

Abstract

One factor predicting posttraumatic growth (PTG), positive changes that occur as a result of psychological struggle with a traumatic event, is hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Hope is conceptualized as goal directed thinking with two elements: agency, goal directed determination, and pathway, plans to meet a goal. Theoretically, high hope should be indicative of higher PTG, however mixed results have been found. Hope has been positively associated with PTG in Chinese cancer survivors (Ho et al., 2011), yet not in American survivors (Bellizzi & Blank, 2006). Data was collected from American and Japanese undergraduate students who experienced a stressful life event and completed the measures. Results indicated Americans had higher agency and pathway and revealed nation, agency, and pathway scores predicted PTG. However, the role of hope pathway on PTG was stronger in Japanese undergraduates. Findings suggest it may be helpful to foster hope pathway in Japanese people post stressful life experiences. Future studies should acknowledge hope as predicting factor when examining PTG cross-culturally.

Cross-Cultural Differences in the Relationship between Hope and Posttraumatic Growth

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Introduction

Snyder's hope theory states hope isn't merely emotional, but consists of goal-directed thinking with two distinct sub themes (Snyder et al., 1991): **Agency**- goal-directed determination and **Pathway**- plans to meet a goal. **Hope** has been found to be a factor predicting **Posttraumatic Growth** (PTG; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), the positive psychological changes after stressful life events. Theoretically, high levels of hope should be indicative of higher PTG, yet **mixed results exist**.

- **Chinese cancer survivors:** hope was positively associated with PTG. (Ho et al., 2011; Yuen, Ho, & Chan, 2014).
- **American cancer survivors:** no relationship was found (Bellizzi & Blank, 2006; Sears, Stanton, & Danoff-Burg., 2003).

Significance: Few studies directly compare the role of hope in PTG between Eastern and Western cultures. Literature warrants a need to examine how hope can influence posttraumatic growth in other cultures.

Purpose: Examine how Japanese and American undergraduates differ in their level of hope, and the predictive nature of hope agency, pathway, and nation on posttraumatic growth.

Hypotheses: (a) American and Japanese undergraduates will differ in their level of hope agency and pathway (b) hope agency and pathway will be positively associated with PTG (c) the predictive nature will differ by nation.

Methods

Table 1.

Participant Demographic Characteristics (N=646)

	n	%
American Students	326	
Male	102	31.29
Female	222	68.10
Missing	2	.01
Mean Age (SD)	19.57 (3.90)	
Japanese Students	320	
Male	155	48.43
Female	164	51.25
Missing	1	.003
Mean Age (SD)	19.93 (3.92)	

Procedures and Measures:

- Paper and pencil survey
- PTGI: 21-item scale (0=not at all to 5=very great degree; $\alpha = .92$)
- Snyder's Hope Scale: 12-item scale (1=definitely false to 8=definitely true)
 - 4-items agency ($\alpha = .72$), "I energetically pursue my goals."
 - 4-items pathway ($\alpha = .76$), "I can think of many ways to get out of a jam."
 - 4 filler items, "I feel tired most of the time."

Inclusion

Criteria: (a) experienced one or more stressful life event(s) in the last five years (b) completed the PTGI inventory and Snyder's Hope scale.

Discussion

Conclusions: Although the American students were more hopeful than Japanese students, hope agency or agentic thinking explained PTG in both the American and Japanese samples. Hope pathway varies, higher pathway led to higher PTG in the Japanese. In the American sample however, PTG was reported at high level regardless of the level of hope pathway.

Interpretation: The role of hope on PTG varies from culture to culture. Fostering hope agency and pathway by developing plans to meet certain goals could help the Japanese population experience posttraumatic growth after stressful life experiences such as natural disasters, which frequent Japan. For Americans hope may not be as strong of a predictor for PTG as other variables.

