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SELF DISTANCING EFFECT IN WRITING NEGATIVE EVENTS REMEMBERING OR WRITING? IMPLICATIONS OF SELF-DISTANCING IN THE REFLECTION OF NEGATIVE EVENTS

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Abstract: Although many studies indicate that self-distancing facilitates adaptive self-reflection, it is necessary to examine the variables in the adaptive self-reflection process further to determine whether it will produce the same profile when the self-reflection is done through writing. As such, this study aims to examine a) whether the induction to remember from an actor's perspective and from an observer's perspective has the same implications as the induction to write using the first-person pronouns and using own-name in facilitating adaptive self-reflection, and b) whether adaptive self-reflection through writing has the same profile as adaptive self-reflection through remembering (thinking). Two quasi-experimental studies (N=428) conducted in this research found that self-distancing was the only variable that differed significantly when we induced the actor's perspective and the observer's perspective (study 1), but the variables of self-distancing, emotional reactivity, and reconstruing differed significantly when self-reflection was conducted through writing manipulation using the first-person pronouns and using own-name. It was also found that adaptive self-reflection through writing (study 2) had a stronger correlation in the negative direction between self-distancing and emotional reactivity, recounting, avoidance, and in the positive direction with the variables of reconstruing, memory age, and perceived resolution, which meant that writing about negative experiences better facilitates adaptive self-reflection than just remembering. We also analyzed the intervening variables to see the direct or indirect relationship between key variables.

Keywords: Remembering, Writing, Self-Distance, Adaptive Self-Reflection

-Writing in a journal reminds you of your goals and of your learning in life. It offers a place where you can hold a deliberate, thoughtful conversation with yourself-
Robin S. Sharma

In life, people cannot avoid negative events (Ismailova et al., 2013), but it is possible to recall them in a non-aversive mode. After experiencing a negative event, individuals often have the following common responses: suppressing and avoiding negative emotions or trying to understand them by thinking or writing about it (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Park, Kross, & Ayduk, 2016; Sloan, 2007). Research on the benefits of understanding emotions that arise after experiencing negative events leads to different conclusions. On one hand, some researchers claim that trying to understand negative emotions will facilitate the process of resolving issues and improve mental and physical health (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999; Smyth, 1998). But other researchers state that individuals who analyze their negative emotions tend to ruminate—a mental process that drives individuals to focus repeatedly on what they feel and why they feel it in a way that actually increases negative emotions rather than reduces it (Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Mor & Winquist, 2002).

In the last twenty years, studies have been developed to examine psychological processes in order to determine why an individual's attempt to understand negative emotions succeeds or fails (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Treynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-hoeksema, 2003). One theory that may explain this phenomenon is the psychological distance theory (Trope, 2007), which plays an important role in explaining why attempts to try to understand one's emotions (self-reflection) produce varied results depending on how the individual processes them (E. Kross, 2009). Laboratory research on how individuals can better practice adaptive self-reflection has found evidence that the individual's perspective (actor vs. observer) determined their success or failure in finding meaning (reconstruing) or just telling about the negative events and emotions repetitively (recounting), which had a negative impact on mental and physical health (E. Kross & Ayduk, 2008; E. Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005).

The observer's perspective, which became known as the self-distancing concept (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Ayduk & Kross, 2011; Kross, Ayduk, Mischel, 2005; Kross.,E., & Ayduk.,O, 2017), was found to be related to the use of language—in this case, self talk (Ayduk. O., et.all, 2014) and writing (Park, Kross, Ayduk, 2016). These studies found that self-distancing was facilitated by the use of own-name during self-talk, and by the decreased use of the first personal pronouns (I, me) during writing about a negative event that they had experienced, as well as other language changing processes. So, it could be said that these studies indicated two important aspects in the self-distancing process during adaptive self-reflection, namely the use of perspectives and the use of personal pronouns.

Although these findings show preliminary evidence that using the observer's perspective (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; E. Kross & Ayduk, 2008) and non-first personal pronouns (E. Kross, 2014) will facilitate self-distancing and encourage more adaptive self-reflection, there are important aspects that still need further investigation. First, whether spontaneous self-distancing process (outside the laboratory) by remembering will also occur by writing, because spontaneous self-distancing process by remembering has been proven to facilitate adaptive self-reflection (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; White, Kross, & Duckworth, 2015) but there has been no research that uses writing to achieve spontaneous self-distancing. Second, whether spontaneous self-distancing process associated with the variables of emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, and avoidance with perceived resolution and memory age as control variables when remembering negative events will lead to the same process if they are done by writing. As such, this research will aim to answer these questions.

