell him, I've met someone else who like more. I'd still like to date him, but I just don't want to have a serious relationship right now.

4. My best friend started dating someone, and now I never get to see her anymore. We used to do stuff all the time, and now whenever I ask her to do something, she's always busy. I really miss her alot. I mean, I'm happy she's happy with this guy, but I wish things were the way they used to be.

ROOMMATES

1. My roommate refused to turn off her alarm. She has class every morning at 8:00 which she never goes to, and she won't turn off her alarm every morning. Plus I sleep in a loft, so I always have to get down to turn off the alarm, she just sleeps right through it. It drives me crazy"

2. My roommate has parties in the room all the time. She always has people over, so I can't get any sleep or study. And if she's not partying in the room, she wakes me up when she comes home to tell me about her night.

ACADEMIC

1. I got a B on an exam. I had studied really hard, and thought I was gonna get an A, but I only got a B.

2. My TA doesn't speak english, so anytime I have any questions and I ask him, I can never understand what he's saying. It's very frustrating, because he conducts the study sessions we have and he's only confusing, he's not helpful at all.

FAMILY

1. My mom keeps bugging me. She says I never call her enough when I do, and the reason I don't call her is because she calls me all the time to tell me I don't call her enough. I mean we have a really close relationship and everything, but I don't feel the need to talk to her everyday, but she always wants to know what's new in my life, but if nothings new I don't have anything to talk to her about.

2. My parents gave my younger sister a brand new car this year. She's a junior in high school, and it made me really mad, because they never gave me a car when I was in high school. I didn't get a car till I came to college and they gave me their old car so they could buy a new one. I just don't think it's fair that she got a new car and all I got was their used car.

Appendix F

Experimenter & Confederate Script-No Feedback Condition

Waiting Procedure.

When subjects enter the lab, the confederates will already be seated in a waiting room. The experimenter should introduce the confederates to the subject. The experimenter will give the subject and confederates an extra credit form and give instructions to fill out the form with their name, id, two credits, and the date. When all three have finished filling out the extra credit form the experimenter should begin instructions for the experiment.

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State this, don't read- One of the things we may do is use this information for incoming freshman during orientation, just to give them an idea of the types of events they may encounter. Now, I am interested in both positive and negative experiences, however, so far most of the discussions have focused

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When seated ask "Does anyone want to begin?"

Use blank sheet of paper to record in written format the events discussed by both the confederates and the subject

CONFEDERATE 1: "Well, I've had a lot of trouble adjusting to the size of my classes here. All my classes have 80 or more people in them, and all my professors talk so fast, if you miss something important they say or don't understand something I feel uncomfortable asking any questions. And then after class they're always so stand-offish, they make me feel stupid to ask any questions. I don't know anyone in my classes so I can't get notes from them, and I feel like I'm falling behind"

EXPERIMENTER" (Subject's name) do you have an experience you'd like to discuss?

Both confederates and the experimenter should wait quietly for 30 seconds for the subject to speak.

SUBJECT

CONFEDERATE 2 "Confederate 2, do have any experiences you'd like to discuss? (Select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

WAIT 30 SECONDS FOR SUBJECT TO RESPOND

EXPERIMENTER "Anyone else?" Look at subject (Subject's name, would you like to go"

SUBJECT

EXPERIMENTER "Confederate one, anything else?"

CONFEDERATE ONE: (select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

EXPERIMENTER "Subject's name, would you like to go?"

Again both confederates should wait 30 seconds for subject's response

SUBJECT

EXPERIMENTER "Confederate two, would you like to go?"

CONFEDERATE 2 (select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed, however if subject is still on same category, switch to another category, roommate problems, if this has not already been discussed, if it has switch to problems with friends)

EXPERIMENTER look at subject

WAIT 30 SECONDS FOR SUBJECT'S RESPONSE

SUBJECT

EXPERIUMENTER look at confederate one

CONFEDERATE ONE (select scenario which best fits category subject has discussed)

EXPERIMENTER look at subject

SUBJECT

EXPERIMENTER (Checks watch) " OK we're about out of time and I still need you to fill out a couple questionnaires before you leave, are there any other experiences any of you would like to talk about before we wrap this up?"

