Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Empathetic Expressions:
Scale Development, Validation, and Message Evaluation

by

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ABSTRACT

The goals of this dissertation were to develop a measurement called the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative and Positive Events, to evaluate expressions of empathy from the receiver perspective, and to provide initial evidence for empathetic expressions as a separate construct from the empathy experience. A series of studies were conducted using three separately collected sets of data. Through the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the EES for Negative Events and the EES for Positive Events were created from the emerged factors. A five-factor structure emerged for the EES for Negative Events, which include Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Empathetic Voice, Emotional Reactivity, and Empathetic Touch. This scale was found to have good convergent and discriminant validity through the process of construct validation and good local and model fit through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). A four-factor structure and two-factor structure emerged for the EES for Positive Events. The four factors include Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Empathetic Voice, and Emotional Reactivity. The two factors in the second structure include Celebratory Touch and Hugs.

The final study focused on evaluating different empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective. From the receiver perspective, the participants rated five types of empathetic expressions in response to negative or positive events disclosure. According to the findings, Emotional Reactivity was rated as the most effective empathetic expression in negative events on both levels of supportiveness and message quality scales whereas Verbal Affirmation received the lowest ratings on both criteria. In positive events, Experience Sharing was evaluated as the most supportive and highest quality
message whereas Verbal Affirmation was evaluated the lowest on both criteria. Taken
together, the series of studies presented in this dissertation provided evidence for the
development and validity of the EES for Negative and Positive Events.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. **INTRODUCING EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS**
   - The Importance of Studying Empathy ............................................................... 2
   - Potential Contributions of the Current Project ............................................ 4
   - Goals of the Current Project .......................................................................... 7
   - Preview of the Dissertation ............................................................................. 9

2. **DEVELOPING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR NEGATIVE EVENTS**
   - Literature Review ............................................................................................. 12
     - Defining Empathy and Empathetic Expressions ............................................. 12
     - Empathy and Empathetic Communication Measurements ............................... 18
     - Defining Social Support .................................................................................. 22
     - Compassion .................................................................................................... 26
     - Sympathy ......................................................................................................... 29
   - The Pilot Study ................................................................................................. 31
   - Methods ............................................................................................................ 32
     - Participants ..................................................................................................... 32
     - Procedures ..................................................................................................... 32
     - Data Analysis ................................................................................................. 33
3 VALIDATING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR NEGATIVE EVENTS

Construct Validity Study..................................................................................44

Empathy........................................................................................................44
Compassionate Communication........................................................45
Narcissism..................................................................................................46
Verbal Aggressiveness...............................................................................48

Methods........................................................................................................49

Measures......................................................................................................49

Empathetic Expressions...............................................................49
Empathy Quotient.................................................................................50
Compassionate Communication..................................................51
Narcissism..............................................................................................51
Verbal Aggressiveness........................................................................52
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy Experience</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Communication</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggressiveness</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis Study</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 DEVELOPING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR POSITIVE EVENTS</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Empathy</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to Capitalization Attempts</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Analysis Study</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Analysis</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 EVALUATING EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS FROM THE RECEIVER PERSPECTIVE............................................................................................................78
Literature Review ..............................................................................................................80
Empathetic and Other Social Support Message Evaluation for Negative Events.............................................................................................................80
Empathetic and Other Social Support Message Evaluation for Positive Events...............................................................................................................84
Method ........................................................................................................................................87
Participants ....................................................................................................................87
Procedures ..................................................................................................................88
Measures ........................................................................................................................................89
Empathetic Expressions Vignettes ..................................................................................89
Supportiveness ..................................................................................................................90
Message Quality ...............................................................................................................90
Results ........................................................................................................................................90
Discussion .............................................................................................................................98
6 GENERAL DISCUSSION.................................................................................................103
Major Findings and Implications ...................................................................................103
The Multidimensional Empathetic Expression Scale for Negative Events.........................................................................................................................104
The Validation of EES for Negative Events .......................................................................105
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Multidimensional Empathetic Expression Scale for Positive Events</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which Empathetic Expression is the Most and Least Effective?</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Responses to Negative Events</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Responses to Positive Events</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Future Directions</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Theory Development</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Statements</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A DATA COLLECTION 1: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B DATA COLLECTION 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND SURVEY</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C DATA COLLECTION 2: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D DATA COLLECTION 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND SURVEY</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E HUMAN SUBJECT APPROVALS</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Negative Events</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Correlations Coefficients for Empathetic Expressions Scale for Negative Events, Empathy Quotients, Compassionate Communication Scale, Narcissism, and Verbal Aggressiveness</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Standardized Path Coefficients from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of EES for Negative Events</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings of the First Four Factors from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Positive Events</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings of the Two Factors from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Positive Events</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Means and Standard Deviations of Five Empathetic Expressions Vignettes in Negative Events</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Emotional Reactivity to Other Expressions in Negative Events</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Verbal Affirmation to Other Expressions in Negative Events</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Experience Sharing to Other Expressions in Positive Events</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Verbal Affirmation to Other Expressions in Positive Events</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hypothesized Model</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The SEM Model</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCING EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS

I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit—the ability to put ourselves in someone else's shoes; to see the world through the eyes of those who are different from us—the child who's hungry, the steelworker who's been laid off, the family who lost the entire life they built together when the storm came to town. When you think like this, when you choose to broaden your ambit of concern and empathize with the plight of others, whether they are close friends or distant strangers; it becomes harder not to act; harder not to help.

—Barack Obama, 2006

Undoubtedly, empathy is an important subject to discuss. Empathy has received attention from several fields of study, including psychology (Davis, 1983; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; Lawrence, Shaw, Baker, Baron-Cohen, & David, 2004), social psychology (Morelli, Lieberman, & Zaki, 2015), neuroscience (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008), nursing (Morse, Bottorff, Anderson, O’Brien, & Solberg, 2006; Sherer & Rogers, 1980), and communication (Broome, 1993; Bodie, 2011; Floyd, 2014). Krznaric (2014) discussed six habits of highly empathetic individuals and suggested that empathy is the key to changing people’s egocentric nature. Also, Krznaric asserted that empathy has the potential to bring about a “revolution of human relationships” (p. 7). Based on empirical findings, empathetic communication has numerous benefits for both senders and receivers (Bodie, 2011; Broome, 1993; Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008; Krznaric, 2014; Rosenzweig, 2012; Stiff et al., 1988).

comprehensive overview of empathy and empathetic communication, ways to become a more empathetic person, and the benefits of being an empathetic person. These publications and research on empathy demonstrate a demand in today’s society to learn, understand, practice, and become more empathetic. This chapter is comprised of the following sections: the importance of studying empathy, potential contributions of the current project, goals of the current project, and a preview of the chapters.

The Importance of Studying Empathy

Empathy is typically divided into two strands. First, cognitive empathy is “the intellectual/imaginative comprehension of another’s mental state” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). Second, affective empathy is “an emotional response to emotional responses of others” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). A number of scholars have identified the importance of empathy in various contexts of everyday life (Broome, 1993; Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012; Floyd, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) found that empathy is an essential part of positive contact between in-groups and out-groups that predicts reduced prejudice and racism. This is an important finding, especially in today’s globalized world where intercultural contacts happen almost every day. Reduced prejudice is not the only benefit of empathy; Broome (1993) found that empathetic communication is the key in solving interpersonal conflicts. Similarly, Dewaele and Wei (2012) referred to empathy as “the ‘glue’ of the social world, drawing us to help others and stopping us from hurting others” (p. 193). Also, empathic responding is found to increase relationship intimacy and satisfaction among married couples (Block-Lerner, Adair, Plumb, Rhatigan, & Orsillo, 2007). Empathy also plays an important role in organizational settings. Scott, Colquitt, Paddock, and Judge (2010)
found a positive association between managers’ empathy and employees’ workplace happiness levels. This implied that highly empathetic managers tend to foster happier workplace environment.

Another reason empathy is an important topic for communication researchers is that empathetic communication improves social interactions. According to Engelen and Röttger-Rössler (2012), empathy is a crucial mean of social communication. Empathy is multidimensional and complex; it is not only the experience of matching emotions (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). Empathy includes: a) understanding the other person’s experiences, situations, emotions, and feeling the same feeling and b) communicating that experience through verbal communication and nonverbal cues. Additionally, cultivating empathy is important because lack of empathy is associated with antisocial behavior, aggressiveness toward others, and potentially a lack of morality (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006), which could cause detrimental effects on individuals and social and personal relationships.

Empathy is also an important element in conflict resolution. Broome (1993) stated that conflicts typically arise when there is a perceived dissimilarity between individuals. He argued that relational empathy could help manage these conflicts effectively. Empathy, in this case, is communicative because it involves “constructing messages consistent with communicative strategies” (Broome, 1993, p. 97). Thus, by mindfully constructing messages and creating mutually shared meaning, conflicts can be alleviated. Another study pointed out that empathetic communication is also a part of expressions of affection (Floyd, 2006). Empirically, affection is crucial to humans’ health and well-being, and affectionate communication facilitates human evolution (Floyd, 2006).
(2014) suggested that empathetic listening is an important method people use to express interpersonal affection. All in all, empathy and empathetic communication do not only help assuage interpersonal conflicts, but it also has health and evolutionary benefits.

Evidently, effective empathetic communication is helpful to the receivers. However, it is rarely mentioned that empathizers also benefit from the experience of empathy. Particularly, empathy and empathetic communication help individuals understand “the intentions of others, predict their behavior, and experience an emotion triggered by their emotion” (Dewaeli & Wei, 2012, p. 193). Intuitively, understanding and being able to predict others’ behaviors are extremely important social skills. Moreover, Stueber (2012) pointed out that the cognitive mechanism that works during our empathy experience can, in turn, help us better understand our individual agency. Therefore, by understanding others, we can better understand ourselves. In the next section, potential contributions of this dissertation are discussed.

Potential Contributions of the Current Project

First, this project contributes to expanding the body of knowledge on empathetic communication. Although most existing studies have examined empathy from a more of a psychological perspective (Davis, 1983; De Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2004; Walter, 2012), scholars acknowledged that empathy fulfills an important communicative function (Broome, 1993; Floyd, 2014; Ioannido & Konstantikaki, 2008). The experience of empathy itself does not equate to the communication of empathy. People might feel empathy but not communicate it effectively. This is similar to other psychological constructs. For instance, affection and affectionate communication are distinct concepts, although they are associated to one another (Floyd, 2006). Scholars
have conceptualized empathetic communication in many different ways. Generally, empathetic communication refers to the ability to utilize empathy to communicate with others. Ioannidou and Konstantikaki (2008) argued that empathy is a powerful communication skill that is learnable and teachable. Since empathetic communication is valuable to social interactions, health, and well-being, and it is something people can improve, it is necessary to study empathy from a communication perspective and construct measurements on how individuals verbally and nonverbally express empathy.

Second, this project contributes to encouraging and facilitating more empathetic communication research that is communication-focused by offering the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative and Positive Events and proposing the principles of empathetic expressions for future investigation. Empathetic communication is typically measured as a part of the empathy experience process, which makes it too simplified and one-dimensional. For instance, Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) developed an Empathy Quotient (EQ) scale to measure empathy from three aspects. One of the dimensions is called “social skills,” and the items within this sub-scale represent various communication behaviors. To provide a deeper understanding of empathetic communication holistically, the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) needed to be constructed. The scale can provide a better understanding of ways in which people express empathy through verbal messages and nonverbal cues. In fact, the EES is an essential step to further developing the current understanding of empathy from the post-positivist, communication perspective. As stated, most existing empathy publications are in psychology, which results in empathy-related constructs lacking in the uniform description of the expressions of empathy. The scales could help generate more empathy
research from the communication discipline, since it measures various expressions of empathy, which will allow researchers to study which expressions are, for instance, most common, helpful, effective, and supportive in different communicative situations.

The third contribution of this project is the validation of the EES for Negative Events. One of the goals of this study is to validate the new measurement. As a new measurement, it is important to establish construct validity, which includes examining convergent and discriminant validity of the scale (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013). According to Trochim (2005), convergent validity is established when the measures of related constructs are proven to be related, and discriminant validity is established when constructs that are not theoretically related are proven to be unrelated by the measures. This is to ensure that the instrument is measuring the construct accurately (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Establishing construct validity will give future researchers more confidence in utilizing the EES for Negative Events in their research, hence, promoting heurism for empathy research.

Moreover, establishing construct validity will also help determine how various empathetic expressions fit in the larger body of research in related constructs. For instance, a key characteristic of narcissism is a lack of empathy (Watson & Morris, 1991); thus, investigating how narcissism is related to various empathetic expressions can also give insight into how narcissistic individuals communicate (or fail to communicate) empathy. Establishing construct validity can also help determine how closely various empathetic expressions are related to similar constructs, such as empathy experience and compassionate communication. This is an important part for making the case that Empathetic Expressions is a unique construct.
Finally, this project contributes to a further understanding of the effectiveness of expressions of empathy in negative and positive events. The major question answered in this dissertation is: which empathetic expressions are rated as the most supportive and evaluated as having the highest quality? This is vital to the development of empathetic communication theory because it demonstrates that there are many ways in which people express empathy; however, some are deemed more effective than others based on the situations, senders, and receivers. Next, goals of this dissertation are discussed.

**Goals of the Current Project**

There are four main goals of this dissertation: 1) to develop the Empathetic Expressions Scales, one for Negative Events and another for Positive Events and to test for reliabilities of all the factors and the scale; 2) to establish validity for the first scale, which is EES for Negative Events; 3) to evaluate empathetic expressions’ level of supportiveness and message quality from the receiver perspective; and 4) to gather evidence and provide principles of empathetic communication for future theory development.

Currently, there is not a communication-based empathy instrument that holistically measures ways people express empathy toward others. An example of a communication-focused empathy scale is the Empathic Listening Scale (Bodie, 2011). However, this scale only measures one’s ability to listen empathetically, which is not a comprehensive view of how empathy is communicated, which is through a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication. As compared to mindful communication, empathetic expressions can involve messages and behaviors that are more mindful, thoughtful, and intentional (Burgoon, Berger, & Waldron, 2000). Specific responses that
can be communicated mindfully allow more effective functioning among communicators. Furthermore, Halpern (2003) states that empathy is a learned skill that could be used during contact with people to communicate and understand others’ experiences and feelings. Therefore, the first goal of this dissertation was to develop self-report instruments that can be used by researchers and practitioners who are interested in studying empathetic expressions. To build this instrument “from the ground up,” the scale items in the EES for Negative Events derived from the qualitative data collected in the pilot study (discussed in Chapter 2).

Another goal was to establish construct validity for the scale. Construct validity refers to the accuracy of the instrument. In other words, the instrument is accurately measuring what it is created to measure. There are two types of construct validity, convergent and discriminant (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). In establishing convergent validity, the measure is proven to be correlated with a similar measure that is established and used by the community of scholars. On the contrary, discriminant validity is established when the measurement does not have correlations or is negatively correlated with its opposite theoretical constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959).

Once construct validity is established, the third goal was to conduct an evaluation of empathetic expressions for both negative and positive scenarios. The message evaluation study involved asking participants to rate different empathetic expression vignettes on two scales: level of supportiveness and perceived message quality. The relational context in focus was friendship. This was to better understand which expressions of empathy were deemed more other-centered, effective, helpful, and beneficial, to name a few.
The final goal was to present the findings of the series of studies to provide initial evidence for the principles of empathetic expressions. It was important to achieve the first three goals because they served as support for the principles offered in the General Discussion chapter. The findings from all the studies presented in this dissertation contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of empathetic communication from both sender and receiver perspectives. Specifically, a better understanding of what senders say or do as they express empathy and determine how receivers are likely to interpret those expressions in terms of supportiveness and message quality.

**Preview of the Dissertation**

To achieve the goals listed, the following studies were conducted and are presented in each chapter of this dissertation. Chapter 2 focuses on 1) the process of generating initial scale items for the EES for Negative Events via a pilot study using qualitative research methods, 2) the process of collecting survey data and analyzing quantitative data to unveil the underlying factor structures for the EES items using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and 3) the reliability tests for the EES for Negative Events as a whole and the reliabilities of each factor/subscale. This chapter offers a holistic view of constructing a scale from the group up, since the items were not taken from an existing measurement or theory.

Chapter 3 presents the process of obtaining construct validity, including convergent and discriminant validity for the EES for Negative Events and confirming the factor structure of the same scale with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Convergent validity “reflects the extent to which two measures capture a common construct” (Carlson & Herdman, 2012, p. 18), whereas,
discriminant validity reflects when the two theoretically unrelated constructs are shown to be statistically unrelated (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Correlational analyses were used to determine the two types of validity, and the results are discussed in this chapter. After that, through the use of SEM, CFA was conducted to show global and local fit of the scale. The implications are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on the construction of the EES for Positive Events. The chapter starts with a literature review on social support and empathetic communication in positive events. Then, the method is outlined. The scale items used to construct this scale derived from the scale items of EES for Negative Events. However, most of the items were reworded and reviewed by three professors to match the positive events context. The chapter presents the process of collecting survey data and analyzing quantitative data to see the factor structures that emerge for the EES for Positive Events using EFA. This chapter also includes the reliability tests for EES for Positive Events as a whole and the reliabilities of each factor/subscale.

Chapter 5 presents a study on the evaluation of different empathetic expressions. The chapter starts with a literature review of seminal social support message evaluation research. Then, the method is outlined. In this study, participants were sent either a negative events survey or a positive events survey. In both surveys, they rated five vignettes for negative events or five vignettes for positive events with each vignette representing each factor of the EES. Two scales were used for the evaluation of each vignette, including level of supportiveness and message quality. The results suggest that emotional reactivity is the most effective in negative events while experience sharing is
the most effective in positive events. Discussions of the findings are presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of all the studies presented in the previous chapters, major findings, and a discussion on the implications of the findings. Then, the limitations of this dissertation and directions for future research are discussed. Next, principles of empathetic expressions are offered for future theory development. The chapter ends with concluding statements and a call for action. Particularly, it calls for scholars to conduct more research on empathetic expressions in different contexts with more representative samples, to prove/disprove the proposed principles of empathetic expressions, and for people to regularly practice and improve their empathetic expression skills in their daily lives.
CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR NEGATIVE EVENTS

This chapter focuses on the construction of Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative Events. The chapter begins with a review of literature on related constructs, including empathy, social support, compassion, compassionate communication, and sympathy. This is to demonstrate how empathetic expression is a distinctive construct from other related behaviors but also to explicate how it fits into the body of literature as a whole. After the literature review, the pilot study is discussed. The pilot study is an important part of the scale construction process because it involves creating items for the scale from qualitative data. The method and results of the pilot study are also discussed. The last section is on the exploratory factor analysis study. This is when the underlying factors are discovered by the use of exploratory factor analysis and the scale is created. Thus, this chapter focuses on developing the EES for Negative Events by determining various ways that people express empathy.

Literature Review

Defining Empathy and Empathetic Expressions

Theodore Lipps, a German psychologist, coined the term *einfühlung* in the 1880s. Most scholars today have concluded that this was the origin of the conceptualization of empathy (Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011). The direct translation of *einfühlung* to English is “in-feeling,” in other words, “feeling other people’s feelings.” However, this seems to emphasize only the affective part of the multidimensional empathy that we know today. In a broader term, empathy is the act of sharing and understanding the state
of mind and/or emotions of others (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008). Scholars have concluded that there are two main strands of the experience of empathy, which are cognitive and affective empathy (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Cognitive empathy refers to “the intellectual/imaginative comprehension of another’s mental state” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). In other words, perspective taking is a major part of cognitive empathy. Engelen and Röttger-Rössler (2012) state that perspective taking involves considering the other person as an equal and seeing that person and his or her actions as relevant to you, which is an important part of cognitive empathy.

Another strand of the empathy experience is affective empathy. Affective empathy refers to “an emotional response to emotional responses of others” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). Affective empathy is also referred to as empathic concern and emotional contagion (Lawrence et al., 2004). Additionally, scholars have described it as “grasping the other’s emotional state” (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012, p. 4). Nonetheless, some researchers have moved beyond the two strands of empathy perspective. Thus far, past research identified other types/sub-categories of empathy, including empathic accuracy and regulations (McLaren, 2013), emotional contagion (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006), relational empathy (Broome, 1993), state and trait empathy (Shen, 2010), empathetic embarrassment (Miller, 1987), associative empathy (Shen, 2010), cultural empathy (Dewaele & Wei, 2012), intercultural empathy (Zhu, 2011), and ethnocultural empathy (Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011).

Broome (1993), who examines the role of empathy in conflict resolution, proposed the construct of relational empathy, which focuses on the productive creation of shared meaning. He argues that empathy is communicative because it is about devising
communication strategies that would contribute to achieving intended goals. These communicative strategies are related to the message construction process, which means empathy has a communicative function. De Vignemont and Singer (2006) argue that empathy is an important human communication skill because it allows us to make quicker predictions of other people’s behavior. Similarly, Dewaele and Wei (2012) argue that empathy is crucial to human interactions, as it allows people “to understand the intentions of others, predict their behavior, and experience an emotion triggered by their emotion” (p. 193). Empathy is also studied in educational contexts. Brown (2005) suggests that teachers who employ empathetic responses to students’ concerns are able to lessen difficulties in class discussions, and students are more likely to ask teachers for help. For instance, an empathetic response to students being late to class is: “I noticed you are late again. Is there anything I can do to help you get here on time? It means a lot to me to have you here when class begins” (Brown, 2005, p. 14). This is an example of an expression of empathy that shows that the instructor can engage in perspective taking.