Psychological Distance, Coping Mechanism, Self-Control, and Construal Level

Psychological distance is a subjective experience or a psychological process that occurs when the egocentric condition at the time of experiencing a stimulus in the here and now is diminished or does not exist (Mischel & Rodriguez, 1993; Trope & Liberman, 2010). Everything that is not present now is at a distance, which can be temporal, spatial, social, or hypothetical distance. There have been extensive research on Psychological Distance in various topics, confirming that the

Psychological Distance construct plays an important role in explaining coping and self-control mechanisms.

Social psychology research on emotional intelligence that focused on delayed gratification conducted by Mischel & Rodriguez (1993) shows that even children had the ability to practice self-distancing strategies that helped them to delay gratification (eating marshmallows) for long-term purposes (getting two marshmallows if they were willing to wait (temporal distance)) through abstract and non-concrete thinking, which was a hypothetical distancing strategy (e.g. thinking that the marshmallow is like a white cloud in the sky, rather than thinking of it as concrete: marshmallows taste sweet and delicious). Psychological distance changes the cognitive representation of one's information (e.g. construal level theory; Trope & Liberman, 2010) and emotional responses to stimulating or painful stimulation (Mobbs & Et.all, 2007). Similarly, research related to imagination and perception (Davis, Gross, & Ochsner, 2011) found that compared to the control group, negative scenes generally cause a more negative response and a lower level of stimulation when imagined as moving away and described as shrinking from the participants, but in contrast, the response becomes more negative and the level of stimulation becomes higher when they are imagined as moving towards the participants and developing or expanding.

This finding shows that spatial distance plays a role in mental representations of emotional events. So, increasing Psychological Distance—by manipulating temporal (present vs. future), spatial (close vs. far), social (self vs. others), hypothetical (fact vs. meaning; concrete vs. abstract) distance—will lead to a "big picture" or a higher level of representation of an event, which helps to achieve long-term goals and better delay gratification that are closer or less distant (Fujita & J.J, 2012; Fujita, Trope, Liberman, & Levin-Sagi, 2006) and facilitate more positive changes in the construal of the self (Libby & Richard P. Eibach, 2010).

The construct of Psychological Distance is also clearly illustrated in clinical research both in theory and practice. The concept of Psychological Distance along with the Decentering theory (Alford & Beck, 1998 in Ayduk & Kross, 2010) assert that "distance" is a concept that states a person's ability to see or observe their own thoughts or beliefs as a construction of reality and not reality itself and that this process is

considered an important precondition for effective cognitive and behavioral therapy. It is conceivable that, without these preconditions, the therapy would not run effectively due to the client's denial, avoidance, and unwillingness to observe the construction of reality built in their own mind. This concept of Decentering overlaps with the concept of Psychological Distance in terms of instructing clients to distance themselves from their thoughts and feelings and observe them (Berstein & Et.all, 2015). Furthermore, it is found that decentering moderates the relationship between self-reflection and self-rumination in depressive symptoms (Mori & Tanno, 2015).

The consequences of Psychological Distance include the emergence of different construal levels (Trope & Liberman, 2010) because humans directly experience only what is happening here and now. But in the mind, through memory and thought processes, humans remember the past, reflect on what happened, draw conclusions from what they learned, conduct a counterfactual process to predict something that has not happened, plan, worry about the future, and all of these will influence their choices, decision-making, as well as emotions. The construal level theory argues that the process is carried out by our minds by forming mental constructs of things that are distanced from the here and now. So, although we can only directly experience what is happening here and now, our mental construction of distant things enables us remember the past, predict things that have not happened, hope for a better future, worry about the future, imagine someone else's reaction, speculate about things, where these things are not direct and present experiences (or mentally distant).

So, an individual's response to negative events can be explained by the psychological distance theory because negative events that happened in the past create a temporal distance, as well as a hypothetical distance, including their perspective on the negative events, their construal, their use of language that may create psychological distance, their perceived resolution of the events, and perhaps other hypothetical things. Generally, an individual's emotional reactivity is different for events that happened a long time ago and events that have just occurred. However, different types of emotions may also have different psychological distances. For example, sadness may not have different psychological distances, but anxiety has different psychological distances because it generally occurs because of something that has not happened (temporal distance), while fear may have

different psychological distances (for example: fear of a tiger that is close by is stronger than fear of a tiger that can only be heard from a distance) (Gray & Mcnaughton, 2003)

Remembering and Writing Negative Experiences Facilitate Adaptive Self-Reflection

When people experience negative events, they often try to understand their feelings through self-reflection to improve the way they feel. Although engaging in this meaning-making process leads people to feel better at times, it can also lead people to ruminate, i.e. continually think about negative feelings, and feel worse. This raises the question: What factors determine whether a person's attempt to "work through" their negative feelings succeeds or fails? For a decade, evidence has been found that one of the factors that facilitates success in processing negative feelings in self-reflection is: self-distancing.

