



Examining the association between rumination, negative affectivity, and negative affect induced by a paced auditory serial addition task

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Abstract

The present study examined the relations among a depressive ruminative response style, a general propensity to experience negative affectivity, and negative affect induced by a paced serial auditory addition task (PASAT). Ninety nonclinical individuals completed a computerized version of the PASAT, which elicits a generalized negative affect response [Lejuez, C. W., Kahler, C. W., & Brown, R. A. (2003). A modified computer version of the paced auditory serial addition task (PASAT) as a laboratory-based stressor: Implications for behavioral assessment. *Behavior Therapist*, 26, 290–292]. As hypothesized, there was a moderate correlation between depressive rumination and a propensity to experience negative affect, as indexed both by a significant association with a negative affect personality factor and the prediction of negative affect elicited during the provocation. Findings also suggested that dispositional negative affectivity moderated the effects of a depressive ruminative response style on the valence but not arousal dimensions of emotional responding to the challenge.

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These findings are discussed in terms of improving our understanding of rumination and its potential role in emotional vulnerability processes.

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1. Introduction

Rumination is an emotion regulatory process defined as behaviors and thoughts that focus an individual's attention on her or his emotional state, inhibit any actions that might distract the individual from his or her (negative) mood (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991), and inhibit action to correct identified problems (Nolen-Hoeksema, Grayson, & Larson, 1999). *Depressive* rumination is a specific type of rumination focused on depressed affect (Segerstrom, Stanton, Alden, & Shortridge, 2003). Depressive rumination has primarily been theorized to be involved with *depressed* affect and mood (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). A relatively large body of literature indicates that a depressive ruminative response style predicts the duration of depressed affect (Nolen-Hoeksema, McBride, & Larson, 1997). For example, people with ruminative styles of responding to their depressed affective state after stressful life events, relative to those without such response styles, are more likely to remain depressed over time (Nolen-Hoeksema, Grayson, & Larson, 1994). Other investigations have indicated that dysphoric people induced to ruminate make more self-defeating attributions and evaluations of events than dysphoric people who distract from their ruminations (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1993, 1995). These studies suggest that depressive rumination is an important emotion regulatory process for better understanding depressed affect.

Psychopathologists have increasingly investigated the influence of rumination on negative emotional states other than depressed affect (Wood, Saltzberg, Neale, Stone, & Rachmiel, 1990), and there is a growing, albeit limited, body of evidence that suggests depressive rumination is not necessarily uniquely related to depressed mood. For example, rumination is positively associated with anger (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998) and negative affect elicited via anxiety induction tasks (Blagden & Craske, 1996). Moreover, evidence suggests depressive rumination, specifically, is positively associated with anxiety (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Schwartz & Koenig, 1996) and worry (Fresco, Frankel, Mennin, Turk, & Heimberg, 2002). Additionally, self-focused attention and repetitive thought, super-ordinate constructs encompassing rumination, are associated with a wide range of negative affective states (e.g., fear, anger, frustration, panic; Borden, Lowenbraun, Wolff, & Jones, 1993; Mor & Winquist, 2002; Segerstrom et al., 2003) and different specific types of repetitive thought (including depressive rumination) do not differentially relate to anxiety and depression (Segerstrom, Tsao, Alden, & Craske, 2000). Other studies have found depressive rumination is associated with anxiety sensitivity (Cox, Enns, & Taylor,

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