

Extra Credit – Week 12

GENDER, RUMINATION, AND DEPRESSION

Purpose: This exercise is designed to explore gender differences in cognitive response styles that may be related to depression.

Instructions: Susan Nolen-Hoeksema (1990) argues that one of the factors related to the greater incidence in depression among women is differences in cognitive response styles. Men are more likely to respond to depression by engaging in activities that “get their minds off of things.” She labels this a *distracting* style. In contrast, women are more likely to exhibit a *ruminative* style whereby they “mull over” their feelings and focus inward on themselves and their unhappiness.

Using the data sheets on the following pages, ask two women and two men to complete a short questionnaire of their response to depression. Describe each participant by indicating his or her sex, age, and social attribute (for example, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social class) at the top of the interview forms.

1. Items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 correspond to the distracting style. Count each participant’s responses to this group and write this number at the bottom of each questionnaire, labeling it *distracting*.
2. Items 2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12 correspond to the ruminative style. Count up the number of responses that fall into this group and write this number at the bottom of each questionnaire, labeling it *ruminative*.
3. Compare the two scores. Did you find gender differences or similarities?

Participant A

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments

Suppose that a recent personal event has put you in a depressed mood (e.g., an unexpectedly low grade on an exam, the breakup of a love relationship, or a quarrel with a close friend or relative). Check which of the following activities you are likely to engage in when you are depressed. You may check as many that apply.

1. Working on a hobby that takes concentration.
2. Writing in a diary about how you are feeling.
3. Getting away from everyone else to try to sort out your emotions.
4. Doing something with your friends.
5. Getting drunk.
6. Telling friends about how depressed you are.
7. Punching something.
8. Engaging in sports.
9. Writing a letter to someone describing your emotions.
10. Engaging in reckless behavior (e.g., 10 miles over the speed limit).
11. Listening to music.
12. Making a list of the reasons you are sad or depressed.

Participant B

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments

Suppose that a recent personal event has put you in a depressed mood (e.g., an unexpectedly low grade on an exam, the breakup of a love relationship, or a quarrel with a close friend or relative). Check which of the following activities you are likely to engage in when you are depressed. You may check as many that apply.

13. Working on a hobby that takes concentration.
14. Writing in a diary about how you are feeling.
15. Getting away from everyone else to try to sort out your emotions.
16. Doing something with your friends.
17. Getting drunk.
18. Telling friends about how depressed you are.
19. Punching something.
20. Engaging in sports.
21. Writing a letter to someone describing your emotions.
22. Engaging in reckless behavior (e.g., 10 miles over the speed limit).
23. Listening to music.
24. Making a list of the reasons you are sad or depressed.