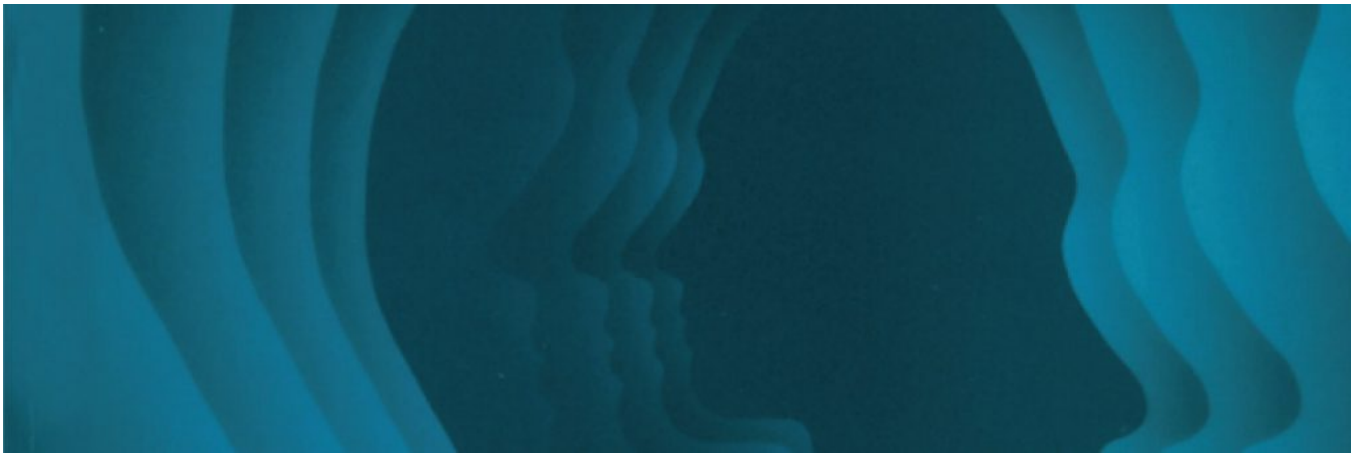
New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

November 30, 2018



Read about the latest research published in *Clinical Psychological Science*:

Rethinking How We Think About Cognitive Interventions for Depression: An Example From Research on Second-Language Acquisition
Gerald J. Haeffel and Michael P. Kaschak

In cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT) for depression, individuals are taught to identify negative thoughts, evaluate them, and generate more adaptive thoughts. Haeffel and Kaschak liken this cognitive restructuring to learning a second language. Just as individuals acquire a new way of coding language when learning a second language, they have to learn a new way of coding life events in a CBT intervention. The same factors that improve success in second-language learning might improve the success of depression treatments, Haeffel and Kaschak say. Immersive experiences that restrict the use of the first language and provide the opportunity to practice the second language (e.g., as when one visits a foreign country) usually improve language acquisition. Similarly, individuals with depression might benefit from surrounding themselves with people who can provide adaptive thoughts for them. Moreover, just as avoiding one's first language improves the use of the second language, Haeffel and Kaschak suggest that CBT may be more effective if focused only on generating new adaptive thoughts without having individuals identify and activate the existing negative thoughts.

Ruminators (Unlike Others) Fail to Show Suppression-Induced Forgetting on Indirect Measures of Memory
Paula T. Hertel, Amaris Maydon, Ashley Ogilvie, and Nilly Mor

Suppression is a useful everyday skill leading to the clinically important outcome of forgetting. Forgetting that is achieved as a consequence of suppression practice is typically demonstrated on direct tests of memory such as deliberate recall, even though indirect tests are often more ecologically valid. This report describes two experiments in which participants practice suppressing response words

previously learned as the second members of pairs when cued by the first members (i.e., *choice mistake*). Then they took an indirect test of memory—a test that ostensibly has a goal other than remembering but nevertheless reflects previous experience. In the indirect test in Experiment 1, students who did *not* describe themselves to be ruminators (i.e., people who repeatedly focus on negative thoughts) took longer to rate the emotional value of central targets when the targets were flanked by previously learned response words (i.e., *mistake*), compared to when those response words had been suppressed or were new. On the indirect test in Experiment 2, the cue members of the previously learned pairs (i.e., *choice*) served as cues for free associations. For the non-ruminators, the free-association responses reflected the meaning of the cues established during learning, but did so less often when the corresponding response words (i.e., *mistake*) had been suppressed. Notably, students who described themselves as ruminators failed to show suppression-induced "forgetting" on either indirect test. This outcome suggests that ruminative habits cannot be easily overcome by practicing suppression.

Attention Bias in Rumination and Depression: Cognitive Mechanisms and Brain Networks
Roselinde H. Kaiser, Hannah R. Snyder, Franziska Goer, Rachel Clegg, Manon Ironside, and Diego A. Pizzagalli

People with depression exhibit biased attention to negative emotional information. Kaiser and colleagues conducted a study to explore the neurocognitive mechanisms of this bias. The researchers showed women with and without depression a series of adjectives superimposed onto photos of themselves or of other people. Some adjectives were self-referential words that participants had used to describe themselves in a first session, four weeks earlier. In one task, participants were asked to decide quickly whether the adjective was positive or negative (valence judgment task); in a second task they judged whether the adjective had been used in their self-description. Participants with depression judged negative adjectives more quickly than other adjectives but only when those were self-referential and in the task in which they had to decide whether the adjectives had been used in their self-description. This indicated an attentional bias for negative information only when it was self-referential and task-relevant. However, a subgroup of participants with ruminative depression (tendency toward negative, repetitive thinking) was faster to judge both self-descriptiveness and valence of negative self-referential adjectives, especially when paired with their own photos. Ruminative depression was thus associated with a bias for negative self-descriptive information even when it was task-irrelevant. In previous brain scans, Kaiser et al. found that individuals with ruminative depression showed differences in the brain activity among regions involved in orienting attention toward self-focused thinking relative to individuals with other types of depression. Taken together, these results suggest the importance of taking into account the heterogeneity of depression subtypes and their neurocognitive differences to enhancing clinical outcomes.