

Depression and Dual-Processing:
Theoretical Analysis and Implications for Treatment

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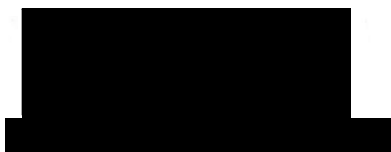
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Certification

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Wendy Phillips.

Wendy Phillips

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Summary

Beevers' (2005) dual-process model of cognitive vulnerability to depression proposes that depression involves an interaction between implicit (automatic) and explicit (effortful) information processing systems. This research comprised four studies that addressed the validity and viability of the theory.

Study 1 examined the relationship between negative self-referential implicit cognition and depression reported in previous research spanning 25 years. A meta-analysis of 89 effect sizes revealed a significant small to medium sized relationship. Moderator analyses indicated that effect sizes relating to all assessed facets of cognition, study designs and sample types significantly predicted depression. Overall, the results supported cognitive models of depression and indicated that negative implicit cognitive biases are reliably associated with past, current and future depression.

Study 2 assessed the underlying structure of several implicit and explicit depression-related cognitions in an undergraduate sample ($N = 306$). Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses failed to support the hypothesized two factor dual-process model. The latent structure of the measures did not clearly differentiate between implicit and explicit cognition, and suggested that an alternative three-factor structure may be more valid.

Study 3 identified dual-process cognitive profiles associated with depression in the same sample by applying Latent Profile Analyses (LPA) to the eight implicit and explicit depression-related cognitions. LPA ($N = 306$) produced a three-profile solution exhibiting quantitative distributions of implicit and explicit indicators ranging from negative, through intermediate, to positive. Patterns of biases across the profiles were associated with decreases in current depressive symptoms, and logistic regression indicated that the profiles significantly predicted depressive status three months later. LPA of a dysphoric subgroup ($n = 57$) identified two distinct profiles; one comprising multiple negative biases

and one featuring average or positive biases on all cognitions except for implicit negative memory. Results suggested that possession of constellations of negative implicit and explicit cognitive biases is associated with current and future depression.

The final study assessed whether implicit self-esteem would interact with life stress to predict subsequent depressive symptoms of undergraduates ($N = 131$) with high and low thought suppression (TS) tendencies – a behaviour linked to cognitive resource depletion by previous research (e.g., Klein & Bratton, 2007). Multi-group multiple regression found that implicit self-esteem moderated the predictive effect of life stress on future symptoms of High TS, but not Low TS, participants. High TS participants with low implicit self-esteem who experienced high life stress reported high levels of subsequent depressive symptoms, whereas implicit self-esteem did not predict future depression for Low TS participants under life stress. Results were consistent with Beevers' (2005) propositions that negatively biased implicit self-referential processing confers vulnerability to depression, and that this vulnerability may be exposed when insufficient cognitive resources are available to employ corrective explicit processing.

Overall, the research findings provide qualified support for Beevers' (2005) dual-process perspective, and suggest that interventions that target both implicit and explicit processes may offer the greatest hope for long-term relief from depression.