CONCLUSIONS. We expected that:
• hopelessness would have a positive relationship with depression, and negative life events.
• hopelessness would be related to personality traits. In particular, positive emotional climates would be more likely to experience hopelessness.
• socio-economic disadvantages would be linked to psycho-social factors. The individual’s age, gender, and socio-economic status would be important in explaining the relationship between hopelessness and depression.
• shared emotions within each canton would increase or reduce the probability of their residents to experience hopelessness.

Hypotheses

Contextual Effects on Hopelessness in the Second Half of the Life

Davide Morselli
Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES – University of Lausanne
Contact: davide.morselli@unil.ch

Abstract

INTRODUCTION. Depression and suicidal ideation are tightly linked to the lack of hope in the future. Hopelessness begins with the occurrence of negative life events and develops through the perception that negative outcomes are stable and pervasive. Much research has investigated individual factors predicting hopelessness (e.g., Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). However, other studies have shown that the social context may also play an important role: disadvantaged contexts exacerbate the feeling that future is unreachables and hopeless (e.g., Elliott, 2000).

AIMS. In this study we investigate the role of shared emotions (emotional climates, Rimé, 2007) on the sense of hopelessness during the second half of the life. Emotional climates have been defined as the emotional relationships constructed between members of a society and describe the quality of the environment within which individuals live. METHODS. We present results of multilevel analysis (individuals nested into cantons) to explore the relationship between characteristics of the Swiss cantons and hopelessness. At the individual level data from the NCCR-LIVES project “Vulnerability and Growth” (CES-D, Radloff, 1977) were used. RESULTS. Results show that hopelessness was mainly explained by individual factors as life events and personality. However, canton’s unemployment rate and climates of optimism or pessimism had also an effect on the individual perception of hopelessness.

CONCLUSIONS. Individuals are more likely to feel hopeless after having experienced critical events (i.e., loss of the partner in the later life) in cantons with high rates of unemployment and with a high share of negative emotions. On the contrary, positive emotional climates play a protective role against hopelessness.

Individual Data and Measures

Individual data: NCCR-LIVES “Vulnerability and Growth”, a study on psychological adaptation to marital breaks-up in the second half of the life in 25 Swiss cantons (n = 2925). Age: 40 to 92 years, N = 61,71, SD = 13,24. Men: 43,36%, Women: 56,99%.

Measures:
• Hopelessness: hopelessness scales (Beck, Weisman, Lester, & Treder, 1974).
• Depression: Centre of Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (CES-D, Radloff, 1977).

RESULTS.

Emotional Climates:
• Climate of optimism: Emotionally healthy cantons (see Chioqueta & Stiles, 2005).
• Climate of depression: Emotionally unhealthy cantons.

Socio-economic factors
• Socio-economic factors: Cantons’ unemployment rate in 2011: from 0.91% in Obwald to 5.97% in Nidwald.

Table 1: Spearman Correlations between Canton-Level Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>GDP change since 2008</th>
<th>Climate of Optimism</th>
<th>Climate of Depression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemp.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.23 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>0.16 (p &lt; 0.05)</td>
<td>0.32 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>0.18 (p &lt; 0.05)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>0.23 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04 (p = 0.30)</td>
<td>0.25 (p = 0.12)</td>
<td>0.17 (p = 0.18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>0.32 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>0.25 (p = 0.12)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.37 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>0.22 (p = 0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>0.18 (p &lt; 0.05)</td>
<td>0.17 (p = 0.18)</td>
<td>0.37 (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.20 (p = 0.08)</td>
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</table>

Table 2: Standardized Regression Coefficients of Two-level Models of Hopelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate of Optimism</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate of Depression</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main Findings

• Most of the variance of hopelessness is explained at the individual level and by psychological factors, but also context plays a role.
• Both socio-economic (i.e., unemployment rate) and social psychological factors explained between canton differences of hopelessness.
• Unemployment rate correlated with emotional climates.
• An optimistic climate decreased the probabilities of high hopelessness, a depressive climate increased them.

References