

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEFENSES AND EXPERIENCES OF DEPRESSION

An Exploratory Study

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This study examined the relationships between defenses and depressive experiences. Two questionnaires, in counterbalanced order, were administered to a community sample of 205 adults: the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ; S. Blatt, J. D’Afflitti, & D. Quinlan 1976, 1979) and the Defense Mechanisms Inventory (DMI; D. Ihilevich & G. C. Gleser, 1986). Although *turning against self* related significantly to both depressive experiences of dependency, especially the less mature neediness in comparison with the more mature connectedness, and self-criticism, other types of defenses, as measured by the DMI, differentiated between interpersonal and self-critical experiences of depression. Results are discussed from psychodynamic and developmental perspectives.

Keywords: defense mechanism, depressive experiences, dependency, self-criticism, neediness

Blatt (2008) characterized personality development as the result of the sequential integration of self-definition and interpersonal relatedness. Self-definition relates to the

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development of a positive and integrated sense of identity, and interpersonal relatedness refers to a process through which the person is able to establish and maintain reciprocal, mature, and satisfying relationships (Blatt & Blass, 1996). Differences in the relative emphasis on processes of relatedness and self-definition delineate two fundamental personality styles, each with distinct modes of cognition, defense, and coping strategies (Besser, Guez, & Priel, 2008; Besser & Priel, 2003b; Blatt, 2008). Exaggerated emphasis on one of these two normal developmental lines, however, may lead to an extreme personality trait: Dependency or Self-criticism.

Exaggerated emphasis on dependency and self-criticism can create two forms of vulnerability to depression (Blatt, 1974, 1990, 2004; Blatt, D’Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1976; Blatt & Homann, 1992; Blatt & Maroudas, 1992; Blatt et al., 1982; Blatt & Zuroff, 1992; Coyne & Whiffen, 1995; Hokanson & Butler, 1992; Nietzel & Harris, 1990; Quimette & Klein, 1993; Robins, Hayes, Block, Kramer, & Villena, 1995; Zuroff, Moskowitz, Wielgus, Powers, & Franko, 1983) as well as to other disorders (e.g., Blatt & Shichman, 1983). Individuals with a dependent or a self-critical personality style may experience depressive states in response to congruent stressful life events. Dependent individuals are primarily sensitive to disruptive interpersonal events, whereas self-critical individuals are more sensitive to disturbances in self-definition and personal achievement. Individuals with a dependent personality style experience depression around feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and feeling unloved in an “anaclitic” form of depression. In contrast, self-critical individuals experience depression around feelings of failure and guilt—around issues of self-worth—in an “introjective” form of depression (Blatt, 1974). Considerable empirical and clinical research demonstrates the relevance of high levels of Self-criticism and Dependency as vulnerability dimensions for depression (e.g., Besser, Flett, & Davis, 2003; Besser & Priel, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b; Besser, Priel, Flett, & Wiznitzer, 2007; Klein, 1989; Priel & Besser, 1999, 2000; Quimette & Klein, 1993; Robins et al., 1995). These two types of vulnerability originate at different points in psychological development, resulting from specific types of disturbed parent–child relationships (Blatt, 2004; Blatt & Homann, 1992).

The two types of depressive experiences are differently related to motivation, to relational and coping styles, and to defensive mechanisms (e.g., Aube & Whiffen, 1996; Blatt, 1990; Blatt & Blass, 1996; Mongrain, Vettese, Shuster, & Kendal, 1998; Mongrain & Zuroff, 1995). Dependent individuals value and are mainly concerned with the preservation of intimacy and interpersonal harmony, usually feeling gratified by the presence of others. These individuals tend to be passive and to inhibit expression of aggressive feelings as well as behavior that might compromise or disrupt the perceived harmony in their interpersonal relationships. In the absence of others, dependent individuals tend to feel weak and helpless. Self-critical individuals, in contrast, usually have interpersonal relationships marked by conflict, criticism, hostility, and interpersonal distance and isolation. They tend to blame themselves and assume responsibility for their failures and to feel unworthy. They strive for personal achievement and success to compensate for their devalued self-image, but their goals and ideals are frequently unattainable, increasing their feelings of failure and of being unable to live up to their expectations (Blatt, 2004).

