The effect of other orientation on self–supervisor rating agreement

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Summary

Employees generally rate their performance more favorably than do their supervisors, which can lead to conflict and poor job performance. However, comparative international research indicates that persons from other-oriented collectivist cultures are less self-enhancing, suggesting that other-oriented employees will exhibit greater agreement with ratings provided by their supervisors. We examined the effect of subordinates’ other orientation on self-supervisor performance rating agreement. Consistent with cultural expectations, self-ratings of other-oriented subordinates showed greater agreement with ratings provided by their supervisors and less leniency relative to their supervisors’ evaluations. These findings have implications for understanding how employees in different professions, organizations, and cultures utilize feedback from their supervisors. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

Allowing employees to rate their own performance can have important advantages for an organization. These include an increased belief in the fairness of the employee appraisal system (Folger & Greenberg, 1985) and a greater acceptance of the appraisal process (Latham & Wexley, 1981). Any such advantages, however, are likely to be diminished or even eliminated if subordinates disagree with the rating they receive from their immediate supervisors. Self-supervisor rating disagreement can also affect employees’ performance. That is, such disagreement can indicate that individuals have not adequately utilized feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, leading to poorer decision-making, leadership, and overall job performance (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993).

Unfortunately, research indicates that employees’ ratings of their performance often show little correspondence with assessments provided by their supervisor. Meta-analysis of self-supervisor rating agreement indicates that employees’ self-ratings are only modestly correlated with supervisor-rated performance (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). While there are numerous reasons for self–supervisor
disagreement, such as halo and stereotyping (Sulsky & Balzer, 1988), scholars have suggested that a major reason for rating disagreement is leniency in self-ratings. Specifically, employees tend to over-rate their own performance (i.e., rate it more favorably) relative to their supervisors (e.g., Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Farh & Werbel, 1986; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Shore & Bleicken, 1991; Thornton, 1980; J. R. Williams & Levy, 1992). Self-enhancement is one of the most common explanations for self–other rating disagreement, yet research suggests that numerous factors may limit the motivation to self-enhance. Much of this research focuses on contextual factors such as rating purpose and format (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). However, with the exception of self-esteem (Farh & Dobbins, 1989; Wells & Sweeney, 1986), little is known about how individual characteristics influence the lack of agreement between self and supervisor ratings of performance.

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the role of individual factors in self-enhancement and, hence, self–supervisor ratings disagreement. Specifically, we focus on other orientation, an individual characteristic that refers to a basic prosocial tendency to be concerned with and helpful to others. Drawing on recent research on cross-cultural differences in rating disagreement, we develop and test the basic proposition that other orientation contributes to greater agreement among subordinates and supervisors. In doing so, we seek to contribute to theory underlying self-enhancement and to the role that individual characteristics play in ratings disagreements between employees and supervisors.

Self–supervisor disagreement and other orientation

Self–supervisor rating disagreement may be manifested in a variety of ways, but the two most common are (in)accuracy and leniency (Sulsky & Balzer, 1988). Inaccuracy, or absolute disagreement, refers to the extent to which self and supervisor ratings disagree regardless of direction. This is typically measured by an absolute or squared difference score or by the correlation between self and supervisor ratings. As noted above, reviews indicating relatively low correlations between self–supervisor ratings indicate that this form of absolute disagreement is a common state of affairs. Leniency, or directional disagreement, refers to the extent to which self ratings exceed supervisor ratings. Leniency in self–supervisor ratings is a pervasive phenomenon and appears to be a main source of absolute disagreement. (e.g., Atwater & Yammarino, 1997; Farh & Werbel, 1986; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Shore & Bleicken, 1991; Thornton, 1980; Williams & Levy, 1992). Some social psychology theorists maintain that the tendency to exaggerate one’s positive personal qualities and to minimize one’s negative qualities (i.e., leniency or self-enhancement) is a universal human motive that is indicative of a psychologically healthy individual (Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Taylor et al., 2003).