Self-distancing is defined as a mental process that occurs when an individual recall negative events by "taking a step back" or creating a distance from the negative events experienced, so that the process of managing negative feelings that accompany them is more effective (E. Kross & Ayduk, 2016). In a series of research conducted over a decade, the adaptive self-reflection process is characterized by low emotional reactivity, no avoidance, and thought content that is more meaningful (reconstruing) instead of recounting, which indicates rumination (Ayduk & Kross, 2009; E. Kross & Ayduk, 2008; E. Kross et al., 2005; Mischkowski, Kross, & Bushman, 2012; Wisco & Nolen-hoeksema, 2011).

This self-distancing process was also subsequently found in the activity of writing. Initially, the writing process that is intended to express emotions is believed to also have a positive effect on mental and even physical health and is considered to have a therapeutic effect (Niles et al., 2015), but it was not clear yet what the underlying processes were. But then, subsequent research was carried out to explain the process and found evidence that in writing activities, the resulting therapeutic effects included a disclosure process (Beal, Sexton, J, & Pennebaker, 2002; Pennebaker, 1997), perspective taking dan perspective switching (Seih, Chung, & Pennebaker, 2011), a decentering process indicated by the change in personal pronouns from first personal pronouns (I, me) to non-

first personal pronouns (he, she, you, they, us, herself, himself, etc.) (Pennebaker, 1997), changes in narrative structure (Danoff-burg, Mosher, C, Asani, & John, D, 2010; Esparza & Pennebaker, 2006), the large quantity of words that indicate cognitive representation, the emergence of story coherence and meaning-making (Klein, K, 2010; E. Kross & Ayduk, 2016; Libby & Richard P. Eibach, 2010).

Interestingly, we found overlaps between writing concepts and psychological distance concepts, specifically self-distancing. When expressing emotions through writing, or writing about negative events, individuals may get caught in non-adaptive rumination when their psychological distance is low (they enter a self-immersed perspective), but individuals may also have an adaptive self-reflection when their psychological distance is high (they experience self-distancing) (Ayduk & Kross, 2009; E. Kross & Ayduk, 2008; E. Kross et al., 2005). Moreover, the results of these research indicate that it is possible to facilitate self-distancing through perspective and through the use of language (using different personal pronouns), which will result in different psychological regulatory processes that are more adaptive (E. Kross, 2014; Kross,E., & Arbor, 2016).

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Research that were conducted based on the concept of self-distancing states that adaptive self-reflection can be achieved by adopting an observer's perspective, which is positioning oneself as another person who observes, rather than adopting an actor's perspective, which positions oneself as the person experiencing and replaying the negative event again. Adaptive self-reflection is defined as a self-mental process that allows the individual to adaptively recall negative memories, or conduct it in a non-aversive mode, that is marked by low negative-feeling reactivity, non-avoidance, more construing than recounting when telling or writing the story. This study intended to prove this concept first.

Study 1 was conducted by replicating the research concept, using induction of the observer's perspective, which has been proven to encourage individuals to reflect on negative events more adaptively than when adopting the actor's perspective (Ayduk & Kross, 2010, for review), but this study induced the actor's and the observer's perspectives in two different groups, which had not been done in prior research on

spontaneous self-distancing. Furthermore, still with the same concept, study 2 was conducted by changing the method of self-reflection, which was induced not only by a remembering task but also a writing task. The induction was different instructions that told participants to write using first personal pronouns (activating the actor's perspective) or using the participants' own-names (activating the observer's perspective). We expected that the different pronouns (i.e. first personal pronouns (I, me) vs. participants' own-names) when doing self-reflection would facilitate self-distancing, which in turn would relieve anxiety, especially social anxiety ((E. Kross, 2010) for review).

Study 1 aimed to a) look at the differences in self-distancing between groups that used the actor's perspective and the observer's perspective, and b) find implications of spontaneous (outside the laboratory) self-distancing (observer's perspective vs. actor's perspective) on emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, and avoidance, as well as how the memory age and perceived resolution variables of negative events become covariate variables. Study 2 aimed to a) replicate the first study by changing the method of reflection by using the writing method and differentiating the perspectives by using first personal pronouns in the first group (actor's perspective) and using the participants' own-name in the second group (observer's perspective) and then looking at the differences, and b) looking at the implications on emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, avoidance variables and what role the age memory and perceived resolution variables play.

