

Abstract

To explore the generality of differences in attribution style between Chinese and Americans found in Morris & Peng (1994), the present thesis used vignettes of four contexts, Academic, Sports, Civil, and Social behaviors with positive and negative outcomes. 171 Chinese students in Hong Kong and 142 American students in the United States participated in the study. Findings suggested that internal attribution may be general and both cultures shared a pattern of high effort attribution. This was observed especially in the achievement contexts (academic and sports) for both success and failure events. Effort attribution was also culturally shared in the social context. Cultural differences were observed mainly in trait attribution. The higher trait attribution of the Americans in two scenarios with negative outcome is in line with previous research. However, the Chinese showed higher trait attribution than the Americans in academic positive scenario. This suggested that the Chinese did not de-emphasize trait in achievement. Moreover, the dispositional attribution of the Americans may be domain specific. In external attribution, the Chinese did not show higher scores than the Americans. In fact, Americans gave higher ratings for external factors than the Chinese in two cases. It was suggested that the use of external factors for explanations is related to their perceived salience in a culture. Directions for further research are discussed.