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What does 'quality of life' refer to in bipolar disorder research? A systematic review of the construct's definition, usage, and measurement



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 DISORDERS**

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BIPOLAR DISORDERS:
 ADVANCES IN UNDERSTANDING AROUND THE GLOBE.

ISBD 2017

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Quality of Life in Bipolar Disorder

- Bipolar Disorder (BD) – chronic, relapsing
 - Relapse common even with best practice treatment (e.g., Gitlin, Swendsen, Heller, & Hammen, 1995)
 - Subsyndromal symptoms common (e.g. Judd et al., 2002)
 - Inter-episode impacts on functioning (e.g., Chengappa et al., 2005)
- Recovery movement – live well despite symptoms
- Quality of Life (QoL) – holistic outcome
- Treatment outcome most valued by consumers with BD (Maczka et al., 2010)
- Incorporating the consumer perspective/preferences (e.g. Milton, 2013)

Quality of Life –
Personal meanings to technical term

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey flat cap and a black t-shirt, is shown in profile. He has his hand to his chin in a thoughtful pose. He is wearing a smartwatch on his left wrist. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text 'HAVE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE WITH A SMART WATCH' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

HAVE A BETTER
QUALITY OF
LIFE WITH A
SMART WATCH

“Among the most inconsistently used terms within the human sciences is that of ‘quality of life’. Indeed, the words ‘quality of life’ are used with such abandon that readers must delve into the text to ascertain the intended meaning”

- Cummins, Gullone, & Lau, 2002

Systematic Review: How is QoL used/defined/measured in the BD literature?

- Review Aim:
 - Clarify use of the QoL construct in the BD literature
- Method
 - Systematic collection and interrogation of studies
 - 275 studies reported data on QoL in BD
 - Based on content analysis techniques
- Investigated:
 - A) Explicit discussion of QoL definition
 - B) Usage of the term QoL in the BD literature

Results

- Explicit Definition:
 - QoL rarely explicitly defined ($n = 36$; 12% articles)
 - No consensus

Implicit Meaning: Four major usage categories



QoL as related to *functioning*
(103 articles)

QoL as related to *subjective experience*
(81 articles)



QoL as related to *health*
(91 articles)

QoL as related to *wellbeing*
(44 articles)



Links to Measurement

- QoL as Functioning/Health
 - SF-36: “Does your health limit you now in these activities?”
 - EQ-5D: “Which statements best describe your own health today”
- QoL as Subjective Experience/Wellbeing
 - WHOQOL-BREF: “How good or satisfied have you felt?”
 - Q-LES-Q: “During the past week how satisfied have you been with your...”

Discussion

Ideographic/Evaluative

Subjective experiences
Satisfaction
Wellbeing
Positive Indicators

Normative/Descriptive

Health
Functioning
Disability and limitations
Deviations from
'normal' status

Discussion

- Differs from other fields:
 - Ageing: Positive psychology (flourishing, sense of meaning, autonomy) (e.g., Bowling, 2005)
 - Schizophrenia: Functioning & health often rated objectively, prominence of symptoms & side effects (e.g., Awad, 2012)