STUDY 1

This study was designed as a comparative cross-sectional study, which compared the adaptive self-reflection process between the group instructed to use the actor's perspective while recalling negative events and the group instructed to use the observer's perspective while recalling negative events. The study was carried out without strict control, i.e. no measurements were made related to the inherent psychological variables in the participants that might affect the self-reflection process of negative events (e.g. levels of depression, levels of rumination, or stress), including non-experimental or quasi-experimental. Furthermore, along with instructions about perspectives (actor vs. observer), cross-sectional data were also taken, namely emotional reactivity, avoidance, recounting,

reconstruing, and data on memory age and perceived resolution to obtain the relationships between those variables.

Samples and Procedures

The study had 428 participants. Based on effect size examination using Gpower, it was determined that the medium effect size required 200 participants for each group, so it was estimated 428 participants would be sufficient. Participants were students of the Department of Psychology at a private university in West Jakarta (327 women, 101 men; M_{age} = 21.14 years, SD_{age} = 4.61). Data were taken from the participants when they attended classes that had been previously offered for those who wished to take part in a study on self-reflection, and then a gradual data collection was carried out by two research assistants at each stage. After a detailed explanation of the research procedures, the participants were given informed consent forms. After ascertaining that no participants were withdrawing, they were asked to fill out personal data and baseline questionnaires. Afterwards, they were divided randomly according to the attendance list into the actor group, who would receive self-distancing instructions to self-reflect on negative events from the perspective of an actor, and the observer group. Participants were then given directions to fill out the personal data (age, education, work status) and baseline questionnaires (types of negative events experienced, time of negative events (in years), perceived resolutions related to negative events). Then participants were asked to listen to the recall instructions given through the speakers already available in the classrooms, and then to begin recalling a negative event for 60 seconds. Afterwards, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing self-report statements to indicate self-distancing process, emotional reactivity, thought content (recounting and reconstruing) and avoidance.

Material and Measurement

Instructions for recall and self-reflection

After participants were divided into two groups (actor's perspective group vs. observer's perspective group), they were asked to remember a negative event they had experienced or were still experiencing, with instructions, such as in the research conducted by Ayduk & Kross (2010), as follows:

Instructions for the actor group:

However humans try to be calm and remain positive, there will always be times when we feel negative feelings such as anxiety, sadness, anger, disappointment, when a difficult event befalls us. Close your eyes and try to remember a difficult event that you have experienced and recall it as if you were experiencing it again and were back at that time as an actor or someone who is experiencing the event again (your perspective as a person experiencing it). Think about why you felt the emotions you felt at that moment. Think from your own perspective. Take enough time to remember when you experienced this difficult event for 1 minute.

Instructions for the observer group:

However humans try to be calm and remain positive, there will always be times when we feel negative feelings such as anxiety, sadness, anger, disappointment, when a difficult event befalls us. Close your eyes and try to remember a difficult event that you have experienced and recall it as if you were an observer who was watching yourself from a distance and observing your emotions during the experience of that difficult event. Think about why the you *that you were observing were having those emotions. Think about it from the perspective as if you were someone else. Take enough time to remember when you experienced this difficult event for 1 minute.*

Self-Distancing

After the recalling activity, the participants were asked to fill out a self-distancing questionnaire consisting of two items: 1) *To what extent did you feel like you were an immersed participant in the experience (i.e. saw the event replay through your own eyes as if you were right there) vs. a distanced observer of what happened (i.e. watched the event unfold as an observer) as you thought about and analyzed your emotions about the experience you recalled?* 2) *As you visualized your experience in your mind's eye just a few moments ago to think about and analyze your emotions, how far away from the scene were you? (1 = predominantly as an actor who experiences it again; 7 = predominantly as an observer observing from a distance).*

The mean of Self-Distancing in the actor group was 5.9 (SD = 3.2) while in the observer group was 7.0 (SD = 3.1), which indicated that individuals in the actor group tended to be immersed in the negative experiences being reflected while the observer group tended to be distanced from the negative experiences being reflected. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), which indicated that the instructions to both groups were successful. Based on previous research, without instructions, individuals naturally think about or reflect on negative experiences they experienced from the perspective of an actor (M = 3.1) (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Nigro & Neisser, 1983).

