



The experience of chronic illness and psychopathology across the life stories: The case of hemophilic boys and depressive hospitalized adolescents.

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Introduction

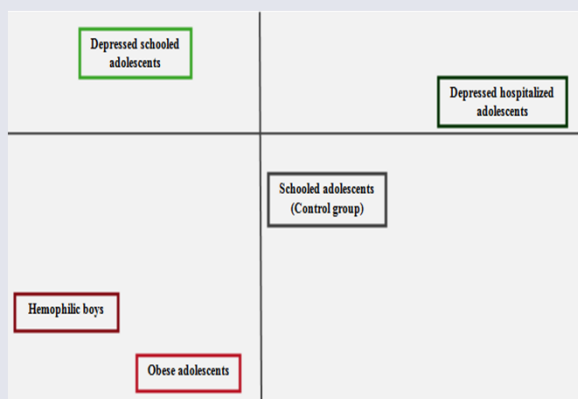
Many articles have emerged in recent years on the life stories (MacAdams, 2006, 2008; McLean, Pasupathi & Pals, 2007), their place in the field of personality psychology (Bamberg, 2004; Fivush, 2000; Thorne, 2000), as well as the development and emergence of the ability to construct a coherent life story (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). However, few researchers have studied psychology at both the structure of the story and its contents among a population suffering from psychopathology or from chronic illness. The aim of this study is to examine and compare how hemophilic adolescents, obese adolescents and depressive hospitalized adolescents tell their own stories, how they build their identities in spite of the treatment constraints and how they involve themselves in different relationships.

Methodology

During an individual semi-structured interview, based on Mc Adams' works, each teenager's life story was collected. Different measures were taken. CESD was used to identified depressed adolescents among sample. In all, we interviewed 69 adolescents. Each personal narrative was then retranscribed and encoded. Finally, discursive analysis and textual data analysis softwares were used to examine the data base.

Results

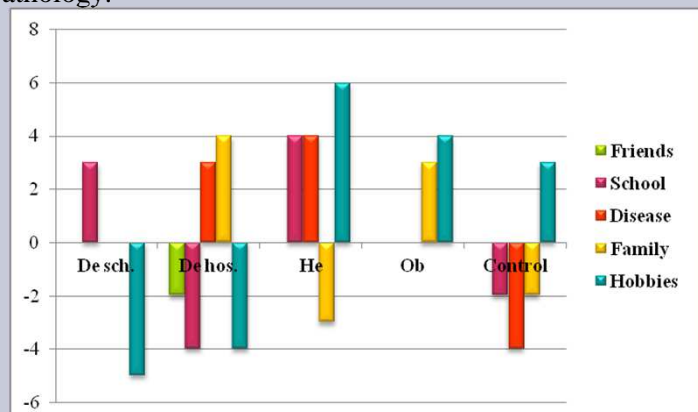
Correspondence analysis on adolescent's vocabulary in function of pathology



On the positive side of axis 1 (horizontal), we observe the two groups of depressed teenagers, in sharp contrast with adolescents with chronic illness. On the negative side of axis 1, the two groups of adolescents with chronic illnesses are close and yet separate. We highlight different discourses in chronic patients compared to depressed adolescents with specificities depending on the type of chronic disease (hemophilia and obesity) and severity of depression (depressive mood and MDE). On the negative side of axis 2 (vertical), we find the schooled adolescents suffering from pathologies (depressive and chronic). They are in opposition to hospitalized adolescents.

Qualitative aspects of different experimental groups' narratives

Hemophilic boys and depressed hospitalized adolescents speak about their disease spontaneously whereas obese adolescents define themselves without mentioning their overweight. Adolescents with chronic illness invest hobbies normally. Nevertheless, obese adolescents value to family significantly. As for depressed hospitalized adolescents, they describe themselves by their family and develop mainly negative life events in their narratives. Relationships with peers' are not mentioned by depressed hospitalized adolescents. Compared with the control group, obese adolescents report their friendship less intimately while hemophilic boys talk about their friends or their hobbies only related to their disease (e.g. Sometimes, to speak about it, with friends, it's harder. Ping-pong, it is nice, because I like it and it's not a contact sport, football I cannot do it ...). A similarity exists between narratives' hemophilic boys and depressed hospitalized adolescents: they define themselves by their pathology.



Discussion

First comparative studies between adolescents with chronic disease and depressive illness highlight some common thematic preoccupations. Further research with a larger number of life stories is needed to explore these differences and similarities. In the longer term, a better knowledge of these specific adolescent concerns according to their pathology will allow us to think about prevention devices for both depressive illness and for chronic illness.