Brown (2005) argues that, though this is against the traditional role of a teacher, empathetic responses can foster mutual respect and are a better solution to dealing with students’ problems.

Empathy and empathetic communication are also important in therapy and nursing. Morse et al. (2006) propose an empathetic communication model for studying nurse and patient interactions. In this model, the caregivers must first experience emotional empathy. Then, they form therapeutic empathetic responses, which affect patients’ needs being met. According to this model, empathetic response is important because it is a mediator of emotional empathy and patients’ needs being met. The
researchers also identified empathetic responses as expressions of verbal comfort, including reflexive reassurance, consolation, commiseration, sympathy, pity, and compassion. Once again, research points out the difference between the experiences of empathy and the expressions of empathy. However, these responses reflect the health care context rather than the more general interpersonal responses that the EES will be developed to measure.

Empathetic communication is typically conceptualized and measured as a dimension of the empathy experience. Researchers suggest that empathy has four dimensions, including perspective-taking (cognitive level), empathic concern and emotional contagion (affective level), and communicative responsiveness (Stiff et al., 1988). The last dimension is a communication construct rather than a psychological construct as it involves encoding and decoding a message. These are the basic communication skills taught in most communication courses. From this study, an important research finding is that empathic concern is a strong predictor of communicative responsiveness. This means that the experience of empathy is positively associated with empathetic communication. In terms of nonverbal empathetic communication, Sherer and Rogers (1980) studied immediacy behavior as an expression of empathy. They found that nonverbal expressions of empathy, genuineness, and warmth increase liking and acceptance between clients and therapists. Therapists who engaged in immediacy behavior were perceived as more empathetic and rated higher in effectiveness. These findings suggest that empathetic communication is twofold. People experience empathy cognitively and affectively and then express it through verbal and
nonverbal communication. The latter concept, which is expressions of empathy, is the main focus of this project.

Empathetic expressions refer to a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication that aims to express empathy. This construct is based on the idea that communicators express empathy through a combination of verbal messages and nonverbal cues that serve social and/or communicative purposes. McLaren (2013) defines empathy as “a social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate communication and support” (p. 27). The last part of this definition provides a pivotal point for empathetic expressions. The term empathetic expressions can be used when empathy is expressed to achieve social and/or communicative purposes, such as to increase understanding, relieve distress, or reciprocate joy and happiness.

I propose three main aspects that distinguish empathetic expressions from the concepts of empathy and empathetic communication. The first aspect is the ability to communicate empathy. Similar to other psychological and emotional processes, there is the internal part (psychology) and the external part (communication), which is the communicative responses portion. For instance, intuitively speaking, jealousy is an emotion most human beings have experienced. Individuals normally express jealousy through verbal and nonverbal communication, and the understanding of that communication is separate from the emotion of jealousy. Thus, Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, and Eloy (1995) developed a construct called *Communicative Responses to Jealousy*. This also applies to the development of empathetic expressions.
For example, an individual may be able to empathize with the other but is not able to offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate communication and support. Therefore, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how people communicate empathy verbally and nonverbally.

Secondly, empathizing without expressing it verbally or nonverbally decreases the positive impact of empathy. The construct of empathetic expressions takes the encoders/decoders communication model into consideration instead of assuming that people who experience empathy will express it. In addition, the construct of empathetic expression is built on the premise that people can express empathy in more or less effective ways. Indeed, effective expressions of empathy can be extremely affirmative, while ineffective expressions can be very detrimental. Hence, if the communicator does not act on the experience of empathy or the receiver does not perceive the expression as an act of empathy, that empathy does not have an impact. Thirdly, empathetic expressions have a different focus from empathetic communication. Empathetic communication typically focuses on empathetic (active) listening (Floyd, 2014) and perspective taking, as well as identifying the other’s emotion (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2003). On the other hand, the construct of empathetic expressions focuses on different verbal and nonverbal messages that communicate empathy from both the sender’s and receiver’s perspectives. Evaluations of empathetic expressions may vary in terms of how effective and helpful senders and receivers rate them, but the EES is designed to include those expressions that senders see as reflecting empathy. Now that the theoretical distinction between empathy and empathetic expressions is explicated, next, how empathy is typically measured will be discussed.
**Empathy and Empathetic Communication Measurements.** Empathy is typically measured by a self-report scale called The Empathy Quotient or EQ (Baron-Cohen & Wheelright, 2004). EQ is a three-dimensional scale that measures a person’s cognitive empathy, emotional reactivity, and social skills. The researchers found EQ to demonstrate high test/re-test reliability and strong concurrent validity with the Empathic Concerns Scale (Davis, 1980). EQ consists of 60 items where participants respond with one of the following options: “strongly agree,” “slightly agree,” “slightly disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Example questions include: “I can easily tell if someone wants to enter the conversation,” “People often tell me that I went too far in driving my point home in a discussion,” “I am good at predicting how someone will feel,” “Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say I am very understanding,” “When I talk to people, I tend to talk about their experiences rather than my own,” and “It upsets me to see an animal in pain.” This scale is widely used and typically proven to have good reliability and validity (Lawrence et al., 2004). Although this scale has a communication dimension, it is not a comprehensive measure of the expressions of empathy. Most social skills items do not take into account both verbal and nonverbal communication, thus, it is important to create an instrument that measures empathetic expressions.

Similarly, empathy has been studied by measuring state empathy in message processing using the State Empathy Scale (Shen, 2010). This scale is three-dimensional, including affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and associative empathy. Shen (2010) defined state empathy as the process where you understand other’s thoughts and feelings. Sample items in this scale include: “I was in a similar emotional state as the character when watching this message,” “I can understand what the character was going through in
the message,” and “I can identify with the situation described in the message.”

Participants respond to questions using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = not at all to 4 = completely. The author reported good internal and external consistency as well as convergent and discriminant validity (Shen, 2010). This scale is similar to the Empathy Quotient except it does not have the communication dimension.

Scholars have also measured emotional empathy. Specifically, Caruso and Mayer (1998) constructed the Multi-Dimensional Emotional Empathy Scale. The scale consists of 30 items, including “If someone is upset I get upset, too,” “I feel good when I help someone out or do something nice for someone,” “It hurts to see another person in pain,” and “Seeing other people smile makes me smile.” Participants respond to questions using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The scale is reported to have good reliability with alpha coefficient = .88.

Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) developed the Emotional Empathic Tendency Scale (EETS) to measure a person’s ability to engage in emotional empathy. The EETS consists of 33 items that are rated on a 9-point scale ranging from -4 = very strong disagreement to +4 = very strong agreement. The items derive from seven subscales, including susceptibility to emotional contagion, appreciation of the feelings of unfamiliar and distant others, extreme emotional responsiveness, tendency to be moved by others’ positive emotional experiences, tendency to be moved by others’ negative emotional experiences, sympathetic tendency, willingness to be in contact with others who have problems, and “cognitive” items. The EETS demonstrates good reliability with a reported reliability coefficient at .87.
A part of empathetic communication has also been measured by focusing on listening. Bodie (2011) constructed an 11-item scale for empathic listening called the Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS). This scale consists of three dimensions, including sensing, processing, and responding. Sample items include: “I am sensitive to what others are not saying,” “I assure others that I will remember what they say,” and “I ask questions that show my understanding of others’ positions.” Each question is responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always. The scale demonstrates good reliability with a reliability coefficient at .80 (Bodie, 2011). Although this is similar to empathetic expressions, the focus of this instrument is the demonstration of empathetic listening. It does not represent a whole picture of ways people express empathy.

There are also other scales that represent a less holistic view of empathetic communication. These scales only measure a single dimension of empathy. For instance, the Perspective-Taking Scale (Davis, 1983) measures the respondent’s ability to understand other people’s perspectives. People who score high on this scale may be predisposed to express more empathy, but it is not a direct measure of empathetic expression. Some of the items include: “Before I criticize somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel in their place,” “I believe there are two sides to every question and I try to look at both of them,” and “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.”

Another unidimensional scale of empathy that examines a part of affective empathy is the Empathic Concern Scale (Davis, 1983). Some example items are “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me,” “When I see someone
being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective toward them,” and “I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.” Lastly, Stiff (1984) created a communicative responsiveness scale to measure the communication part of empathy, which includes items such as “I usually respond appropriately to the feelings and emotions of others,” “Others think of me as a very empathic person,” and “I am the type of person who can say the right thing at the right time.” Of the scales reviewed in this section, the communicative responsiveness scale comes the closest to measuring empathetic expression.

Essentially, however, none of the reviewed instruments focus on the various ways that communicators express empathy. There is not an instrument in the communication field that specifically measures verbal and nonverbal expressions of empathy. Hence, the development of a new measurement is necessary given that research has established empathetic communication as an important construct. The new instrument should take into account different forms of communication, as well as measure and demonstrate different ways in which individuals communicate empathy verbally and nonverbally. The EES will be distinctive from other empathy measurements because it does not focus on how much a person experiences empathy but instead focuses on how an individual expresses empathy.

For instance, EQ (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004) measures how empathetic you are as a person, including items such as “I am good at predicting how someone will feel” and “I can easily tell if someone wants to enter the conversation.” These items are considered more internal rather than external. It is still a person’s ability to empathize not how they express their empathy that is being measured. On the other hand, items such as
“I told my friend I have had the same experience and I know how it feels” or “I gave my friend a hug when her dog died because I can relate to it” would be examples of empathetic expressions. It is important to develop a scale that includes items such as these because the verbal and nonverbal expressions of empathy must be understood as an individual variable and construct, separate from the empathy construct that emphasizes the internal experience. It can help scholars gain a deeper understanding of empathetic communication overall and to generate more empathy research that is communication-focused.

**Defining Social Support**

According to Vangelisti (2009), social support is conceived differently from sociological, psychological, and communication perspectives. The sociological perspective focuses on the “interconnectedness” between people in the social group while the psychological perspective emphasizes the available support perceived by the receivers. Lastly, the communication perspective highlights the interactions between support senders and receivers. Social support is proven to have numerous positive benefits. Thoits (1986) found that social support improves people’s ability to deal with stress. Wills and Fegan (2001) found that receiving social support positively enhances the receiver’s overall health and well-being. Moreover, Burleson (1990) found that people who receive social support from their social networks report having more satisfying interpersonal relationships.

Social support is a construct that is closely related to empathetic communication. Social support is initially defined as “reassurance, validation, and acceptance, the sharing of needed resources and assistance, and connecting or integrating structurally within the
web of ties in a supportive network” (Cobb, 1976, p. 300). This definition points out an important aspect of social support; that is, supportive communication comes from one’s social network. On the other hand, empathetic communication does not require that condition. Empathy can be seen as a subset of social support in that context; however, it is not limited to one’s personal network (e.g., you can empathize with a stranger on the train, doctors can empathize with patients).

The most recent and recognized definition of social support is “verbal and nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid” (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002, p. 374). Based on this definition, empathetic expressions are particularly similar to social support as both concern verbal and nonverbal behavior. Nonetheless, empathetic expressions have different purposes from social support and supportive messages. Expressions of empathy do not only involve the intention of providing assistance for someone who needs help, but they can also be used with both positive and negative situations, thoughts, and feelings the other is experiencing. For instance, we can empathize and express empathy with a co-worker who just received a promotion because we understand the joy and excitement. However, we cannot express “social support” since the co-worker is not experiencing a distressed situation. Another example is you can help an elderly person read something even though you have no concept of having bad eyesight. Therefore, the situation that requires empathy and social support is different, which makes it a distinguishing factor between the two constructs.

Burleson (2009) explains that supportive interactions normally consist of a) support-seeking displays, b) supportive messages by the helper, c) recipient’s responses,
and d) helper’s reaction to recipient’s responses. The author also identifies features of supportive messages. Supportive messages are divided into two main categories, verbal content of the message and non-content, the latter of which refers to nonverbal elements of the message. The first category is the message content, which is the verbal content of the message the sender overtly communicates to the receiver. One of the main aspects of different verbal messages is whether it is problem focused or emotion focused (Burleson, 2009). While problem-focused verbal messages emphasize the problem itself and solutions to those problems, emotion-focused verbal messages highlight the other person’s feelings and emotions.

Secondly, verbal messages differ in terms of the types of politeness strategies being used (MacGeorge, Lichtman, & Pressey, 2002). Some messages are more or less face threatening than others. Thirdly, the type of support offered by supportive messages is another aspect of verbal content (e.g., emotional support or esteem support). Lastly, the quality of messages is another important aspect of the verbal content of supportive messages. The quality of supportive messages has been evaluated using the concept of person centeredness (Burleson, 1994). Person centeredness can range from high to moderate to low depending on how much the messages clearly recognize, legitimate, and elaborate the other person’s distress. According to Burleson (1994), effective social support messages are highly person centered and low person-centered messages are the least helpful and effective. Burleson (2008) states “highly person-centered (HPC) comforting messages explicitly recognize and legitimate the other’s feelings, help the other to articulate those feelings, elaborate reasons why those feelings might be felt, and assist the other to see how those feelings fit in a broader context” (p. 208).
Apart from the differences in the verbal content of the message, nonverbal aspects of the messages also vary. According to Burleson (2009), the second category of supportive messages is the non-content and nonverbal message elements. The author states that variations of pitch, rate, and volume of delivery can make a difference in the quality of supportive communication as well as the silences and fluency of the speech. Jones and Guerrero (2001) found that receivers evaluate nonverbal immediacy behavior as supportive. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors refer to “a set of interrelated behaviors that work together to increase physical and psychological closeness during an interaction” (Jones & Guerrero, 2001, p. 570). Nonverbal immediacy and person centeredness complement each other and together create highly supportive messages (Jones & Guerrero, 2001). This means that the recipients usually perceive supportive communication as more effective if the helpers are more nonverbally immediate.

Social support messages are typically evaluated by person centeredness, effectiveness, and message quality ratings (Burleson, 2008). Participants normally receive definitions of person centeredness as they rate different messages utilizing low, moderate, or high person-centered concepts. Effectiveness and message quality are typically measured by the use of semantic differentials. Burleson (2008) found positive associations between person centeredness, message quality, and effectiveness. Specifically, high person-centered messages are rated as the most effective and highest quality support. Similarly, social support messages are also evaluated in terms of their helpfulness. Burleson et al., (2011) assessed perceived message helpfulness by having participants “rate each message on four, 5-point bipolar scales…”
Moreover, from the perceived support perspective, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) is, arguably, one of the most influential social support instruments. The scale consists of 12 items, and participants respond to a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree. Sample items include: “There is a special person who is around when I am in need” and “My friends really try to help me.” Supportive listening has also been used as an indicator of social support. Bodie and Jones (2012) operationalized supportive listening by using the Active Listening Observation Scale (ALOS) (Fassaert, van Dulmen, Schellevis, & Bensing, 2007). ALOS is a unidimensional scale containing 14 items, such as “used inviting body language.” Although many scales of social support have been created, none of these scales capture the essence of expressions of empathy. Therefore, it is necessary that a measure of empathetic expressions is constructed to measure how individuals verbally and nonverbally communicate empathy.

**Compassion**

Compassion is typically defined as “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it” (Merriam-Webster, 2012, Para. 1). Another popular definition is:

The self’s experiencing a certain sorrow at the suffering of the other when the self stands as a non-responsible witness to that suffering. It is a sorrow, moreover, which constitutes a mode of the self’s moral acknowledgement of the other, in his
suffering. Thus, compassion is both a certain sort of moral emotion and a certain sort of moral understanding. (Tudor, 2001, p. 77)

Based on these definitions, the experience of compassion heavily deals with one’s sense of morality as well as the will to help others. Since compassion is such a positive experience, it is shown to have a positive health impact on people who practice it in their daily lives. For instance, compassion promotes optimism, happiness, and positive mental health in depressed individuals (Shapira & Mongrain, 2010). Also, Neff (2003) found that practicing compassion promotes relational maintenance, which in turn contributes to higher relational satisfaction among romantic couples.

Compassion is, perhaps, as misunderstood as empathy. Pommier (2011) states that the experience of compassion deals with supportive emotions and behaviors for the other who is experiencing a difficult situation. The author argues that compassion is a multidimensional construct, which includes kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. On the other hand, empathy is defined as “the ability to imaginatively take the role of another and understand and accurately predict that person’s thoughts, feelings, and actions” (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988, p. 221). Although they seem to be similar, there are major differences between compassion and empathy, particularly with the situation and the actual process of empathy and compassion.

The first distinction is the situation where compassion or empathy is needed. While compassion is needed for someone who is suffering or in distress, empathy does not require this type of situation to occur. One can empathize with someone’s joy and excitement as much as pain and sorrow. Thus, the situations where these experiences occur can be very different. Secondly, by definition, compassion heavily focuses on
morals, while empathy is more of a psychological construct of understanding others. This is understandable because empathy does not necessarily involve working toward ending someone’s suffering but rather to support or enhance someone’s cognitive and/or emotional experiences. Scholars have not conceptualized the concept of empathy as heavily related to morality although it is intuitive to think that empathy is a moral experience when expressed appropriately.

Furthermore, Walter (2012) identifies isomorphism as the distinguishing factor between compassion and empathy. Empathy requires the empathizer to understand another person’s state of mind and the emotional experience is isomorphic. Compassion is related to relieving the suffering of the other without experiencing the same feeling. Thus, isomorphism is a major difference between the two concepts. In addition to the unique experiences of compassion and empathy, compassionate communication and empathetic communication are also different. Salazar (2013) suggests that compassionate communication involves acknowledging another person’s suffering and putting that person’s needs first. On the contrary, empathetic communication does not necessarily involve putting other people’s needs first as it is more of a “shared” experience.

The experience of compassion has been measured by using the Compassion Scale (Pommier, 2011). This scale consists of six factors; samples include: “Everyone feels down sometimes, it is a part of being a human,” “I pay careful attention when other people talk to me,” and “I tend to listen patiently when people tell me their problems.” The participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Compassionate communication has been measured quantitatively using the self-reporting Compassionate Communication Scale (CCS) (Salazar, 2013). The CCS
contains 34 items in three subscales, including compassionate conversation (communicating compassion during conversations) with a .91 reliability coefficient, compassionate messaging (computer-mediated communication of compassion) with a .91 reliability coefficient, and compassionate touch (a nonverbal factor that communicates compassion) with a .88 reliability coefficient. Sample items include: “Let them know I feel bad for them” for compassionate conversation, “Post a compassionate message on their social networking site (e.g., Facebook)” for computer-mediated communication of compassion, and “I put my arm around their shoulder” for compassionate touch.

**Sympathy**

Sympathy is often confused as an equivalent construct to empathy. Sympathy is typically defined as the “heighten awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated” (Wispe, 1986, p. 318). By definition, the distinction between sympathy and empathy is crystal clear. Empathy is a much more complex process than sympathy. If a co-worker is experiencing distress for not receiving a promotion, a person would express sympathy by saying, “I’m sorry you did not get the promotion,” and the experience of sympathy ends there. On the other hand, expressions of empathy for this situation can involve listening to the co-worker’s complaint carefully, also feeling distressed, and giving useful advice to the co-worker based on personal knowledge and experience. Researchers have pointed out the differences between sympathy and empathy. Hojat, Spandorfer, Louis, and Gonnella (2011) state,

Both empathy and sympathy can lead to a similar outcome (e.g., prosocial behavior), albeit for different behavioral motivations. A prosocial behavior induced by empathic understanding is more likely to be elicited by a sense of
altruism. A prosocial behavior prompted by sympathetic feelings, however, is more likely to be triggered by a self-serving egoistic motivation to reduce the observer's personal distress. (p. 989)

For example, if the observer “feels bad” for the victim because they are experiencing hardships, the observer does things to alleviate that person’s hardships but also his/her own personal distress.

Furthermore, similar to the difference between compassion and empathy, De Vignemont and Singer (2006) suggest that isomorphism is the distinguishing feature that is absent in the experience of sympathy but central to the experience of empathy. Although both constructs are related to an affective state in relation to the other, sympathizers “feels bad” rather than “feeling the same feeling” as the other person (e.g., I feel bad for you that you are depressed, but I am not depressed myself). The authors state that isomorphism is key to emotional/affective empathy. For example, if a friend is sad because her dog passed away and you feel bad for her but still go out partying, this is sympathy. On the other hand, if you are sad because your friend’s dog passed away and you are willing to stay around to comfort her because you feel sad too, this is affective empathy.

Additionally, Ioannidou and Konstantikaki (2008) state that empathy requires more effort than sympathy. Sympathy is an emotional reaction that is immediate and uncontrollable (e.g., I feel sad for the dogs in the animal shelter that are being put down), which is similar to pity—feeling sorry for others. However, both of the concepts do not stress the importance of emotional matching (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). On the other hand, using the same example, you would not be able to empathize with being an
animal in the shelter and being put down. Thus, it takes more than just an emotional reaction to empathize with others and their situations. To put this in the communication perspective, sympathetic communication involves expressing condolence for the other (e.g., saying “sorry for your loss”) while empathetic communication is expressing your understanding of the other (e.g., I know how it feels; I also have just lost my brother). Evidently, empathetic communication takes a lot more processing, cognition, and attention as compared to sympathetic communication.