Instructions for questionnaire

EXPERIMENTER:"O.K., I just have a couple questionnaires that I'd like you to fill out before you leave. I want to let you know that these questionnaires are completely anonymous, we have assigned a code number to each questionnaire and your informed consent forms are kept in a separate room in a locked file cabinet, so that any information that I collect today cannot be linked to your name or who you are. In addition, you will fill out the questionnaires in private cubicles, so you can feel comfortable to be as honest as possible" O.k., I 'll take each of you back separately Look at subject "(Subject's name), if you want to follow me and then I'll come back and get (one Confederate's name)

Take subject to front cubicle and give thought listing instructions

EXPERIMENTER: "What I would like you to do now, is a thought listing task. When the tasks begins I'd like you to write down thoughts that you are having at this time about the group discussion. I would simply like you to indicate what is going through your mind about the group discussion. I would like you to write down any thoughts that occur to you. Write down each thought as it occurs from moment to moment and please convey any information that you can on your thoughts at that moment. The task will

take four minutes. When the four minutes is up I will come back in and ask you to stop writing."

Experimenter should start stopwatch and tell subject to begin.

The experimenter should then go back and take each confederate separately to their cubicles.

When the subject's four minutes is up, the experimenter should give the subject the rest of the questionnaires.

EXPERIMENTER "I just have a few questionnaires that I'd like you to fill out. These are questions about your thoughts and feelings about the group discussion and your college life experiences so far. In addition, we would like you to retake the life experiences survey, just as a reminder, on the Life Experiences Survey, only respond to events that have happened to you in the past two months and please indicate next to the event when it happened, within the past month or one-two months ago. When you finish the questionnaires, you may bring them back to me at the table"

Appendix H

Maximization Behavior Coding Form

Subject ID _____

Coder Initials _____

1. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES EVENT IN
SAME CATEGORY (I.E., ADACEMEIC, FINANCIAL, ETC.)
AS THE CONFEDERATE THAT IS OF THE SAME INTENSITY -----

2. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES EVENT IN
SAME CATEGORY AS CONFEDERATE THAT IS MORE NEGATIVE
OR OF A GREATER INTENSITY (E.G., CONFEDERATE: MY ROOMATE
WAKES ME UP AT 1:00 EVERY MORNING, SUBJECT: MY ROOMATE
WAKES ME UP AT 3:00 EVERY MORNING) -----

3. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES EVENT IN
DIFFERENT CATEGORY AS THE CONFEDERATE THAT IS OF THE SAME
INTENSITY

4. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES EVENT IN DIFFERENT
CATEORY AS THE CONFEDERATE THAT IS MORE NEGATIVE
OR OF A GREATER INTENSITY -----

5. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES SAME NEGATIVE
LIFE EVENT IN SUBJECT PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED THAT IS OF
SAME INTENSITY -----

6. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES SAME NEGATIVE
LIFE EVENT IN SUBJECT PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED THAT IS MORE
NEGATIVE OR OF A GREATER INTENSITY (E.G., I BROKE MY LEG.....
I BROKE MY LEG AND HAD A CONCUSSION) -----

7. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT MINIMIZES CONFEDERATES' EXPERIENCE (I.E., SUBJECT VERBALIZES THAT CONFEDERATES' EXPERIENCES IS NOT THAT BAD) -----
8. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT MAXIMIZES HIS/HER OWN EXPERIENCE (I.E., SUBJECT VERBALIZES THAT HIS/HER EXPERIENCE IS WORSE IN COMPARISON TO THE CONFEDERATES) -----
9. NUMBER OF DIFFERENT NEGATIVE EVENTS SUBJECT DISCUSSES -----
10. NUMBER OF TIMES SUBJECT DISCUSSES SAME EVENT -----
11. DURATION OF SUBJECT'S INTERACTIONS -----
12. DURATION OF GROUP DISCUSSION -----

Appendix I
Maximization Thought-listing Coding Form

1. NUMBER OF MAXIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE ONE
 (STATEMENTS WHICH INDICATE THAT SUBJECT'S EXPERIENCES ARE
 WORSE IN COMPARISON TO CONFEDERATE ONE) -----
2. NUMBER OF MAXIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE
 TWO -----
3. NUMBER OF MAXIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING BOTH
 CONFEDERATES -----
4. NUMBER OF MINIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE
 ONE (STATEMENTS THAT INDICATE THE CONFEDERATES EXPERIENCES ARE
 NOT AS BAD AS SUBJECT'S) -----
5. NUMBER OF MINIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE
 TWO -----
6. NUMBER OF MINIMIZATION STATEMENTS REGARDING BOTH
 CONFEDERATES -----
7. NUMBER OF NEGATIVE STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE ONE
 (E.G., SHE WASN'T VERY FRIENDLY) -----
8. NUMBER OF NEGATIVE STATEMENTS REGARDING CONFEDERATE TWO -----
9. NUMBER OF NEGATIVE STATEMENTS REGARDING BOTH CONFEDERATES -----
10. NUMBER OF STATEMENTS REGARDING POSITIVENESS OF SHARED
 EXPERIENCES -----