Research on other-oriented or collectivist values has challenged the universality of this conclusion (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). This opposing view is based on the nature of other-oriented collectivist (e.g., Eastern) cultures, which encourage greater interpersonal harmony, interdependence, and group cohesion than individualist (e.g., Western) cultures (Hofstede, 1984). In such other-oriented cultures, fitting in with others and gaining a sense of belonging are more important than projecting a positive self-image, which could potentially disrupt group harmony (Farh, Dobbins, & Cheng, 1991; Heine & Lehman, 1999; Triandis, 1995). Tentative evidence for this assertion comes from studies indicating that Asians exhibit less leniency bias in their self-ratings (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Moreover, Heine and Renshaw (2002) found that North Americans were significantly more likely to self-enhance on ratings of socially desirable attributes. Research also indicates that, in comparison to persons from Western cultures, individuals from Eastern cultures exhibit a greater discrepancy between their actual and ideal self (Heine & Lehman, 1999), and are more disposed to accept information about their weaknesses and poor performance (Heine et al., 1999).
These cross-cultural findings are consistent with the results of a study of self–supervisor rating agreement by Farh et al. (1991). In contrast to self-rating leniency seen in individualist Western cultures, these authors found that employees from the Republic of China (i.e., Taiwan) underrated their performance (i.e., rated it less favorably) relative to their supervisors. A follow-up study by Yu and Murphy (1993), however, failed to replicate Farh et al.’s (1991) results. Among employees from the People’s Republic of China (i.e., mainland China), these researchers found the same tendency toward self-enhancement and leniency that is typically observed in Western cultures. Yu and Murphy concluded that leniency bias may be caused by factors that are more specific than global differences between Eastern and Western cultures. As a result, they proposed that future research on leniency bias ‘should include measures of relevant work values’ (p. 362).

The inconsistent findings observed by Farh et al. (1991) and Yu and Murphy (1993) emphasize the problems associated with drawing conclusions about individual-level phenomena from aggregate-level data such as cultural differences. Research methodologists have long cautioned against such practices and have described the resulting conclusions as ‘ecological fallacies’ (e.g., Robinson, 1950; Sackett & Larson, 1990). To address this aggregation problem, cross-cultural researchers have begun to implement designs that are consistent with Yu and Murphy’s (1993) recommendation. That is, these researchers have used various measures of other orientation at the individual level of analysis (see, for example, Cialdini et al., 1999; Heine & Renshaw, 2002). In the following study, we employed a similar methodology. Specifically, rather than imputing value differences based on differences in culture, we followed Yu and Murphy’s (1993) recommendation by directly investigating individual differences in other orientation.

Research suggests that other orientation assessed at the individual level captures characteristics that are associated with value differences at the cultural level. For example, cultural research in conflict and cooperation shows that persons from collectivistic as opposed to individualistic cultures tend to minimize differences between themselves and others (e.g., see themselves as closer to others in fairness; Gelfand et al., 2002). These findings are similar to those found at the individual level. Specifically, persons higher on allocentrism (the tendency to act in accordance with a collectivistic cultural syndrome) are more likely to minimize within-group differences in rewards (i.e., to favor rewards based on equality as opposed to equity; Hulbert, Correa da Silva, & Adegboyega, 2001) and persons higher on vertical collectivism tend to prefer broad distributions of rewards (i.e., maximizing the outcomes experienced by all participants in social dilemmas; Probst, Carnevale, & Triandis, 1999). Thus, individual differences in other orientation appear to mirror corresponding cultural differences in norms and behaviors (Triandis, 1995).

At a more fundamental level, these and other measures of other orientation appear to assess a general other-oriented trait on the part of individuals. Indeed, Penner and his associates found that various measures of other orientation were so highly related that they could be captured in a single measure of prosocial tendency (see, for example, Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger, & Freifeld, 1995). Moreover, research addressing the prosocial or altruistic personality shows the existence of a broad-based altruistic trait that is highly correlated with measures of empathy, social responsibility, prosocial values, and concern for the welfare of others (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981; Schroeder, Penner, Dovido, & Piliavin, 1995). Research has also shown that various indicators of other orientation such as social interest (Hui, 1988) and humanitarianism–egalitarianism (Strunk & Chang, 1999) are significantly correlated with collectivism.

The relationships described above indicate that other orientation encompasses a general trait that includes individualism–collectivism at both the individual and the cultural level. Therefore, if cultural-level differences in other orientation are indeed responsible for varying degrees of self–supervisor rating disagreement, then this phenomenon should be evident within a particular culture as a function of individual differences in other orientation. Specifically within the population of U.S.
employees, individuals higher other orientation should exhibit less disagreement. In sum, our first hypothesis was:

**Hypothesis 1**: Higher levels of other orientation will be associated with less absolute disagreement between self-ratings and supervisor ratings of performance.

As noted above, most of the cross-cultural research on self–other differences in ratings has focused on a specific pattern of disagreement, namely leniency. Although the findings are not fully consistent (Yu & Murphy, 1993), research suggests that less leniency occurs in other-oriented cultures than in individualistic cultures. These findings are mainly attributed to the tendency of persons from other-oriented cultures to rate themselves less favorably than do persons from individualistic cultures. One explanation for this tendency is referred to as hansei or self-reflection in Japanese culture (Heine et al., 1999). Hansei is the propensity to focus on self-improvement and to be highly sensitive to the ways that one’s behavior is negatively evaluated by others (Heine & Lehman, 1999). This explanation would suggest that other orientation leads to less leniency because persons high in other orientation tend to seek out and accept information from others about their poor performance.