Sympathetic orientation has been measured by the use of Measure of Orientations Toward Sympathetic Care (Hojat, Spandorfer, Louis, & Gonnella, 2011). Participants respond to several clinical vignettes that were designed to measure their sympathetic orientations toward patients with a scale of 1 = very unlikely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = likely, and 4 = very likely. Sample items include: “I can feel how difficult losing your job and insurance is and how upset you are,” “I can feel how difficult and distressful this is for you,” and “I can feel your distress and worries in dealing with your problems, including informing your parents and boyfriend and deciding whether to maintain or terminate your pregnancy.” The scale was reported to have good reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .84.

The Pilot Study

The first step in constructing the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative Events is to generate items that represent different aspects of the construct. This pilot study utilizes McLaren’s (2013) definition of empathy as a “social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate
communication and support” (p. 27). As a new construct, Empathetic Expressions is conceptualized as verbal and nonverbal expressions of empathy. This construct is based on the assumption that people who experience empathy express it differently through a combination of verbal messages and nonverbal behavior. The differences in which individuals express empathy could depend on several factors, such as sex, cultural and communication orientation, and personality, among others. These variables need to be empirically observed after the scale is created.

In this study, participants were asked to respond to questions regarding ways in which they verbally and nonverbally communicate cognitive and affective empathy. They were given the definitions of empathy and asked to report how they express empathy in a retrospective manner. Collecting qualitative data is important to the scale construction process because it allows the researcher to generate initial items that represent the construct without relying on and replicating existing literature.

**Methods**

**Participants.** One hundred and fifty-one undergraduate students \((N = 151)\) from a large Southwestern university participated in this study in exchange for course extra credit (under instructors’ discretion). The participants were recruited from undergraduate level communication courses. From 151 participants, 69 identified as male \((n = 69)\), 81 identified as female \((n = 81)\), and 1 preferred not to disclose \((n = 1)\). Also, 94 identified as White Americans \((n = 94)\), 19 as Hispanic Americans \((n = 19)\), 18 as Asian Americans \((n = 18)\), 10 as African Americans \((n = 10)\), and 10 as International students \((n = 10)\).

**Procedures.** Students who wished to participate in the study clicked the link provided by their instructor on Blackboard. The link directed them to the online survey
The first page of the survey was a participant information letter informing the participants of the overall goal of the study, potential risks, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. They were informed that by clicking “next” and taking the online survey, they had given consent for their participation. In section one, participants were asked demographic questions, such as sex, age, college year, and ethnicity.

Section two consisted of questions regarding empathy and empathetic communication, including the following. 1) In your own understanding, what is empathy? 2) What are some of the characteristics of an empathetic person? 3) In your own understanding, what is empathetic communication? 4) Some people are skilled at figuring out and understanding what other people are thinking. Can you think of a time when you were able to do this? If so please: a) describe what you said to empathize with them, and b) describe what you did nonverbally. 5) Some people are so good at figuring out and understanding what other people are feeling that they start to feel the same way. Can you think of a time when you were able to empathize with someone this way? If so please a) describe what you said to empathize with them, and b) describe what you did nonverbally.

**Data Analysis.** Coding was the first step in dealing with qualitative data. The researcher looked for “recurring patterns” (Creswell, 2013) that came from ways in which the participants described empathetic expressions. A draft codebook was created with the first 50 responses. In the second round of coding, the researcher used Saldana’s (2012) “codifying and categorizing method.” According to Saldana (2012), “Coding is thus a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories
or ‘families’ because they share some characteristic—the beginning of a pattern” (p. 8).
In the last round of coding, codes were solidified, and categories were isolated along with sample quotes for each code. The categories that emerged were also in response to the types of empathetic expressions.

Results

Five categories emerged for verbal empathetic expressions, including 1) expressions of personal experience (e.g., “I told the other person I could relate to his/her pain because I know what it is like to experience this”); 2) expressions of emotional contagion (e.g., “When the other person is upset, I am upset”); 3) expressions of support (e.g., “I offer them some advice/help”); 4) expressions of character affirmations (e.g., “I still think you are a great person”); and 5) expressions of reiteration (e.g., “I tried my best to show them I understand by reiterating what they have just told me”).

Four categories emerged for nonverbal expressions of empathy, including 1) eye contact (e.g., “I used enough eye contact that is comfortable for them”); 2) haptic (e.g., “I gave the other person a hug” and “I held their hands”); 3) facial expressions (e.g., “I used encouraging or positive facial expressions”); and 4) paralanguage (e.g., “I used an attentive and calm voice”). A list of 53 items was originally created. However, 3 items were removed due to repetitiveness. This process yielded a total of 50 items. The next step before collecting quantitative data was to ensure the items’ face validity.

Face Validity

In order to obtain face validity, three professors and two graduate students who were familiar with the concept of empathetic communication evaluated the 50 items. They were asked to 1) evaluate the relevance of the items to the construct, 2) remove
irrelevant and repeated items, and 3) edit items that need to be reworded for clarity. After this process, vague and repeated items were removed. Relevant items that were not clearly worded were edited until all the evaluators clearly understood each item. As a result, the remaining 44 items retained after the evaluation process and these items were used to construct the scale (See Table 1). Next, in order to construct the EES for Negative Events, a follow-up study was conducted using exploratory factor analysis.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis Study**

As a result of the pilot study, the items for the Empathetic Expressions Scale were generated. DeCoster (2000) states that scale development is a multifaceted process that involves refining, adding, and dropping items to create the most accurate and fitting fundamental structure. This phase involved obtaining quantitative data by having participants respond to a questionnaire that consisted of 44 EES items, performing exploratory factor analysis, and examining the underlying factor structures that emerged and how items clustered together.

**Methods**

**Participants.** Five hundred and thirty five undergraduate students from a large Southwestern university participated in this study ($N = 535$). From 535 participants, 215 identified as male ($n = 215$) and 320 identified as female ($n = 320$). The average age was 21.22 years old. According to Comrey and Lee (1992), over 500 participants is considered a good sample size for a procedure such as exploratory factor analysis. Optimum sample size also depends on the number of items generated from the pilot study. According to Costello and Osborne (2005), most factor analyses have less than 10
cases per item. Following this rule, the sample size for this study is excellent since there are 535 participants for 44 initial EES items.

**Procedures.** Upon IRB approval, undergraduate students from a large Southwestern university were recruited to take the survey in exchange for extra credit (under the participating instructors’ discretion). The recruitment script was posted on Blackboard (see Appendix A) along with the link to the survey (see Appendix B), which was online and hosted by Qualtrics.com. As they entered the survey, they were greeted with a participant information letter that informed them about the goal of the study as well as the voluntary nature of their participation (see Appendix B). Next, the participants were asked to respond to demographics questions and the 44 empathetic expressions items. Before they responded to these items, they were given the following directions:

Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand what someone is feeling, whether those feelings are positive or negative. Sometimes we communicate feelings of understanding to others. Think about the last few times that you were in a situation where you felt you could identify with and understand another person’s feelings. To what extent do you tend to communicate your thoughts and feelings and use the following behaviors in this type of situation?

They were instructed to use a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = very often. High scores represented high empathetic expressions and low scores represented low empathetic expressions.

**Factor Analysis**

The next step was to use a data reduction technique to discover the underlying factor structure of the items. In this step, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized
to evaluate the factor structure of the EES. The purpose of exploratory factor analysis is to discover how items group together to create meaningful subscales. Suggested procedures and several criteria were adopted in this process. Particularly, the standards were taken from Costello and Osborne’s (2005) suggestions on best practices in exploratory factor analysis and Tabachnick and Fidell’s (2001) recommendations. Specifically, EFA with Maximum Likelihood Extraction Method and Oblique Rotation (Oblimin with Kaizer Normalization) were used in this study.

After the initial analysis, 21 items that did not meet the criteria, cross-loading of .3 and above, or did not contribute to the simple factor structure were removed, which left the remaining 23 items. Subsequently, the final exploratory analysis yielded five meaningful factors. Cattell’s Scree Test also showed five factors before the “bend.” The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .92, above the recommended value of .6, and the Goodness-of-Fit test was significant ($\chi^2 (166) = 549.72, p < .00$). The initial eigenvalues showed that the first factor explained 39.14% of the variance, the second factor 9.24% of the variance, the third factor 7.35% of the variance, the fourth factor 6.90% of the variance, and the fifth factor 4.48% of the variance. The five-factors solution accounted for 67.11% of the total variance explained.

The first factor *Verbal Affirmation* had eight items, including “When people are feeling negative emotion, I encourage them by saying that they will get through this,” “When people are dealing with a tough situation, I assure them that things will get better,” “If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are,” “I remind people of their accomplishments if I think it will help them feel better about themselves,” and “When people are having a tough time, I tell them that they
will be fine because they have wonderful qualities.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .90$). The second factor *Experience Sharing* had five items, including “I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do,” “I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations,” and “I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .86$).

The third factor *Empathetic Voice* had three items, including “I noticed that my voice gets a bit lower and softer when I am empathizing with people” and “I use a soft voice when talking to someone I empathize with.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .86$). The fourth factor *Emotional Reactivity* had two items, including “I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling” and “I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.” This factor has good alpha reliability ($\alpha = .83$).

The fifth factor *Empathetic Touch* had five items, including “I comfort people with a hug if I think that they are feeling down,” “I show people I understand where they are coming from by giving them a hug,” and “I give people a reassuring touch if I see that they are distressed.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .89$). The EES, when combining all five factors, demonstrated high alpha reliability ($\alpha = .93$). For more details on factor loadings, means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for final EES items, see Table 1.
Table 1

*Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Negative Events*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>( \alpha )</th>
<th>( M(SD) )</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Affirmation</strong></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>5.25(.82)</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people are feeling negative emotion, I encourage them by saying that they will get through this.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When people are dealing with a tough situation, I assure them that things will get better.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I offer to listen to people if they want to talk about their feelings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell people that I understand and am available if they want to share their feelings with someone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When people need encouragement, I remind them that they are strong and can get through tough situations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I remind people of their accomplishments if I think it will help them feel better about themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people are having a tough time, I tell them that they will be fine because they have wonderful qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience Sharing</strong></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>4.86(.66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>I let people know that I have felt that same way that they are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are going through.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Empathetic Voice</strong></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>5(1.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I notice that my voice gets a bit lower and softer when I am empathizing with people.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My voice gets calm when I am talking with someone who needs comfort.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use a soft voice when talking to someone I empathize with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Reactivity</strong></td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>4.55(1.27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathetic Touch</strong></td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>4.28(1.28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comfort people with a hug if I think that they are feeling down.</td>
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(Continued)
Discussion

In summary, this analysis demonstrated a parsimonious, five-factor structure with two verbal communication factors and three nonverbal communication factors. The five factors that comprise EES are: Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Empathetic Voice, Emotional Reactivity, and Empathetic Touch. These five factors make conceptual sense in measuring empathetic expressions to distressed receivers. Verbal Affirmation involves showing empathy to the receiver through the words of encouragement and reassurance. This factor is similar to a type of social support called Esteem Support (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992; Xu & Burleson, 2001). Holmstrom (2008) found that esteem support are most successful when they foster reappraisals of self by the recipient. This gives evidence to why the items in this factor loaded together. The items revolve around reminding the recipients of their good qualities and that they will get through the negative events.

Experience Sharing involves conveying messages of previous similar experiences in order to express empathy. As stated earlier, cognitive empathy is when one can relate and understand the other’s situations (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Garaigordobil, 2009; Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). This makes conceptual sense because, when we experience empathy by relating to and understanding the other person’s situation, we

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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I show people I understand where they are coming from by giving them a hug.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I give people a reassuring touch if I see that they are distressed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I pat people on the arm or back to show them that I care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \alpha \quad M(SD) \quad \text{Loading} \]

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\alpha & M(SD) & \text{Loading} \\
0.83 & 0.90 & 0.70 & 0.49 \\
\end{array}
\]
would express that empathy by sharing similar past experiences with the receiver. Salazar (2013) similarly states, “Expressed empathy is more about understanding another person’s experiences of suffering” (p. 31). Thus, communicating past experience in order to show that you can relate to the person’s distress may be an essential component of empathetic expressions.

The third factor, Empathetic Voice, is one of the three factors in the five-factors structure that is a nonverbal expression of empathy. It is important that the scale include factors that encompass both verbal and nonverbal communication. It is widely accepted in the human communication literature that over 60% of communication is via nonverbal messages (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2014). Thus, this factor structure is conceptually accurate. Also, it makes intuitive sense that these items are part of empathetic communication. One of the items is “my voice gets calm when I am talking with someone who needs comfort.” This illustrates that one experiences empathy and chooses to express it by calming down the voice to match the receiver’s emotions/feelings.

Emotional Reactivity is the only factor that is emotion-oriented instead of direct expressions-oriented. Other factors, thus far, involve expressing some type of direct message, whether it is verbal or nonverbal. However, this factor focuses on experiencing similar emotion with the other person and expresses that emotion as a sign of empathy. This category is supported by numerous existing research studies as a strand of empathy and is often regarded as emotional reactivity or emotional contagion (Caruso & Mayer, 1998).

The last factor, Empathetic Touch, is the second nonverbal communication factor. Similar to Salazar’s (2013) compassionate touch and Burleson’s (2008) social support
messages, it was expected that EES would retain factors that are related to touching in order to show support to the other. The items revolve around positive touching behavior, such as a hug when needed, a pat on the back, and a reassuring touch when distress is observed. Studies have shown that touch is typically used to communicate social support (Jones & Guerrero, 2001; Dolin & Booth-Butterfield, 1993). Jones and Guerrero (2001) found that many people use nonverbal immediacy to communicate support, which includes touch.
CHAPTER 3
VALIDATING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR NEGATIVE EVENTS

After the scale has been developed and reported in Chapter 2, this chapter presents the process of validating Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative Events. The main goal is to establish construct validity for the scale and confirm the model fit by using confirmatory factor analysis. Construct validity is divided into two categories: convergent validity and discriminant validity. As a new scale, it is important to establish construct validity to demonstrate that the scale is measuring the construct accurately (Meyers et al., 2013), in other words, that the instrument is accurately measuring what it is created to measure. In obtaining convergent validity, the measurement has to be properly correlated with a similar construct that is established and used by the community of scholars. On the contrary, discriminant (divergent) validity is established when the measurement does not have correlations or is negatively correlated with theoretically opposite constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959).

Secondly, to validate model fit, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate global and local fit of the EES for Negative Events model. In summary, this chapter presents two separate studies: Construct Validity Study and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Study. These two studies utilize two different data sets. First, the Construct Validity Study uses the same data set as the Exploratory Factor Analysis Study reported in Chapter 2. Secondly, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis Study uses a new data set collected from a different sample to confirm the factor structure. Therefore, this chapter
is comprised of two separate studies with the same overall goal to provide a more extensive validation for EES for Negative Events.

**Construct Validity Study**

The section starts with a brief review of literature on empathy experience, compassionate communication, narcissism, and verbal aggressiveness. Hypotheses regarding convergent and discriminant validity are posed in this chapter. Theoretically, the experience of empathy and compassionate communication should have positive associations with empathetic expressions while narcissism and verbal aggressiveness should be negatively associated or uncorrelated with empathetic expressions, as they are naturally opposing constructs. Therefore, the purpose of the study reported in this section is to investigate how the five factors of empathetic expressions correlate with similar and dissimilar constructs to demonstrate evidence of construct validity.

**Empathy**

Empathy refers to the ability “to tune into how someone else is feeling, or what they might be thinking” (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004, p. 193). Empathetic expressions should be associated with related empathy constructs. As stated earlier, empathetic communication is not a single process. People experience empathy first (cognitive and affective), and then they should be able to express empathy through verbal and nonverbal communication. The Empathy Quotient (EQ) is a multidimensional measure of empathy, which includes cognitive empathy, emotional reactivity, and social skills dimensions (Lawrence et al., 2004). Cognitive empathy refers to the ability to understand the other person’s mental state. Emotional reactivity is going beyond emotional matching of the other person to experiencing the same emotions that were
reactivated by the other’s emotions. Lastly, social skills involve the ability to spontaneously understand social rules and how to interact with others within the context.

The Empathy Quotient scale was found to have concurrent validity from the observed moderate correlations with Davis’s (1980) “empathic concern” and “perspective taking” scales. Comparably, EES should also be moderately correlated with EQ as well. 

De Vignemont and Singer (2006) state that empathy has a vital role in human communication. Similarly, Engelen and Röttger-Rössler (2012) suggest that empathy is an essential means of social communication. Gagan (1983) indicates “empathy is the ability to perceive one’s feelings on one hand, while transmitting them on the other” (p. 119). These statements suggest a clear relationship between empathy and human communication. Intuitively, for empathetic expressions, the more empathetic a person is, the more they express empathy. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Empathy Quotient is positively correlated with a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement, b) Relating to Past Experience, c) Empathetic Voice, d) Emotional Reactivity, and e) Empathetic Touch.

Compassionate Communication

Compassion is defined as “the self’s experiencing a certain sorrow at the suffering of the other when the self stands as a non-responsible witness to that suffering. It is a sorrow, moreover, which constitutes a mode of the self’s moral acknowledgement of the other, in his suffering. Thus, compassion is both a certain sort of moral emotion and a certain sort of moral understanding” (Tudor, 2001, p. 77). Previous research has identified a positive association between compassion and empathic concern (Pommier,
Compassionate communication refers to a combination of compassionate conversation, compassionate touch, and compassionate messaging (Salazar, 2013). Another recent research also found that compassionate communication is positively correlated with empathetic concern and perspective taking (Salazar, 2013). Additionally, compassionate communication is also considered an important and positive social skill, similar to empathetic communication. From this reasoning, the following hypothesis was derived:

H2: Compassionate communication is positively correlated with a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement, b) Relating to Past Experience, c) Empathetic Voice, d) Emotional Reactivity, and e) Empathetic Touch.

Narcissism

According to Konrath, O'Brien, and Hsing (2010), one in ten Americans has a narcissistic personality, which they refer to as “epidemic of narcissism.” The authors report that there is a significant decline in empathy among American young adults between the 1980s and now. Narcissism is conceptualized as the exaggerated sense of self-importance and uniqueness, inability to accept criticism, and a sense of entitlement (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Paulus and Williams (2002) suggest that a narcissistic personality is characterized by a pretentious self-concept and lack of empathy. Narcissism also affects social relationships. Narcissists perceive themselves as more intelligent, important, powerful, and attractive than their romantic partners as well as others in their social relationships (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Rohmann, Bierhoff, & Schmohr, 2011). Naturally, narcissists would find it hard to understand other people’s feelings and situations because they tend to be more self-centered and less aware
of the people around them. According to Watson and Morris (1991), cognitive and emotional empathy are both negatively correlated with narcissism. They also found a negative correlation between narcissism and responsibility for helping others. This suggests that highly narcissistic individuals may be less capable of understanding the other’s perspectives, feelings, and emotions. They would also have less desire to help others feel better when in distress. Therefore, if narcissists were less capable of empathizing with others, intuitively, they would be less capable of verbally and nonverbally expressing empathy as well.

Honeycutt, Pence, and Gearhart (2013) state, “In everyday communication, narcissism often means egoism, vanity, conceit, or simple selfishness” (p. 28). From this statement, narcissism represents the opposing construct of empathy and empathetic expressions. Clearly, someone who is egoistic, selfish, and conceited should not be able to empathize with others and express empathy in most circumstances. Salazar (2013) found a negative correlation between narcissism and compassionate conversation, a construct similar to empathetic expressions. For instance, trying to relate to the other’s situation and then trying to lighten the situation is an example of compassionate conversation. Specifically, the author found that highly narcissistic individuals reported having less compassionate conversations. Again, this suggests that narcissism should be negatively associated with empathetic expressions.

Furthermore, research points out that narcissistic interactions are typically self-oriented, and narcissists employ weak supportive responses such as “uh huh,” “oh really,” and “umm” instead of a constructive supportive message. Also, communicators that have conversational narcissism tend to focus the conversations on themselves while
“glazing over” when others are speaking. They also use more abbreviated responses and display impatience while other people are talking (Vangelisti, Knapp, & Daly, 1990). This research suggests that there should be a negative relationship between narcissism and empathetic expressions. Based on existing literature, the following hypothesis arose:


**Verbal Aggressiveness**

Verbal aggressiveness is defined as the intention to harm others’ self-concepts through the use of verbal communication, which includes but is not limited to teasing, swearing, and threats (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Worthington (2005) found that verbal aggressiveness is negatively correlated with effective listening styles. Particularly, people who are verbally aggressive tend to be more argumentative, thus, unable to suspend their judgment while listening. This is one of the most ineffective listening styles because the listener is not paying attention to the speaker but rather trying to form a response (pseudo-listening) while the other person is talking. This also suggests a negative relationship between verbal aggressiveness and empathetic expressions. Clearly, ineffective listeners would not spend much time and cognitive capacity to be able to understand the other’s thoughts and emotions. If they experience less empathy, it is likely that they would not score high in empathetic expressions.

