



Evaluating the Impact of Cognitive Fusion on Forms of Repetitive Thinking and Depression

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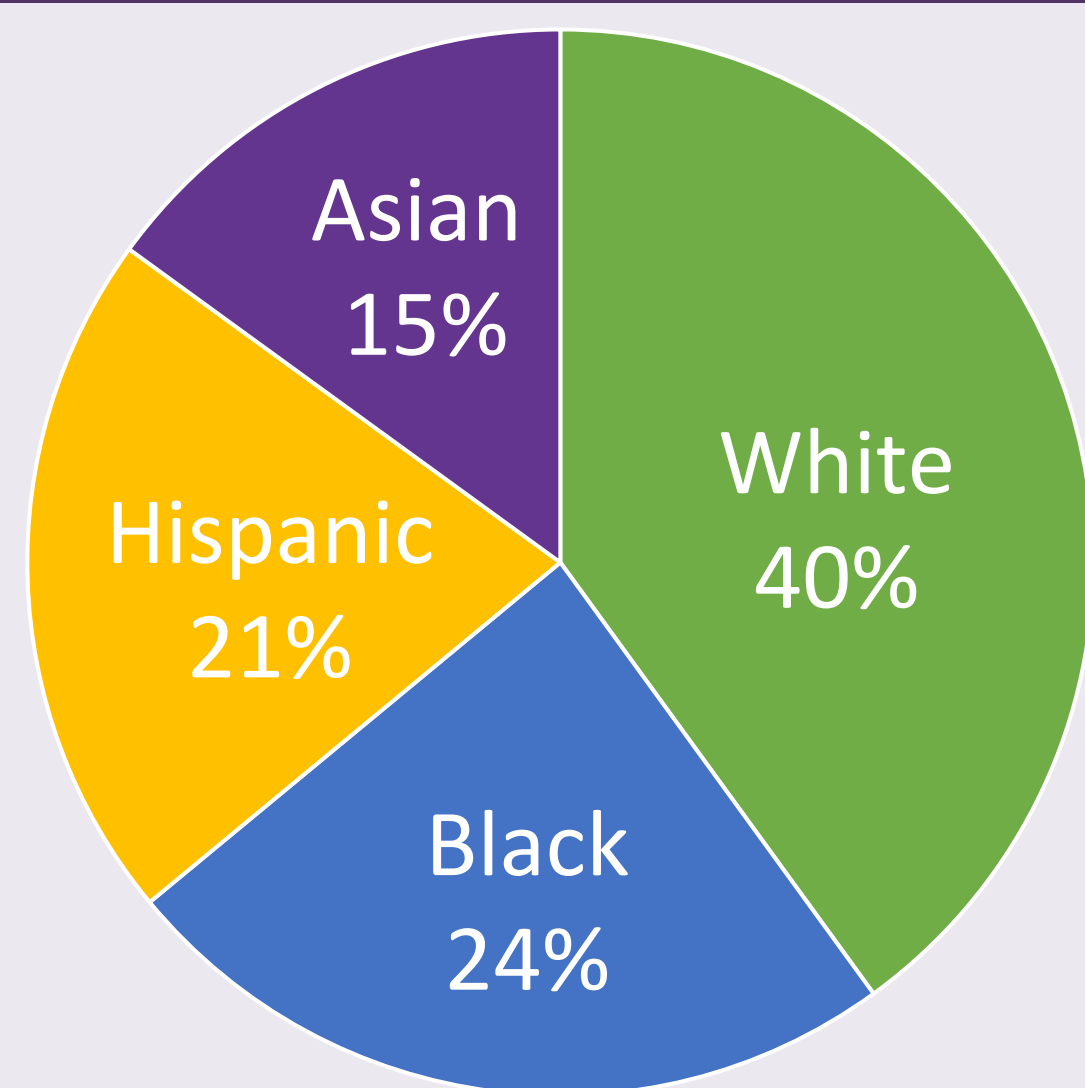
Cognitive fusion accounts for most of the effect of rumination on depressive symptoms in a non-clinical sample of undergraduates.

Background

- Rumination is a key cognitive feature of depressive and anxiety disorders.
 - Greater rumination is associated with prolonging and deepening episodes of depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008) and increases risk for subsequent depressive episodes (Spasojević & Alloy, 2001).
- Current research aims to identifying the cognitive processes underlying types of repetitive thinking (Quertret & Cropley, 2013).
 - Fusion with the content of rumination may be a core cognitive process that explains relations between rumination and various psychological outcomes.
 - Indeed, cognitive fusion mediates the effect of rumination on depressive symptoms in a medical sample of Brazilian women (Lucena-Santos, et al., 2017).
- The present study seeks to extend previous work by examining cognitive fusion as a mediator of relations between rumination and depression in a non-clinical sample.

Methods

- Participants ($N = 395$, $M_{age} = 19.00$, $SD_{age} = 2.36$; 69% female) were a diverse sample of undergraduates recruited at the University at Albany, SUNY who completed a battery of psychological measures as part of a larger online study examining meditation use.
- Assessment included:
 - Ruminative Responses Scale (RRS; $\alpha = .88$; 22 items; X)
 - Cognitive Fusion Questionnaire (CFQ; $\alpha = .95$; 7 items; M)
 - Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; $\alpha = .92$; 21 items; Y)
- Significant relations between $X \rightarrow Y$, $X \rightarrow M$, and $M \rightarrow Y$ were established prior to testing the mediation model.
- Cross-sectional mediation analyses were conducted utilizing Hayes Process Macro Version 3.3 for SPSS (Hayes, 2012).
- Significance of the indirect effect of the model was tested with bootstrapping (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) using 10,000 replication samples.



