

ABSTRACT

CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN UNREALISTIC OPTIMISM

Results of past cross-cultural unrealistic optimism research is confusing. To help sort out the circumstances in which unrealistic optimism occurs, the present study utilized two different questioning methods (direct and indirect) and two different event types (positive and negative future life events). American, Japanese, and Taiwanese participants all showed unrealistic optimism for the direct method across positive and negative events, with the Japanese showing a bit lower than the others. Using the indirect method, American and Japanese participants showed unrealistic optimism for positive and negative events. However, Taiwanese participants showed no bias for positive events and showed unrealistic optimism for negative events. Correlations between the direct and indirect method suggest that all participants tend to think more about themselves than others when making direct comparison judgments. These findings suggest that methodological issues may be part of the reason for the inconsistent differences across cultures.

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December 2006