

JOINT EVENT

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### The relationship between memory bias and anxiety

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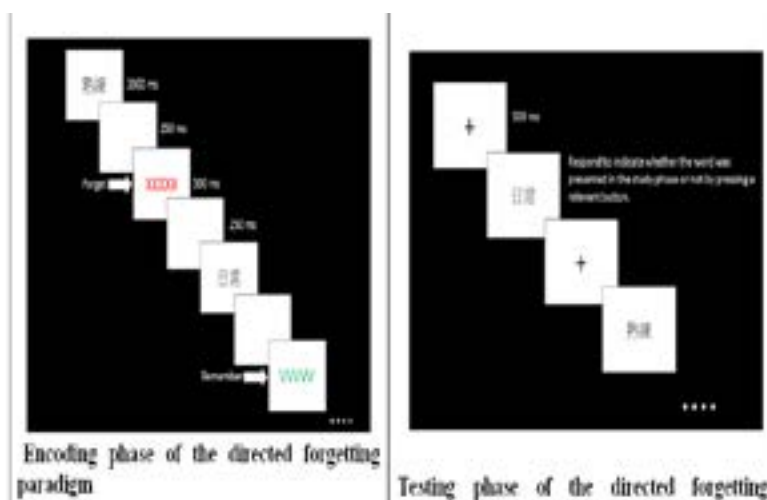
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**Statement of the Problem:** Cognitive models postulate that schema-congruent biases towards danger and vulnerability in the processing of emotional information play a vital role in the onset and maintenance of anxiety symptoms. Two recent experimental studies among breast cancer survivors and community adolescents confirmed the above proposition by showing that participants with higher negative attentional bias tended to report more anxiety symptoms. Compared to attentional bias, the role of memory bias on anxiety symptoms is relatively less investigated, especially among children and adolescents. This presentation will report the results of a study to examine the relationship between memory bias and anxiety symptoms.

**Methodology & Theoretical Orientation:** The theory of intentional forgetting, that is the voluntary forgetting of material after it has been encoded, has been used to guide the study. Intentional forgetting was measured by the item-method directed forgetting paradigm (Figure 1). A total of 142 high school students between 12.25 to 17.70 years old (mean age=14.23 years; SD=1.25 years) participated in this study.

**Findings:** More anxious participants tended to exhibit more difficulty in forgetting negative stimuli. An anxiety x depression interaction effect on positive attentional bias was obtained. Individuals with higher anxiety levels would exhibit less positive memory bias only when they were also having high depression level. Anxiety had no relationship with positive memory bias among those non-depressed individuals.

**Conclusion & Significance:** Negative cognitive processing biases, including both attentional and memory biases play a more significant role in anxiety than positive cognitive processing biases.



### Biography

Samuel M Y is the Associate Provost (Institutional Initiatives) and a Professor of Psychology at the City University of Hong Kong. As a Registered Clinical Psychologist, his research interest is in Psychopathology, especially etiology of anxiety and depression. Currently, he is conducting a series of experiments to examine the relative roles of positive and negative cognitive processing styles in anxiety and depression. He is one of the representative figures of Positive Psychology in Asia. He is the Executive Council Member of the Clinical Division of the International Positive Psychology Association.

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