These concepts of dependency and self-criticism have been empirically validated by research with the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ) and several other instruments (e.g., Dysfunctional Attitudes Scale, Weissman & Beck, 1978; Sociotropy–Autonomy Scale, Beck, 1983; Personal Styles Inventory, Robins et al., 1994). The DEQ includes items that represent common life experiences of depressed individuals, rather than overt symptoms of depression (Blatt et al., 1976). The first DEQ factor, Dependency,

includes concerns about abandonment, helplessness, and loneliness, and the need for close and dependent interpersonal relationships. The items loading on the second DEQ factor, Self-criticism, reflect preoccupation with issues of failure, ambivalent feelings about the self and others, and an intense self-critical stance (Blatt et al., 1976). Subsequent research on these two vulnerabilities to depression has also distinguished positive or adaptive (mature) from negative or maladaptive (immature) aspects of Dependency; analyses of the Dependency factor of the DEQ differentiated two subscales (Blatt, Zohar, Quinlan, Luthar, & Hart, 1996; Blatt, Zohar, Quinlan, Zuroff & Mongrain, 1995; Rude & Burnham, 1995): *Neediness*—preoccupation with abandonment and separation, feelings of being unloved, and fear of loss; and *Connectedness*—a mature and more reciprocal type of interpersonal concern about one's relationship with particular significant others.

Blatt and Shichman (1983) noted that different types of defense mechanisms and coping styles are associated with the dependent (interpersonal) and self-critical configurations of personality and psychopathology. Avoidant type of defense mechanisms (e.g., denial and repression) are used primarily by dependent individuals to cope with interpersonal issues, whereas counteractive defenses (e.g., projection, intellectualization, overcompensation) are used by self-critical individuals to cope with feelings of failure and worthlessness (e.g., Blatt, 1990; Blatt & Zuroff, 1992). Avoidant defenses serve to protect the individual from recognizing conflicting interpersonal issues, whereas counteractive defenses attempt to transform conflicts around issues of self-worth into more acceptable experiences (Blatt, 1990).

Research on defense mechanisms has been conducted under several theoretical frameworks, especially psychoanalytic approaches. A. Freud (1946, 1965) stated that defense mechanisms can also be modes of adaptation as long as they are flexible and moderate. Others consider all defense mechanisms as maladaptive (e.g., Haan, 1963). A third position considers particular defenses as primitive, immature, or pathological, whereas other defenses are regarded as mature and adaptive (e.g., Vaillant, 1971, 1977; P. Cramer, 1991). Vaillant (1977) differentiated defenses as mature (e.g., humor), neurotic (e.g., displacement), psychotic (e.g., denial), and personality disordered (e.g., projection). This classification is inconsistent, however, with most clinical reports and empirical studies, which show that people at various levels of adaptation use most of the classically defined defenses, but with different degrees of reality testing. What is important, according to Ihlevich and Gleser (1986), is not the kind of defenses used, but the rigidity with which they are deployed and the extent of reality distortion.

Ihlevich and Gleser (1986) did not use an evolutionary or adaptive criterion to classify defenses. Rather, they grouped defensive responses to conflict around five distinct styles, each one characterized by a unique set of mental operations, emotional responses, and behavioral reactions. The authors viewed all types of defenses as adaptive if they are used in a flexible way. The five categories of Ihlevich and Gleser encompass most of the classical defenses mentioned in the psychoanalytic literature. These investigators developed the Defense Mechanisms Inventory (DMI), an open-ended assessment procedure in which individuals consider everyday conflicting situations, which assesses reliably the five types of defenses at a global level as expressed in participants' reactions to situation-specific vignettes: Turning against object (TAO); Projection (PRO); Principalization (PRN); Turning against self (TAS); and Reversal (REV). The TAO represents a type of defense in which a person uses aggression to achieve mastery over a psychologically demanding situation. In contrast, PRO involves the attribution of undesired qualities of the self to others in the absence of validating evidence. PRN assesses a person's tendency to transform conflict into a truism or lesson that may be learned from an otherwise frustrating

experience. REV measures an individual's inclination to downplay the negative aspects of a situation and to give it a neutral or positive meaning. Finally, TAS self-describes a person's tendency to resolve psychological conflict by directing aggressive behaviors, feelings, or fantasies toward the self. This type of defense mechanism also includes the attribution of fault and responsibility to oneself without sufficient reason.