Emotional Reactivity

Participants assessed how reactive their emotions were by answering three items : *1) Remembering about the event still makes me feel disappointed (rejected, angry, sad), 2) When remembering the event, I relive the emotions that I felt, 3) When I remember the event and reflect on it as instructed, my emotions and physical reactions are still intense, on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 7 = strongly agree).*

Participants in the actor group had emotional reactivity ($\alpha = 0.80$; $M_{actor} = 14.63$; $SD_{actor} = 3.48$) that was slightly higher than the observer group's emotional reactivity ($\alpha = 0.80$; $M_{observer} = 14.57$; $SD_{observer} = 4.20$) but statistically they did not differ significantly from one another ($p > 0.05$).

Thought Content

To measure thought content, closed questions were mapped to two types of thought content that had been encoded from previous research (E. Kross & Ayduk, 2008; E. Kross et al., 2005), namely the type of thought content that focused on what happened (recounting) and that focused on why it happened and why one felt the emotions, involving insight and openness, which caused participants to feel and think differently about their negative experiences (reconstruing). Participants rated the thought content on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 7 = strongly agree) to answer 1 recounting statement (i.e. *When I remember the negative events I experienced, my mind was focused on the event specifically, what happened and what was said and done*). The mean in the actor group ($M_{actor} = 4.70$; $SD_{actor} = 1.77$) was slightly higher than the observer group ($M_{observer} = 4.66$; $SD_{observer} = 1.71$) but the difference was not statistically significant. Measurements were also carried out with 3 items of

reconstruing, namely: *"Remembering the event makes me realize something that somewhat changes my thoughts about the event", "When I remember the event, I realize something that makes me feel there is some resolution for the issue"* and *"When remembering that event, I feel like I'm able to better understand the negative experience and see it more comprehensively*" on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 7 = strongly agree). In the actor group the mean value is lower ($\alpha = 0.82$; $M_{actor} = 14.45$; $SD_{actor} = 4.11$) than the mean value of the observer group's reconstruing ($\alpha = .0.82$; $M_{observer} = 15.0$; $SD_{observer} = 3.84$), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p \geq 0.05$).

Avoidance

Participants filled a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 7 = strongly agree) for two items that indicated the level of avoidance, namely "*1)When asked to recall and think about the event, I tried to avoid thinking about it"* and *2) " When asked to recall and think about the event, I tried to suppress my feelings about the event".* In the actor group the mean value of avoidance ($\alpha = 0.86$ $M_{actor} = 8.79$; $SD_{actor} = 9.48$) was higher than the observer group ($\alpha = 0.86$ $M_{observer} = 8.48$; $SD_{observer} = 2.87$) but the difference was not statistically significant.

Intervening variables

Theoretically, the memory age and the perceived resolution of a problem can reduce emotional reactivity and increase distance (Ayduk & Kross, 2010; Nigro & Neisser, 1983; Robins & Oliver, 1997), both of which were categorized as control variables in this study. Participants were asked to measure perceived resolution of a negative experience through the question "*On a scale of 1 to 7, I think that the event was ...." (1 = resolved; 7 = not resolved)*. This item was reversed before analysis. Then participants were asked to remember how long ago the event had occurred in the past (memory age) by checking one of five choices *(1 = less than one year ago, 2 = two years ago, 3 = three years ago, 4 = four years ago and 4 years ago and 5 = more than four years ago)*. An examination of these variables as (intervening) controls found a direct negative relationship between self-distancing and emotional reactivity (r = -0.40). When the memory age variable was controlled, the correlation coefficient decreases (r = -0.38), but the relationship was still statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Whereas when the perceived resolution was controlled, the relationship between self-distancing and emotional reactivity (r = -0.40)

decreases even more (r = -0.34) but the relationship was still statistically significant. This showed that perceived resolution played a larger role than memory age in the interrelationship between self-distancing and emotional reactivity.

STUDY RESULTS 1

An examination of descriptive statistics showed that, although gender and self-distancing had a negative relationship, it was not statistically significant (p> 0.05), so it will not be discussed further.

T Test Analysis between Groups

Because the participants in this quasi-experiment were differentiated by two sets of instructions, i.e. the actor's perspective and the observer's perspective, independent T tests were carried out between the two treatment groups. The results of the independent T tests between the two groups showed that only the self-distancing variable was different between the actor's perspective and the observer's perspective. The mean of self-distancing in the observer group was ($M_{observer}$ = 7.00; p <0.05), compared to the mean of self-distancing in the actor group (M_{actor} = 5.91; p <0.05). It meant that the different treatments of the actor's perspective and the observer's perspective were successfully induced. However, other variables such as emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, and avoidance were not statistically different between the two groups.