According to the hansei explanation, the effect of other orientation on self-evaluations should be manifest mainly when individuals are exposed to negative information about their performance. In such circumstances, the self-evaluations of individuals high in other orientation should reflect the negative assessment of those around them (i.e., supervisors), resulting in less leniency. This process is also consistent with prior research indicating that other-oriented individuals were more disposed to accept negative information about their performance (Korsgaard, Meglino, & Lester, 1997).

In summary, drawing on trends in the cross-cultural literature, we expected the relationship between other orientation and self–supervisor rating agreement to be attributable mainly to the effect of this characteristic on leniency. We therefore hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 2**: Higher levels of other orientation will be associated with less leniency in self-ratings relative to supervisor ratings.

Research examining antecedents of agreement and accuracy has mainly involved correlating the antecedent with composite measures of agreement, such as the absolute difference score or algebraic difference score (Sulsky & Balzer, 1988). This approach is flawed because, aside from the poor reliability of composite scores (Cohen, 1977), there are numerous interpretations for an observed correlation between the antecedent and the composite score, many of which are not consistent with the underlying theory (Edwards, 1995). With few exceptions (Atwater, Ostroff, Yammarino, & Fleenor, 1998; Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal, 1995; Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993), prior studies on self–other rating agreement have been unable to distinguish among these competing interpretations (see Edwards, 1995).

For example, an observed correlation between an antecedent and an algebraic difference score is typically assumed to indicate that the antecedent is causing leniency, which is often thought to be a result of self-enhancement processes. However, the correlation between the antecedent and the difference score could result from the effect of the antecedent on the supervisor’s perceptions rather than its effect on self-evaluation processes. That is, the correlation could be driven by an underlying effect of the antecedent on supervisor ratings as opposed to its effect on self-ratings. Moreover, the correlation may reflect a modesty bias rather than a leniency bias. That is, the relationship could result from the impact of the antecedent on underrating (i.e., severity), as opposed to its impact on overrating (i.e., leniency).

In the present investigation, we employ an analytic procedure (Edwards, 1995) that directly examines each of these interpretations. In doing so, we seek to provide a more complete understanding of the nature of self-supervisor agreement and its relationship to individual differences.
Organizational Context

The Company and Facility
Data were collected from a healthcare provider in the United States employing approximately 30,000 individuals. The company has several facilities located in the Midwest. At the time of data collection, the company was experiencing an expansion, and we collected data at a newly opened facility. Managerial staff of this facility were either transferred or newly hired, whereas the rank-and-file employees were all newly hired. Employees were hired in waves over a 9-month period in groups of approximately 40–50 people. We were able to gain access to this site at its inception and administer questionnaires to employees at the point of hire. Thus, the facility and its employees had little or no collective history prior to data collection. The company paid a very competitive wage rate for the area and consequently selected employees from a fairly deep pool of applicants.

Respondents
The focal participants in this study were all newly hired. Work at this facility involved administering the daily paperwork associated with each individual health plan offered by the healthcare provider. In essence they were a division within the larger organization. Their responsibilities included managing enrollment, billing and claims processing for the various health plans, and involved regular interaction between employees and their supervisors. These jobs were clerical in nature and required at least a high school education, with most employees having at least some college education. Although some of the jobs did not involve advanced verbal and quantitative skills, basic competency, dependability, and attention to detail were critical, so that claims processing errors were minimized.

Method

Sample
Our initial sample was composed of 450 newly hired employees at a recently opened healthcare claims center in the Midwestern United States. Our participants consisted of 292 of these employees for whom we obtained complete information on all variables across two separate times and data sources. All participants held similar entry-level positions in the organization. Their average age was 35 years, and 67 per cent had at least some college education. The sample was predominantly female (92 per cent), and over 95 per cent of the sample was Caucasian.