Several studies examined the relationship between depression and defense mechanisms (e.g., Azibo, 2007; Flett, Besser, & Hewitt, 2005; Ihilevich & Gleser, 1991; Kwon & Lemon, 2000; Margo, Greenberg, Fisher, & Dewan, 1993), but only a few reports have related defenses to the two types of depressive experiences, *anaclitic* and *introjective* (or *dependent* and *self-critical*). Using the DMI, Ihilevich and Gleser (1986, 1991) found that depression was related to the *turning against self* (TAS) type of defense mechanism, stating that patients with a high *turning against self* and *reversal* profile would "be more similar to what Blatt et al. (1976) described as anaclitic depression than introjective depression, which is more typical of extremely scoring TAS patients" (Ihilevich & Gleser, 1991, p. 104).

The defense styles in anaclitic and introjective patients were explored by Cramer, Blatt, and Ford (1988), who investigated the use of the denial, projection, and identification in psychiatric patients in a long-term open intensive treatment program. Their results demonstrated that both anaclitic and introjective patients are characterized by similar immature defenses (denial and projection). These findings suggest that immature defenses may exacerbate the vulnerability to depression (Cramer, 1991) in both types of patients. Thus, the association between defense styles and Self-criticism and Dependency remains unclear because no significant differences were found in defense styles between anaclitic and introjective patients. Although anaclitic and introjective personality organizations are linked theoretically and clinically with maladaptive defenses, the nature of these linkages remains unclear.

Zuroff et al. (1983) examined the correlates of the introjective and anaclitic personality styles in a nonclinical sample in terms of defense mechanisms using the Defense Mechanism Inventory, reporting that Self-criticism in women was positively associated with an expression of negative feelings against themselves and others, and negatively associated with the more primitive defense mechanisms of avoidance (REV and PRN), in both women and in men. The authors also found no clear evidence that Dependency was associated with the more primitive avoidant defense mechanisms, but only with the expression of aggression toward the self. Besser (2004), with a young adult community sample, found that both Dependency and Self-criticism were correlated with immature defenses assessed by the Defense Style Questionnaire. Self-criticism was more strongly associated with immature defenses as well as with emotion-avoiding defenses.

Aim of the Study

The present study is an extension of the Zuroff et al. (1983) study, with the important addition of an evaluation of the two dependency subscales: Neediness and Connectedness. We, like Zuroff et al. (1983), studied depressive experiences in a nonclinical sample, and investigated depressive experiences rather than the manifest symptoms of depression (Blatt et al., 1976). Our consideration of the two subscales within the Dependency factor is important because recent research on the Dependency/Self-criticism vulnerabilities has differentiated positive or adaptive from negative or immature aspects of Dependency. Assessing only the global Dependency dimension overlooks two subscales within the

Dependency factor, which may have different psychological correlates, including different defense mechanisms.

Thus, this article reports a study of the relationship between defense mechanisms as measured by Ihlevich and Gleser's (1986) DMI and the four types of depressive experiences conceptualized by Blatt and his colleagues: Self-Criticism, Dependency, and more recently, Neediness and Connectedness, as two subtypes within the Dependency dimension, in a nonclinical sample. We expected that the present study might address the inconsistent and inconclusive findings of previous studies.

We expected, on the basis of Zuroff et al.'s (1983) results, that Dependency would be significantly related to *turning against self* and Self-Criticism would be related to *turning against self* as well as *turning against others* and negatively related to *reversal* and *principalization*. As for Neediness, the more maladaptive component of Dependency, we expected a similar pattern of correlations as with Dependency, but with a stronger magnitude. As for Connectedness, it is more difficult to formulate an a priori hypothesis because only a few studies have examined its behavioral, interpersonal, and emotional correlates. However, we expected Connectedness, the more adaptive aspect of the Dependency factor, to be minimally related to the five types of defenses measured by the DMI. Like Besser (2004), we addressed the relationship of defense mechanisms with experiences of depression without consideration of gender.

Method

Participants and Procedure

A community sample of 205 adults, the majority living in the district of Évora, Portugal, participated in this study: 103 men and 102 women, ranging in age from 19 to 69 years ($M = 34.28$, $SD = 11.5$). More than 95% of the participants were Caucasian, and their education levels ranged from 6 to 19 years ($M = 12.06$, $SD = 3.43$). Only a minority was unemployed. All participants were informally contacted and recruited by trained undergraduate research assistants and volunteered to participate and gave informed consent. Eighty percent of people contacted participated in the study. All protocols were collected in individual sessions by trained undergraduate research assistants, and instructions were presented in written form.

