



Invalidation as Trauma?: Post-traumatic Cognitions Relate to Invalidation and Suicidality

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Introduction

- Empirical work suggests that **emotional invalidation** relates to **suicidal ideation (SI)** and **post-traumatic cognitions (PTCs)**, both of which correlate with each other.
 - This points to underlying mechanisms and/or interrelatedness between invalidation, PTCs, and SI.
 - The theoretical approach of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) also considers invalidation to be a key factor in psychopathology.
- Present research has not tested whether PTCs could mediate the relationship between invalidation and SI.

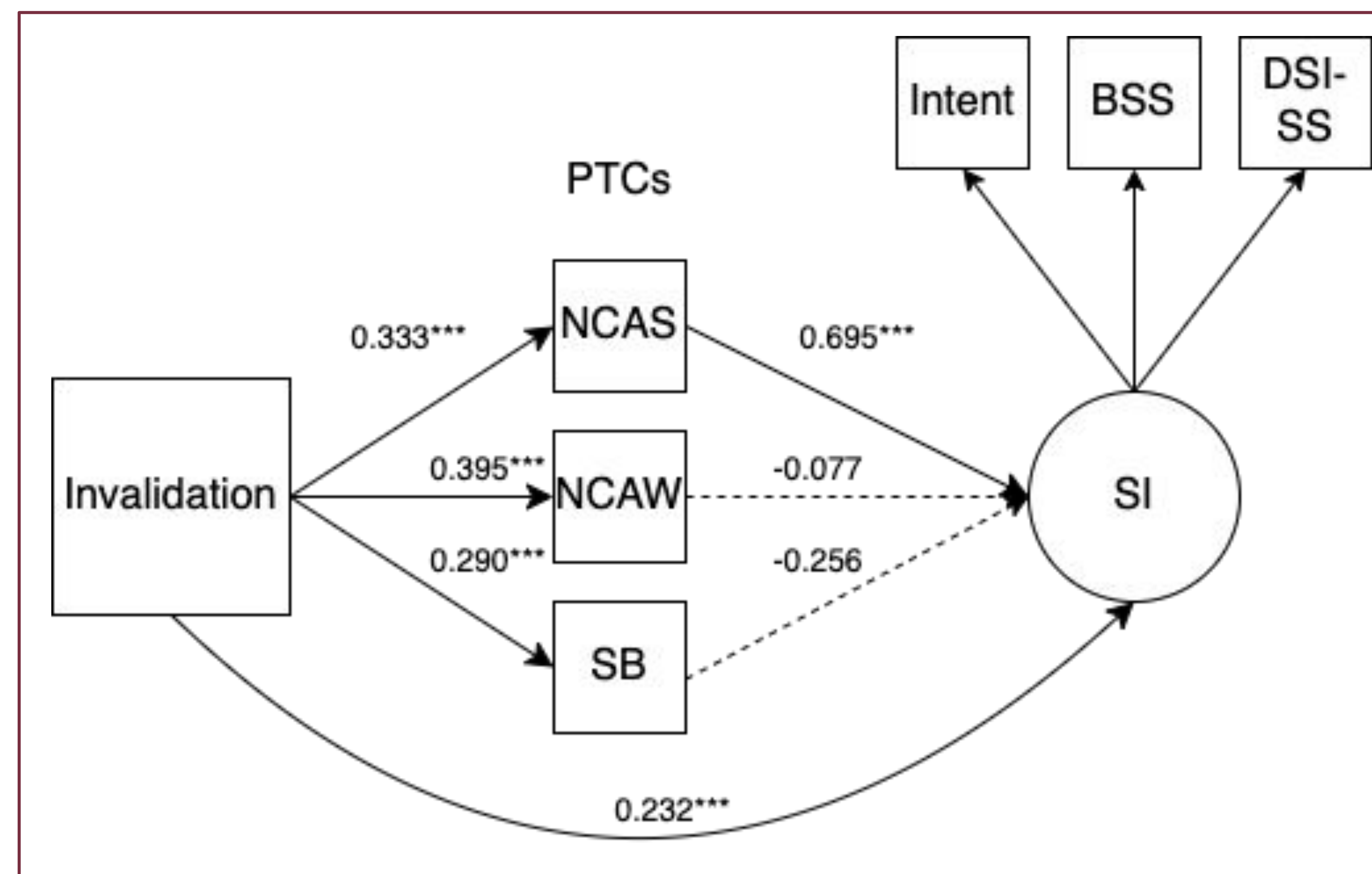
Methods

- Sample Characteristics ($n = 460$)
 - Recruited from large southeastern U.S. university.
 - All participants had at least one minoritized identity (75.9% cis-gendered women, 75.7% people of color, 43.9% non-heterosexual, 3.9% transgender, and 17.6% disability-identifying).
- Measures/Scales
 - The Perceived Invalidation of Emotion Scale (**PIES**) (Zielinski & Veilleux, 2018), which includes the following subscales:
 - **Negative Cognitions About Self (NCAS), Negative Cognitions About the World (NCAW), and Self-Blame (SB).**
 - Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory-9 (**PTCI-9**) (Wells et al., 2019).
 - Depressive Symptom Index – Suicidality Subscale (**DSI-SS**) (Joiner et al., 2002).
 - Beck Scale for Suicidal Ideation (**BSS**) (Beck et al., 1988).
 - One Item Measure of Suicidal **Intent** (rated from 0% to 100%).
- Data Analysis
 - A structural equation indirect effects model was estimated using robust maximum likelihood.

Results

- The estimated model fit well (CFI = .946, TLI = .937, RMSEA = .053).
- NCAS partially accounted for the relationship between perceived invalidation and SI ($b = 0.194, z = 3.198, p < .001$).
- NCAW and SB did not account for the relationship between perceived invalidation and Suicidal Ideation.
 - NCAW ($b = -0.030, z = -1.055, p = 0.291$)
 - SB ($b = -0.062, z = 1.713, p = 0.08$)

Figure 1.
Indirect Effects Model of Relation Between Invalidation, PTCs, and SI.



Note. NCAS, NCAW, and SB reflect previously mentioned subscales of the PTCI-9, which indicate PTCs. Invalidation was measured by the use of PIES. Squares are observed variables, while SI, designated by a circle, was modeled as a latent factor indicated by the BSS, the DSI-SS, and a one-item measure of intent. Significance is indicated by the following:

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$ *** = $p < 0.001$

Discussion

- This study can not support causal connections but does support prior connections between these variables, such as those found by Horwitz et al. (2018) and Hong & Lishner (2016).
- Among PTCs, only negative cognitions about self was found to mediate the relationship between invalidation and SI, indicating the importance of NCAS connecting invalidation with suicidal ideation.
- Invalidation was indirectly (through NCAS) and directly correlated with suicidal ideation. Future studies should focus on invalidation as a possible mechanism of suicidal ideation.
 - The strong link between invalidation and post-traumatic cognitions bolsters the existence of “traumatic invalidation,” in which invalidation acts as a form of trauma (Cardona et al., 2022).
- The fully minoritized sample gives room to investigate disparities in suicidal ideation.
 - Variance among types of minoritized identities may for generalization, despite the lack of fully majority-aligning individuals.

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