

CHAPTER 7: DEPRESSION AND MOOD DISORDERS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the exact role of neurotransmitters such as serotonin in the experience of depression? Is depression associated with an imbalance in neurotransmitters or a deficit in specific neurotransmitters?
- Abnormalities in certain brain areas have been associated with depression. How are these brain abnormalities involved? Do they *cause* depression, or are they simply a *consequence* of experiencing depression?
- Is the association between dysfunction in specific brain areas and depression consistent or inconsistent with evidence of the role of neurotransmitter imbalances in depression?
- What is the relationship between depression and inflammation? Could a link between depressive symptoms and inflammation explain all forms of depression?
- In what way can biological (e.g. neurotransmitter imbalances) and psychological processes (e.g. cognitive biases in thinking about the self and the world) be integrated to explain the aetiology of depression?
- Because of the way that psychoanalytic theory is formulated, can its explanation of depression ever be verified?
- Are interpersonal theories of depression merely accounts of how depression is maintained rather than how it is acquired?
- Do depressed individuals have a negative bias when making judgements about themselves and the world, or is it nondepressed individuals who have a positive bias?
- Do the negative thinking biases defined by Beck (e.g. the negative triad) actually *cause* depression, or are they simply a *consequence* of being depressed?
- In 'Battered Woman Syndrome' have such women learned to be helpless or have they simply learned that acquiescence is an adaptive response to abuse?
- To what extent is Hopelessness Theory a full explanation of depression? What evidence is there that hopelessness causes depression rather than being just a consequence of being depressed?
- Cognitive change is just as likely to occur after behavioural treatments for depression as after cognitive treatments. So is the cognitive restructuring element really necessary?
- Adolescent suicide rates have increased substantially over the past 40 years – what are the factors that have contributed to this rise?
- What is the psychological function of deliberate self-harm?