Measures

The Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ)

The DEQ, a 66-item questionnaire, yields two factors of depressive experiences (Blatt & Zuroff, 1992), consistent with the two depressive dimensions previously discussed by Blatt (1974), Dependency and Self-Criticism. In addition to these two factors, the DEQ yields an additional factor, Efficacy. Individuals with high scores on the Efficacy factor are likely to present goal-oriented strivings, but not excessive competition with others. Because we were interested in studying depressive experiences, we focused on the first two factors of the DEQ. These two factors of depressive experiences were identified in the original standardization sample of American college students (Blatt et al., 1976; Blatt, D'Afflitti, & Quinlan, 1979) and have been replicated in numerous other studies in a number of different cultures (see a summary in the work of Blatt, 2004).

Subsequent research (Blatt et al., 1995; Rude & Burnham, 1995) identified two subscales, Neediness and Connectedness, within the DEQ Dependency factor. Connect-

edness assesses concerns about experiences of loss and loneliness in the context of a disruption of a significant relationship with a specific person, but without feeling devastated by the possible loss. Neediness, in contrast, assesses excessive preoccupation with, and fear about, interpersonal relationships, more generally with devastating feelings of helplessness, fear, and apprehension about separation and rejection, including intense concern about loss of gratification and support, independently of any specific relationship with a particular individual.

In the DEQ, scores of each of the 66 items are multiplied by the factor weight coefficients obtained in the original sample for loadings on each of the three factors: Dependency, Self-criticism, and Efficacy. In this factor-weighted scoring system, all 66 items, in relation to their factor weight coefficients, contribute to the final scores of each of the three factors. The original standardized scores and the factor weight coefficients were used in the present study. Scores for the Neediness and Connectedness subscales were obtained by following the second-order factor analysis conducted by Rude and Burnham (1995). Nineteen items from the 66-item DEQ (Blatt et al., 1976), identified by Rude and Burnham as Dependency items, are used to assess Neediness and Connectedness as standardized weighted scores on the basis of the secondary factor analysis of the Dependency factor.

The Portuguese version of DEQ has adequate psychometric properties (Campos, 2000, 2009). Results of internal consistency and of factorial structure were very similar to those obtained by Blatt (Blatt et al., 1976, 1979; Zuroff et al., 1990). Cronbach's alphas varied between .70 and .82 for the three scales: Dependency, Self-criticism, and Efficacy. The factor structure of the Portuguese version was very close to the original factor structure presented by Blatt et al., with Gorsuch's (1983) congruent coefficients of .92, .93, and .86, for Dependency, Self-Criticism, and Efficacy scales, respectively (Campos, 2000, 2009). In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were .82 and .83 for Dependency and Self-criticism scales, respectively, and .82 and .81 for Neediness and Connectedness, respectively.

The Defense Mechanisms Inventory (Ihlevich & Gleser, 1986)

This measure presents two parallel forms—male and female—each with 10 brief vignettes describing conflicting situations in everyday life. For each vignette, the participants are asked, in each of four blocks, to choose among five options (one option for each of the five types of defense mechanisms composing the inventory), indicating which defense was the closest to and which was furthest from their opinion. The four blocks of five options, in each vignette, focus on how a person would behave in a real situation, would act in fantasy, would think, and would feel. The procedure yields scores for five defenses: Turning against object (TAO)—this class of defenses deals with conflict through object attack; Projection (PRO)—which includes defenses that justify the expression of aggression toward an external object through attributing to it, without evidence, negative intent, or characteristics; Principalization (PRN)—a class that deals with conflict by invoking a general principle that “splits off” affect from content and represses the former; Turning against self (TAS)—a class composing those defenses that handle conflict by directing aggressive behavior toward oneself; and Reversal (REV)—which includes defenses that deal with conflict by responding in a positive or neutral way to a frustrating object that might be expected to evoke a negative reaction.

The Portuguese version of the DMI has acceptable psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha varied between .71 and .86 for the five scales in the two versions, male and female (Justo, 1989; 2010). In the present study, Cronbach's alphas are .63, .64, .72, .79, and .81, respectively for PRO, PRN, TAS, REV, and TAO.

