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Overgeneral memories and assessment of reduced specificity in autobiographical memories

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Source

Andrew Edward Paul MITCHELL, University of Chester Riverside Campus, Castle Drive, CH1 2SL, Chester, United Kingdom. (2015). *AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY RESPONSE TO A NEGATIVE MOOD IN THOSE WITH/WITHOUT A HISTORY OF DEPRESSION*. *SP*, vol. 57 (3), 229-241. doi:10.21909/sp.2015.03.696.

The term over general memory “focuses on how information is encoded”^[1] p229 and “focuses on cognitive processes involved in memory retrieval”^[1] p229, and the “phenomenon has been investigated predominantly in those already showing signs of depression compared to primed studies, which predominantly utilise non-depressed individuals”^[1] p229-230.

Assessing over general memories

The Sentence Completion for Events from the Past task (SCEPT)^[2] assesses autobiographical memories for reduced specificity, i.e., over generality.

The SCEPT “presents participants with a series of non-valenced sentence stems probing memories for past events, which participants complete in relation to the sentence stems to cue different memories”^[1] p231 and how these memories are “coded according to whether completed sentences [referred] to a specific, categoric, semantic, associate or general event[s]”.^[1] p233

Sentence stems were then coded as

“**specific memories** if they referred to an event that occurred at a particular time and a place with a duration of less than a day (e.g., my chat with my personal tutor this morning);

general memories were coded as general if they referred to events which took place over a period greater than one day (e.g., “my summer holiday this year”);

categoric memories, referring to a category of events or repeating events (e.g., “dissertation writing”);

semantic associate/personal, referring to generic information about the self (e.g., “I’m a good freestyle climber”)^[1] p234

The researcher used the Sentence Completion for Events from the Past task pre and post-mood induction procedure to assess reduced specificity in autobiographical memories. A similar design was used to assess memories, but rather than

reduce specificity, the researcher assessed phenomenological characteristics in cued memories, which is explained further in a related definition [\[3\]](#).

References

1. [a](#), [b](#), [c](#), [d](#), [e](#), [f](#) Andrew Edward Paul MITCHELL, University of Chester Riverside Campus, Castle Drive, CH1 2SL, Chester, United Kingdom. (2015). AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY RESPONSE TO A NEGATIVE MOOD IN THOSE WITH/WITHOUT A HISTORY OF DEPRESSION. *SP*, vol. 57 (3), 229-241. doi:10.21909/sp.2015.03.696.
2. [^] Filip Raes, Dirk Hermans, J. Mark G. Williams, Paul Eelen. (2007). A sentence completion procedure as an alternative to the Autobiographical Memory Test for assessing overgeneral memory in non-clinical populations. *Memory*, vol. 15 (5), 495-507. doi:10.1080/09658210701390982.
3. [^] Andrew E. P. Mitchell. (2023). Autobiographical memories and assessment of the phenomenological characteristics. doi: 10.32388/PR1XF4.