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Borderline Personality Disorder, Emotion Regulation, and Self-Compassion

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Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a disorder in which an individual has a pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, emotional experience, and has marked impulsivity (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It affects approximately 2% of the general population, and is seen in 10% of outpatients and 20% of inpatients (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). A core feature of borderline personality disorder (BPD) is emotion dysregulation: an inability to efficiently regulate emotions (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Such dysregulation leads to emotions spiraling out of control, hindering reason and leading to out-of-control maladaptive behaviors (Conklin, Bradley, Westen, 2006). Invalidating environments, coupled with biologically based emotional vulnerability, are thought to account for the development of BPD (Linehan, 1993). Self-compassion (SC) is in contrast to some common symptoms related to BPD, such as self-hatred, intense shame and negative self schemas. SC is proposed as a potential mechanism for decreasing emotional dysregulation. SC consists of extending self-kindness, having an understanding of common humanity (rather than feeling isolated) and mindfulness (balancing painful thoughts and being in the present) (Neff, 2003). It is hypothesized that SC will moderate the relationship of emotion dysregulation and BPD characteristics in a college sample, such that those with higher levels of SC will have lower BPD characteristics, and those with lower levels of SC will have higher BPD characteristics, in the context of emotion dysregulation.

Simultaneous multiple regression will be conducted to test two hypothesized models. In the first model, self-compassion (SCS) will be tested as a moderator of the relationship between the predictor, emotion dysregulation (DERS), on the criterion, BPD characteristics (BSL). In the second model, self-compassion (SCS) will be tested as a moderator of the relationship between the predictor, affect intensity (AIM), and the criterion, BPD characteristics (BSL). For

exploratory purposes, self-esteem (RSES) will be similarly independently tested as a moderator of the relationship between emotion regulation (DERS) and BPD characteristics (BSL), and of the relationship between affect intensity (AIM) and BPD characteristics (BSL). University students, over the age of 18, enrolled in Psychology courses will have the opportunity to complete surveys during designated dates throughout the Spring 2014 semester, and possibly into the Fall 2014 semester. To the best of our knowledge, SC has not been studied in those with BPD. Results from this study can contribute to the growing body of knowledge on self-compassion, and its potential role in regulating emotions.

Keywords: Borderline personality disorder, emotion regulation, self-compassion