Mental defeat

“A sense of a loss of autonomy, agency and human integrity” (Tang et al., 2010, p.547)
- Mental defeat is an important concept in clinical psychology (e.g. chronic pain, depression, PTSD, psychosis, suicidality)

Gesture
- Gestures can depict abstract concepts (for example, defeat) through metaphorical use of space and body (McNeill, 1992)
- In fact, victory triggers upward body movements even in congenitally blind athletes (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008)
- Defeat is typically followed by a display of submissive postures (Allan & Gilbert, 1997)

Hypotheses
- This suggests that the direction and location of gestures may be an important part of gestural representation of defeat
- The aim of this study was to investigate embodied representations of mental defeat through the observation of how gestures depict defeat experiences.

METHOD

- 20 participants were instructed to describe their own experiences in which they felt defeated and victorious
- They were asked to describe how they felt about the event
- We analysed the movement properties of hand gestures that spontaneously accompanied the descriptions
- Specifically, we compared the height and direction (vertical, lateral) of gestural movements between the defeat and victory conditions

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RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Defeat mean</th>
<th>Victory mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height (1=low, 4=high)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical (0=up, 1=down)</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral (0=open, 1=close)</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table of means for height, vertical direction, and lateral direction for defeat and victory conditions

- Height: marginally significant (p<0.1) in predicted direction
- Vertical: wrong direction, non-significant
- Lateral: right direction, non-significant

BUT...

- Height: majority of participants have lower height scores for defeat than victory
- Vertical: majority of participants have higher downwards score for defeat than victory
- Lateral: majority of participants have higher closing score for defeat than victory

Preliminary results indicate a difference between gesture height (defeat = lower) and direction (vertical (defeat = downward) and lateral (defeat = closing)) for the defeat and victory conditions

CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Our preliminary results indicate that defeat and victory may be embodied in different ways
- It is important to probe embodied representation of mental defeat because of potential clinical application
- If mental defeat is associated with particular body movements, then this knowledge could be used to design a body-movement-based intervention to help tackle mental defeat
- We will now be exploring different ways of coding the videos, as well as coding more data and participants.

REFERENCES


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