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Results

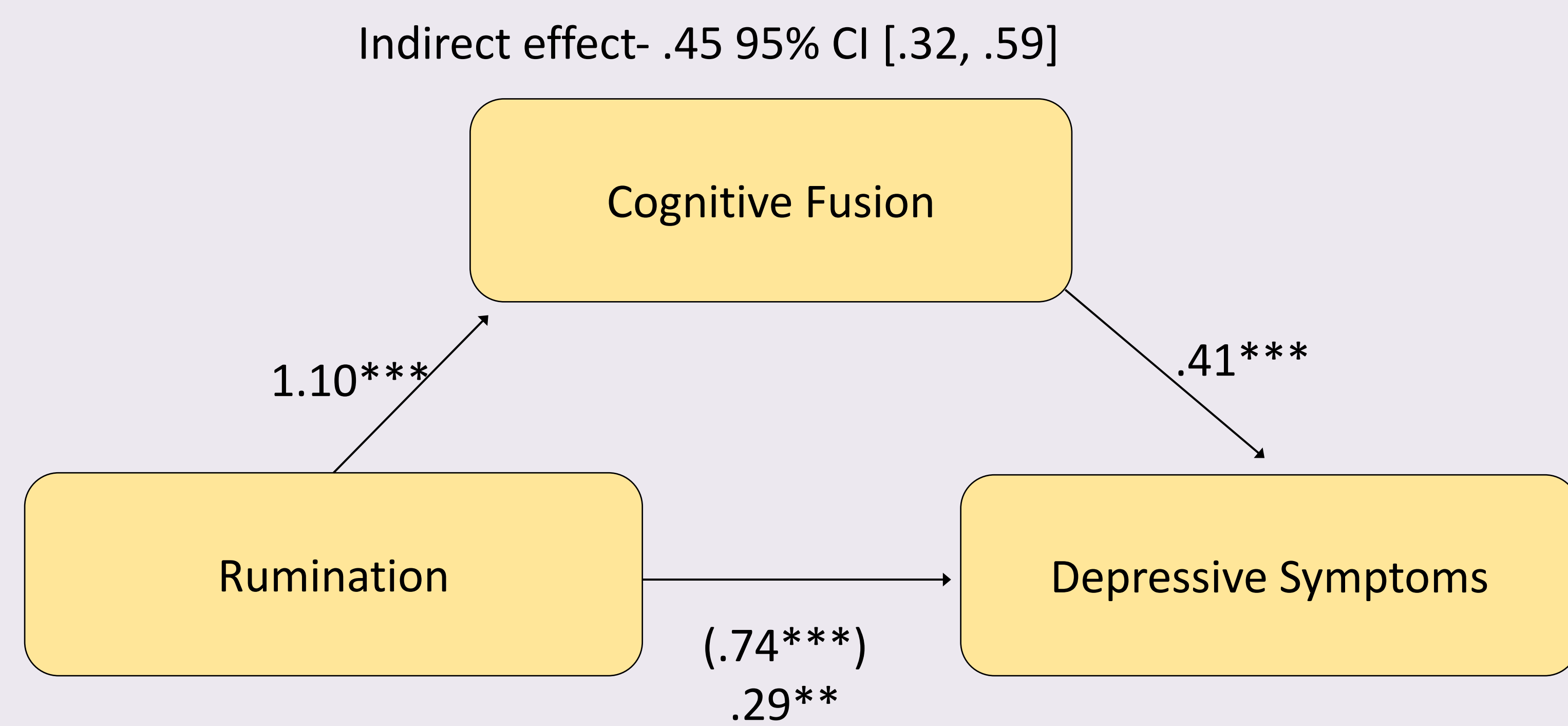


Figure 1. *Partial Mediating Effects of Cognitive Fusion*
Note: Numerical values are standardized regression coefficients. Number in parenthesis represents value of the unmediated path.
** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

- In the present study, cognitive fusion partially mediated the relation between rumination and depressive symptoms.
 - Approximately 60% of effect observed between rumination and depressive symptoms is accounted for by cognitive fusion.
 - Future research should examine possible omitted mediator variables that could complete this model, such as experiential avoidance and inflexible attention.
- The present findings add to existing work suggesting that cognitive fusion may denote a core cognitive process that underlies the deleterious relations between rumination and depressive symptomatology.
 - Disengaging from the emotional response to rumination (i.e., cognitive defusion) has been shown to be one of the most useful intervention strategies available for rumination (Quertret & Cropley, 2013).
- Clinical implications include emphasizing cognitive defusion, rather than changing the frequency or content of ruminative thinking.

Key References

- Lucena-Santos, P., Carvalho, S., Pinto-Gouveia, J., Gillanders, D., & Oliveira, M. S. (2017). Cognitive Fusion Questionnaire: Exploring measurement invariance across three groups of Brazilian women and the role of cognitive fusion as a mediator in the relationship between rumination and depression. *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 6(1), 53-62.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., Wisco, B. E., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). Rethinking rumination. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 3(5), 400-424.
- Spasojević, J., & Alloy, L. B. (2001). Rumination as a common mechanism relating depressive risk factors to depression. *Emotion*, 1(1), 25.
- Quertret, D., & Cropley, M. (2013). Assessing treatments used to reduce rumination and/or worry: A systematic review. *Clinical psychology review*, 33(8), 996-1009.