Temporal appraisal of new student orientation predicts undergraduates’ university adjustment

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Research on temporal comparisons has revealed that people’s memories about their past selves or past relationships are negatively biased, and indicated that such bias leads to greater satisfaction with their present self or relationships. The present study explored whether such downward temporal comparisons occur with regard to memories of new-student orientation, and examined its effects on freshmen’s later university adjustment in terms of loneliness, self-esteem, and identification with the university. Female freshmen (N=101) participated in three-wave panel survey. At Time 2 and Time 3, participants' retrospective evaluations of new student orientation were more negative than their actual evaluations at Time 1, indicating a downward temporal comparison. Moreover, hierarchical regression analysis revealed that more negative retrospective evaluations at Time 2 were associated with less loneliness and higher self-esteem at Time 3. Identification with the university was not affected by temporal comparisons.

Keywords: autobiographical memory, temporal appraisal, university adjustment.

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