Author's response to reviews

Title: Autobiographical memory and hierarchical search strategies in depressed and non-depressed participants

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Reviewer 1

Q: In the revision the statistical analyses are in my view much more appropriate, and the pattern of results stays the same which is reassuring.

R: Thanks.

Q: However the authors have still not justified the use of parametric analyses, nor reported on outliers which could drive the findings in this small sample.

R: As suggested by the reviewer, we have now explicitly mentioned in the Results section that there were no outliers (highlighted in grey in pages 14-16). Homogeneity of variance was assumed in all analyses except for one, which is noted in the footnote. Although our sample size is relatively small for parametric tests, independent sample t tests produce error rates close to 5% and are adequately powered when effect sizes are large (as ours were). Consequently we feel the use of independent samples t tests in this study is justified.


Q: I am particularly concerned about the counts of each of the types of retrieval sequence. We need to see the ranges and whether or not the distributions are skewed. There is reference in the authors’ response to ‘transformed’ data which implies they were skewed, in which case we need to know whether this was corrected for each comparison of means.

R: We have looked at the P-P plots to check if the distributions were skewed for all five knowledge sequences for both groups of participants. The plots clearly showed the distributions to be approximately normally distributed, fulfilling the requirement for independent sample t-tests (highlighted in grey in page 18). Just to clarify, the word “transformed” that we used in our earlier responses was meant for the conversion of count data to proportion data.

Q: Regarding the organization of the paper, it would be better if the descriptions of the retrieval sequences were included in the method section rather than the results.

R: Thank you, the description of the retrieval sequence has now been included in the Method section (highlighted in grey in page 13).