Research design and procedures
We collected data from participants on two occasions over the first 18 months of operations at the center. We also collected data from their supervisor at the time of the second data collection. During the period of this study, the center hired a number of new employees on a monthly basis. Data collections were coordinated such that new employees completed their surveys at specified points in their tenure. All employees completed their surveys on company time and returned them directly to the third author upon completion. Participants and supervisors were informed that all data were collected for research purposes.
Participants completed an initial survey after approximately 1 month of employment. At this point in time, employees had completed a 3-week training program and had been working on the job for approximately 1 week. This survey contained a measure of other orientation and measures of demographic characteristics. Although participation in the study was voluntary, all 450 employees completed the survey. Participants completed a second survey approximately 10 months after they were hired. At this point in their tenure, these employees had recently received their first formal supervisory performance review, which included a discussion of their performance in relation to criteria that had been established by the company for claims processors. (Because the proposed influence of other orientation involves how individuals accept and interpret information from others, it was important to establish that rating disagreement could not be attributed to the absence of feedback to employees regarding their performance. We therefore collected self and supervisor ratings after their first performance review.) This second survey, which asked employees to rate their job performance, was completed by 370 employees (82 per cent response rate). At this time, we asked supervisors to rate participants’ job performance. We received supervisory ratings for 311 employees (69 per cent response rate). We obtained complete matches on 298 cases and complete data on 292 cases. There were no significant demographic differences between the 292 participants and those who did not respond to the second survey.

Measures

Self-ratings of job performance
Each participant provided a self-rating of his or her job performance using a five-item scale of job performance. We used the five positively worded items from Williams and Anderson’s seven-item subscale of in-role performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991). A sample item is ‘fulfills all the responsibilities specified in his/her job description.’ The response categories ranged from (1 = strongly disagree) to (5 = strongly agree). We averaged the five items to obtain an overall rating (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.70$).

Supervisor ratings of job performance
Supervisors assessed each employee’s performance using the same five-item scale that participants used to report their self-rating (Williams & Anderson, 1991). As with self-ratings, we averaged these items to form an overall scale ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Other orientation
Obtaining an accurate assessment of other orientation poses a problem because this construct encompasses modes of behavior that are socially desirable (i.e., helping other persons, expressing concern about another’s welfare). Thus, measures that assess one’s endorsement of such behaviors are vulnerable to social desirability response bias (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), which can seriously compromise the validity of the measure. Such bias exists in normative (e.g., Likert-type) measures of other oriented values (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987a).

To avoid this problem, we employed a forced-choice measure of other orientation. Hicks (1970) states that forced-choice measures can be either normative or ipsative (Cattell, 1944) depending upon how the items are matched and scored. When forced-choice items are matched in attractiveness and irrelevant items are not scored, the procedure yields a normative measure with important properties that enhance its validity. Specifically, this procedure ‘serves to reduce leniency, severity, and halo error, as well as faking and acquiescent sets’ (Hicks, 1970, p. 177).

We assessed other orientation using the Concern for Others subscale of the Comparative Emphasis Scale (CES, Ravlin & Meglino, 1987a, 1987b). The CES is a forced-choice scale that asks respondents...
to choose between pairs of statements representing four different values (concern for others, fairness, achievement, and honesty–integrity) that are highly important in the workplace (Cornelius et al., 1985). In accordance with the normative characteristics described by Hicks (1970), the items in each pair of statements are matched for social desirability. Moreover, in keeping with Hicks’ procedure, we only scored those statements that assessed the value of concern for others (i.e., we did not score the statements that assessed different values). Statements assessing concern for others include ‘helping others on difficult jobs’ and ‘encouraging someone who is having a difficult day.’ Scores ranged from 0 to 12 depending upon the number of times that a respondent selected one of 12 statements representing the value of concern for others. Research (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987a) indicates that scores on the CES are not significantly correlated with social desirability as measured by the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964).

The construct validity of the Concern for Others subscale has been demonstrated in a number of ways. Scores have been significantly correlated with independent ratings of prosocial behavior toward individuals in the workplace (McNeely & Meglino, 1994). This scale has also demonstrated convergence with other measures of other orientation such as empathy (Davis, 1980) and social interest (Crandall, 1975), and divergence with measures of self-orientation, such as narcissism and self-enhancement (Korsgaard, Meglino, & Lester, 1996; McNeely, 1992; McNeely & Meglino, 1994). Internal consistency procedures can yield erroneous estimates of reliability for forced-choice scales (Baron, 1996; Tenopyr, 1988). Therefore, Tenopyr (1988) recommended computing the internal consistencies of forced-choice scales using the items in normative form. This procedure yielded an internal consistency of 0.95 for the Concern for Others subscale (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987a). Moreover, because stability is an important form of reliability for relatively stable attributes such as values, we estimated the stability of this measure among a separate sample of 358 job applicants. Our results showed that the test–retest reliability over a 4-week period was acceptable ($r = 0.70$).