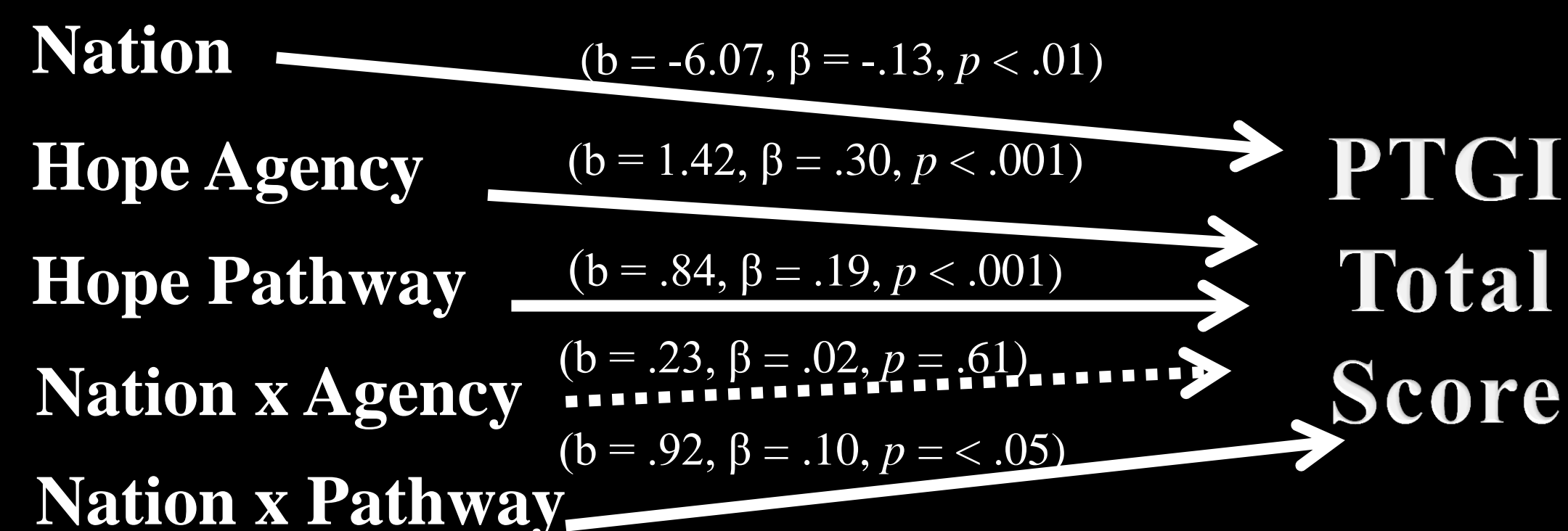
Limitations: The current study only examined Japanese and American undergraduates, and could differ among other Eastern and Western Cultures. Since the participants were also attending a university their level of goal-directed thinking, determination, and planning abilities may be heightened compared to those who are not attending university.

Future Directions: Future studies should acknowledge the role of hope agency and pathway when examining PTG cross-culturally between Eastern and Western countries. Researchers should also consider analyzing hope's predictive nature and PTG in other populations of socio-economic statuses and in children and adolescents. In childhood and in to adolescence, hope may be more predictive of PTG than in adults due to the development trajectory of hope in the wake of trauma and stressful life events.

Clinical Significance: Clinicians should consider the use of hope development post stressful life experiences to experience potential positive changes.

Results

Variable	Nation	M	SD	t	p
Agency	American	25.16	4.09	13.38	$p < .001$
	Japanese	20.60	4.55		
Pathway	American	23.48	4.67	10.19	$p < .001$
	Japanese	19.60	5.03		

