



Assessing mental imagery in clinical psychology: A review of imagery measures and a guiding framework



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Mental imagery is of potential interest and relevance across clinical disorders.
- We highlight the key domains and measures for assessing mental imagery.
- We propose a guiding framework for the selection of measures in clinical research.
- Exploring mental imagery will help drive forward advances in theory and treatment.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 February 2012

Received in revised form 13 July 2012

Accepted 4 September 2012

Available online 11 September 2012

Keywords:

Mental imagery

Working memory

Psychopathology

Autobiographical memory

Psychological assessment

ABSTRACT

Mental imagery is an under-explored field in clinical psychology research but presents a topic of potential interest and relevance across many clinical disorders, including social phobia, schizophrenia, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. There is currently a lack of a guiding framework from which clinicians may select the domains or associated measures most likely to be of appropriate use in mental imagery research. We adopt an interdisciplinary approach and present a review of studies across experimental psychology and clinical psychology in order to highlight the key domains and measures most likely to be of relevance. This includes a consideration of methods for experimentally assessing the generation, maintenance, inspection and transformation of mental images; as well as subjective measures of characteristics such as image vividness and clarity. We present a guiding framework in which we propose that cognitive, subjective and clinical aspects of imagery should be explored in future research. The guiding framework aims to assist researchers in the selection of measures for assessing those aspects of mental imagery that are of most relevance to clinical psychology. We propose that a greater understanding of the role of mental imagery in clinical disorders will help drive forward advances in both theory and treatment.

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