11. NUMBER OF STATEMENTS REGARDING NEGATIVENESS OF SHARED EXPERIENCES	-----
12. NUMBER OF STATEMENTS REGARDING SUBJECT'S PERCEPTION OF INVALIDATION	-----
13. NUMBER OF STATEMENTS REGARDING A NEGATIVE LIFE EXPERIENCE	-----
14. OTHER	-----
15. TOTAL NUMBER OF STATEMENTS	-----

APPENDIX J
MAXIMIZATION
GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions refer to the discussion you have just participated in. We are interested in collecting information regarding your thoughts and feelings about the discussion. Please read and answer each question as honestly as possible.

The following questions concern your thoughts and feelings during the previous interaction. We would like you to indicate to what degree you experienced the described thought or feeling. "0" indicating not at all and "7" indicating extremely. For questions regarding other group participants, please answer the question for both participants. Please include the person's name or a brief description of the individual.

Remember this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please circle one choice per item that best represents what you think.

	Not at all	Extremely						
1. To what degree did the interaction seem awkward and forced to you?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To what degree did the interaction seem strained to you? ?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. To what degree did the interaction seem pleasant to you?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. To what degree did the interaction seem dull?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. To what degree did you like _____ (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not at all							Extremely
6. To what degree did you like _____? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. To what degree did _____ appear friendly? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. To what degree did _____ appear friendly? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. To what degree did _____ appear cold to you? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. To what degree did _____ appear cold to you? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. To what degree did you feel friendly toward _____? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. To what degree did you feel friendly toward _____? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. To what degree did you feel anxious during the interaction?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. To what degree did you feel negative toward _____? (Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- | | Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
|--|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| | | | | | | | | |
| 15. To what degree did you feel negative toward _____?
(Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. To what degree did you feel comfortable during the interaction? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. To what degree did you feel that the event(s) you have experienced make you life more difficult in comparison to _____?
(Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. To what degree did you feel that the event(s) you have experienced make you life more difficult in comparison to _____?
(Please fill in with one participants name or a description of that indiv.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. Are there any events you discussed which you feel make your life more difficult in comparison to your friends or other Virginia Tech students? Please describe. | | | | | | | | |
| 20. Are there any events you did not discuss which you feel make your life more difficult in comparison to your friends or other Virginia Tech students? Please describe. | | | | | | | | |

Appendix K DEBRIEFING

"The study is over. However, before you leave I would like to tell you a little bit more about the study and ask you a few questions.

First, I'd like to know what you think the study is about, so on the back of the thought listing questionnaire please write what you believe the study was investigating. When subject is done ask the following questions:

- (1) Do you have any questions regarding this study.
- (2) Was every aspect of the study perfectly clear?
- (3) Did you find any aspect of the study odd, confusing or disturbing? If so , why?
- (4) Do you think there may have been more to the study than meets the eye? If yes, please explain. If yes, please explain how this might have affected your behavior.

Alright let me tell you a little bit about what I'm investigating. In general I'm interested in reactions to negative life events and how people cope with these events. One of the things you find in the coping literature is that following a negative life event people tend to minimize what has happened to them. They may make downward comparisons, they' compare themselves to other people who are worse off, for example women who have had a lumpectomy will compare themselves to women who have had a masectomy. Or people will try to find positive meaning in the event, for example they may feel that they are a better person, or believe it happened for a reason. Or people will not even label the event as negative, for example women who have been raped, will indicate on a questionnaire that they have never been raped, but based on their responses to questions about what constitutes rape, they actually have.

Now, from my own experience, in myself and observing other people, I know that individuals following a negative life event, don't always minimize what's happened to them. Sometimes we will engage in what I have called maximization. This is the belief that the experiences you are encountering are worse in comparison to someone else. Maximization will often lead to one-upmanship, where the two people actually compete to see who has the worse experience

To make sure they understand maximization ask them if,

- (5) Have you ever observed someone else or have you engaged in this behavior?

