The Importance of Friends in Autobiographical Memory
Antalikova, Radka; Hansen, Tia Gitte Bondesen; Gulbrandsen, Knut Arild; Santamaria, Andres

Publication date:
2011

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript, peer reviewed version

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

? Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
? You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
? You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from vbn.aau.dk on: december 11, 2018
The importance of friends in autobiographical memory

Radka Antalíková1, Tia Hansen2, Knut A. Gulbransden3, André Santamaría4, & Manuel de la Mata5
1Department of Communication & Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark
2Department of Psychology, University of Sevilla, Spain

Introduction

Autobiographical memory – memories of significant personal experiences from an individual’s life (Wang & Conway, 2004) – and self-construct - constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one’s relationship to others and the self as distinct from others (Singhöl, 2004) – are considered to be mutually interrelated.

Many cross-cultural studies investigate this relationship, but they tend to focus on recall of earliest childhood memories.

Therefore, family is typically the prominent setting of these memories, as family’s role for individual’s self-construct is the most important in this period

But the roles of other people for individual’s self-construct might change during development – such as in adolescence, where friends and school could become at least as influential as family.

Based on the mutual interrelatedness of autobiographical memory and self-construct, the importance of the family, school and friendship settings for adolescent’s self-construct should then be reflected in this adolescent’s autobiographical memories

Thus, rather than asking for earliest childhood memories (selection by time), we instead ask for the most meaningful memories (selection by importance) to elicit memories that are the most relevant to the adolescent’s current self.

Pilot results and suggested model

In a pilot study, we asked 22 Norwegian adolescents (M = 17.95) to recall three meaningful memories about their family, school and friends.

We found:

1. Adolescents’ meaningful friendship memories were most recent and family memories oldest.
2. When asked to rate how often they have thought or talked about the specific (most recalled) memories and about family, school and friendship memories in general, the friendship memories were the most frequently rehearsed in both cases and family memories the least.
3. When coding the adolescents’ recalled memories for the amount of relatedness – based on how many times they refer to other people and how many times they refer to themselves – the family memories included the highest amount of relatedness, the school memory the lowest, with friendship memories falling in between.

Similar patterns were found in the Slovak sample reported in Antalíková et al. (2011) with the following model suggested (see Figure 1).

Self-system

Autobiographical memory

Self-construct

Relation

Figure 1. Settings’ contributions to self-construct. The developmental trajectory of settings’ shifting dominance in adolescents’ life, as reflected in the recency and relatedness of their meaningful memories.

Results Slovaks vs. Danes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Mean difference (Danes-Slovaks)</th>
<th>F(1,90)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variables in this study:
1. Mean difference (Danes-Slovaks)
2. Memory rehearsal
3. Family memories relatedness
4. School memories relatedness
5. Friendship memories relatedness

Where corrected, F-values are after the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

Discussion

The suggested model (Figure 1) fits the meaningful memories from Danes in a time of memories’ age distribution (family oldest, friend most recent) and amount of relatedness (family highest, school lowest). However, rehearsal patterns differed. Young Danes think or talk more about family than young Slovaks.

One could speculate that Slovak adolescents “leave” the family setting behind faster than Danish adolescents and that family memories are therefore better representations of “who they were,” rather than “who they are now.” This assumption needs to be investigated in further research.

References


Method

Similar to pilot study:

- Questionnaire asking to recall memories from three settings, which should be at least 1 year old and of a special meaning to the participant
- Participants also reported their age at the time of these events and gave a rating of how often they have thought or talked about the particular memory they have just recalled and about memories from this setting in general (on a scale from 1 = never before to 7 = very often)
- Memories were coded for relatedness (after Wang & Conway, 2004)

Figure 2: Age at recall (in years)

Figure 3: Memory rehearsal

Figure 4: Other-self ratio

Aim of the current study

1. To investigate whether the results can be replicated in the Danish sample
2. To compare Slovaks and Danes

Participants

- 40 Slovak adolescents (M = 18.22)
- 52 Danish adolescents (M = 19.12)

Method

Similar to pilot study:

- Questionnaire asking to recall memories from three settings, which should be at least 1 year old and of a special meaning to the participant
- The settings were presented in two alternative sequences in order to test for sequence effect – there was none
- Participants also reported their age at the time of these events and gave a rating of how often they have thought or talked about the particular memory they have just recalled and about memories from this setting in general (on a scale from 1 = never before to 7 = very often)
- Memories were coded for relatedness (after Wang & Conway, 2004)

Results Slovaks vs. Danes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Mean difference (Danes-Slovaks)</th>
<th>F(1,90)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent variables in this study:
1. Memory rehearsal (Danes-Slovaks)
2. Family memories relatedness
3. School memories relatedness
4. Friendship memories relatedness

Where corrected, F-values are after the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.