Verbal aggressiveness also has a negative impact on romantic relational partners. It is perceived as destructive to romantic relationships (Infante & Rancer, 1996). Similarly, Venable and Martín (1997) found that verbal aggressiveness is negatively
associated with communication satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, Martin and Anderson (1996) found that verbal aggression is negatively correlated with verbal responsiveness. This implies that verbally aggressive communicators are also not good at constructively responding to the other communicator. Since empathetic communication usually starts with active listening (to be able to understand others) and then an appropriate verbal and nonverbal response follows, verbal aggressiveness is essentially the opposite construct to empathetic expressions. Altogether, this hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Verbal aggressiveness is negatively correlated with a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement, b) Relating to Past Experience, c) Empathetic Voice, d) Emotional Reactivity, and e) Empathetic Touch.

Methods

The participants and survey procedures in this study are the same as the EFA study presented in the previous chapters. Students from communication courses were recruited to take the survey in exchange for extra credit (under their instructors’ discretion). For this part, participants responded to questions regarding empathetic expressions, empathy, compassionate communication, narcissism, and verbal aggressiveness. The scales used are presented below.

Measures

Empathetic Expressions. Empathetic Expressions was measured by Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative Events. This scale includes 28 items and has five dimensions, including 1) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement, 2) Relating to Past Experience, 3) Empathetic Voice, 4) Emotional Reactivity, and 5) Empathetic Touch.
Touch. Participants responded on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = very often. Sample items are: “I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations,” “My voice gets calm when I am talking with someone who needs comfort,” “If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are,” “My emotions tend to match the emotions of the people around me,” and “I comfort people with a hug if I think that they are feeling down.” The multidimensional scale and all five factors individually were found to be highly reliable: EES with all five factors ($\alpha = .93$), Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement ($\alpha = .90$), Relating to Past Experience ($\alpha = .86$), Empathetic Voice ($\alpha = .89$), Emotional Reactivity ($\alpha = .79$), and Empathetic Touch ($\alpha = .86$).

**Empathy Quotient (EQ).** Empathy was measured by a self-report scale, The Empathy Quotient (Baron-Cohen & Wheelright, 2004). EQ has three dimensions, including cognitive empathy, emotional reactivity, and social skills. Past research found EQ to demonstrate high reliability and strong concurrent validity with Empathic Concerns (Davis, 1980). EQ consists of 60 items where participants respond to one of the following options: “strongly agree,” “slightly agree,” “slightly disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Sample items are: “I can easily tell if someone wants to enter the conversation,” “People often tell me that I went too far in driving my point home in a discussion,” “I am good at predicting how someone will feel,” “Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say I am very understanding,” and “When I talk to people, I tend to talk about their experiences rather than my own.” The reported alpha coefficient from the original study was .83. In this study, the scale was also found to be reliable ($\alpha = .71$).
Compassionate Communication. Compassionate communication was measured by a self-report Compassionate Communication Scale (CCS) (Salazar, 2013). CCS contains 34 items in three subscales, including compassionate conversation (communicating compassion during conversations in a relationship) with original alpha reliability of .96, compassionate messaging (computer-mediated communication of compassion) with original alpha reliability of .85, and compassionate touch (a nonverbal factor that communicates compassion) with original alpha reliability of .85. Sample items include: “When I am distressed about something my friend or partner tends to…” “touch my shoulder,” “let me know that he or she will be there for me when I need a friend,” and “support me emotionally the best he or she can.” In this study, overall CCS and subscales of CCS were found to be highly reliable (α = .91)—compassionate conversation (α = .92), compassionate messaging (α = .91), and compassionate touch (α = .93).

Narcissism. Narcissism was assessed by the Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS) (Hendin & Cheek, 1997). HSNS consists of 10 items and is a newer and shorter form of the original narcissism scale by Murray (1938). Sample items are: “I often interpret remarks of others in a personal way,” “I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present,” and “I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.” Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = very uncharacteristic to 5 = very characteristic. This measure indicated the participants’ level of narcissism, which can range from low, moderate, to high. It was found to have a good alpha reliability in the original study (α = .76). In this study, HSNS was found to be reliable (α = .83).
Verbal Aggressiveness. Infante and Wigley’s (1986) 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness scale (VA) was used to measure verbal aggressiveness. This scale has 10 negatively worded items, such as “If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character,” and 10 positively worded items, such as “When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self concepts.” The positively worded items are also called Verbal Benevolence (Guerrero & Gross, 2014). This scale measures a person’s tendency to engage in verbal aggression. The participants respond on a Likert-type scale from 1 = almost never true to 5 = almost always true. A recent alpha reliability was reported at .87 (Salazar, 2013). In this study, VA was found to be reliable (α = .76).

Results

Bivariate Pearson Correlations were used to test the hypotheses and find the relationships between empathetic expressions and empathy experience, compassionate communication, narcissism, and verbal aggressiveness (see Table 2). These correlations are important because they provide evidence for convergent and discriminant validity for Empathetic Expressions Scale for Negative Events. The results in response to the hypotheses are addressed below.

Empathy Experience

The first hypothesis predicted positive correlations between the experiences of empathy (Empathy Quotient) and the five types of empathetic expressions. The hypothesis was supported. The results showed that empathy experience is positively correlated with a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement (r = .44), b) Relating to Past Experience (r = .24), c) Empathetic Voice (r = .33), d) Emotional Reactivity (r = .19), and e) Empathetic Touch (r = .28).
Compassionate Communication

The second hypothesis predicted positive correlations between compassionate communication and the five types of empathetic expressions. The hypothesis was supported. The results showed that compassionate communication is positively correlated with a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement ($r = .48$), b) Relating to Past Experience ($r = .35$), c) Empathetic Voice ($r = .43$), d) Emotional Reactivity ($r = .39$), and e) Empathetic Touch ($r = .61$). More detailed correlations demonstrated that the five types of empathetic expressions are also positively correlated with all three types of compassionate communication, including compassionate conversation, compassionate messaging, and compassionate touch, when the correlations were run separately factor by factor. The strongest correlations were expressions of encouragement/reinforcement and compassionate conversation ($r = .65$), as well as empathetic touch and compassionate touch ($r = .61$).

Narcissism

The third hypothesis predicted negative correlations between narcissism and the five types of empathetic expressions. The hypothesis was partially supported. There were no significant negative correlations between narcissism and a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement, c) Empathetic Voice, and e) Empathetic Touch. There were weak correlations between narcissism and b) Relating to Past Experience ($r = .12$) and d) Emotional Reactivity ($r = .15$). Possible explanations are addressed in the chapter’s discussion section.
Verbal Aggressiveness

The fourth hypothesis predicted negative correlations between verbal aggressiveness and the five types of empathetic expressions. The hypothesis was partially supported. Only a) Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement ($r = .25$) and c) Empathetic Voice ($r = .18$) were found to be negatively correlated with verbal aggressiveness. The other three factors—b) Relating to Past Experience, d) Emotional Reactivity, and (e) Empathetic Touch—were not found to be significantly correlated with verbal aggressiveness. Further explanations are provided in the chapter’s discussion section.

Table 2

**Correlations Coefficients for Empathetic Expressions Scale for Negative Events, Empathy Quotients, Compassionate Communication Scale, Narcissism, and Verbal Aggressiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>All Empathetic Expressions</td>
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<td>.684**</td>
<td>.694**</td>
<td>.670**</td>
<td>.786**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.486**</td>
<td>.528**</td>
<td>.460**</td>
<td>.545**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.486**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.324**</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.359**</td>
</tr>
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<td>.324**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.521**</td>
<td>.439**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>.670**</td>
<td>.460**</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.521**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.447**</td>
</tr>
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<td>.240**</td>
<td>.334**</td>
<td>.185**</td>
<td>.283**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Conversation</td>
<td>.617**</td>
<td>.481**</td>
<td>.345**</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>.392**</td>
<td>.614**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Messaging</td>
<td>.615**</td>
<td>.645**</td>
<td>.387**</td>
<td>.518**</td>
<td>.302**</td>
<td>.368**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissism</td>
<td>.344**</td>
<td>.233**</td>
<td>.219**</td>
<td>.200**</td>
<td>.290**</td>
<td>.359**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate Touch</td>
<td>.433**</td>
<td>.243**</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>.279**</td>
<td>.271**</td>
<td>.610**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Aggressiveness</td>
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<td>-.254**</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.182**</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>-.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. **p < .01. ***p < .001.*
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Study

This study focuses on confirming the model fit for the Empathetic Expressions Scale for Negative Events. There were five latent variables in the hypothesized model, including Encourage (expressions of encouragement and affirmation), Relating (expressions of past experience), Voice (empathetic voice), Emotion (emotional contagion), and Touch (empathetic touch). Encourage has eight observed variables (1–8), Relating has five observed variables (9–13), Voice has five observed variables (14–18), Emotion has five observed variables (19–23), and Touch has five observed variables (24–28). The hypothesized model is presented (see Figure 1).

Method

A new group of participants was recruited from communication courses in a large Southwestern university to participate in this study \((n = 659)\). Of all the participants, 51% were men \((n = 338)\) and 48% were women \((n = 319)\), and two preferred not to disclose. The participants identified with different ethnicities, including White/Caucasian \((n = 444)\), Asian \((n = 117)\), Hispanic/Latino/a \((n = 102)\), Black/African \((n = 35)\), Other \((n = 17)\), Native American/Native Alaska \((n = 9)\), and Pacific Islander \((n = 6)\). The average age in this sample was 19.54 years old. In terms of class standing, 59% were freshmen \((n = 383)\), 19% were sophomores \((n = 125)\), 15% were juniors \((n = 98)\), and 7% were seniors \((n = 45)\). When asked whether they are local American students (English is their first language) or International students (English is not their first language), 93% \((n = 610)\) reported as American students and 7% reported as International students \((n = 44)\).
Figure 1. Hypothesized model with five exogenous variables and 28 endogenous variables with 33 predicted paths. Encourage stands for Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement. Relating stands for Relating to Past Experiences. Voice stands for Empathetic Voice. Emotion stands for Emotional Contagion. Touch stands for Empathetic Touch.
Procedures

Upon IRB approval, undergraduate students from a large Southwestern university were recruited to take the survey in exchange for extra credit (under the participating instructors’ discretion). The recruitment script was posted on Blackboard (see Appendix C) along with the link to the online survey (see Appendix D), which was hosted by Qualtrics.com. As they entered the survey, they were greeted with a participant information letter that informed them about the goal of the study as well as the voluntary nature of their participation (see Appendix D). Next, the participants completed the questionnaire that included the measure of empathetic expressions in negative events. They were instructed to use a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = very often. The EES for Negative Events included the 23 original items that emerged in the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) study and five items (two added into Empathetic Voice and three added into Emotional Reactivity).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The model was tested with Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) using Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the maximum likelihood method to determine whether the factor structure found in the EFA study would be a good fit when applied to a new set of participants. The model with standardized coefficients is shown below (see Figure 2). According to Guerrero, Hannawa, and Babin (2011), “testing such an extensive model that includes so many parameters with a large sample size, however, can undermine the possibility of obtaining a good-fitting model” (p. 235).
Figure 2. The SEM model with five exogenous variables and 28 endogenous variables with 33 standardized path coefficients. Encourage stands for Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement. Relating stands for Relating to Past Experiences. Voice stands for Empathetic Voice. Emotion stands for Emotional Contagion. Touch stands for Empathetic Touch. All paths were found to be significant at p < .05 or better.
For local fit, all the paths were found to be significant (see Table 3). For global fit, the model’s fitness to data was evaluated by multiple indices. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .042 with confidence intervals of low 90 = .038 and high 90 = .046, which indicates that the model has excellent fit since it is less than .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was .93, which indicates adequate fit since values of .90 - .94 indicate adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Although chi square was significant, \( \chi^2 (24) = 80.60, p < .01 \), the results indicated that this model was appropriate to describe the current data. The \( \chi^2/df \) ratio equaled 2.68; this is less than 5, which indicates good fit for models that test many parameters with a large sample size (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

Table 3

*Standardized Path Coefficients from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of EES for Negative Events*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Affirmation</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Note. All paths were significant at $p < .001$.

### Discussion

This chapter presented two separate studies with an aim to provide evidence of validity for EES for Negative Events. The goal of the first study presented was to establish construct validity for EES for Negative Events by demonstrating evidence of convergent and discriminant validity, which are the two types of construct validity. This goal was partially accomplished. Most of the findings provided evidence of construct validity for the five factors of empathetic expressions with a few minor exceptions. First, empathy experience and compassionate communication were significantly positively
correlated with all five factors of empathetic expressions. These findings provide strong evidence of convergent validity for EES for Negative Events.

Secondly, verbal aggressiveness was negatively correlated with Verbal Affirmation and Empathetic Voice, which is consistent with the literature. The verbal aggressiveness scale includes items such as: “If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character” and “When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them” (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Clearly, these items are the exact opposite of words of encouragement and using empathetic voice, respectively. Therefore, it can be justified that discriminant validity of the two types of empathetic expressions is established.

Interestingly, narcissism did not negatively correlate with any of the five factors of empathetic expressions. On the contrary, it was weakly correlated with relating to past experience and empathetic voice. However, this finding can be explained by existing findings in the literature. Narcissists are often seen as charismatic (Young & Pinsky, 2006) and can be popular and charming (Foster, Shrira, & Campbell, 2006). These characteristics may influence them to be seen as good communicators. Therefore, it makes sense that highly narcissistic individuals would report having done at least one of the five types of empathetic expressions. Again, the concept of empathetic expressions focuses on the external part of communication, the verbal and nonverbal communication of empathy that is observable. This is a separate construct from the psychology of empathy that is usually measured by EQ (Baron-Cohen & Wheelright, 2004)—the intent or whether the person is actually experiencing authentic empathy. To simplify, when one communicates empathy, it may not mean that they also experience empathy. When taking
this perspective, it is evident why narcissism and empathetic expressions were found to be uncorrelated.

The goal of the second study presented in this chapter was to test the factor structure of EES for Negative Events with a new set of participants through the use of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the scale. CFA was conducted using a different sample separated by time. The findings in this study confirm the five-factor solution for EES for Negative Events found from the EFA study. All path coefficients were significant. In other words, all the observed variables significantly loaded on the predicted latent variables. This confirms that the items measure what the factor is conceptually meant to measure.

As for model fit, based on multiple indices, the model has acceptable to good fit as reported in results. It is important to note that testing a model with several parameters, such as the one in this study with a large sample, tend to “undermine the possibility of obtaining a good-fitting model” (Guerrero, Hannawa, & Babin, 2011, p. 235). Similarly, other researchers stated, “The hypothesized structure will always provide poor fit to the data if the sample size is large enough” (Hurley et al., 1997, p. 673). Nevertheless, this study provides another validation for EES for Negative Events by confirming the relationships between variables. Each subscale was also found to be highly reliable for measuring empathetic expressions with alpha reliabilities ranging from .89 to .92, which is considered very high. Overall, the items that represent each factor make conceptual sense. Scholars can use the scale with all five factors or use each factor as a unidimensional scale. Future studies can be conducted to provide more extensive validation for the scale.
CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING THE EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS SCALE FOR POSITIVE EVENTS

This chapter focuses on the construction of the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Positive Events. The chapter begins with a brief review of existing literature on empathy, empathetic communication, and other related social support research that occurs in positive events from sender and receiver perspectives. This is to demonstrate that the concept of empathetic expressions is a distinctive construct from other social support behaviors, compassion, and sympathy. While most social support behaviors as well as compassionate communication and sympathetic communication are experiences solely unique to when the other is in a distressed or negative situation, people can empathize and express empathy when others experience positive events/emotions. After the literature review, the exploratory factor analysis study of EES for Positive Events will be discussed. Overall, this chapter focuses on the construction of the measurement, EES for Positive Events.

Literature Review

Positive Empathy

In contrast to empathy and empathetic communication for negative events and emotions, appropriate empathetic communication for positive events has not been extensively studied (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015; Morelli et al., 2015). Positive empathy is defined as “understanding and vicariously sharing others’ positive emotions” (Morelli et al., 2015, p. 58). This distinctive mark is one of the main reasons why empathy is a unique construct from other similar social support constructs, compassion,
and sympathy. While people can be compassionate toward others who are experiencing negative events or sympathize with them, they do not normally feel sympathy or compassion when others disclose their experiences regarding positive events or positive emotions.

The expressions of empathy for positive events should also involve a different set of behavior from the ones for negative events. As articulated by Andreychik and Migliaccio (2015), “although empathizing with others’ positive emotions and empathizing with others’ negative emotions engage a number of the same foundational processes, they are distinct capacities” (p. 280). A recent research study conducted by Motomura et al. (2015) using electroencephalogram found that empathic brain responses are different depending on familiarity with the discloser and empathy valence (positive or negative empathy). Their report on empathy valence concurs with previous literature on positive and negative empathy being two distinctive constructs. Therefore, it is justified that empathetic expressions for positive events should have its own measurement.

Evidently, empathy for the distressed-other is vital to self and others, but being able to empathize with others during their positive events/emotions is important as well. Positive empathy is related to positive affect, which has benefits to a person’s physical, social, and cognitive functioning (Fredrickson, 2001). Moreover, researchers found that positive empathy is positively correlated with social competence (Sallquist, Eisenberg, Spinrad, Eggum, & Gaertner, 2009), prosocial behavior and the well-being of the empathizer because they share the other’s positive affect (Morelli et al., 2015), and that it can be beneficial for children’s peer relations (Lengua, 2003). Positive empathy is also seen as a therapeutic skill in clinical psychology (Conoley, Pontrelli, Oromendia, Bello,
Positive empathy as a psychological function seems to be highly related to the communication aspect of it, which is the expression of empathy in positive events. Currently, there are not many survey instruments for measuring positive empathy and empathetic communication in positive events. However, scholars have utilized various experimental methods by observing people’s verbal and nonverbal responses to others’ positive events as a measure of positive empathy (Maisel, Gable, & Strachman, 2008; Sallquist et al., 2009).

For survey research, Morelli et al. (2015) recently published a self-report scale for positive empathy including seven items called The Positive Empathy Scale (PES). Sample items from PES include: “When someone else is enthusiastic, I can’t help but be enthusiastic too” and “If I don’t understand why someone is excited, I try to put myself in their shoes and understand what they’re thinking and feeling.” These items represent more of the empathy experience and not the communication. As stated in Chapter 2, empathy is internal and empathetic communication is external. Therefore, the scale that is created in this study, Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Positive Events, can complement the existing empathy instrument.

**Responses to Capitalization Attempts**

Another construct related to social support in positive events is capitalization. When positive events happen to people, they tend to share it with others. This process is called capitalization (Langston, 1994). The capitalization process is threefold: the capitalization attempt, which is when the people disclose good news to another person(s); responses to capitalization, which is the feedback the receivers give to the positive events...
discloser; and the perceived supportiveness of the capitalization responses (Pagani, Donato, & Iafrate, 2013).

Responses to capitalization attempts are found to affect relationship formation and relational satisfaction (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006), as well as individual happiness (Demir, Dogan, & Procsal, 2013). Specifically, Gable et al. (2006) found that understanding, validating, and caring responses to partners’ capitalization attempts affect relational satisfaction, commitment, and love. People typically disclose positive events to people with whom they have close relationships. Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher (2004) found that participants tell their close others about the positive event 97% of the time and only disclose that information to non-close others 3% of the time. Furthermore, Demir et al. (2013) report that people normally disclose good news to their close friends. They found that effective responses to capitalization attempts enhance quality of friendships and, therefore, promote individual happiness. This means that it is important to further investigate what constitutes effective and supportive responses to people’s positive events and emotions.

The important questions are: when people share good news and/or are experiencing positive emotions, how do we respond in an empathetic and supportive way? How do we best cultivate the capitalization occurrence? What types of responses are seen as unsupportive, uncaring, and unempathetic? Scholars have divided responses to capitalization into four different types: active-destructive (e.g., downplaying the positive event), passive-destructive (e.g., ignoring the positive event), active-constructive (e.g., excited and genuine support), and passive-constructive (e.g., underwhelming support) (Gable et al., 2006). Interestingly, Gable, Gosnell, Maisel, and Strachman (2012)
found that it is easier to provide a responsive and effective support to other people’s positive events over negative events.

There is a scarcity of instruments for measuring responses to people’s capitalization attempts. More specifically, there is not a measurement for empathetic communication in response to positive events. An example measurement is the Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempts (PRCA) Scale. The PRCA is an other-report, 12-item scale that measures overall effectiveness of responses to capitalization attempts from the positive event discloser perspective. A sample of a positively worded item is “When I tell my partner about something good that happened to me, I sometimes get the sense that my partner is even more happy and excited than I am,” while a negatively worded item would be “My partner tries not to make a big deal out of it but is happy for me” (Gable et al., 2004). This measurement is different from EES for Positive Events in two major ways: 1) this concept does not take into account elements that are important to empathy, such as perspective taking and emotional contagion, and 2) this measurement is an other-report scale but EES for Positive Events is a self-report scale, which means they yield different kinds of data.

