Self-construals and earliest childhood memories
Antalikova, Radka; Hansen, Tia Gitte Bondesen; de la Mata Benitez, Manuel

Publication date:
2011

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript, peer reviewed version

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):
Self-construals and earliest childhood memories: a new perspective from Slovakia and Denmark

Radka Antalíková¹, Tia Hansen¹, & Manuel de la Mata Benítez²

¹Aalborg University, ²University of Seville
Example 1

“Probably when I was around 4-5 years old, maybe even less, my mum was busy, she was in the garden, and I was bored. I don’t even know for what reason, I went into the boiler-room and took a straw broom and stuck it into the burning boiler. Afterwards, I got scared, but I didn’t let the broom loose, instead I was running around the courtyard with it, holding it like a torch and screaming that it’s on fire.”

Slovak female, 19 years old
Theoretical model

- Autobiographical memory
- Self-construal

Culture

- Can emphasize independence
- Can emphasize connectedness
- Can emphasize group membership

- Can be from an earlier or later age
- Can be more or less detailed
- Can focus more on one's own roles or roles of other people
- Can express more or less one's autonomy
- Can be more or less specific

- Can define a person by own internal attributes
- Can define a person by relationships to others
- Can define a person by membership in groups
Empirical model

Nationality

Recall of an autobiographical memory

Self-description questionnaire
Example of an empirical study (Wang, 2001)

**American**

I have a memory of being at my great aunt and uncle's house. It was some kind of party; I remember I was wearing my purple-flowered party dress. There was a sort of crib on the floor…

**Jewish, cheerful and optimistic, worldly, curious, creative, charismatic, a performer.**

**Chinese**

I was 5 years old. Dad taught me ancient poems. It was always when he was washing vegetables that he would explain a poem to me. It was very moving. I will never forget the poems such as …

**a college student, a girl, fun-loving, a freshman, in the Math. Department, rational, lazy to think.**
East-West perspective
A NEW East-West perspective
Our questions

1. Will the form and content of the earliest childhood memories and the type of self-descriptions in young Danes and Slovaks display a similar profile as in members of strongly individualist cultures, such as USA?

2. Will any characteristics of the earliest childhood memories and self-descriptions reveal the specific background of participants as having been raised in post-communism or welfare state, respectively?
Participants and method

- 80 Slovak \((M = 17.75\text{ years})\) and 80 Danish \((M = 18.92\text{ years})\) secondary grammar school students
- 43 females and 37 males in each sample
- Written questionnaire in the respective mother tongue consisting of:

  **Recall of earliest childhood memory**
  - Coding for:
    - Age at the time of event
    - Volume
    - Other-self ratio
    - Autonomy ratio
    - Specificity

  **Shortened Twenty-Statements Test**
  - Coding for:
    - Private descriptions
    - Collective descriptions
    - Public descriptions
# Results – earliest childhood memories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Slovak</th>
<th>Danish</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (in months)</strong></td>
<td>51.89</td>
<td>51.00</td>
<td>3054.00</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volume (in words)</strong></td>
<td>54.26</td>
<td>63.27</td>
<td>2657.00</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other-self ratio</strong></td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>2852.50</td>
<td>.352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy ratio</strong></td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2842.00</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specificity</strong></td>
<td>70% specific</td>
<td>80% specific</td>
<td>X²(1, N = 160) = 2.133</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*all tests are two-tailed*
## Results – self-descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Slovak</th>
<th></th>
<th>Danish</th>
<th></th>
<th>U</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>81.27</td>
<td>21.06</td>
<td>88.03</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>U = 2692.50,</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>20.07</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>U = 2632.00,</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>U = 3090.50,</td>
<td>.656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* all tests are two-tailed
Conclusions

1. Young Slovaks and young Danes seem to display a similar independent profile

2. Hardly any factors revealing the specific background of the participants

  • Could the coding attend to other interesting features when dealing with post-communist and long-term welfare state samples?
    • References to extended family
    • Numbers of others / groups
    • Markers of the situation – Christmas, birth of a sibling, etc.
    • References to particular relationships (“glad to be around my family”) or relationships in general (“friendly”) in TST

  • Age
  • Gender
Example 2

“What I remember is that I am outside walking with my grandmother, I am wearing green sandals, we are on our way down to the beach, I am holding her hand, the sun is shining and a light cool wind is blowing around us, cloud-free sky, the weather is warm.”

Danish male, 19 years
Thank you for your attention!

radonka@hum.aau.dk