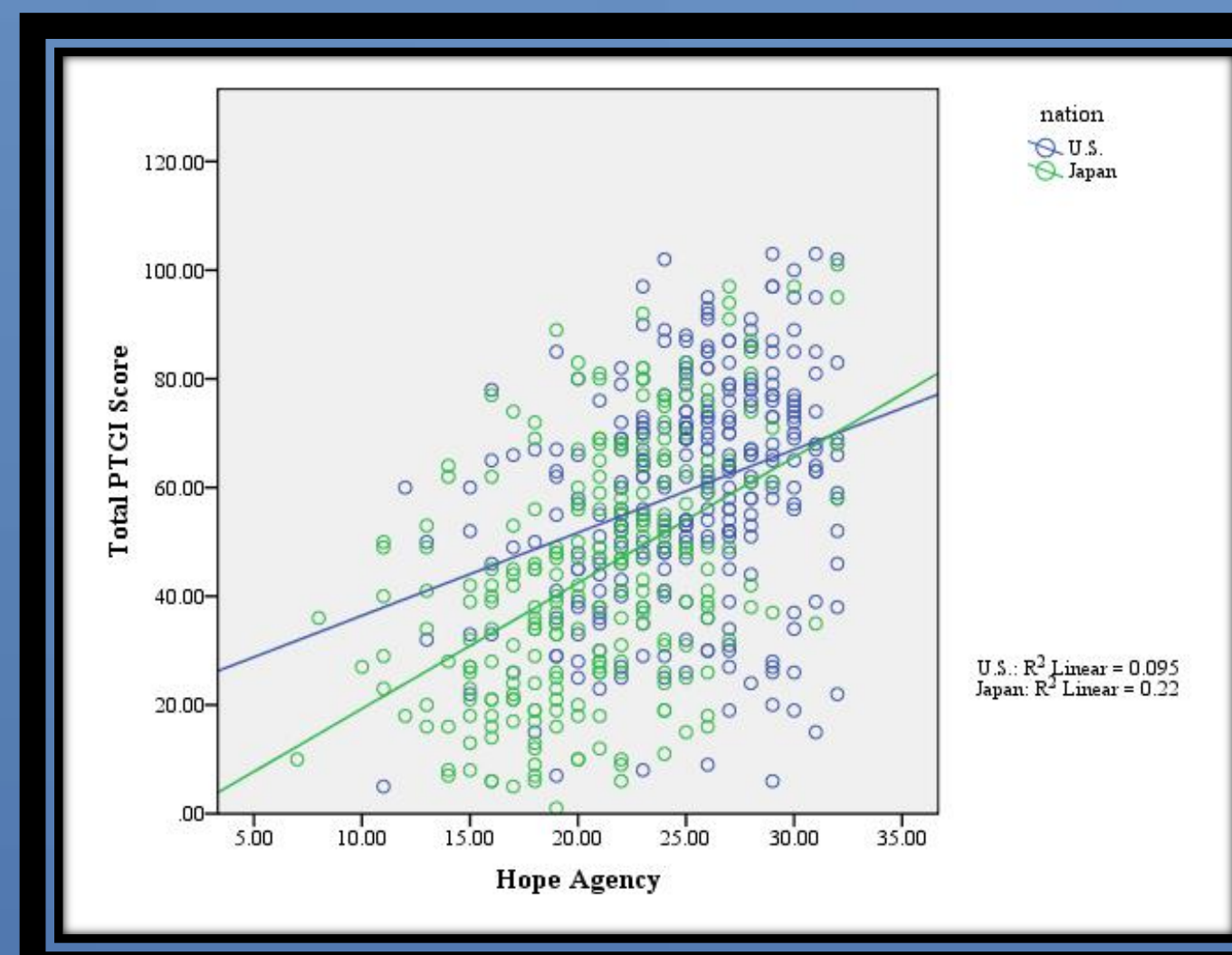
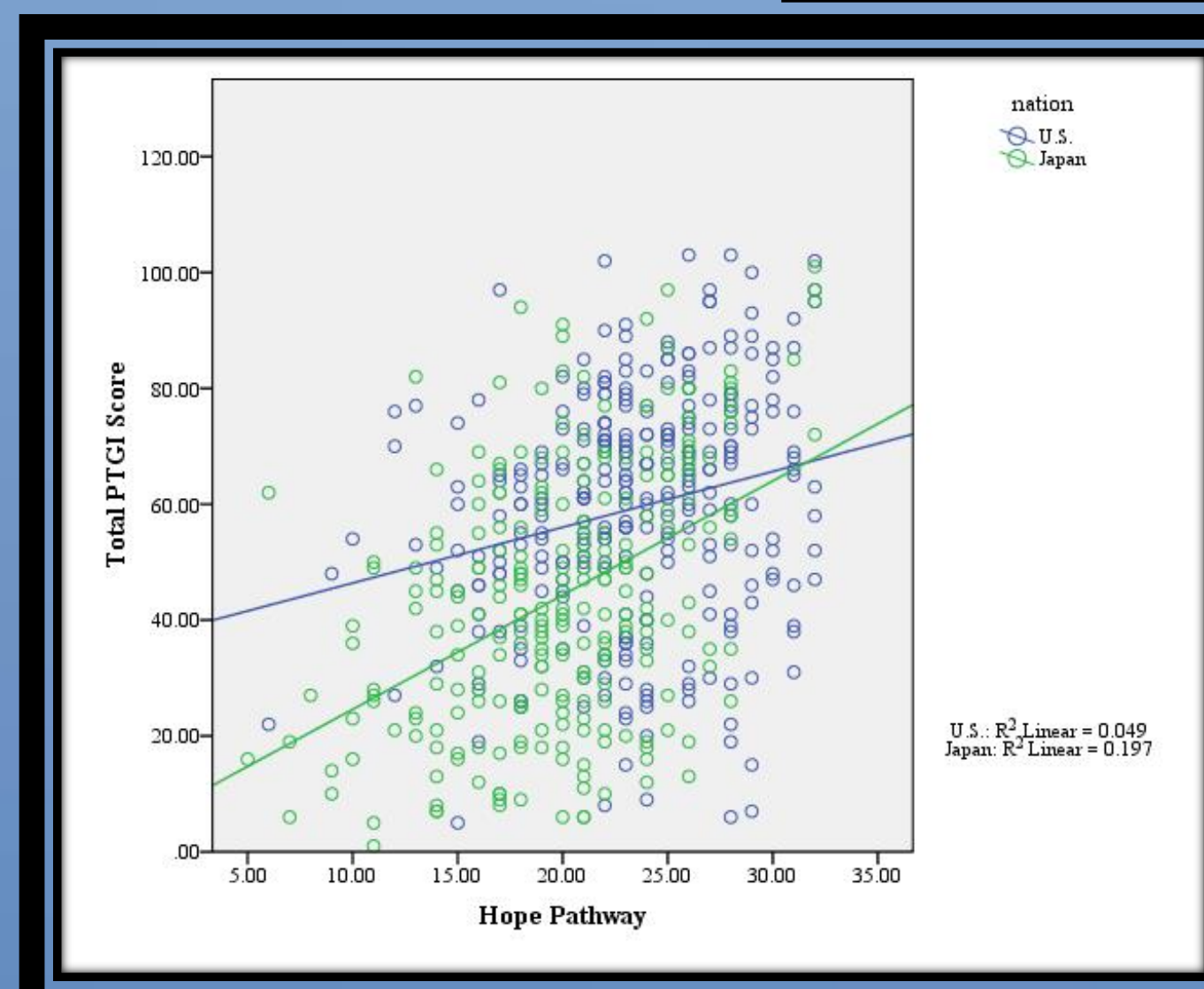


$$R^2 = .28, F(5,546) = 43.03, p < .001$$

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .28$$

Being American and having high levels of hope agency and pathway lead to higher PTG.

Interactions



Pathway

There is a significant interaction between nation and pathway. Planning to meet goals is important in the development of PTG in the Japanese sample.

Agency

For American and Japanese undergraduates agentic thinking aids in the development of PTG.

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