Another measurement is a self-report scale called Daily Partners’ Positive Events Intended Responsiveness (Gable et al., 2012). This scale measures how responsive people are to their partners’ disclosure of positive events. The higher the scores, the more responsive they are to their partners’ disclosure of positive events. Participants respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much). Sample survey items include: “I tried to understand my partner” and “I tried to make my partner feel like I valued his/her abilities and opinions.” This scale only has three items, and it is not
comprehensive since it does not include elements of verbal and nonverbal communication.

All in all, these scales are not a holistic measurement of how one expresses empathy in positive events because they do not involve the notions of understanding, perspective taking, and emotional contagion, which are core to the experience of empathy and intertwine with empathetic communication. Also, they do not incorporate both verbal and nonverbal messages, which are important in every communication phenomenon but particularly with empathetic expressions. Essentially, these instruments lack comprehensiveness and multimodal factors. Therefore, a scale such as EES for Positive Events can be beneficial for scholars who want to study empathetic communication for positive events from the communication perspective.

**Factor Analysis Study**

The items for the EES for Positive Events were derived from the validated items of the EES for Negative Events. A number of scale items in four factors were re-worded to make them more fitting to how people would communicate empathy in response to positive situations and emotions, but items with neutral wording remained unedited. As DeCoster (2000) states, scale development is a multifaceted process that includes editing, adding, and deleting items to create the most accurate and fitting fundamental structure that accurately represented the construct. This phase involved obtaining quantitative data by having participants respond to a questionnaire that consisted of 28 EES for Positive Events items and then performing Exploratory Factor Analysis on SPSS and examining the underlying factor structures that emerged and how items clustered together.
Methods

Participants. The same sample of participants presented in the confirmatory factor analysis study in the previous chapter took this questionnaire. The total number of participants was 659 \((n = 659)\). According to Comrey and Lee (1992), over five hundred participants is considered a good sample size for a procedure such as exploratory factor analysis. According to Costello and Osborne (2005), most factor analyses have less than 10 cases per item. Following this rule, the sample size for this study was excellent since there were 659 participants for 28 EES for Positive Events items. Of all the participants, 51% were men \((n = 338)\), 48% were women \((n = 319)\), and 2 preferred not to disclose. The participants identified with different races, including White/Caucasian \((n = 444)\), Asian \((n = 117)\), Hispanic/ Latino/a \((n = 102)\), Black/African \((n = 35)\), Other \((n = 17)\), Native American/Native Alaska \((n = 9)\), and Pacific Islander \((n = 6)\). The average age in this sample was 19.54 years old. In terms of class standing, 59% were freshmen \((n = 383)\), 19% were sophomores \((n = 125)\), 15% were juniors \((n = 98)\), and 7% were seniors \((n = 45)\). When asked whether they were local American Students (English is their first language) or International Students (English is not their first language), 93% \((n = 610)\) reported as American students and 7% reported as International students \((n = 44)\).

Procedures. Upon IRB approval, undergraduate students from a large Southwestern university were recruited to take the survey in exchange for extra credit (under the participating instructors’ discretion). The recruitment script was posted on Blackboard (see Appendix C) along with the link to the survey (see Appendix D), which was hosted by Qualtrics.com. As they entered the survey, they were greeted with a participant information letter that informed them about the goal of the study as well as the
voluntary nature of their participation (see Appendix D). The participants responded to the entire survey on empathetic expressions from the sender and receiver perspectives where this questionnaire was the latter part of the survey.

**Factor Analysis**

The next step was to use a data reduction technique to discover the underlying factor structure of the items. In this step, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to evaluate the factor structure of the EES for Positive Events. The purpose of EFA is to discover how items group together to create meaningful subscales. Suggested procedures and decision criteria were used in this process. Specifically, Tabachnick and Fidell’s (2001) recommendations were utilized, and the “rule of thumb” was taken from Costello and Osborne’s (2005) suggestions on best practices in exploratory factor analysis. EFA with Maximum Likelihood Extraction Method and Oblique Rotation (Oblimin with Kaizer Normalization) were used in this study.

After the first round of the analysis, four items that did not meet the criteria were dropped, which left 24 items in the structure. Another EFA was conducted; the final analysis yielded four meaningful factors with 19 items. From looking at the patterns, touch items appeared to operate distinctly from the original four factors. EFA using the Maximum Likelihood method with Oblimin rotation was used to confirm that these items form a separate two-dimensional scale.

For the original four-factor structure, Cattell’s Scree Test also confirmed four factors before the “bend.” The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .92, above the recommended value of .6, and Goodness-of-fit test was significant ($\chi^2_{(248)} = 543.28, p < .00$). The initial eigenvalues showed that the first factor explained
37.77% of the variance, the second factor 8.71% of the variance, the third factor 7.98% of the variance, and the fourth factor 6.53% of the variance. The four-factors solution accounted for 60.99% of the total variance explained.

The first factor, *Verbal Affirmation*, included five items, such as “When people are experiencing something great, I tell them that they deserve it” and “When something good happens to people, I tell them that it is because they have wonderful qualities.” This factor is highly reliable (α = .87). The second factor, *Experience Sharing*, included five items, such as “I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do” and “I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.” This factor is highly reliable (α = .87). The third factor, *Empathy Voice*, included four items, such as “My voice sounds happy when I am talking to someone who is happy” and “I use a cheerful voice when I empathize with someone’s happiness.” This factor is highly reliable (α = .90). The fourth factor, *Emotional Reactivity*, included five items, such as “I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling” and “I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.” This factor has good alpha reliability (α = .86). Details on factor loadings, means, and standard deviations of the first four factors of EES for Positive Events items are presented below (see Table 4).
### Table 4

*Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings of the First Four Factors from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Positive Events*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>M(SD)</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal Affirmation</strong></td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>5.20(.92)</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When people are experiencing something great, I tell them that they deserve it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If people are excited, I try to reinforce their feelings by telling them how great they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When people are excited about something, I tell them I’m excited for them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I remind people of their accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When something good happens to people, I tell them that it is because they have wonderful qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience Sharing</strong></td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>4.66(.98)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I let people know that I have felt the same way that they are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are experiencing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocal Empathy</strong></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>5.24(1.04)</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My voice gets enthusiastic when I am talking with someone who is excited.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My voice sounds happy when I am talking to someone who is happy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I use a cheerful voice when I empathize with someone’s happiness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I use an excited voice when I empathize with someone who is excited.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Reactivity</strong></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>4.66(.99)</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I tend to catch the emotions of people around me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When people communicate emotions to me I start to feel the same way they do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My emotions tend to match the emotions of the people around me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The other two factors appeared to operate separately from the first four factors, and further analysis confirmed the observation. Cattell’s Scree Test also confirmed two factors before the “bend.” The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .67 above the recommended value of .6, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (10) = 769.80, p < .000$). The initial eigenvalues showed that the first factor explained 56.81% of the variance, and the second factor explained 23.40% of the variance. The two-factors solution accounted for 80.21% of the total variance explained.

Both of the factors have unique and strong loadings. The first factor, *Hug*, included two items, “I respond to people with a hug when they are happy about something” and “I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .89$). The second factor, *Celebratory Touch*, has three items, such as “I give people a high five when something positive happens to them” and “I pat people on the back when something good happen to them.” This factor is highly reliable ($\alpha = .82$). Details on factor loadings, means, and standard deviations of the two factors of EES for Positive Events items are presented in Table 5.
Table 5

*Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Means and (Standard Deviations), and Factor Loadings of the Two Factors from the Exploratory Factor Analysis of EES for Positive Events*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>M(SD)</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hug</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>4.51(1.50)</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I respond to people with a hug when they are happy about something.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebratory Touch</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.39(1.33)</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I give people a high five when something positive happen to them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When something good happens to people, I pat them on the shoulder.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I pat people on the back when something good happens to them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

In summary, this analysis demonstrated a parsimonious four-factor structure with two factors representing verbal expressions and two factors representing nonverbal expressions. Additionally, a separate two-factor structure emerged for items related to touching. The emerged four factors that comprise EES for Positive Events are: Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Vocal Empathy, and Emotional Contagion. The other two factors are: Hug and Celebratory Touch. These factors make conceptual sense in measuring empathetic expressions for positive events. Verbal Affirmation involves showing empathy to the receiver through the words that reaffirm their characters. This factor is similar to a type of social support called Esteem Support (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992; Xu & Burleson, 2001).

Verbal Affirmation as empathetic expression also aligns with existing literature on responses to capitalization. Gable et al. (2006) state that responses to positive events
that are perceived as supportive essentially emphasize and accentuate the capitalizer’s strengths. One of the items in this factor is “When something good happens to people, I tell them that it is because they have wonderful qualities.” This is a great example of highlighting the capitalizer’s strengths. Based on the four types of responses to capitalization (Gable et al., 2004), the five items in the first factor are all considered active-constructive because they are all enthusiastic support.

Experience Sharing is when one communicator relates to the other’s positive events by sharing his/her similar personal experience. As stated earlier, cognitive empathy is when one can relate and understand the other’s situation (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). This makes conceptual sense; when we experience empathy by relating to and understanding the other person’s positive situation, we would express that empathy by sharing similar past positive experiences with the receiver. This is especially true in the situation of unique life experiences. If someone else has had an experience that is limited to very few persons (e.g., birthing a child, winning an Olympics, competing in the Super Bowl), experience sharing in that sense can definitely be an effective expression of empathy in positive events.

Empathetic Voice is one of the two factors in the four factors structure that highlights nonverbal expressions of empathy other than active listening. It is important that the scale includes factors that encompass both verbal and nonverbal communication. It is widely accepted in human communication literature that over 60% of communication is via nonverbal messages (Floyd, 2014). Thus, this factor is conceptually valid. Also, it makes intuitive sense that the items included are empathetic communication. One of the items is “I use an excited voice when I empathize with someone who is excited.” This
demonstrates receiver-centered or person-centered communication (Burleson, 2008), which is one of the important components of empathetic communication.

Emotional Reactivity is the other factor that represents nonverbal communication of empathy. This factor is supported by an array of research and is often regarded as a strand of empathy. Emotional Reactivity is defined as an affective state that is isomorphic to another person’s affective state (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Emotional Reactivity can also be called emotional contagion, affect sharing, and affection empathy. One of the items in this factor is “My emotions tend to match the emotions of people around me,” which is precisely emotional contagion or affect sharing. However, this factor is not only an emotional empathy experience, but also an empathetic expression. For example, the first item states, “I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.” Thus, it is important to recognize the distinction between empathy experiences and empathetic expressions.

The other two factors, Hug and Celebratory Touch, also represent nonverbal empathetic communication through haptics. Similar to Salazar’s (2013) compassionate touch and Jones and Guerrero’s (2001) supportive nonverbal immediacy, it was expected that the EES for Positive Events would retain factors that are related to touch in order to show support to others. The items are either a hug or another type of celebratory touch, such as a pat on the back or shoulder. Studies have shown that touch is typically used to communicate social support (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield, 1993; Jones & Guerrero, 2001). Jones and Guerrero (2001) found that many people use nonverbal immediacy to communicate support, including the use of touch, and that it affects what constitutes good comforting. Even though the findings from previous studies are on support in negative
events, the types of supportive communication should be applicable across the board, including empathetic expressions in positive events.
CHAPTER 5

EVALUATING EMPATHETIC EXPRESSIONS FROM THE RECEIVER PERSPECTIVE

Intuitively, supportive messages are not always seen as helpful, effective, or high quality, and unsuccessful support can have a negative impact on the senders, receivers, and their social/personal relationships (Holmstrom, Burleson, & Jones, 2005). Since support has a huge impact in personal lives, scholars from various disciplines and research areas have investigated the topic (see, Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Burleson & Mortenson, 2003; Goldsmith, 2004; Jones & Guerrero, 2001). Primarily, scholars have utilized the concept of person centeredness as a criterion to evaluate the effectiveness of social support messages, and most studies found that high person centered messages are more effective than moderate and low person-centered messages (Bodie et al., 2010; Burleson, 2008; Burleson et al., 2005; Jones & Guerrero, 2001). This demonstrates that people perceive social support messages differently based on their preferences and contexts. As compared to other types of social support, it is evident that attempts of empathetic expressions will not always be perceived as helpful, effective, or high quality. Since empathetic communication can have a positive or negative impact in individuals’ lives, it is important to find out which empathetic expression(s) are perceived as more supportive and higher quality to promote more effective empathetic communication.

The study presented in this chapter extends the research on empathetic expressions by focusing on the evaluation of empathetic messages from the receiver perspective. Specifically, this study is comprised of evaluations of the five types of empathetic expressions for positive and negative events (as emerged in previous
chapters) based on two main criteria: level of supportiveness and quality of message. The main goal of this study is to understand empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective and to determine which empathetic expression(s) are seen as more supportive and higher quality in positive versus negative events.

The evaluation of empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective is important for the following reasons. 1) There are many types of empathetic expressions and, as existing research indicates, people differ in their preferences and perception of supportive messages (Burleson, 2008; Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Vangelisti, 2009). Thus, it is vital to find out which ones are better than others in different contexts. 2) There is a dearth of evidence on empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective. Kim, Kaplowitz, and Johnston (2004) point out that most empathetic communication research is self-report based on the sender perspective, which may be an inaccurate representation of reality. Thus, this study fills the gap in empathetic communication literature by examining empathetic communication from the receiver perspective.

Additionally, some empathetic communication may go unnoticed. As Squier (1990) states, effective empathy must also be acknowledged and perceived by the receivers. Therefore, an evaluation of supportiveness and quality of message for different empathetic expressions is warranted and is the next reasonable step for the development of scholarly understanding on empathetic expressions. This chapter includes: 1) a review of empathetic and social support message evaluation in negative and positive events literature followed by the study’s research questions; 2) a method section outlining participants, measures, and procedures; 3) a result section in response to the research
questions; and 4) a discussion of the implications of results, as well as how they generally fit in the social support and empathetic communication literature.

**Literature Review**

**Empathetic and Other Social Support Message Evaluation for Negative Events**

According to most social support scholars, the more person centered a message, typically the more effective it is rated (Bodie et al., 2010; Burleson, 2008, 2009; Burleson & Kunkel, 2006; Burleson & Mortenson, 2003; Burleson et al., 2005; Jones & Guerrero, 2001). Person centeredness is defined as “the extent to which messages explicitly acknowledge, elaborate, legitimize, and contextualize the distressed other’s feelings and perspective” (Burleson, 2008, p. 208). Person centeredness is generally divided into three levels: high, moderate, and low. High person centered messages have been found to be more effective than moderate or low person centered social support messages. High person-centered social support messages are conceptualized as communication that “explicitly recognize and legitimize the other’s feelings, help the other to articulate those feelings, elaborate reasons why those feelings might be felt, and assist the other to see how those feelings fit in a broader context” (Burleson, 2009, p. 24). Naturally, moderately person centered messages are more implicit, distracting, and are usually offered in forms of sympathy and condolences. Low person centered social support messages encompass the sender criticizing, invalidating, and challenging the other person’s feelings (Burleson, 2008, p. 208). According to this conceptualization, the least effective social support messages are the ones that have the lowest person centeredness. Message supportiveness can be measured by four criteria, the message is other-centered, validating, empathizing, and acknowledging (Jones, 2004). For the present study,
empathetic expressions that score the highest in supportiveness should resemble Burleson’s (2008) high person-centered messages.

Burleson (2008) examined people’s values of support skills and how it affects the way they evaluate person centeredness for different supportive messages. Mainly, the researcher found little difference on the effects of values of support skills on the evaluation of supportive messages. However, he found that the increments between high, moderate, and low person-centered messages are large. Specifically, people read different supportive messages and rated high person-centered messages as significantly better than moderate person-centered messages. They also rated moderate person-centered messages significantly better than low person-centered messages. This goes to show that social support messages, even when well intended, can be seen as ineffective and unhelpful.

High person-centered messages are also preferred across the severity of negative situations. Particularly, it is found that people prefer high person-centered supportive messages in both mildly and moderately upset situations; however, those messages tend to have a greater impact on receivers who are coping with moderately upset situations (Burleson, 2008). Bodie et al. (2010) share a similar finding that message evaluation is moderated by problem severity, but, interestingly, it is not moderated by relationship status (e.g., support from friend vs. acquaintance). On the other hand, Lemieux and Tighe (2004) found a slightly different result that receivers prefer moderately supportive messages. They offered the following explanation, “Most of an individual's comforting experiences may occur primarily at the mid-level. Thus, he or she becomes familiar with this level of support and perceives it as sufficient” (Lemieux & Tighe, p. 150).
Recently, Rossetto (2015) conducted a qualitative study to evaluate the helpfulness of different types of social support during spousal deployment. The researcher found that certain types of emotional, instrumental, informational, and network support are seen as helpful. Among these effective types of social support, person centeredness remained the central idea that characterizes helpful support. Interestingly, a few types of support that were seen as unhelpful are pity, rumors and gossips, and unsolicited advice. Advice is considered a form of social support (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Researchers found that people experience dilemmas when evaluating advice as a way of providing social support. For instance, dilemmas for quality of advice encompass “being helpful and caring versus butting in” (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997, p. 454). Some advice is evaluated positively because it is perceived as caring and helpful, while other advice is seen as an intrusion (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). It is possible that a certain expression of empathy can be seen as an intrusion and, hence, evaluated negatively. This is why it is vital to conduct a study on empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective.

Scholars have identified and evaluated active listening as a form of social support. Bodie and Jones (2012) stated that supportive communicators who use a combination of high verbal person-centered messages and high nonverbal immediacy are evaluated as better listeners than those who use low person-centered messages along with low nonverbal immediacy. Floyd (2014) proposed the concept “empathic listening” as a form of affectionate communication. He suggested that empathic listening could be misconveyed and misinterpreted either intentionally or unintentionally. This goes to show that even a positive behavior, such as empathic listening, could potentially be evaluated
negatively or misinterpreted by the receivers. Therefore, even though there are different types of expressions that are supposed to be empathetic, some of the expressions might be evaluated as worse than others.

There are positive and negative consequences in sending and receiving effective and ineffective social support messages. For example, effective social support can potentially decrease emotional distress and improve close relationships (Cunningham & Barbee, 2000). It also plays a critical role in relationship development and relational maintenance (Burleson, 2003). On the contrary, ineffective support, which is usually called “support attempts that fail” or “cold comfort,” can have negative effects on both senders and receivers (Bodie & Burleson, 2008). Scholars have found that even well intended support can be evaluated as insensitive and unhelpful (Holmstrom et al., 2005). These messages were found to be harmful to the recipients and escalate emotional hurt (Holmstrom et al., 2005). Comparable to the theory of social support, receivers can also perceive different types of empathetic expressions as effective or ineffective and that can have a significant impact on the senders and receivers. If the empathetic expressions are not seen as helpful, they may not have accomplished communicative or social goals intended by the message sender (Burleson et al., 2011). Based on the above discussion on empathetic message evaluation literature, the following research question is presented:

RQ1: Do empathetic expressions for negative events differ in the extent to which receivers perceive them as a) supportive and b) high-quality messages?
Empathetic and Other Social Support Message Evaluation for Positive Events

As discussed in the previous study presented in Chapter 4, empathetic communication and other types of social support can occur during positive events, and, when it happens, people naturally evaluate them as effective or ineffective. When good things happen and people are happy/excited about something and they disclose the good news to other people, this process is called Capitalization (Langston, 1994). As a reaction to the good news, most people generally try to formulate supportive responses; this process is called Responses to Capitalization Attempts (Gable et al., 2006). Researchers argue that responses to capitalization attempts can be more important to the well-being of personal relationships than support in negative events (Gable et al., 2006). If so, it is imperative to further explore this phenomenon and find out the types of support that are evaluated as more effective in the midst of positive events. Specifically, the present study can identify which empathetic expressions are perceived as more supportive and better quality.

There are a handful of studies on message evaluation for supportive messages in positive events because support in positive events is much less explored than support in negative events. Similarly, empathy toward distressed others is a much more common construct that has been heavily investigated compared to positive empathy, which is a relatively new construct (Morelli et al., 2015; Sallquist et al., 2009). Consequently, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the evaluation of supportive and empathetic communication in positive events (Demir et al., 2013; Gable et al., 2004, 2012; Pagani et al., 2013).
According to Gable et al. (2006), there are four types of responses to capitalization attempts: 1) active-constructive, 2) passive-constructive, 3) active-destructive, and 4) passive-destructive. Active-constructive response, which is conceptualized as enthusiastic and genuine support, is the most supportive type of response to positive events. It involves reacting with attention, elaborating the positive news, and asking questions (Gable et al., 2012). Active-constructive response to positive news is found to be positively associated with relationship quality and personal well-being (Gable et al., 2004). Similarly, Ilies, Keeney, and Scott (2010) found that supportive partner responsiveness to positive work-related events predicts relationship satisfaction. Based on this framework, supportive and high-quality empathetic expressions for positive events should resemble responses that are active and constructive.

