



Short Communication

The generalizability of temporal focus profiles across cultures: A secondary analysis using data from Japan and the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Studies examining time perspective have increased exponentially in recent years, driven by advances in measurement sophistication. Additionally the literature about time perspective has seen a move toward person-centered analyses, away from bivariate or correlational analyses. The Temporal Focus Scale is a relatively new measure that assesses cognitive engagement with the past, present and future. This is the first study to examine the viability of person-centered analyses using this scale across cultures, and to assess how temporal focus clusters relate to criterion variables. Participants were school children in Japan and the United Kingdom. Results show that a four cluster solution was best in both countries, with three broadly similar clusters emerging across the two sites. Lower self-esteem in the United Kingdom was associated with being in the Past Focussed cluster, while in Japan, lower self-esteem was associated with being in the No Focus cluster.

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1. Introduction

The study of time perspective, the degree to which cognitions and feelings about the past, present and future influence behavior, has increased rapidly in recent years. This growth has been partly driven by the development of new measurement instruments, and the refinement of previously developed ones. Additional to the longer-established Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), other measures have been developed which have been purposive attempts to assess more nuanced aspects of time perspective. Notably, the Temporal Focus Scale (TFS; (Shipp, Edwards, & Schurer-Lambert, 2009)) was developed to assess the cognitive (how people think) dimension of time perspective.

Adolescence is a particularly interesting life-stage in which to assess time perspective as developmental theory suggests that with the transition from childhood to adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Piaget, 1955), individuals' time perspectives will change. Moreover, as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, adolescence is characterised by a need to make decisions and preparations that will have long-term life consequences (e.g. (Nurmi, 2002)). Additionally, adolescence is a period of emotional and psychological change, and the intensity of these changes can result in stress (Moksnes, Byrne, Mazanov, & Espnes, 2010) which can, in turn, have an adverse impact on self-esteem. Understanding

the degree (if at all) to which time perspective relates to adolescent self-esteem is therefore potentially useful.

The majority of temporal studies to date have used bivariate or correlational analyses to assess how specific dimensions (for example scores on past or future) of time perspective relate to scores on criterion variables. However, a weakness in this approach is that individuals relate to the past, present and future to matters of degree, and concurrently, therefore it seems important to simultaneously account for scores on all of these dimensions when assessing how they relate to criterion variables. Accordingly, recent studies have employed person-centered analyses, using heuristic cluster analysis (e.g., (Andretta, Worrell, & Mello, 2014)) to better account for the totality of temporal experience when assessing its relation to criterion variables. For example, Andretta et al. (Andretta et al., 2014) showed that clusters of Positives and Pessimists differed on academic attainment with a moderate effect size, although attitudes toward specific time periods themselves were not predictive of these outcomes. Cluster analysis is used to develop categories, so that individuals within categories have multiple, co-occurring time attitudes or cognitions that are as similar as possible, and as dissimilar as possible with individuals between categories (Bergman, Magnusson, & El-Khoury, 2003).

While this analytical approach has been applied to other time perspective scales (Andretta et al., 2014; Cole, Andretta, & McKay, 2016), we are not aware of any such analyses having been undertaken with the TFS. Additionally, because of a dearth of research on the generalizability of clusters across cultures (Sircova, Van De Vijver, Osin, et al., 2015), and the fact that culture influences how individuals perceive and conceptualise time (Jones & Leitner, 2015), the present study

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sought to compare TFS clusters in UK and Japanese adolescents. Although this is the first study to examine temporal focus clusters, we hypothesized that, in line with other studies using other temporal scales (e.g., (Cole et al., 2016; Higata & Saito, 2007; Shirai, 1997)) membership of a future temporal cluster would be optimal, with the reverse true for a past profile. The only additional data that were gathered in both countries (and therefore useful as a criterion measure) were data on self-esteem. We also examined how membership of TFS clusters was related to scores on self-esteem.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants in the UK were 676 adolescents (Mean age = 14.67, SD = 1.77; 59.5% male) recruited from seven high schools in Northern Ireland. Participants in Japan were 965 adolescents (Mean age = 15.08, SD = 1.77; male = 45.6%). These were recruited from one junior high school and two high schools in the Kanto district in Japan. Both studies were given ethical approval by the relevant university ethics committee and all participants gave informed consent.

2.2. Measures

The Temporal Focus Scale, TFS (Shipp et al., 2009) is a 12-item scale assessing cognitive engagement with the past, present and future. The scale consists of: four TFS Past (e.g., *I think about things from my past*), TFS Current (e.g., *My mind is on the here and now*), and TFS Future (e.g., *I think about times to come*) items. Cronbach's alphas for the TFS ranged from 0.74 to 0.89 (Shipp et al., 2009). Construct validity of the scale was demonstrated through correlations between scale factors and other pre-existing measures of time perspective, including the ZTPI (Shipp et al., 2009). Internal consistency estimates in the present study were as follows for the UK and Japan respectively: TFS Past

($\alpha = 0.83, 0.89$); TFS Current ($\alpha = 0.67, 0.72$); TFS Future ($\alpha = 0.79, 0.80$).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; (Rosenberg, 1965)) consists of 10 Likert-type items designated to assess positive and negative evaluations of self. Respondents in the UK indicated their level of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Thus, the possible total score can range from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 40, with higher scores reflecting more positive evaluations of self. In the Japanese study the scale was scored 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Thus, the possible total score can range from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 50. Internal consistency estimates in the present study were acceptable for the UK and Japanese samples respectively ($\alpha = 0.74, 0.77$).

The TFS was translated into Japanese using a translation and back-translation process (Brislin, 1986). The Japanese Version of the RSES (Yamamoto, Matsui, & Yamanari, 1982) was used in the present study

2.3. Analyses

SPSS (v23) software was used to compute bivariate Pearson's correlations (two-tailed) between scores on all temporal focus dimensions and scores on self-esteem. Ferguson's (Ferguson, 2009) effect size estimates were used to interpret coefficients. Accordingly, the recommended minimum practical effect (RMPE) is 0.20, 0.50 represents a moderate effect size, and 0.64 represents a strong effect. Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis of TFS scores were performed, and to identify a set of potential solutions using two stopping rules were employed: (a) Calinski and Harabasz (Calinski & Harabasz, 1974) pseudo-F index and (b) Duda and Hart's (Duda & Hart, 1973) $Je(2)/Je(1)$ index with associated pseudo-T-squared. Cluster solutions were validated in several ways. First, K-means iterative partitioning was applied to the data to validate Ward's solutions, and to provide cluster assignments for the subsequent analyses. Second, homogeneity of TFS scores within each cluster had to meet the recommended cut-off (i.e., $EV \geq 67$; (Bergman et al., 2003)). Third, T-scores were plotted to examine distinctions between



Fig. 1. Temporal Focus Clusters in the UK sample. Note: values reported are T-scores.

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