

Abstract

Distance transcending technology of the internet generated a new experimental paradigm for the study of intercultural, or joint cultural interaction between members of two societies. University students from Japan, China, and Taiwan participated in three experiments in real-time using an intercultural trust paradigm derived from a game theoretic and evolutionary approach to social exchange. The modified Trust Game improves on the Prisoner's Dilemma Game by eliminating greed as an explanation for lack of cooperation: the truster unilaterally decides whether or not to trust their exchange partner, and the allocator then decides whether or not to divide the reward fairly between the two of them. Participants earned real money by playing 6 rounds of one-shot Trust Games with 3 in-group members and 3 out-group members over the internet. Japanese were found to be less trusting and trustworthy exchange partners compared to cultural Chinese, suggesting that Japanese collectivism is based more on long-term assurance networks, whereas Chinese collectivism provides a more expansive, guanxi-based approach to building new social networks. Japanese also showed less in-group favoritism in both trust and trustworthiness (or conditional fairness) at the national-level compared to cultural Chinese, suggesting that culture-specific content (e.g., collective guilt for WWII) influences ethnocentrism at the national-level.