Now, one of the reasons I believe people engage in maximization is due to a process called self-verification. Self-verification is the process of wanting to receive information that is consistent with our self-concept. For

example, if I think I'm a friendly person, then I want to receive feedback from others that says yes, I am a friendly person. If I receive information that is not consistent with my self-concept, if someone told me I was hostile, then I'll be motivated to change this information. One way to change the information is to convince the person who thinks I'm hostile that I'm really friendly, I can do this by exaggerating my friendly behavior. I believe the same process effects maximization. That is, if individuals feel they are undergoing a stressful life event and someone else does not validate this feeling, by ignoring them or talking about their own problems, they will be likely to try and convince the other individual that they really have it bad. One method of doing so to increase disclosure of the number of events one is going through so that they can convince the other person that they really do have it bad, so their distress will be validated.

The only way I can determine if self-verification leads to maximization is to set up a situation where someone's distress is invalidated and see if it leads to maximization. I need to inform you that _____ and _____ are not real subjects and were only acting for purposes of this experiment. I regret the need for this deception, I'm truly sorry for this, and if there was any way I could get around it I would, but for the purposes of studying maximization we needed you to believe that you were interacting with other college students going through the same experience as yourself. Again I apologize for the deception, but we believe that is is very important to better understand how individuals cope with stressful life events. This information may be able to help others cope better with stressful life events they are experiencing. Unfortunately the only way to better understand maximization is to study it in the lab. We can observe it in the real world, but that doesn't help us understand why it happens. How it allows us to feel better. Therefore the only way to study this process was to set up this scenario to determine if the invalidation of one's distress will lead to maximization behavior.

(7) Does that upset you or make you uncomfortable, one of the things I can do, is if you do feel uncomfortable, I can erase your audiotape,?

(8) Do you have any suggestions regarding ways to improve the study?

Finally, it is important to collect unbiased data, therefore I need to ask you not to discuss this study with anyone until after the semester is over. Now that you know more about the study you can see why it is so important that you not tell anyone else about this study, if people know they are being observed before they come in it can really mess up our results. Would you agree to not discuss this study with anyone? Great, I really appreciate it. "

Appendix L
Informed Consent Form
College Life Experiences

I. Purpose and procedure

The purpose of this research is to investigate the number and types of events college students are experiencing. In addition, we are interested in individual differences that may influence student's perceptions of these events. Participants will be asked to fill out three questionnaires which will take approximately 1/2 hour.

II. Confidentiality

To insure your privacy you will be assigned a code number so that your name will not be identified with any data generated by this research. However, a number of subjects randomly selected will be asked back to participate in a more detailed study of college life. Therefore, although, the information you present will remain completely confidential, it will not be anonymous.

III. Extra credit and freedom to withdraw

You will receive one extra credit for one hour toward you grade in Introductory Psychology (PSYC 2004). Participation in this research is voluntary and my be withdrawn at any time. You have the right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Should you choose not to participate in this experiment you will still receive one extra credit point. There are no anticipated risks entailed by participation in this experiment.

IV. Risks/Benefits

There are no anticipated risks to you from participation in this study. Your participation may result in an increased awareness of the number of college life events you have been experiencing.

V. Use of research data

The information provided by this research will be used only for research and educational purposes. It may be presented at scientific meetings and/or published and reproduced in professional journals, or books, or used for any other purpose that Virginia Tech.'s Department of Psychology considers proper in the interest of education, knowledge, or research. If you are interested in the results they will be available from the researchers in the form of group means and summary data. However, since all data are anonymous and will be analyzed as such, information regarding individual responses will not be available.

VI. Approval of research

This research project has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee, Psychology Department, Virginia Tech, and the Institutional Review Board, Virginia Tech.

VII. Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the above description of the study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them all answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that should I have any questions regarding this research and its conduct, I should contact any of the persons named below

Karyn Carr	Researcher	231-6581
Danny Axsom	Research Director	231-6495
Richard Eisler	Chair, Human Subjects Committee	231-8027
Ernest Stout	Chair, IRB	231-9359

Name (please print) _____

Number in which you may be contacted in the near future _____

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX M
Informed Consent Form
College Life Experiences

I. Purpose and procedure

The purpose of this research is to investigate the number and types of events college students are experiencing. In addition, we are interested in individual differences that may influence student's perceptions of these events. Participants will be asked to interact with two other freshman to describe in detail the types of events they have experienced in preparing to come to college and since they have been at Virginia Tech. The group discussions will be audiotaped to avoid loss of information.

II. Confidentiality

To insure your privacy you will be assigned a code number so that your name will not be identified with any data generated by this research. However, as you will be discussing college experiences with two other freshman information we receive from you will not remain completely anonymous. We do ask that you do not discuss any information you learn during this session with anyone outside of the procedure.