Results

The following steps were conducted in the exploration of the associations between DEQ factors and subscales and the defense mechanisms scales:

1. Given that the present study investigates clinical phenomena in a nonclinical sample, it seems important to examine whether variables are normally distributed. Therefore in the first stage we examine this issue.
2. Correlations between DEQ scales and DMI defense mechanisms were examined to identify the significant univariate zero-order associations.
3. The univariate zero-order correlations depict the associations among each of the observed variables separately and do not estimate the unique contribution of each of the obtained significant defense mechanisms in predicting each type of depressive experience (i.e., they do not consider simultaneously the other obtained significant defense mechanisms), so multiple linear regressions were used, entering each of the obtained significant predictors simultaneously in predicting a specific DEQ scale, thus estimating the unique contribution of each defense mechanism to that particular type of depressive experience.

Examining Whether Variables Are Normally Distributed

For testing normality we used the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (K-S test), the Lilliefors, and the Shapiro–Wilk W. These tests indicated no significant differences between the empirical distribution and an expected normal distribution indicating that the distribution of our variables was not significantly different from normality ($ps > .20$ for all of the DEQ and DMI variables in all of these tests).

Zero-Order Correlations Between Depressive Experiences and Defense Mechanisms

The obtained zero-order Pearson correlations between DEQ scales and the five types of defense mechanisms are presented in Table 1. Dependency was significantly correlated with TAS and negatively with TAO. Self-criticism had a significant positive correlation

Table 1
Correlations Between DEQ Scales and Subscales and Types of Defense Mechanisms

	TAO	PRO	PRN	TAS	REV
Dependency	-.20**	-.12	.07	.35***	-.01
Self-criticism	.09	.02	-.14*	.18*	-.15*
Neediness	-.07	-.14*	.02	.46***	-.19*
Connectedness	-.19**	-.03	.07	.17*	.08

Note. TAO = turning against object; PRO = projection; PRN = principalization; TAS = turning against self; REV = reversal. $N = 205$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

with TAS, although lower than with Dependency, and a negative correlation with PRN and REV. Neediness showed a strong positive correlation with TAS, but a negative correlation with both PRO and REV. Finally, Connectedness correlated positively with TAS, and negatively with TAO.

Multiple Regressions

We undertook four multiple linear regression analyses in order to predict Self-Criticism, Dependency, Neediness, and Connection as criterion variables, using as predictors the types of defense mechanisms that were significantly correlated in the zero-order correlations. The results obtained are presented in Table 2. Self-criticism was predicted by high TAS, low REV and low PRN types of defense. Dependency was predicted only by high TAS, Neediness by TAS and low REV defenses, and Connectedness tended ($p < .08$) only by low TAO.

Discussion

We studied the relationship between the different types of depressive experiences following the conceptualization of depression proposed by Blatt and colleagues and different types of defense mechanisms, following the conceptualization of Ihilevich and Gleser (1986).

As was expected, all four types of depressive experiences were related to the TAS defense mechanisms. Connectedness, however, was not predicted by TAS in the multiple regression analysis. These findings are consistent with psychoanalytic theory that considers turning against self as the central psychological mechanism in depression (e.g., Coimbra de Matos, 2001; Goldstein & Anthony, 1988). Sigmund Freud, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, described this core masochistic characteristic in the depressive personality.

Table 2
Results of Regression Analyses

	Defense mechanism	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-criticism	PRN	-.03	-.15	-2.13	<.04*	.28	.08	5.77	<.001*
	TAS	.03	.21	3.00	<.003*				
	REV	-.02	-.15	-2.18	<.03*				
Dependency	TAO	-.00	-.05	-.60	<i>ns</i>	.36	.13	14.60	<.0001*
	TAS	.04	.33	4.44	<.0001*				
Neediness	PRO	.00	.03	.31	<i>ns</i>	.51	.26	23.29	<.0001*
	TAS	.06	.49	6.61	<.0001*				
	REV	-.02	-.21	-2.91	<.004*				
Connectedness	TAO	-.01	-.14	-1.78	<.08*	.21	.04	4.48	<.01*
	TAS	.01	.10	1.27	<i>ns</i>				

Note. PRN = principalization; TAS = turning against self; REV = reversal; TAO = turning against object; PRO = projection. *N* = 205; *ns* = not significant.

* Two-tailed.