Correlation Test

Then we examined the relationships between self-distancing and the variables of emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, avoidance, including memory age and perceived resolution, with the last two variables considered as control variables and tested with partial correlation (Ayduk & Kross, 2010).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Key Variables in Study 1

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Remembering									
1.Self-Distancing	6.46	3.21	1	-0.40**	-0.42**	0.18**	-0.19**	0.28**	0.21**
2.Emotional Reactivity	14.60	3.85	-	1	0.45**	-0.90	0.25**	-0.31**	-0.14**
3.Recounting	4.68	1.74	-	-	1	-0.11**	0.20**	-0.27**	-0.16**
4.Reconstruing	14.60	4.01	-	-	-	1	0.061	0.23**	0.36**

5. Avoidance	8.63	2.80	-	-	-	-	1	-0.16**	0.037
6.Perceived Resolution	4.50	2.10	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.14**
7. Memory Age	3.11	1.41	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Emotional Reactivity

Emotional reactivity was negatively correlated with self-distancing, which meant that in both the actor and the observer groups, the more an individual adopted self-distancing, the lower their emotional reactivity (see Table 1). The relationship between self-distancing and emotional reactivity, which was originally 40% ($r_{zeroorder}$ = -0.40; p <0.05), decreased when a partial correlation was performed ($r_{partial}$ = -38.6; p <0.05) by controlling the memory age variable (M_{memory} = 3.11; SD_{memory} = 1.4), but it remained significant. This showed that memory age played a quite important role, although the relationship between the variables emotional reactivity and self-distancing remained a direct relationship. When a partial correlation analysis was carried out by controlling perceived resolution, the correlation between emotional reactivity and self-distancing weakened ($r_{partial}$ = -0.34; p <0.05), which showed that perceived resolution played a larger role to explain the relationship between self-distancing and emotional reactivity.

Thought Content: Recounting-Reconstruing

As hypothesized, self-distancing was significantly and negatively correlated with recounting and had a significant positive correlation with reconstruing (see Table 1). This showed that someone who adopted self-distancing would do less recounting and more construing. A partial correlation test also explained the role of memory age and perceived resolution in the relationship between self-distancing and thought content when performing self-reflection about negative events. After controlling the memory age variable, the correlation coefficient, which was initially 18% ($r_{zeroorder}$ = 0.18; p < 0.05) decreased to 11% ($r_{partial}$=0.11; p < 0.05). This meant that memory age played a role, even though the relationship between self-distancing and thought content remained a direct relationship.

Avoidance

Unlike previous studies that showed no correlation between avoidance and reconstruing (Ayduk & Kross, 2010), this study found different results. As seen in the Table 1, avoidance was negatively correlated with self-distancing (r=19%), positively correlated with emotional reactivity (r=25%), and positively correlated with recounting (r=20%). It meant that adopting self-distancing during self-reflection will decrease avoidance, but the positive correlation with emotional reactivity meant that the more avoidance an individual did, the more emotionally reactive he would be. The positive correlation between avoidance and recounting meant that the more avoidance an individual did, the more he would recount what happened over and over, not trying to make meaning from it.

STUDY 2

Study 2 aimed to conceptually replicate and expand Study 1 from several aspects. First, in this study we changed the method of self-reflection—not only remembering in the mind but also writing it down—so the results would be more observable through the stories written by the participants. Second, differentiating induction no longer used the actor's and the observer's perspectives, but different pronouns as self-representations (first personal pronouns vs. participants' own names), which was done because previous studies found that the use of non-first personal pronouns (participants' own names) facilitated self-distancing (Kross., et. al., 2014). The method used in Study 2 was quasi-experimental. The writing method is interesting to study in its relation to the self-distancing concept because the nature of writing is to externalize the mind, regulating expression and regulating cognition, and a study by Lyubomirsky, Sousa & Dickerhoff (2006) that compared the benefits of thinking and writing found that writing about negative events had effects that might improve life satisfaction and physical and mental health when compared to groups that only thought about it. Another important point is that writing has a cognitive mechanism that facilitates the practice of self-distancing and ultimately reduces emotional reactivity through a quite interesting cognitive mechanism (Park et al., 2016).

Study 2 focused on 1) determining whether the group using first personal pronouns to represent themselves when doing negative self-reflection would be different from the group using own-names, in terms of self-distancing, emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, and avoidance, and 2) learning the implications of self-distancing in relation to key

variables in the adaptive self-reflection process, namely emotional reactivity, recounting, reconstruing, and avoidance and the role of memory age and perceived resolution as control variables.

Samples and Procedures

The study had 428 participants (327 women, 101 men; M_{age} = 21.14 years, SD_{age} = 4.61). Participants who were involved in study 1 were offered to take part in study 2 and we obtained the same number (all participants were willing to participate). Study 2 was conducted 2 (two) months after study 1 to prevent carry-over effects. Participants were students of the Department of Psychology in a private university in West Jakarta, compensated for their participation with extra credits for a Psychology course. After a detailed explanation of the research procedures for the participants, the participants were given informed consent forms. Anyone who were not willing to remember and write down about a negative event that they had experienced were allowed to withdraw from the study.