III. Extra credit and freedom to withdraw

You will receive one extra credit for one hour toward your grade in Introductory Psychology (PSYC 2004). Participation in this research is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. You have the right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Should you choose not to participate in this experiment you will still receive one extra credit point. There are no anticipated risks entailed by participation in this experiment.

IV. Risks/Benefits

There are no anticipated risks to you from participation in this study. Your participation may result in an increased awareness of the number of college life events you have been experiencing.

V. Use of research data

The information provided by this research will be used only for research and educational purposes. It may be presented at scientific meetings and/or published and reproduced in professional journals, or books, or used for any other purpose that Virginia Tech.'s Department of Psychology considers proper in the interest of education, knowledge, or research. If you are interested in the results they will be available from the researchers in the form of group means and summary data. However, since all data are anonymous and will be analyzed as such, information regarding individual responses will not be available.

VI. Approval of research

This research project has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee, Psychology Department, Virginia Tech, and the Institutional Review Board, Virginia Tech.

VII. Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the above description of the study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them all answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that should I have any questions regarding this research and its conduct, I should contact any of the persons named below

Karyn Carr	Researcher	231-6581
Danny Axsom	Research Director	231-6495
Richard Eisler	Chair, Human Subjects Committee	231-8027
Ernest Stout	Chair, IRB	231-9359

Name (please print) _____

Number in which you may be contacted in the near future _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Curriculum Vita
Karyn I. Tiedeman

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EDUCATION

- MS** Experimental Psychology, May 1990
Hollins College
Thesis Title: Memory Remediation Training for the Brain Injured
Population: The Progressive Memory Load Technique
- BS** Psychology, May 1987
University of Colorado, Boulder

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Psychological Association, Student Affiliate
American Psychological Society, Student Affiliate
Society of Personality and Social Psychology, Student Affiliate
Society of Southern Social Psychology, Student Affiliate
Psi Chi

POSITIONS HELD AND RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE**Research**

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology,
Blacksburg, Va.: Research Assistant, Social psychological influences and trauma.

Hollins College Rehabilitation Institute, Department of Psychology
Roanoke, Virginia: Research Assistant, collected and analyzed data investigating the cognitive and behavioral remediation of brain injured individuals

University of Colorado, Department of Behavioral Genetics
Boulder, Colorado: Professional Research Assistant for the McArthur Longitudinal Twin Study, involved the collection and coding of data investigating environmental and genetic determinants of cognition and behavior

University of Colorado, Department of Behavioral Genetics

Boulder, Colorado: Professional Research Assistant for the Toddler Emotions Study, involved the collection and coding of data investigating affective communication between mother-child and child-peer dyads.

Instruction**Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology**

Blacksburg, Va: Instructor for, Psychology of Personality Course, Spring 1995

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, Va: Instructor for, Introduction to Social Psychology Course, Fall 1994

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, VA: Instructor for Advanced Psychology of Personality Lab Fall 1992- Spring 1993

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, VA: Instructor for Advanced Social Psychology Lab Fall 1991-Spring 1992

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, VA: Workshop presenter at GTA Training Program Fall Workshop, Fall 1991

Virginia Tech, Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, VA: Instructor for Introductory Psychology Lab Fall 1990- Spring 1991

PAPERS PRESENTATED

Axson, D., Carr, K., & Bogle, T. (1996). Death Penalty Attitudes: They're not what you think. Paper presented at the 42nd annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Norfolk, VA.

Carr, K. & Axson, D. (1995) Self-blame following victimization: A meta-analysis. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Society of Social Psychology, Gatlinburg, Tenn.

Carr, K. & Axsom, D. (1994) Self-blame following victimization: A meta-analysis. Paper presented at the 6th annual meeting of the American Psychological Society, Washington, D.C.

Carr, K., & Axsom, D. (1994) Women Wheelchair Users' Perceptions of Helpful and Unhelpful Support Attempts. Paper presented at the 1st annual Women's Health Conference, Washington, D.C.

Carr, K. & Axsom, D. (1992) Thought Suppression During Interactions With Victim. Presented at the 54th annual conference of the American Psychosocial Association, Washington, D.C.

Axsom, D., Yates, S., & Carr, K. (1991, October). Psychosocial Predictors of Post-Disaster Mental Health Help-Seeking. Presented at the 7th Annual Meeting of the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies, Washington, D.C.

Ledger, G., & Carr. (1991, April). Memory Remediation Training for the Brain Injured Population: The Progressive Memory Load Technique. Presented to the First Annual Educational Conference of the JMA Foundation Inc., and the National Brain Injury Research Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Karyn Tedeman