Passive-constructive response is less involved than active-constructive, but it is still conveyed in a positive and supportive manner. It involves “conveying warmth and satisfaction quietly and reservedly” (Gable et al., 2012, p. 965). Even though the concept theoretically demonstrates positive responses toward positive event discloser, previous research points out that passive-constructive response was negatively correlated with good intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes (Gable et al., 2004). It is possible that passive support is very subtle and may go unnoticed, thus, it may not be well evaluated by the receivers. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether this holds true with expressions of empathy in positive events or whether people may perceive subtle empathetic expressions as more supportive.
There are two types of negative responses. The first one is active-destructive response, which involves emphasizing the negative aspect of the good news and/or downplaying the positive events. The second one is passive-destructive response, which involves ignoring the good news and/or switching the conversation to another topic. Theoretically, both of these responses should negatively impact the relationship and both communicators in various ways. Research found that active-destructive and passive-destructive responses negatively associated with relationship satisfaction, trust, and intimacy (Gable et al., 2004, 2006). Conceptually, both of these destructive responses are considered un-empathetic expressions for positive events since they do not involve cognitive or affective empathy.

Response to capitalization attempts is typically measured by the Perceived Responses to Capitalization Attempt (PRCA) scale (Gable et al., 2004). PRCA consists of 12 items that describe the four responses outlined above on two dimensions, which are the active-passive continuum and the constructive-destructive continuum. Pagani et al. (2013) investigated the reliability and validity of PRCA and found that the scale is highly reliable and has good validity. They found that active-constructive response is negatively correlated with passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive. In terms of the impact on relationship satisfaction, they found that active-destructive and passive-destructive responses are both negatively correlated with quality of marriage, with the latter being the worst type of response to positive events. Based on the supportiveness scale (Burleson & Kunkel, 2006) used in this study, active-constructive responses should score high in supportiveness because the messages are other-centered, empathizing,
validating, and acknowledging. This means that empathetic expressions that score high on the supportiveness scale can be seen as active-constructive responses as well.

Perceived partner’s responsiveness of positive event disclosure can also be affected by the characteristics of the discloser. Researchers found that attachment styles affect people’s evaluation of support in positive events (Shallcross, Howland, Bemis, Simpson, and Frazier, 2011). Particularly, they found that people who have secure attachment styles are more likely to gain benefits from capitalization events and see their partners as more supportive and responsive (Shallcross et al., 2011). Perceived quality of social support is also affected by daily-enacted support. Gable et al. (2012) state, “The more participants’ friends, families, and partners responded well to their positive event disclosures, the more they perceived they were supportive of them when they had or do have problems or stressful events” (p. 977). This goes to show that these concepts may be more nuanced and intertwined than they are mutually exclusive and distinctive. Based on the above discussion on empathetic message evaluation literature, the following research question is presented:

RQ2: Do empathetic expressions for positive events differ in the extent to which receivers perceive them as a) supportive and b) high-quality messages?

Method

Participants

The participants from the confirmatory factor analysis study also completed a message evaluation questionnaire. The total number of participants was 659 (n = 659). Of all the participants, 51% were men (n = 338) and 48% were women (n = 319), and two preferred not to disclose. The participants identified with different races, including
White/Caucasian \((n = 444)\), Asian \((n = 117)\), Latino/a \((n = 102)\), Black/African \((n = 35)\), Other \((n = 17)\), Native American/ Native Alaska \((n = 9)\), and Pacific Islander \((n = 6)\). The average age in this sample is 19.54 years old. In terms of class standing, 59\% were freshmen \((n = 383)\), 19\% were sophomores \((n = 125)\), 15\% were juniors \((n = 98)\), and 7\% were seniors \((n = 45)\). When asked whether they are local American Students (English is their first language) or International Students (English is not their first language), 93\% \((n = 610)\) reported as American students, and 7\% reported as International students \((n = 44)\).

**Procedures**

The participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses at a large Southwestern university. Participating instructors offered the survey as an extra credit opportunity. The recruitment letter that included the survey link was posted on Blackboard. Once the participants clicked on the link, they were directed to the first page of the online survey and presented with a participant information letter. This letter informed the participants of the overview and goals of the study and that there was not a foreseeable risk for their participation. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and by clicking “next” to the survey, they had provided consent for their participation. After consenting to participate, half of the participants were directed to the negative scenario survey, and the other half of participants were directed to the positive scenario survey.

In the negative scenario, participants were asked to think in retrospective about a time they were upset/distressed about something and to evaluate five different vignette—representing the factors of empathetic expressions for negative events—from the receiver’s perspective. In the positive scenario, participants were asked to think in
retrospective about a time they were happy/excited about something and to evaluate five different vignettes—representing five factors of empathetic expressions for positive events—from the receiver’s perspective. The vignettes were randomized, so different participants saw a different sequence of the vignettes. Finally, all of the participants responded to six demographic questions. More detailed information on the questionnaire is attached in the appendix (see Appendix C and D).

Measures

**Empathetic expressions vignettes.** Ten gender-neutral vignettes were constructed to represent the five factors of EES for Negative and Positive Events. For the negative scenario survey, vignettes include: a) “A friend you run into assures you that things will get better and reminds you of your good qualities, b) “The next friend you run into tells you that he or she has been in similar situations and understands how you feel,” c) “The next friend you run into speaks to you in a calm, soothing voice that is soft and comforting,” d) “As you talk to the next friend you run into, that friend seems to start feeling the same emotions that you are expressing,” and e) “The last friend you run into pats you on the back and then gives you a hug.” For the positive scenario survey, vignettes include: a) “The first friend you run into says you deserve it and reminds you of your good qualities,” b) “The next friend you run into tells you that he or she has been in similar situations and understands why you are so happy/excited,” c) “The next friend you run into sounds really happy and excited for you by their tone of voice,” d) “As you talk to the next friend you run into, that friend seems to start feeling the same emotions that you are expressing,” and e) The last friend you run into gives you a hug or a high five.”
**Supportiveness.** Participants rated the level of supportiveness for each vignette on four 7-point semantic differential scale items. All the items were derived from social support literature focusing on the effectiveness of the support message (see, Burleson & Kunkel, 2006; Jones, 2004). The four items include: Self-centered-Other-centered, Invalidating-Validating, Judgmental-Empathizing, and Dismissive-Acknowledging. The scale is highly reliable with alpha reliabilities ranging from .86 to .92 for all the vignettes in a negative scenario and .87 to .92 for all the vignettes in a positive scenario.

**Message quality.** Perceived quality of message for empathetic expressions is measured by the adapted version of Perceived Quality of Medical Care (PQMC) scale (Richmond, Smith, Heisel, & McCroskey, 1998). Participants rated the level of quality for each vignette on seven 7-point semantic differential scale items. The items include: Beneficial-Not Beneficial, Helpful-Not Helpful, Appropriate-Inappropriate, Sensitive-Insensitive, Effective-Ineffective, High Quality-Low Quality, and Caring-Uncaring. The scale is highly reliable with alpha reliabilities ranging from .92 to .95 for all the vignettes in a negative scenario and .93 to .95 for all the vignettes in a positive scenario.

**Results**

The first research question asked: Do empathetic expressions for negative events differ in the extent to which receivers perceive them as a) supportive and b) high-quality messages? A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the independent variable (the five vignettes of empathetic expressions) on the dependent variables, perceived supportiveness and quality. For perceived supportiveness (RQ1a), Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity indicated that sphericity could be assumed, $\chi^2(9) = 38.84$, $p < .001$. The test of within-subjects effects was significant $F(4, 1224) = 1084$, $p = < .001$, ...
partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Vignette 4 (Emotional Reactivity) was found to be higher in perceived supportiveness than the other four vignettes, and Vignette 1 (Verbal Affirmation) was found to be lower in supportiveness than all of the other vignettes. Therefore, to answer RQ1a, empathetic expressions for negative events statistically differed in supportiveness.

The differences were probed using paired samples t-tests. First, the highest scoring vignette was tested against the other four vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived supportiveness between Emotional Reactivity ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.34$) and Verbal Affirmation ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.26$); $t(307) = 5.44$, $p < .001$, Experience Sharing ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.20$); $t(306) = 4.11$, $p < .001$, Empathetic Voice ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.21$); $t(306) = 3.75$, $p < .001$, and Empathetic Touch ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.26$); $t(307) = 3.54$, $p < .001$. Second, the differences were probed by paired samples t-tests by testing the lowest scoring vignette against four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived supportiveness between Verbal Affirmation ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.25$) and Experience Sharing ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.20$); $t(306) = -2.76$, $p < .05$, Empathetic Voice ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.21$); $t(306) = -2.62$, $p < .05$, Emotional Reactivity ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.34$); $t(307) = -5.44$, $p < .001$, and Empathetic Touch ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.26$); $t(307) = -2.65$, $p < .05$. These tests confirmed that in response to negative events, Emotional Reactivity was perceived as the most supportive of the five forms of empathetic expressions, whereas verbal affirmation was perceived as the least supportive.

Another repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the five vignettes of empathetic expressions on perceived quality of message (RQ1b). Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity indicated that the sphericity could be assumed, $\chi^2(9) = 23.48$, $p < .05$. The test of within-subjects effects was significant $F (4, 1224) = 16.10$, $p =
Vignette 4 (Emotional Reactivity) was found to be higher in perceived quality of message than other vignettes, and Vignette 1 (Verbal Affirmation) was found to be lower in perceived quality of message than other vignettes. Therefore, to answer RQ1b, empathetic expressions for negative events statistically differed in quality of message.

The differences were again probed by paired samples t-tests by first testing the highest scoring vignette against the four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived quality of message between Emotional Reactivity (M = 3.21, SD = 1.29) and Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.57, SD = 1.32); t(307)= 6.99, p < .001, Experience Sharing (M = 2.75, SD = 1.26); t(306)= 5.60, p < .001, Empathetic Voice (M = 2.70, SD = 1.30); t(306)= 5.83, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.78, SD = 1.29); t(307)= 4.67, p < .001. The differences were also probed by paired samples t-tests by testing the lowest scoring vignette against the four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived quality of message between Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.56, SD = 1.32) and Experience Sharing (M = 2.75, SD = 1.26); t(306)= -2.47, p < .05, Emotional Reactivity (M = 3.21, SD = 1.29); t(307)= -6.99, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.78, SD = 1.29); t(307)= -2.40, p < .05. This showed that, similar to the results for perceived supportiveness, people viewed emotional reactivity as the highest quality response in the context of negative events, whereas verbal affirmation was perceived to be the lowest quality response.
Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Five Empathetic Expressions Vignettes in Negative Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Voice</td>
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<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Touch</td>
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<td>1.27</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Message</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation</td>
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<td>Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>Empathetic Voice</td>
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<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity</td>
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<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Touch</td>
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<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 7

Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Emotional Reactivity to Other Expressions in Negative Events

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</tr>
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<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Verbal Affirmation</td>
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<td>5.44***</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>4.11***</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Empathetic Voice</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>3.75***</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>3.54***</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Quality of Message</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Verbal Affirmation</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>6.99***</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>5.60***</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Empathetic Voice</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>5.83***</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>4.67***</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.07</td>
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</table>

*Note.***p < .001. Degrees of Freedom range from 306-307 for all tests.*
Table 8

Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Verbal Affirmation to Other Expressions in Negative Events

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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>-2.76***</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Empathetic Voice</td>
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<td>-2.62***</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>-5.44***</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-2.65***</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Quality of Message</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Experience Sharing</td>
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<td>-2.47***</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Empathetic Voice</td>
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<td>-1.66</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>-.64</td>
<td>-6.99***</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-2.40***</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ***p < .001. Degrees of Freedom range from 306–307 for all tests.

The second research question asked: Do empathetic expressions for positive events differ in the extent to which receivers perceive them as a) supportive and b) high-quality messages? A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the five vignettes of empathetic expressions on the perceived supportiveness for positive events (RQ2a). Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity indicated that sphericity could be assumed, χ^2(9) = 45.69, p < .001. The test of within-subjects effects was significant F (4, 1192) = 36.36, p = < .001, partial η^2 = .11. Vignette 2 (Experience Sharing) was found to be higher in perceived supportiveness than the other vignettes, and Vignette 1 (Verbal Affirmation) was found to be lower in perceived supportiveness than other vignettes in the positive scenario. Therefore, to answer RQ2a, empathetic expressions for positive events statistically differed in perceived supportiveness.

The differences were probed by paired samples t-tests by first testing the highest scoring vignette against four other vignettes. There were significant differences in
perceived supportiveness between Experience Sharing (M = 2.96, SD = 1.36) and Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.06, SD = 1.22); t(299) = 11.25, p < .001, Empathetic Voice (M = 2.35, SD = 1.27); t(299) = 7.38, p < .001, Emotional Reactivity (M = 2.60, SD = 1.33); t(299) = 4.02, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.53, SD = 1.28); t(298) = 4.87, p < .001. The differences were also probed by paired samples t-tests by testing the lowest scoring vignette against four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived supportiveness between Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.06, SD = 1.22) and Experience Sharing (M = 2.96, SD = 1.36); t(299) = -11.25, p < .001, Empathetic Voice (M = 2.35, SD = 1.26); t(300) = -4.67, p < .001, Emotional Reactivity (M = 2.60, SD = 1.32); t(300) = -7.22, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.54, SD = 1.27); t(299) = -6.85, p < .001.

Another repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the five vignettes of empathetic expressions on perceived quality of message (RQ2b). Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity indicated that the sphericity could be assumed, \( \chi^2(9) = 53, p < .001 \). The test of within-subjects effects was significant \( F(4, 1196) = 25.52, p = < .001 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .08 \). Vignette 2 (Experience Sharing) was found to be higher in perceived quality of message than the other vignettes, and Vignette 1 (Verbal Affirmation) was found to be lower in perceived quality of message in the positive scenario. Therefore, to answer RQ2b, empathetic expressions for positive events statistically differed in perceived quality of message.

The differences were probed by paired samples t-tests by first testing the highest scoring vignette against four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived quality of message between Experience Sharing (M = 2.81, SD = 1.34) and
Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.08, SD = 1.17); t(301)= 8.83, p < .001, Empathetic Voice (M = 2.33, SD = 1.05); t(300)= 6.51, p < .001, Emotional Reactivity (M = 2.51, SD = 1.13); t(300)= 3.71, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.55, SD = 1.21); t(299)= 2.89, p < .01. The differences were also probed by paired samples t-tests by testing the lowest scoring vignette against four other vignettes. There were significant differences in perceived quality of message between Verbal Affirmation (M = 2.08, SD = 1.17) and Experience Sharing (M = 2.81, SD = 1.34); t(301)= -8.83, p < .001, Empathetic Voice (M = 2.32, SD = 1.05); t(302)= -4.05, p < .001, Emotional Reactivity (M = 2.51, SD = 1.13); t(301)= -5.80, p < .001, and Empathetic Touch (M = 2.55, SD = 1.21); t(301)= -6.31, p < .001.

This means when the event is positive, people perceive experience sharing to be the most supportive and of the highest quality as compared to the other empathetic expressions. On the contrary, direct verbal affirmation and encouragement received the lowest ratings in both supportiveness and quality of message for a positive scenario.
Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations of Five Empathetic Expressions Vignettes in Positive Events

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supportiveness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation</td>
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<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Voice</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Message</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Affirmation</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Voice</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic Touch</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Experience Sharing to Other Expressions in Positive Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M-Diff</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>Eta²</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Experience Sharing vs. Empathetic Voice</td>
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<td>7.38***</td>
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<td>.15</td>
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<td>Experience Sharing vs. Emotional Reactivity</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>4.02***</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
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<td><strong>Perceived Quality of Message</strong></td>
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<td>Experience Sharing vs. Emotional Reactivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience Sharing vs. Empathetic Touch</td>
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*Note.* ***p < .001. Degrees of Freedom range from 298-301 for all tests.
Table 11

Mean Difference, t Value, Standard Deviation, Degrees of Freedom, and P Value from Paired T-Tests Comparing Verbal Affirmation to Other Expressions in Positive Events

<table>
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<td>.12</td>
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Note. ***p < .001. Degrees of Freedom range from 299-302 for all tests.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out whether the five types of empathetic expressions differ in terms of supportiveness and message quality as responses to negative and positive events as judged by receivers. The results in this study confirm the dominant narrative in social support literature that people perceive and evaluate types of supportive messages differently whether it is during negative events (Bodie et al., 2010; Burleson, 2008; Burleson & Mortenson, 2003; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997) or positive events (Gable et al., 2004; Gable et al., 2012; Demir et al., 2013).

There were differences in terms of supportiveness and message quality between five types of empathetic expressions for both negative and positive events. When responding to negative events, Emotional Reactivity was found to be the most supportive and to have the highest quality when compared to Verbal Affirmation, Experience
Sharing, Empathetic Voice, and Empathetic Touch. Perhaps the expression of similar emotions demonstrates the most genuine form of empathetic communication toward the distressed other. Emotional expressions may also be harder to imitate; thus, it might be perceived as more authentic. Consequently, this type of expression is evaluated as higher quality and more supportive.

Emotional Reactivity as an expression of empathy is conceptually similar to affective empathy, which is defined as “an emotional response to emotional responses of others” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). In the past, literature has pointed out that affective empathy/emotional empathy is an important strand of empathy that often has a positive impact on the distressed other (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Stiff et al., 1988). As Walter (2012) stated, a true empathic experience requires isomorphic emotional experience between the empathizer and the distressed other. Similarly, Engelen and Röttger-Rössler, (2012) explained that emotional matching is a distinctive characteristic that distinguishes empathy from sympathy. Automatic emotional reaction is a function of sympathy, while emotional matching is a function of empathy, which takes more effort from the empathizer (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). Therefore, it makes sense that Emotional Reactivity as an empathetic expression was evaluated as the most supportive and highest quality message.

Interestingly in negative events, Verbal Affirmation was evaluated the lowest in supportiveness and message quality. This finding is different from those in the social support literature, particularly research on person centeredness (Burleson, 2008). Person centeredness is defined as “the extent to which messages explicitly acknowledge, elaborate, legitimize, and contextualize the distressed other’s feelings and perspective”
(Burleson, 2008, p. 208). From this definition, Verbal Affirmation should not have been evaluated the lowest in supportiveness and message quality since the action aligns with the conceptualization of person centeredness. There are three possible explanations: 1) Verbal Affirmation may be an extension of the existing conceptualization of empathy, 2) Verbal Affirmation is too “visible” a form of support, and 3) the vignette that represented this factor may not have been elaborated enough.

The conceptual definition of empathy is the act of sharing and understanding the state of mind and/or emotions of others (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008). It is reasonable to say that the expression of emotional reactivity is the most precisely related to the definition of empathy, and verbal affirmation, encouragement, and reinforcement may be an extension of the definition. This is not to suggest that people should not verbally encourage others who are distressed. Past research has found that a combination of verbal and nonverbal messages can strengthen the quality of supportive messages (Broome, 1993; Burleson et al., 2009; Jones & Guerrero, 2001; Salazar, 2013) Secondly, Verbal Affirmation is one of the two direct verbal communication factors in the EES. It is possible that people who are in distress prefer less deliberate and more organic empathetic expressions over direct and intentional ones. Research on “invisible” support suggested that invisible support—support that is subtle and not easily detected—is sometimes more effective than the “visible” ones (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000).

Finally, the vignette for Verbal Affirmation stated, “A friend you run into assures you that things will get better and reminds you of your good qualities.” Admittedly, this may not be the most elaborated expression of affirmation and encouragement as compared to the definition of high person centered messages. Burleson (2008) defined
that high person centered messages “explicitly recognize and legitimize the other’s feelings, help the other to articulate those feelings, elaborate reasons why those feelings might be felt, and assist the other to see how those feelings fit in a broader context” (p. 208). It seems that the vignette mostly captured the first part of this definition but not the rest of it, since it did not include elaborating feelings and fitting it into the broader context.

For positive events, Experience Sharing as a form of empathetic expression in response to positive events was found to be the most supportive and has the highest quality. It is reasonable since some human experiences are unique and only certain groups of people have experienced the exact same situations. An example of this is a woman with a desire to have a baby for several years finds out that she is pregnant. Obviously, not every person can relate to that situation and the specific moment when she found out that she was having a baby, while maybe some can. Therefore, those who have experienced the same situation and use experience sharing as a form of empathy may be seen as the most truthful and genuine.

This is also fitting to the existing literature in response to capitalization attempts. As reviewed above, active-constructive responses are found to be the best kind of response to good news/positive event disclosure. According to Gable et al. (2012), active-constructive responses include reacting with attention, elaborating the positive news, and asking questions. Similarly, Experience Sharing includes statements such as “I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling” and “I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are experiencing.” These statements fit the conceptual definition of active-constructive
responses to capitalization attempts. On the other hand, the nonverbal types of empathetic expressions, including Emotional Reactivity, Empathetic Voice, and Empathetic Touch, may not scale as well on the active-passive and constructive-destructive continuums because they do not involve constructing active verbal responses. This is an important implication for the use of combinations of verbal and nonverbal empathetic expressions. One type of expression may not capture the cognitive and affective empathy that people experience during positive events.

