

The role of rumination & executive function in autobiographical memory phenomenology in depression

Beth Markham¹, Bernice Wright¹, Steph Sayan², and Rachel Anderson¹

¹School of Psychology and Social Work, University of Hull, UK

²School of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Glasgow, UK

INTRODUCTION & AIM

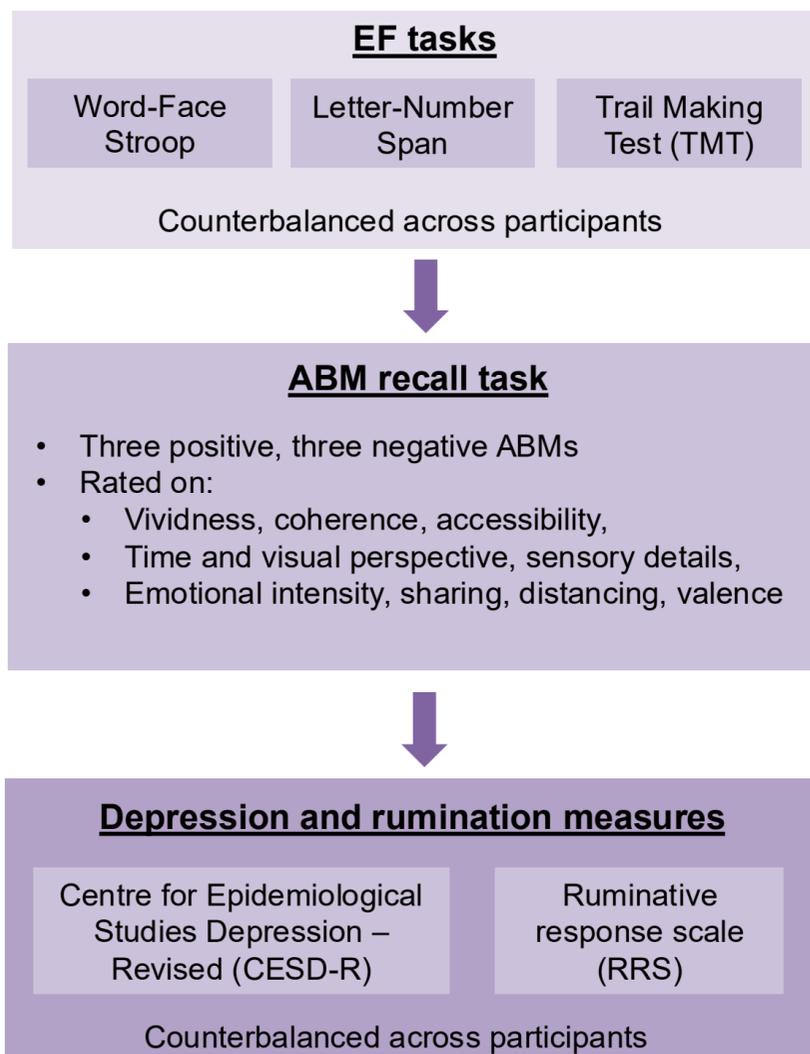
- Depression is associated with alterations in autobiographical memory (ABM) phenomenology
- The mechanisms underlying these differences remain unclear
- Rumination and executive function (EF) are linked to other memory biases in depression (e.g., overgeneral memory)
- Their role in memory phenomenology is less well understood
- Rumination may bias retrieval toward negative material and may be linked to increased reliving during recall
- Reduced EF may limit the phenomenological richness of recalled ABMs

Aim: Investigate how depressive symptoms, rumination, and EF relate to ABM phenomenology

Hypothesis: Higher levels of depressive symptoms and rumination, and reduced EF, will be associated with impoverished phenomenology

METHOD

- 219 University of Hull students (179 after exclusions)



RESULTS

- Higher depression and rumination were associated with distant positive and emotionally intense negative memories

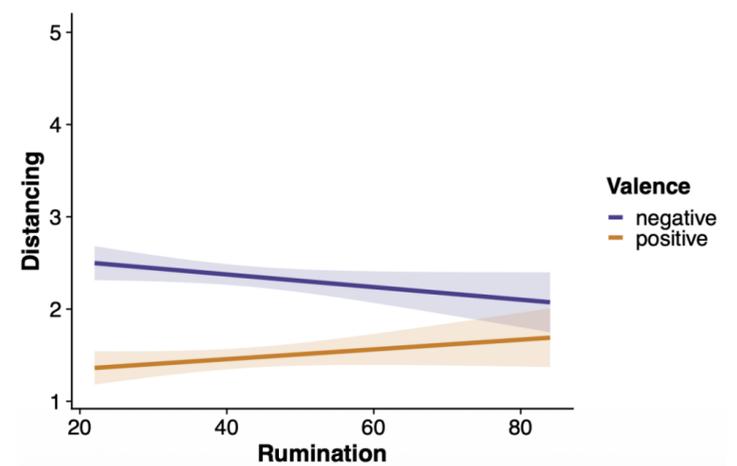


Figure 1. Interaction between rumination and memory valence on distancing

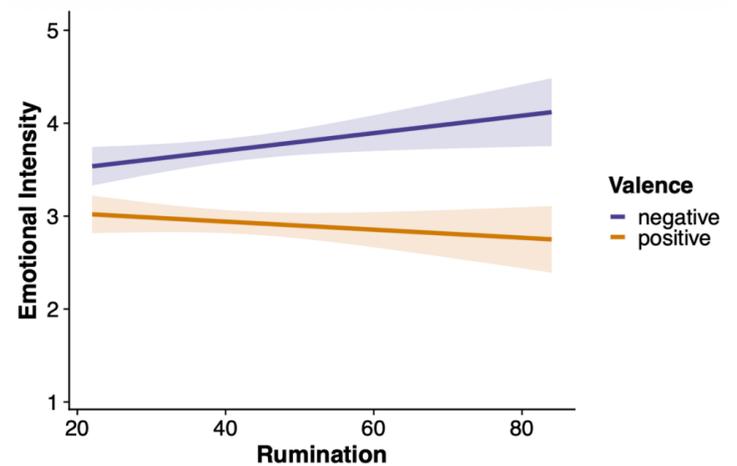


Figure 2. Interaction between rumination and memory valence on emotional intensity

- Executive function showed minimal associations with ABM phenomenological characteristics

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Extends previous findings – depression and rumination affect ABM phenomenological experience
- Limited EF associations suggest mood related effects
- Sample may mask EF deficits (high-functioning undergraduates)

REFERENCES

- [1] Thomsen, D. K., Schnieber, A., & Olesen, M. H. (2011). Rumination is associated with the phenomenological characteristics of autobiographical memories and future scenarios. *Memory*, 19(6), 574-584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2011.591533>
- [2] Werner-Seidler, A., & Moulds, M. L. (2011). Autobiographical memory characteristics in depression vulnerability: Formerly depressed individuals recall less vivid positive memories. *Cognition and Emotion*, 25(6), 1087-1103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2010.531007>
- [3] Williams, J. M. G., Barnhofer, T., Crane, C., Herman, D., Raes, F., Watkins, E., & Dalgleish, T. (2007). Autobiographical memory specificity and emotional disorder. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 122-148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.1.122>
- [4] Eaton, W. W., Muntaner, C., Smith, C., Tien, A., Ybarra, M., & Maruish, M. E. (2004). Center for epidemiologic studies depression scale: Review and revision. *The use of psychological testing for treatment planning and outcomes assessment*, 363-377
- [5] Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Morrow, J. (1991). A prospective study of depression and posttraumatic stress symptoms after a natural disaster: the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 61(1), 115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.61.1.115>