Self-defining memories and future projections as a means to facilitate reflection on life values in depressed adults

A preliminary study

Aurélie Wagener*, Béatrice Brouette* & Sylvie Blairy*
* Psychology and Neuroscience of Cognition Research Unit, University of Liege, Belgium

Introduction

Brief Behavioral Activation Treatment for Depression (BBATD) (Lejuez et al. 2001)
- Depressed patients are lead to a reflection on their personal life values per life domains (e.g., family relationships, employment)
  - Behavioral assignments through valued activities

Depressed patients → Difficulties to conduct this reflection and to identify their life values

Self-defining memories (SDMs) & self-defining future projections (SDFPs) (Singer, Blagov, Berry & Oost, 2012)
- Autobiographical memories concerning reflections on the past and on the potential future central goals, values and conflicts of one's life
- Vivid and well-rehearsed autobiographical memories related to a meaning-making (i.e., a learned lesson about oneself, others or the world)
- Positive, neutral or negative; specific or categorical events

SDMs and SDFPs are highly relevant for the self
- Recalling SDMs and imagining SDFPs might help depressed patients to have a clearer view of their personal values
- This might facilitate the selection of valued activities in BBATD

This preliminary study aims at assessing the feasibility for depressed patients to recall SDMs and to imagine SDFPs per life domains

30 depressed patients (DP) and 30 paired healthy controls (HC) (i.e., sex, age) were asked to recall past SDMs and imagine SDFPs per life domains (e.g., family relationships, employment)

→ Comparison of SDMs and SDFPs between DP and HC

Methods

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DP N = 30</th>
<th>HC N = 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (ET)</td>
<td>43.20 (10.04)</td>
<td>43.70 (8.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (ET)</td>
<td>0.04 (1.58)</td>
<td>0.84 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depressed patients vs Healthy controls

![Bar chart showing comparison of total number of memories and future projections between DP and HC](chart.png)

Discussion

Even though DP report autobiographical memories and projections to the same extent than HC, DP report less SDMs and SDFPs than HC (i.e., autobiographical memories with a meaning-making).

→ DP seem less capable to produce a meaning-making while it is highly relevant for the self and the identification of one's personal life values

- The adjunction of clinical interventions aiming at helping DP to elaborate a meaning making seems relevant in the BBATD perspective.

DP recalled more negative SDMs and less positive SDMs: mood congruence bias?

- These differences are not observable in regards to SDFPs: optimism for their future?

- The adjunction of clinical interventions aiming at helping DP to focus on more positively valenced memories seems appropriate.

- Both issues should be addressed in future experimental studies.

Contact: aurelie.wagener@ulg.ac.be
This poster’s bibliography is available upon request by email.