Interestingly, direct verbal expression of empathy in a form of Verbal Affirmation was also evaluated as lower in supportiveness and message quality in positive events. Perhaps such an expression is too “obvious” and may be deemed as inauthentic and overreaching. One research study lends an explanation to this finding. Bolger, Zuckerman, and Kessler (2000) found that “invisible support,” which is the kind of support that goes undetected by the receiver, is the most effective kind of social support. Also, there are two criteria to responses to capitalization, the active-passive continuum and the constructive-destructive continuum (Gable et al., 2012). Conceptually, Verbal Affirmation does not fully fit into the active-constructive response type. Although it is enthusiastic and direct, it does not involve elaborating and asking questions. Therefore, people may perceive it as a non-personalized response and only a moderate person-centered message. Further discussion on empathetic expressions message evaluation is included in the General Discussion chapter.
CHAPTER 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present dissertation is comprised of six studies that utilized three separately collected sets of data. The first data set was used to conduct a pilot study using qualitative data. The second data set, which was quantitative, was used for two studies: the Exploratory Factor Analysis study for the Empathetic Expressions Scale (EES) for Negative Events and the construct validity study for the EES for Negative Events. Finally, the third data set, which was also quantitative, was utilized for the studies that focused on: 1) conducting a Confirmatory Factor Analysis study for the EES for Negative Events, 2) conducting an Exploratory Factor Analysis study for EES for Positive Events, and 3) investigating how receivers evaluate empathetic expressions in negative and positive event situations. All three data sets used college student samples. This chapter includes the following discussion: major findings and implications, limitations and future directions, strengths, future theory development, and concluding statements.

Major Findings and Implications

This section discusses major findings and their implications. Major findings include the development and test for construct validity of the EES for Negative Events, as well as the initial development of the EES for Positive Events. These scales were developed from a sender perspective focusing on what types of verbal messages and nonverbal communication people use to express empathy. Another major finding derived from the final study, which focused on the evaluation of various empathetic expressions. This study demonstrated that, from a receiver perspective, these messages vary in terms of supportiveness and perceived message quality.
The Multidimensional Empathetic Expression Scale for Negative Events

The EES for Negative Events is a multidimensional scale that is comprised of five factors, including Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Empathetic Voice, Emotional Reactivity, and Empathetic Touch. The first two factors represent the verbal aspect of empathetic expression while the other three factors represent the nonverbal aspect of empathetic expression. This multidimensional scale makes conceptual sense because every communication episode involves verbal and nonverbal communication; the latter of the two tends to dominate people’s everyday communication. As Guerrero et al. (2014) stated, over 60% of human interaction is communicated through nonverbal cues, and Jones and Guerrero (2001) also found that nonverbal behaviors play a crucial role in comforting processes.

The five types of empathetic expressions complement and extend the social support and empathetic communication literature. First, they align with various types of support, such as emotional support and esteem support (Xu & Burleson, 2001). Emotional support is defined as “expressions of love, empathy, and concern” (Cutrona, 1996, p. 4). Every expression of empathy found in the studies presented in this dissertation aligns with this definition. Esteem support is defined as “expressions of respect, validation, and confidence that bolster another’s self-concept” (Xu & Burleson, 2001, p. 537). Verbal affirmation is particularly similar to this type of support, which includes survey items such as “If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are” and “When people are having a tough time, I tell them that they will be fine because they have wonderful qualities.”
The empathetic expressions also resemble the psychological experiences of empathy, such as cognitive and affective empathy. For instance, Experience Sharing is a communication response showing cognitive empathy. Cognitive empathy is defined as “the intellectual/imaginative comprehension of another’s mental state” (Lawrence et al., 2004, p. 911). Having similarly shared experience can enhance one’s cognitive empathy toward the distressed other. Therefore, Experience Sharing is a valid form of expression of cognitive empathy. Another type of empathy experience is called affective empathy, which is defined as “grasping the other’s emotional state” (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012, p. 4). Based on this definition, Emotional Reactivity is a valid form of empathetic expression that is a communicative response of affective empathy.

Overall, the multidimensional EES for Negative Events is demonstrated to be a distinctive construct and measurement from other similar constructs, such as sympathy and compassionate communication. Empathetic expression during negative events is more complex than sympathizing with the distressed other. Sympathy is defined as “heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated” (Wispe, 1986, p. 318). If a coworker is getting fired, a person can say, “I’m so sorry this happened to you” to express sympathy. However, as exhibited, empathetic expressions involve more than feeling sorry for the other person. As De Vignemont and Singer (2006) pointed out, sympathizers “feel bad” for the other person, whereas empathizers “feel the same feeling” as the distressed other.

**The Validation of EES for Negative Events**

Two separate studies were conducted to validate the EES for Negative Events. The findings from both studies confirmed construct validity for the scale. Construct
validity is established when the instrument is accurately measuring what it is created to measure (Meyers et al., 2013). Construct validity is divided into two types: convergent and divergent validity. The first study found that all five factors of EES for Negative Events had moderate positive correlations with three types of compassionate communication and empathy experience. This established convergent validity for the scale because the factors positively correlated with theoretically similar constructs. Additionally, the first study also found that all five factors of EES for Negative Events had moderate negative correlations with verbal aggressiveness and no correlation with narcissism. This established divergent validity for the scale because the factors had negative or no correlations with theoretically opposite constructs. The factor structure was also confirmed by the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) study with a new sample. The results demonstrated good model fit and local fit. This means that the model makes conceptual and statistical sense.

**The Multidimensional Empathetic Expression Scale for Positive Events**

The EES for Positive Events consists of two separate structures. The first structure is comprised of four factors, including Verbal Affirmation, Experience Sharing, Empathetic Voice, and Emotional Reactivity. The second structure is comprised of two factors related to touch, including Hugs and Celebratory Touch. The emerged factors serve as initial evidence that empathetic expressions is a distinctive construct from sympathetic communication and compassionate communication, because expressions of empathy also function in positive events and not only in negative events like sympathy and compassion. As stated earlier, positive empathy is defined as “understanding and vicariously sharing others’ positive emotions” (Morelli et al., 2015, p. 58). Based on this
conceptualization, the EES for Positive Events extends the positive empathy literature and serves as a measurement of the communicative responses to positive empathy. It is important to examine empathy in reaction to positive as well as negative events, as Andreychik and Migliaccio (2015) pointed out: “although empathizing with others’ positive emotions and empathizing with others’ negative emotions engage a number of the same foundational processes, they are distinct capacities” (p. 280).

The types of empathetic expression for positive events found in the study presented in this dissertation also align with the responses to capitalization literature. Responses to capitalization are the reactions toward the positive event discloser (Pagani et al., 2013). There are four types of responses to capitalization, including active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Gable et al., 2006). Active-constructive responses were found to be the best type of response to positive event disclosure. Theoretically, every type of empathetic expression highlighted above is an active-constructive response to positive events. Therefore, an important implication is that the two scales for EES for Positive Events should be used together to capture the complexity of empathetic expressions. The scales presented were developed from a sender perspective. The next step was to have the expressions evaluated by receivers to determine which ones were perceived as most effective.

**Which Empathetic Expression is the Most and Least Effective?**

**Empathetic responses to negative events.** For empathetic expressions in negative events, Emotional Reactivity was rated the highest in supportiveness and message quality. A sample item of this expression is “I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.” This finding implied that an authentic
nonverbal expression of a similar emotion to the distressed other is perceived as very supportive, helpful, and effective. This supports the current conceptualization of empathy. Scholars from various disciplines, such as Martin Hoffman and Nancy Eisenberg in developmental psychology, Dan Batson in social psychology, and Jean Decety in neuroscience, have identified “feelings” as the aspect of focus in the construct of empathy (see, Rasoal et al., 2011). Hoffman (1987) defined empathy as an affective response to another’s situation. Similarly, Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade (1987) defined empathy as an other-oriented emotional response. Based on these conceptualizations, it is logical that a communicative response to empathy that is an expression of affect, such as Emotional Reactivity, was evaluated as the most supportive and the highest quality.

This finding also fits into the existing empathetic communication literature. An early study on nonverbal behavior in therapy found that nonverbal cues exponentially increased the ratings of therapists’ interpersonal skills and effectiveness (Sherer & Rogers, 1980). Engelen and Röttger-Rössler (2012) described emotional matching as a distinctive quality of empathetic communication as compared to sympathy that does not involve matching the emotion of the distressed other. Isomorphism or emotional mimicry is also an important part of empathetic communication (Walter, 2012). Mimicry is defined as the tendency to imitate facial expressions, voice, and posture of others with whom we interact (Hess, Blairy, & Philippot, 1999). Hess and Fischer (2014) found that people engage in emotional mimicry because it promotes affiliation goals. Additionally, Emotional Reactivity is also similar to emotional contagion, which is described to be a big part of affective empathy (Lawrence et al., 2004). Svenaeus (2015) explained that emotional contagion is a process in which one person starts to feel the same thing that the
distressed other is feeling. Having the same feeling as the distressed other and expressing it nonverbally is the quintessence of Emotional Reactivity.

Verbal Affirmation was evaluated as the worst expression of empathy based on both level of supportiveness and message quality. This finding has two major implications. First, people may see direct verbal encouragement and affirmation during tough times to be superficial and not helpful. This is supported by literature on advice as a form of social support. MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, and Budarz (2004) found that advice that was evaluated positively was relevant to the problem, feasible, and low in limitations. Verbal encouragement may be good for boosting morale but it does not offer any help that is related to the problem. Hence, people might perceive it as superficial and not helpful.

Second, Verbal Affirmation may not be perceived as totally capturing the essence of empathy experience and empathetic communication. For instance, Verbal Affirmation include statements such as “When people are feeling negative emotion, I encourage them by saying that they will get through this” and “If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are.” These verbal encouragements do not involve perspective-taking or emotional contagion, which are the core of cognitive and affective empathy respectively (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). Therefore, this could be the reason why people rated Verbal Affirmation as the worst empathetic expression. All in all, as compared to verbal messages, nonverbal behavior, such as emotional mimicry, is harder to imitate and express in a formulaic way. Perhaps for this reason, an expression of the same emotion as the distressed other is perceived as the most genuine form of empathetic communication. Consequently, Emotional Reactivity was
evaluated as the most supportive and highest quality while Verbal Affirmation was rated the least supportive and lowest quality for negative events.

**Empathetic responses to positive events.** For empathetic expressions in positive events, Experience Sharing was rated the highest in supportiveness and message quality with Emotional Reactivity as a runner up. There are a few explanations to this finding. Experience Sharing includes messages such as “I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before, so I really understand what they are experiencing” and “I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.”

Essentially, Experience Sharing as an expression of empathy is a communicative response to both cognitive and affective empathy because it involves expressions of understanding of the other’s situation (cognitive) and feelings (affective). For this reason, Experience Sharing could be seen as a more empathetic way to respond to people’s positive events.

There are four possible responses to capitalization attempts (Gable et al., 2004). Active-constructive responses are the most effective and supportive way to respond to people’s disclosure of good news. Active-constructive responses involve but are not limited to “reacting enthusiastically, asking questions, and elaborating” (Gable et al., 2012, p. 965). People who have had similar positive experiences can truly understand the discloser’s joy/excitement and, therefore, respond to them in a more genuinely enthusiastic way. It was found that shared experiences foster relational closeness (Min & Kim, 2015). Since some positive experiences are exclusive to certain groups of people (e.g., giving birth, winning a basketball game, getting a dream job, etc.), having had similar experiences allows some people to be more empathetic than the others. Thus,
Experience Sharing as an expression of empathy in positive events has higher message quality and is perceived as more supportive than other types of expressions.

Verbal Affirmation was rated as the worst expression of empathy in positive events on both supportiveness and message quality scales. This finding can be explained by positive empathy literature. Similar to negative events, people may find direct verbal affirmation toward them when they are experiencing positive events as artificial because it lacks perspective taking. According to Morelli et al. (2015), positive empathy is defined as “understanding and vicariously sharing others’ positive emotions” (p. 58). Based on this definition, an effective empathetic expression in positive events should also involve a cognitive understanding of the other person’s positive experience. This is perhaps what is lacking in Verbal Affirmation.

Also, based on the active-constructive responses to capitalization attempts discussed earlier, Verbal Affirmation may be seen as active but conceptually it is not constructive. Constructive responses to positive event disclosure involve a more complex communication response, such as asking questions and clarifying the news (Gable et al., 2012). Examples of Verbal Affirmation include: “When something good happens to people, I tell them that it is because they have wonderful qualities” and “When people are experiencing something great, I tell them that they deserve it.” From this comparison, it is understandable why people rated direct verbal affirmation and encouragement as the least supportive and lowest message quality of all the empathetic expressions in positive events.
Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations and future studies are discussed in this section. There are many limitations to this dissertation, including 1) lack of diversity in the samples, 2) no evidence on causal relationships and related outcomes, 3) the EES for Positive Events scale items were not piloted and the scale was not validated, 4) combinations of empathetic expressions were not evaluated, 5) the context was limited to college student friendships, 6) the limitations of using vignettes in survey research, and 7) the intercultural settings implications.

First, the samples are not representative of all populations. All of the data in this dissertation were collected from the undergraduate student population with the average age in the 20s. Also, most of the students were communication major students. This means that they may have had a more nuanced way of answering communication-related questions and a better understanding of the questionnaire items. It is imperative to further investigate whether the scales presented in this dissertation are still reliable and valid with different populations and samples. Future studies should examine the differences in empathetic expressions used among people of different age and cultural backgrounds, as well as which messages are perceived as more effective within diverse groups of people. For instance, researchers could look at the generational differences in empathetic expressions.

Second, the studies in this dissertation did not observe causal relationships and related outcomes. For instance, Gentzler, Kerns, and Keener (2010) conducted research on the effects of attachment styles on responses to positive events disclosure. Future research should study the antecedents of empathetic expressions. Future studies should
also investigate the related outcomes of empathetic expressions. For instance, Salazar (2013) found that compassionate communication is positively associated with relational satisfaction. It is important to find out the related outcomes of empathetic expressions because it has the potential to contribute to more meaningful personal relationships.

Third, as opposed to the EES for Negative Events, the scale items of the EES for Positive Events did not come from qualitative data. The items were taken from the five factors of EES for Negative Events with some of the items reworded to represent positive situations/emotions. Hence, some expressions may be left out. Perhaps a qualitative study of how people typically express empathy in positive events would be beneficial for this construct. Another limitation is that the scale for positive events has not been validated. Thus, it is imperative that future studies aim to establish validity for this measurement.

Fourth, the studies did not test for the best combination of empathetic expressions. It is possible that some combinations of empathetic expressions are more effective and helpful than others. For instance, Verbal Affirmation and Touch could be the best combination of empathetic expressions when the other person wins at a sporting event. Therefore, researchers could try to test different combinations of empathetic expressions to find out which combination is the strongest in various contexts.

Fifth, researchers of other disciplines, as well as communication scholars in other focus areas (e.g., health communication, intercultural communication, organizational communication), could study these empathetic expressions in more specific contexts. Example questions are: which empathetic expression is the most effective in the event of discovering a life threatening disease? Do empathetic expressions differ between female and male sexual harassment in the workplace? Which empathetic expression is the most
helpful for international student advising? Nevertheless, these questions can be answered with further investigations on the topic.

Sixth, there are limitations in using vignettes in survey research. According to Atzmüller and Steiner (2010) “vignette studies use short descriptions of situations or persons (vignettes) that are usually shown to respondents within surveys in order to elicit their judgments about these scenarios” (p. 128). In the message evaluation study presented in Chapter 5, a vignette was created for each type of empathetic expression to represent all of the items in that factor. Since the participants only rated the vignettes, and not all of the items in the scale, they might not have enough information about the types of empathetic expressions to rate them more accurately. A related issue is that each vignette focused on a specific way of enacting a particular empathetic expression, which may have been more or less effective than other ways of enacting that type of expression. Therefore, future studies should use a variety of vignettes that represent different ways that each type of empathetic expression could be communicated. Other methods, such as rating individual item on effectiveness, could also be utilized in the future.

Finally, this dissertation did not take into account the intercultural settings implications. For instant, the empathetic expressions constructed in this dissertation may not work, as effectively, in other cultures or individuals in other cultures may practice completely different types of expressions of empathy. Thus, the empathetic expressions presented here are Eurocentric and specific to this particular population. Future research could address this limitation by adopting various perspectives on empathy. Perhaps empathetic communication in intercultural settings could also be conceptualized as relational empathy where empathy is seen as a learning process that occurs among
communicators as they interact. As Broome (2009) stated, relational empathy is a process that “allows understandings to remain open as new information is gained and as new learning develops” (p. 187).

**Strengths**

Despite the limitations discussed above, this dissertation possesses several strengths. First, this dissertation presents a multi-step scale construction process for the EES for Negative Events. The items from this scale were developed from the ground up using qualitative methods, and then the items went through quantitative analysis. Finally, the scale was validated with two different college-age samples. Through this rigorous process of scale construction, the EES for Negative Events appears to be a highly reliable and valid scale ready for scholars to adopt. Alpha reliability tests of all the factors demonstrated high reliabilities.

Second, this dissertation includes studies from both sender and receiver perspectives. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 were dedicated to understanding empathetic expressions from the sender perspective. Chapter 5 was focused on evaluating empathetic expressions from the receiver perspective. This provides a holistic view of empathetic expressions as a new communication construct.

Third, all of the studies presented in this dissertation had good sample sizes. According to Comrey and Lee (1992), a sample size of 300+ is considered good and 500+ is considered very good. Good sample size is important in quantitative research because it gives us more information, provides more consistent data, and, therefore, reduces our uncertainty. Particularly, it improves explanatory power and reduces the probability of committing a type I error.
Finally, this dissertation expands the empathetic communication literature by creating multidimensional measurements for empathetic communication and examining empathetic communication in positive events. As stated in the introduction, there is no comprehensive scale for measuring empathetic communication, and existing scales tend to be unidimensional. Thus, the EES for Negative and Positive Events expand the literature on empathetic communication by offering five types of expressions of empathy in both situations. Furthermore, research on empathetic communication in positive events is scarce; thus, the studies presented here serve as extensions of empathetic communication literature.

**Future Theory Development**

Taken together, these studies suggest certain principles of empathetic communication, as well as certain characteristics that help define empathetic expressions. Principle 1: Empathetic Expressions is different from the experience of empathy and, therefore, should be treated as a distinctive construct. This is supported by data derived from the development of the EES in Negative and Positive Events. The factors that emerged from the two sets of data confirmed that there are many types of empathetic expressions. These factors, though a few are similar, are not the same as the factors in other empathy experience scales, such as EQ (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004), Emotional Empathy (Caruso & Mayer, 1998), and the State Empathy Scale (Shen, 2010).

Principle 2: Expressions of empathy comprise a combination of verbal and nonverbal messages. This is supported by the factors that emerged in both of the scales developed in this dissertation. The EES for Negative Events includes verbal communication factors, such as Verbal Affirmation and Experience Sharing, and
nonverbal communication factors, such as Empathetic Voice, Emotional Reactivity, and Empathetic Touch. The EES for Positive Events includes verbal communication factors, such as Verbal Affirmation and Experience Sharing, and nonverbal communication factors, such as Empathetic Voice, Emotional Reactivity, Celebratory Touch, and Hugs.

Principle 3: The receivers determine whether the received empathetic expression is effective and helpful. This principle is supported by the message evaluation from the receiver perspective study presented in Chapter 5. It was found that Emotional Reactivity as an expression of empathy was evaluated as the most supportive and highest quality, whereas Verbal Affirmation was evaluated the lowest on both criteria. In positive events, Experience Sharing was evaluated the most effective while Verbal Affirmation remained the lowest rating.

Furthermore, there are other principles that come from the literature and/or are self-evident; however, they were not tested in the present set of studies. Principle 4: Empathetic expressions can be intentional or unintentional. Conceptually, effective empathetic expressions should be intentional because the process involves complex understanding of others and their situations. As Svenaeus (2015) stated, sympathy is passive but empathy is active. Similar to mindful communication, empathetic expressions can be purposive and goal-oriented (Burgoon et al., 2000). This is connected to Principle 5: Empathetic expressions can be learned, changed, and improved. Unintentional expressions of empathy can be conveyed ineffectively and, hence, perceived as support attempts that failed or miscarried help (Holmstrom et al., 2005). As a communication skill, empathetic communication can be improved with practice and experience.
Principle 6: Preference of empathetic expressions from both sender and receiver perspectives may differ based on different independent variables, such as age, gender, cultural background, and context, but the act of expressions of empathy remains universal, which means that people from every culture expresses and receives some type of empathetic expression. This is based on intercultural communication concepts, such as high- and low-context cultures. People from low-context cultures tend to communicate more explicitly while people from high-context cultures tend to communicate more implicitly (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). Therefore, people in high-context cultures may prefer indirect expressions of empathy more than direct ones and vice versa.

Principle 7: The use of different types of empathetic expressions is moderated by relational closeness. Evidently, people communicate with loved ones and close friends differently from acquaintances and strangers. A recent study found that relational closeness and unsolicited advice are positively correlated (Feng & Magen, 2015). This means that the closer you are to the distressed other, the more you are going to offer unsolicited advice as social support. This provides related evidence that people express empathy differently based on how close they are to the receivers.

Concluding Statements

In conclusion, the EES for Negative Events should be utilized and tested in different contexts with diverse samples. This measurement has been carefully constructed and validated, and, so far, is highly reliable. The more information scholars have about expressions of empathy, the more we are able to navigate interactions in our personal relationships effectively and in more meaningful ways. Scholars are also encouraged to prove/disprove the principles outlined in the previous section. Further investigations are
valuable to the advancement of the knowledge on empathy and empathetic interactions. This advancement is pivotal to the depth of our understanding of empathetic communication, which could potentially have a wide impact in society.