He had also mentioned the introjection of aggression, following the identification with the ambivalently held object. The anger against the object flows back on the self (S. Freud, 1917). Contrary to expectations, however, this relationship is stronger for dependent depressive experiences, especially for Neediness—the more pathological and less adaptive Dependency subfactor (Blatt et al., 1995)—than it was for Self-criticism. Thus, it seems that individuals who experiences dependent (anaclitic) depressive experiences are, as formulated by Blatt (1974), reluctant to express aggression for fear of losing the affection, support, and the gratification that significant others can provide, thus turning aggressive feelings against themselves in order not to disrupt their interpersonal relationships. Dependent individuals constantly need to be assured of others' availability to care for them. They desperately seek attention and affection, and feel depressed when facing separation or abandonment. They feel helpless and unsafe in emotional relationships, inhibiting or denying aggression and being submissive, because of their need for care and fear of abandonment (Blatt & Homann, 1992). Depression often occurs in these individuals following disruptions in interpersonal relationships (e.g., abandonment and rejection) (Blatt, 1974, ; Blatt & Homann, 1992).

REV is also another important defense mechanism that correlates, but negatively, with Neediness. This finding is counter to expectations, but may reflect the fact that individuals with more primitive experiences of dependency may be more prone to feel the dissatisfaction with others, than would more integrated dependent individuals who struggle more actively to maintain a sense of relatedness to others. These more primitively dependent individuals may be unable to contain (deny) their intense feelings of loneliness and helplessness, fear of abandonment, and perceived external threats. A more definitive answer to this question, however, awaits further investigation, including research with clinical samples of depressed patients.

As was expected, Self-criticism had a significant correlation, but at a lower value, with the TAS type of defense mechanism, and it also correlated negatively with the REV and PRN defenses, but did not correlate with TAO. Individuals prone to self-critical depression tend not to use defense mechanisms as rationalization, intellectualization, and reaction formation. This is a somewhat unexpected result because Blatt (e.g., Blatt, 1974, 1990) discusses introjective depression as characterized by the use of counteractive defenses, which are represented in part by principalization type of defenses. However, this result is consistent with findings by Zuroff et al. (1983). Again, clarification of this inconsistent finding awaits further research with the study of depression in clinical samples.

Introjective individuals, as is noted in the introduction, are more ambivalent in their interpersonal relationships (Blatt, 2004; Blatt & Zuroff, 1992). They experience intense ambivalence in relationships with others and in the expression of aggression. The individual engages in an inner struggle against the object, attacking it and being attacked by it (Coimbra de Matos, 2001). Thus, they may tend to make less use of the TAS defense than do dependents, especially very needy individuals.

The formulations of Blatt and colleagues (1995) and Rude and Burnham (1995) of Connectedness as a more mature level of interpersonal relatedness is consistent with the findings of the multiple regression analysis, which indicates that Connectedness is not significantly related to any of the five defenses assessed in this investigation. Individuals high on Connectedness tend to have a somewhat lower ($p < .08$) level of turning against others and, instead, try to maintain a level of interpersonal relatedness characteristic of more mature levels of psychological functioning. It seems that the Connectedness subscale may be associated with more adaptive defense mechanisms. This finding potentially

addresses the failure of previous studies to distinguish between Self-criticism and Dependency in terms of the predominant defenses associated with each type of depressive experiences. It seems that evaluating the adaptive and maladaptive components of Dependency should be considered by further studies in order to further reconcile the inconsistent and inconclusive findings of previous studies.

In summary, Zuroff et al. (1983) found that Self-criticism was positively associated with TAS and negatively associated with REV and PRN. Our findings replicated this finding. Zuroff et al. (1983) also found that Dependency was only associated with TAS. Our study also replicates this finding. However, and most important, our findings indicate the need to distinguish positive or adaptive (Connectedness) from negative or maladaptive (Neediness) aspects of Dependency in relationship to defenses as well as more generally. The subscales of Dependency reveal a more complex relationship to defenses; Neediness is not only associated with TAS but is also negatively associated with REV. Connectedness, in contrast, is not significantly related to any of the five defenses.

Limitations of the Study and Future Directions

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the percentage of explained variance in two of the regression models was small. We have to bear in mind, however, that experiences of depression in this study were assessed in a nonclinical sample by a self-report measure. The results obtained with this sample will have to be compared with findings with clinical samples of depressed patients. But given the increasing evidence of the value of Blatt's theoretical formulations of the centrality of interpersonal relatedness and self-definition in personality development and organization, in psychopathology, especially depression, and in therapeutic process (Blatt, 2008), the findings of the present study indicate the importance of exploring more fully correlates (e.g., cognitive, interpersonal, motivational, and defensive styles) associated with the two primary developmental lines of self-definition and interpersonal relatedness.

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