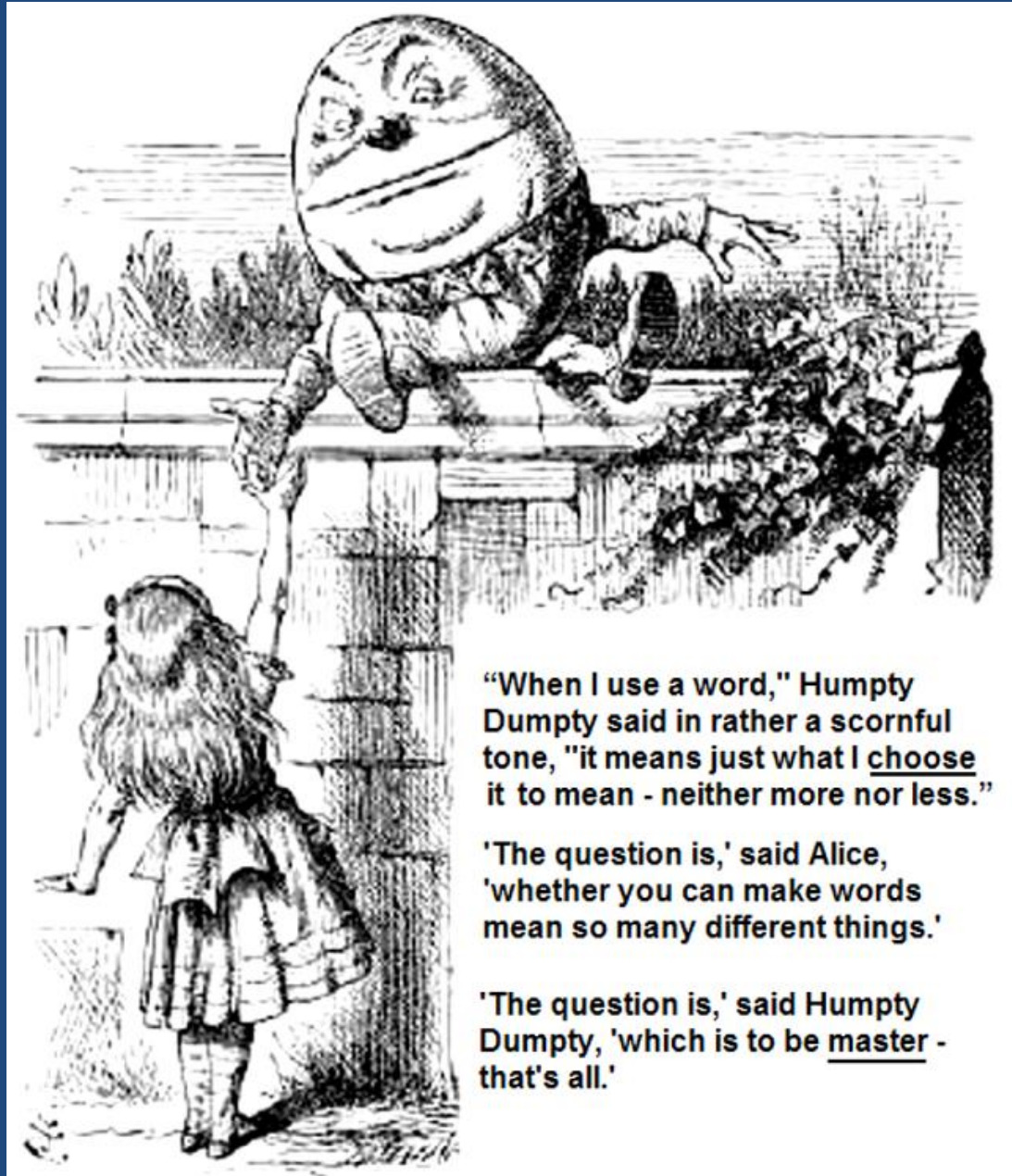
Implications

- Theoretical clarification of concepts related to QoL
- Recognition of diverse approaches to QoL when reviewing previous literature
- Consensus? Maybe not
 - Plurality of definitions not necessarily a weakness
 - Authors must be accountable – explicit definition necessary, justify measurement choice

Conclusion

- QoL rarely explicitly defined in the BD literature; multiple important constructs identified
- Quality of life may represent “a field of interest, rather than a single variable” (Katschnig, 2006)
- Diversity can be tolerated, if authors are explicit in definition
- Something to think about...
 - Possible to live with with BD (Suto et al., 2010)
 - What do people with BD say is important to QoL? – Development of QoL.BD out of consumer voices (Michalak & Murray, 2010)

Questions?



"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - that's all.'