

Abstract

In this study American and Japanese participants judged whether their performance was above or below the school average after taking a bogus intelligence test. The results replicate the standard finding that Japanese are self-effacing and Americans, especially males, are self-enhancing. But this result obtained only in the control condition, in which no reason was given as to why the participants were being asked to make these self-evaluation judgments. In the experimental condition in which the participants were offered a monetary bonus for making the correct judgment, the cultural difference in levels of self-evaluation between Japanese and American participants disappeared. These results support the view that the modesty observed in self-evaluations among Japanese participants can be viewed as a “default strategy” used to avoid offending others under certain circumstances.

Keywords: self-enhancement, self-effacement, self-construal, default strategy, cultural differences