Although it was found that Emotional Reactivity was evaluated as the best empathetic expression in negative events and Experience Sharing was rated the best empathetic expression in positive events, it is not suggested that people should only use these forms of expression of empathy. Past research has found that a combination of verbal and nonverbal messages can strengthen the quality of supportive messages (Broome, 1993; Burleson et al., 2009; Jones & Guerrero, 2001; Salazar, 2013).

As for practical implications, people could try to improve their empathetic communication skills by adopting some of the empathetic expressions in their daily lives. Expressing empathy can sometimes be difficult. However, with practice, I believe that people can get better at communicating their empathy experience. This dissertation does not provide evidence that empathetic expression improves empathy, but communicators can improve their empathetic expressions skill. As Vangelisti (2009) stated, “Social support can be delivered in more or less skillful ways” (p. 43). Empathy has the potential to change people’s lives by solving interpersonal conflicts (Broome, 1993), drawing people to help each other (Dewaele & Wei, 2012), increasing the chance of positive contact between in-groups and out-groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), and improving overall social communication (Engelen & Röttger-Rössler, 2012). I believe people should try to learn, improve, and become competent empathetic communicators. As Maya Angelou, an American civil rights activist, once said: “I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it.”
REFERENCES


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124


APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION 1: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT
Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Tara Suwinyattichaiporn, and I am a graduate student in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. I am working under the direction of Dr. Laura Guerrero to conduct research on empathetic expressions. The goal is to create a scale that measures ways in which people expresses empathy.

We are inviting your participation, which will involve answering a series of questions online regarding empathy and how you express empathy. It should take approximately 15 minutes to participate.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous and will not be linked directly to you in any way. You can decide not to participate at any time. There will be no penalty if you decide not to participate. You must be over the age of 18 in order to participate. You will be able to earn extra credit for your participation (points possible is under your instructor’s discretion).

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact us at jsuwinya@asu.edu (or) 909-248-8282 and laura.guerrero@asu.edu. We thank you for your participation.
How Do You Express Empathy?: The Development and Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions Scale

Dear Participant:

My name is Tara Suwinyattichaiporn, and I am a Graduate Student in The Huge Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to gain a better understanding of how individuals verbally and nonverbally express empathy in their daily lives. I am inviting your participation, which will involve answering series of questions online regarding empathy and how you express empathy. This process should take you 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be over the age of 18 to participate.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Although there is no direct benefit to you, there may be some benefits of your participation. Mainly, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of Empathic Expressions and help support the need for additional research in this area. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be completely anonymous. You will not be asked to write your name or any other obvious personal identifying information on this questionnaire. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the Primary Investigator, Dr. Laura Guerrero at laura.guerrero@asu.edu or Co-Investigator, Tara Suwinyattichaiporn at jsuwinya@asu.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

The return of your answers will be considered your consent to participate. You will be able to earn extra credits for your participation. Please print out confirmation page at the end and give it to your instructors as evidence of participation for extra credit purpose. However, if you decide not to participate, there will be other opportunities for you to earn extra credits for your class.

Sincerely,

Tara Suwinyattichaiporn, M.A
Section 1: Demographics
Directions: Please answer the following questions.
1. Sex ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to disclose
2. Age __________ years old
3. College year ☐ Freshmen (year 1) ☐ Sophomore (year 2) ☐ Junior (year 3) ☐ Senior (year 4)
4. Race ☐ White/ Caucasian ☐ Black/African ☐ Native American/ Native Alaska ☐ Asian ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Other
5. Local/International ☐ Local/American student ☐ International student

Section 2: Empathetic Expressions
Directions: Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand what someone is feeling, whether those feelings are positive or negative. Sometimes we communicate feelings of understanding to others. Think about the last few times that you were in a situation where you felt you could identify with and understand another person’s feelings. To what extent do you tend to communicate your thoughts and feelings and use the following behaviors in this type of situation?

Please use the following 7-point scale:
1= Never to 7= Very Often
1. I listen to people with undivided attention to try and fully understand where they are coming from.
2. I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do.
3. I try to show sincerity with my eyes so people know that I get what they are saying.
4. I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.
5. I have a sympathetic look on my face when listening to people’s problems.
6. I let people know that I have felt that same way that they are feeling.
7. I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are going through.
8. If people are dealing with something distressing, I say I’m so sorry you have to go through that.
9. When something good happens, I tell people that I feel happy for them.
10. I agree with what people are saying to show them I understand.
11. I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.
12. When people are feeling negative emotion, I encourage them by saying that they will get through this.
13. I use eye contact to show that I am listening and understand what people are saying.
14. When people are dealing with a tough situation, I assure them that things will get better.
15. I offer to listen to people if they want to talk about their feelings.
16. I comfort people with a hug if I think that they are feeling down.
17. I tell people that I understand and am available if they want to share their feelings with someone.
18. If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are.
19. I restate another person’s story in my own words to show that I understand.
20. I exchange knowing glances with people to signal that we share an understanding.
21. I show people I understand where they are coming from by giving them a hug.
22. I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.
23. I put myself in their place and give them the type of advice that I think would be most helpful given their situation.
24. I give people a reassuring touch if I see that they are distressed.
25. I finish another person’s sentences (at least once) as a way of showing that I understand.
26. I pat people on the arm or back to show them that I care.
27. I use encouraging or positive facial expressions when listening to people talk about their feelings.
28. I notice that my voice gets a bit lower and softer when I am empathizing with people.
29. My voice gets calm when I am talking with someone who needs comfort.
30. I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.
31. I smile at people to comfort them.
32. I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.
33. I express sadness when I am around people who are sad.
34. When people need encouragement, I remind them that they are strong and can get through tough situations.
35. I lean in toward them to show that I am into what they are saying.
36. I remind people of their accomplishments if I think it will help them feel better about themselves.
37. I smile and act especially nice if I think it will help someone feel better.
38. I nod my head in agreement to show that I understand.
39. I try my best to show people I understand by reiterating what they told me.
40. I communicate to people how I think they feel.
41. I express happiness when I am around people who are happy.
42. When people are having a tough time, I tell them that they will be fine because they have wonderful qualities.
43. I use a soft voice when talking to someone I empathize with.
44. I give people my condolences if something bad has happened to them.

Section 3: Empathy Experience
Directions: Below is a list of statements. Please read each statement very carefully and rate how strongly you agree or disagree with it. There are no right or wrong answers, or trick questions.

Please use the following 5-point scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree
1. I can easily tell if someone else wants to enter a conversation.
2. I really enjoy caring for other people.
3. I find it hard to know what to do in a social situation. (r)
4. I often find it difficult to judge if something is rude or polite. (r)
5. In a conversation, I tend to focus on my own thoughts rather than on what my listener might be thinking. (r)
6. I can pick up quickly if someone says one thing but means another.
7. It is hard for me to see why some things upset people so much. (r)
8. I find it easy to put myself in somebody else’s shoes.
9. I am good at predicting how someone will feel.
10. I am quick to spot when someone in a group is feeling awkward or uncomfortable.
11. I can’t always see why someone should have felt offended by a remark. (r)
12. I don’t tend to find social situations confusing.
13. Other people tell me I am good at understanding how they are feeling and what they are thinking.
14. I can easily tell if someone else is interested or bored with what I am saying.
15. Friends usually talk to me about their problems as they say that I am very understanding.
16. I can sense if I am intruding, even if the other person doesn’t tell me.
17. Other people often say that I am insensitive, though I don’t always see why. (r)
18. I can tune into how someone else feels rapidly and intuitively.
19. I can easily work out what another person might want to talk about.
20. I can tell if someone is masking their true emotion.
21. I am good at predicting what someone will do.
22. I tend to get emotionally involved with a friend’s problems

Section 4: Compassionate Communication
Directions: The following statements describe the ways some people behave while talking with or to others who are distressed about something in their lives. Please think about the degree to which you believe each of the following statements applies to you when you talk to your friend who is in distressed.

Please use the following 5-point scale:
1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = very often
When my friend is in distressed, I tend to:
1. Let them know that I will be there if they need me
2. Let them know that I will listen if they need to talk
3. Listen with interest when they talk
4. Touch them on their arm
5. Hold their hand
6. Touch their shoulder
7. Pat them on the back
8. Empathize with them by trying to understand their feelings or emotions
9. Express sympathy toward their situation
10. Let them pour their feelings or concerns out to me
11. Send them a supportive private message on their social networking site (e.g., Facebook)
12. Post a positive message on their social networking site (e.g., Facebook)
13. Send a supportive email
14. Send an email communicating compassion toward them
15. Support him or her emotionally the best I can
16. Try to relate to their situation
17. Display interest in their issues
18. Rub their shoulders
19. Put my arm around their shoulder
20. Touch their back
21. Post a compassionate message on their social networking site (e.g., Facebook)
22. Reply to their social networking posts in a compassionate way
23. Reply to their emails in a compassionate way

Section 5: Narcissism
Directions: These are questions concerning your thoughts and feelings about yourself and relationships with others. Please read each statement carefully and decide how much the statement is generally true of you. Be sure to answer every item and try to be as honest and accurate as possible in your responses.

Please use the following 6-point scale: 1 (not at all true) to 6 (very true)

1. I can become entirely absorbed in thinking about my personal affairs, my health, my cares, or my relations with others.

2. My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by the slighting remarks of others.

3. When I enter a room I often become self-conscious and feel that the eyes of others are upon me.

4. I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.

5. I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present.

6. I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people.

7. I often interprete the remarks of others in a personal way.

8. I easily become wrapped up in my own interests and forget the existence of others.

9. I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people's troubles.
10. I am secretly "put out" when other people come to me with their troubles, asking me for my time and sympathy.

Section 6: Verbal Aggressiveness
Directions: This survey is concerned with how we try to get people to comply with our wishes. Indicate how often each statement is true for you when you try to influence other person.

Please use the following 5-point scale:
1 = almost never true; 2 = rarely true; 3 = occasionally true; 4 = often true; 5 = almost always true

1. I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individuals’ intelligence when I attack their ideas.

2. When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to soften their stubbornness.

3. I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.

4. When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.

5. When other do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.

6. If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.

7. When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.

8. I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.

9. When people simply will not budge on a matter of importance I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.

10. When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get back at them.

11. When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.

12. When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.

13. I like poking fun at people who do things, which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.

14. When I attack a person's ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.

15. When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
16. When people do things, which are mean, or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.

17. I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.

18. When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.

19. When I am not able to refute others’ positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.

20. When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.
Effective Empathy: The Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions

Hello, my name is Tara Suwinyattichaiporn and I am a graduate student in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. I am working under the direction of Dr. Laura Guerrero to conduct research on empathetic expressions. The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of empathetic expressions.

We are inviting your participation, which will involve answering series of questions online regarding empathy and how you express empathy. It should take approximately 15 minutes to participate.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your responses are anonymous and will not be linked directly to you in any way. You can decide not to participate at any time. There will be no penalty if you decide not to participate. You must be over the age of 18 in order to participate. You will be able to earn extra credits for your participation (points possible is under your instructor’s discretion).

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact us at jsuwinya@asu.edu and laura.guerrero@asu.edu. We thank you for your participation.

Below is the link to the survey:
https://asuclas.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4VdOp9uaTmk0aVL
APPENDIX D

DATA COLLECTION 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND SURVEY
Effective Empathy: The Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions

Dear Participant:

My name is Tara Suwinyattichaiporn, and I am a Graduate Student in The Huge Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University working under the direction of Dr. Laura Guerrero. I am conducting a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of empathetic expressions. I am inviting your participation, which will involve answering series of questions online regarding how you evaluate empathetic expressions and communicate empathy. This process should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be over the age of 18 to participate.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Although there is no direct benefit to you, there may be some benefits of your participation. Mainly, your participation will contribute to a better understanding of empathetic communication and help support the need for additional research in this area. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be completely anonymous. You will not be asked to write your name or any other obvious personal identifying information on this questionnaire. To ensure anonymity, please avoid using full names in open-ended questions. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the Primary Investigator, Dr. Laura Guerrero at laura.guerrero@asu.edu or Co-Investigator, Tara Suwinyattichaiporn at jsuwny@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

The return of your answers will be considered your consent to participate. You will be able to earn extra credits for your participation. Please print out confirmation page at the end and give it to your instructors as evidence of participation for extra credit purpose. However, if you decide not to participate, there will be other opportunities for you to earn extra credits for your class.

Sincerely,
Tara Suwinyattichaiporn
Section 1: Demographics
Directions: Please answer the following questions.
1. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to disclose
2. Sexual Orientation ☐ Prefer not to disclose
3. Age ☐ 18 - 20 ☐ 21 - 23 ☐ 24 – 26 ☐ 27 – 29 ☐ 30 and above ☐ Prefer not to disclose
4. College year ☐ Freshmen (year 1) ☐ Sophomore (year 2) ☐ Junior (year 3) ☐ Senior (year 4) ☐ year 5 and above ☐ Prefer not to disclose
5. Race/Ethnicity ☐ White/ Caucasian ☐ Black/African ☐ Asian ☐ Native American/Native Alaska ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to disclose
6. Local/International ☐ Local/American student ☐ International student

Section 2: Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions
(Half of the participants will be sent to the Negative Experience questionnaire “Scenario 1” and other half will be sent to the Positive Experience questionnaire “Scenario 2”)

Scenario 1
Think about the last time you were really upset about something. It could have been a breakup, a problem with school or work, a fight with someone, or a death in the family. Recall how you felt. Please write a brief description of the event you are thinking about.
Answer:

Now imagine that while you are feeling that way you briefly run into five different good friends of yours at different times of day. Please imagine interacting with each of the friends separately as described below and then indicate how you would likely perceive their communication.

A. A friend you run into assures you that things will get better and reminds you of your good qualities.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
  1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
  2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
  3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
  4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
  5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
  6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
  7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
  8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory
B. The next friend you run into tells you that he or she has been in similar situations and understands how you feel.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory
C. The next friend you run into speaks to you in a calm, soothing voice that is soft and comforting.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory
D. As you talk to the next friend you run into, that friend seems to start feeling the same emotions that you are expressing.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

E. The last friend you run into pats you on the back and then gives you a hug. How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

Scenario 2
Think about the last time you were really happy or excited about something. It could have been a new relationship, an achievement at school or work, or an upcoming event. Recall how you felt. Please write a brief description of the event you are thinking about.
Answer:

Now imagine that while you are feeling that way you briefly run into five different good friends of yours at different times of day. Please imagine interacting with each of the friends separately as described below and then indicate how you would likely perceive their communication.
A. The first friend you run into says you deserve it and reminds you of your good qualities. How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?

1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

B. The next friend you run into tells you that he or she has been in similar situations and understands why you are so happy/excited. How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?

1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

C. The next friend you run into sounds really happy and excited for you by the tone of voice. How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?

1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

D. As you talk to the next friend you run into, that friend seems to start feeling the same emotions that you are expressing.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory

E. The last friend you run into gives you a hug or a high five.
How would you rate the way that this friend communicated with you?
1. Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Other-centered
2. Invalidates 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Validates
3. Judges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empathizes
4. Disregards 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Acknowledges
5. Unconcerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concerned
6. Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unhelpful
7. Appropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inappropriate
8. Sensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Insensitive
9. Effective 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ineffective
10. High Quality 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Low Quality
11. Personable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Impersonal
12. Uncaring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Caring
13. Concerned 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned
14. Beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not Beneficial
15. Unsatisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfactory
Section 3: Empathetic Expressions Scale
(Participants that completed scenario 1 in the previous section will complete Empathetic Expressions Scale for Negative Experience; and participants that completed scenario 2 in the previous section will complete Empathetic Expressions Scale for Positive Experience)

Directions: Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand what someone is feeling, whether those feelings are positive or negative. Sometimes we communicate feelings of understanding to others. Think about the last few times that you were in a situation where you felt you could identify with and understand another person’s feelings. To what extent do you tend to communicate your thoughts and feelings by using the following behaviors?

Please use the following 7-point scale:
1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Not Very Often, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Often, 6 = Very Often 7 = Always

### Negative Experience

**Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement**
1. When people are feeling negative emotion, I encourage them by saying that they will get through this.
2. When people are dealing with a tough situation, I assure them that things will get better.
3. I offer to listen to people if they want to talk about their feelings.
4. I tell people that I understand and am available if they want to share their feelings with someone.
5. If people are distressed, I try to boost their confidence by telling them how great they are.
6. When people need encouragement, I remind them that they are strong and can get through tough situations.
7. I remind people of their accomplishments if I think it will help them feel better about themselves.
8. When people are having a tough time, I tell them that they will be fine because they have wonderful qualities.

**Relating with Past Experiences**
9. I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do.
10. I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.
11. I let people know that I have felt that same way that they are feeling.
12. I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are going through.
13. I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.

**Empathetic Voice**
14. I notice that my voice gets a bit lower and softer when I am empathizing with people.
15. My voice gets calm when I am talking with someone who needs comfort.
16. I use a soft voice when talking to someone I empathize with.
17. I use a soothing voice when I empathize with someone.
18. I use a comforting voice when I empathize with others.

Emotional Reactivity
19. I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.
20. I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.
21. I tend to catch the emotions of people around me.
22. When people communicate emotions to me I start to feel the same way they do.
23. My emotions tend to match the emotions of the people around me.

Empathetic Touch
24. I comfort people with a hug if I think that they are feeling down.
25. I show people I understand where they are coming from by giving them a hug.
26. I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.
27. I give people a reassuring touch if I see that they are distressed.
28. I pat people on the arm or back to show them that I care.

Positive Experience
Expressions of Encouragement/Reinforcement
1. When people are feeling positive emotion, I support them by saying positive things to them.
2. When people are experiencing something great, I tell them that they deserve it.
3. I listen and ask them to tell me more about their positive experience.
4. I express my willingness to hear more about their positive experience.
5. If people are excited, I try to reinforce their feelings by telling them how great they are.
6. When people are excited about something, I tell them I’m excited for them.
7. I remind people of their accomplishments.
8. When something good happens to people, I tell them that it is because they have wonderful qualities.

Relating with Past Experiences
9. I tell people I know what it is like to feel the way they do.
10. I share with people that I understand how they feel because I have been in similar situations.
11. I let people know that I have felt that same way that they are feeling.
12. I tell people that this type of thing happened to me before so I really understand what they are experiencing.
13. I try to recall past experiences in my life to show that I know what others are feeling.

Empathetic Voice
14. I notice that my voice gets a bit higher when I am empathizing with people.
15. My voice gets enthusiastic when I am talking with someone who is excited.
16. My voice sounds happy when I am talking to someone who is happy.
17. I use a cheerful voice when I empathize with someone’s happiness.
18. I use an excited voice when I empathize with someone who is excited.

Emotional Reactivity
19. I tend to experience and express the same emotions that other people are feeling.
20. I begin feeling the same way as people who I am communicating with feel.
21. I tend to catch the emotions of people around me.
22. When people communicate emotions to me I start to feel the same way they do.
23. My emotions tend to match the emotions of the people around me.
   Empathetic Touch
24. I respond to people with a hug when they are happy about something.
25. I give people a high five when something positive happen to them.
26. I hug people to celebrate with them when they are feeling good.
27. When something good happen to people, I pat them on the shoulder.
28. I give people a fist bump when something good happen to them.
APPENDIX E

HUMAN SUBJECT APPROVALS
Dear Laura Guerrero:

On 6/25/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Initial Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>How Do You Express Empathy?: The Development and Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Laura Guerrero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>STUDY00002834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Title:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant ID:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents Reviewed:</td>
<td>• Participant Information Letter_EES.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Survey, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • EES_IRB_Jun18.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Script_EES.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 6/25/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,
EXEMPTION GRANTED

Laura Guerrero
Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of
480/965-3730
Laura.Guerrero@asu.edu

Dear Laura Guerrero:

On 10/20/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Initial Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Effective Empathy: The Evaluation of Empathetic Expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Laura Guerrero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>STUDY00003399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grant Title:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant ID:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Documents Reviewed: | • Recruitment Script_Evaluating EES.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;  
|                  | • Confirmation page for extra credit, Category: Other (to reflect anything not captured above);  
|                  | • Evaluating EES_IRB.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;  
|                  | • Edited according to clarification request, Category: Consent Form;  
|                  | • Evaluating EES Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); |

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/20/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Tara Suwinyattichaiporn
    Tara Suwinyattichaiporn
Tara Suwinyattichaiporn was born in Bangkok, Thailand. She attended Santa Cruz Convent School in Bangkok until 9th Grade and moved to attend Seinajoen Lukio, a high school in Seinajoki, Finland. After finishing high school, she attended Assumption University, a private Catholic university in Bangkok, Thailand, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business English with a minor in Tourism Management. After that, she moved to the United States to attend a master’s program in communication studies at California State University, Los Angeles and earned a Master of Arts in speech communication with a concentration in Intercultural Communication and Instructional Communication. Afterwards, Tara started her Ph.D. journey at the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. After earning her Ph.D. in May 2016, she will begin her career as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Quantitative Research Methods at California State University, Fullerton in Fall 2016.