After the participants gathered and filled out an attendance sheet, they were divided randomly into two groups differentiated by instructions about personal pronouns: the first group would write about a negative event using first personal pronouns (I, me) and the second group would write about a negative event using their own-names as a representation of themselves. Both groups received instructions in separate rooms.

Material and Measurement

Study 2 used instructions that were adapted and modified from the ones used by Kross et al. (2014). Participants were asked to recall a negative event that they had experienced or were still experiencing, but in this study, participants were asked to write about the event that they remembered in two different ways, i.e. group one used first personal pronouns, while group two used their own-names. The instructions were as follows:

> Writing Instructions for Group One: First Personal Pronouns
> *Please recall a negative event that you experienced. When you have remembered the difficult event and your negative feelings at the time, write about the difficult event and the negative feelings you felt using first personal pronouns (I or me), focus on yourself and use the words I or Me as much as possible to tell*

about your feelings, while observing the feelings that you had while experiencing the difficult event. Write about why you felt the emotions that you felt at that time. Write from your own perspective (example: I feel sad ...) for 30 minutes.

Writing Instructions for Group Two: Own-Names for Personal Pronouns

Please recall a negative event that you experienced. When you have remembered that difficult event and your negative feelings at the time, write about the difficult event and the negative feelings you felt using your own name as a personal pronoun. Focus on your own name and use your own name as a personal pronoun as much as possible to tell about your feelings while observing the feelings you had when experiencing the event. Write why you felt the feelings you felt at that moment, from a perspective as if you were someone else observing you, when you experienced that difficult event, for 30 minutes (example: your own-name is sad ...)

As in Study 1, this study also asked participants to do several tasks: filling out personal data and baseline questionnaires, performing the recalling task, self-reflecting on a negative event they had experienced by writing it down. The participants completed the questionnaires using Google Form, which they could access on their phones, so that the data could be quickly collected. After filling out personal data and baseline questionnaires, together the participants read the distributed instruction sheets and listened to the instructions through the speakers in the classrooms. Then together they recall a negative event they had experienced for 60 seconds. After recalling the negative event, the participants wrote about it according to the instructions for each group, for 30 minutes.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Consistent with previous research (study 1), gender was not related to self-distancing, so this variable will not be examined further.

Independent T Tests

In study 1, the induction of different instructions could only differentiate self-distancing between the two groups, which indicated the success of

group manipulation. But study 2, which instructed participants to write using different personal pronouns (first personal pronouns vs. own-names), was able to differentiate not only self-distancing, but also emotional reactivity and reconstruing variables. The study found that the mean for self-distancing in the group using first personal pronouns (M = 6.04; SD = 2.66; $p \leq 0.05$) was lower than the group using own-names (M = 8.14; SD 2.82; $p \leq 0.05$) whereas the mean for the emotional reactivity variable in the first personal pronouns group (M = 15.63; SD 2.81, $p \leq 0.05$) was higher than the own-name group (M = 14.36; SD = 2.60 $p \leq 0.05$), which indicated that manipulation by personal pronoun differentiation was successful and was also able to differentiate emotional reactivity between the two groups. For the thought content variables, the recounting variable in the first personal pronoun group (M = 4.63; SD = 1.46; $p \leq 0.05$) was higher than the own-name group (M = 4.25; SD = 1.46; $p \leq 0.05$), whereas the reconstruing variable in the first personal pronoun group (M = 13.72; SD = 2.98 ; $p \leq 0.05$) was lower than the own-name group (M= 15.59; SD=3.2 ; $p \leq 0.05$). This indicated that the first personal pronoun group did more recounting while the own-name group did more reconstruing. For the avoidance variable, the mean in the first personal pronoun group (M = 8.46; SD = 2.95) was higher than the own-name group (M = 7.95; SD = 3.12), but it was not statistically significant.

Correlation Test

Below is the correlation test table for key variables in study 2:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Interrelations of Key Variables in Study 2

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Writing									
1.Self-Distancing	7.04	2.93	1	-0.46**	-0.55*	0.24**	-0.11*	0.10**	0.18**
2.Emotional Reactivity	15.00	2.78	-	1	0.56**	0.14**	0.21**	0.14**	0.13**
3.Recounting	4.44	1.47	-	-	1	-0.06	0.16**	0.19**	0.06
4.Reconstruing	14.65	3.70	-	-	-	1	0.04	0.26**	-0.02
5. Avoidance	8.20	3.04	-	-	-	-	1	-0.06	0.08
6.Perceived Resolution	4.50	2.10	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.54**
7.Memory Age	2.93	1.73	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Emotional Reactivity

In study 2, emotional reactivity was negatively correlated with self-distancing with a greater correlation coefficient (r = -0.46) than study 1 (r = -0.40), which indicated a stronger relationship between the variables in the writing induction, compared to just remembering the negative event. Emotional reactivity and self-distancing still had a direct relationship after the memory age variable was controlled, and although the correlation coefficient decreased, the correlation still remained statistically significant.

Thought Content (Recounting - Reconstruing)

The recounting variable in study 2 was negatively correlated to self-distancing, and the coefficient correlation was higher (r = -0.55; $p \leq 0.05$) than study 1 (r = -0.42), whereas the reconstruing variable was positively correlated with self-distancing (r = 0.24) and the coefficient correlation was higher than study 1 (r = 0.18). Recounting was more positively correlated with emotional reactivity (r = 0.56) than study 1 (r = 0.45), which indicated that the more an individual wrote down the details of an event and the emotions felt at the time, the higher the emotional reactivity would be. The reconstruing variable did not correlate with emotional reactivity in Study 1, but in Study 2 it was negatively correlated (r = -0.14), which meant that if emotional reactivity was high, the reconstruing would decrease.

Recounting was positively correlated with avoidance (r = 0.16), less so when compared to study 1 (r = 0.20), but reconstruing does not correlate with avoidance. This indicated that recounting (detailed and repeated narrative) encouraged avoidance, but not reconstruing. When the memory age control variable was omitted from the self-distancing relationship with reconstruing (r = 0.18), the relationship remained significantly correlated although weaker (r = 0.11). Likewise, when the perceived resolution control variable was omitted from the self-distancing relationship with reconstruing (r = 0.18), the relationship was weaker (r = 0.12). This indicated that memory age and perceived resolution played a role in explaining the relationship between self-distancing and reconstruing.

In the relationship between self-distancing and recounting (r = -0.42), the correlation coefficient decreased after the memory age variable was controlled (r = -0.40), as well as after the perceived resolution variable was controlled (r = -0.37). This indicated that memory age and perceived

resolution played a role in explaining the relationship between self-distancing and recounting.

Avoidance

The interesting result about the relationship between the avoidance variable with other key variables (self-distance, emotional reactivity, recounting, and reconstruing), which were more strongly correlated compared to study 1, was that the avoidance variable in study 2 tended to have lower relationship coefficients, although they remained significant, except for its relationship with reconstruing. This indicated that writing activities tended not to facilitate avoidance.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the two studies conducted, it was found that self-reflection activities through writing using own-name pronouns decreased emotional reactivity when an individual was self-reflecting on the negative events they experienced. Writing activities facilitated better self-distancing than self-reflection through just remembering. Emotional reactivity in the group that used own-name pronouns was lower than the group that used first personal pronouns. In addition, the group that used own-name pronouns did less recounting (repeating stories) than the group that used first personal pronouns, but did more reconstruing. This result confirmed that reconstruing was easier to do when an individual adopted more self-distancing, facilitated by using non-first personal pronouns (Grossman & Kross, 2014). The avoidance variable did not differ significantly between the two groups, even though the first personal pronoun group did more avoidance than the own-name pronoun group. The statistically-significant negative correlation between self-distancing and emotional reactivity showed that self-distancing facilitated adaptive self-reflection. This study also showed that using own-name pronouns facilitated self-distancing better, decreased emotional reactivity, increased reconstruing than recounting, with a stronger correlation when compared to self-reflecting by remembering.

An interesting aspect that needs to be taken into account in further research is the potential to create interaction between perspective variables (actor vs. observer perspective) and personal pronouns (first personal pronouns vs. own-name pronouns), which will allow for interesting combinations in order to examine self-distancing methods that provide better implications

in facilitating more adaptive self-reflection (Fergussen, 1993) because research on expressive writing has shown that writing for three consecutive days was able to naturally reduce the use of first personal pronouns (me, I) and increase the use of non-first personal pronouns (second, third, or own-name personal pronouns), as well as increase reconstruing of negative events (Kross, Et. al, 2014). If that study, which only used expressive writing instructions (without manipulating perspectives and personal pronouns), was able to facilitate a decrease in emotional reactivity level, then it would be interesting to examine such mechanism, by creating interaction between two variables (perspectives vs. pronouns), which had shown to have an impact on emotional reactivity in this study.

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