Demographic control variables
Although we coordinated data collection so that participants could complete their surveys at specified points in their tenure, there were some delays in the timing of the initial survey. Given that tenure has been associated with self–supervisor rating agreement and leniency (Brief, Aldag, & Van Sell, 1977), we controlled for tenure, measured as the number of months that participants had been with the organization when they completed the initial survey. We also controlled for employee gender, given evidence of its relationship to rating agreement and leniency (Brutus, Fleenor, & McCauley, 1999).

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations for all measured variables are reported in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the overall mean for employee self-ratings ($m = 4.27$, $SD = 0.48$) was greater than the mean for ratings obtained from their supervisors ($m = 4.17$, $SD = 0.60$). A paired $t$-test indicated that this difference was significant ($m_{diff} = 0.01$, $SD_{diff} = 0.73$, $d = 0.14$, $t_{290} = 2.35$; $p < 0.05$). This is consistent with prior research (e.g., Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Thornton, 1980) showing that most employees overrate their performance relative to their supervisors.

As noted above, to address reliability and interpretation problems commonly present in research on self–supervisor ratings, we followed the procedure recommended by Edwards (1995) for analyzing self–other ratings agreement. This procedure involves decomposing the composite scores to determine whether disagreement is driven by absolute disagreement, leniency, or severity and whether it is
caused by differences in self perceptions as opposed to differences in supervisor perceptions. Note that this procedure involves decomposing difference scores when the difference score is the dependent variable. Decomposing difference or congruence scores that are independent variables involves a different analytic method (i.e., polynomial regression; Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

Edwards’ procedure involves conducting three regression models. In the first model, which is consistent with most prior research on self–supervisor rating agreement, the absolute difference is regressed on the predictor and control variables. The use of an absolute difference score assumes that the effect of the predictor is consistent between participants who overrate their performance and those who underrate their performance. The second regression model examines this assumption by testing if the effect of the predictor is moderated by whether disagreement involves leniency or severity in self ratings. The third model involves decomposing the difference score to determine the separate influences on self and supervisor judgments and uses a multivariate regression analysis on the component scores of self and supervisor ratings. The results of these analyses are reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Descriptive statistics for overrating and underrating subgroups are listed in Table 5.

As shown in the second step of the first column in Table 2, other orientation was significantly and negatively related to the absolute difference score ($B = -0.03$, $t_{288} = -2.76$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.02$, $f^2 = 0.02$). This finding indicates that, compared to those who were low in other orientation, the self ratings of participants who were high in other orientation exhibited greater agreement with the ratings supplied by their supervisors. Hypothesis 1 was therefore supported.1

Hypothesis 2 predicted that other orientation would be negatively related to leniency in self ratings relative to supervisors. To test this hypothesis, we continued with the second step of the procedure outlined by Edwards (1995). This step involves testing whether the effect of other orientation on self–supervisor agreement is consistent across persons who overrate their performance (i.e., are lenient) versus those who underrate their performance (i.e., are severe). Specifically, we regressed the directional self–supervisor difference score on the controls, other orientation, and a dummy-coded variable representing whether subordinates overrated or underrated their performance (Edwards, 1995).2 This

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1 We also tested Hypothesis 1 using the more traditional approach of examining the correlation between self and supervisor ratings. We tested whether the strength of the relationship between self and supervisor ratings of performance was moderated by other orientation using moderated regression analysis. The results indicated that other orientation significantly moderated the relationship between self and supervisor ratings ($B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.02$, $t_{288} = 2.63$, $p < 0.05$, $ΔR^2 = 0.02$, $f^2 = 0.02$) such that the correlation between ratings was stronger for persons high in other orientation than for persons low in other orientation.

2 The dummy-coded variable representing over- versus under-estimators does not directly address the cases where self ratings equal supervisor ratings. Edwards (1995) recommends comparing the results when perfect matches are all coded as 1 (i.e., equivalent to under-estimators) to the results when perfect matches are all coded as 0 (i.e., equivalent to over-estimators). If the results are substantively different, a second dummy coded variable should be created to represent perfect matches versus non-matches. If the results are not substantively different, perfect matches should be randomly coded as 1 and 0. In our case, there were no practical differences between the results when matches were coded as 1 or 0; therefore, we randomly assigned performance matches (approximately 14 per cent of the participants) to 1 or 0. Consistent with Edwards’ (1995) recommendation, subgroup analyses did not include perfect match cases.
Table 2. Regression analysis on self–supervisor rating agreement composites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Overraters&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Underraters&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1: Gender</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Other orientation</td>
<td>-0.03**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.61*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>7.11**</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: $W^c$</td>
<td>-1.53**</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$W \times$ Other orientation</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>86.91**</td>
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<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>212.52**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>$n = 292$. The dependent variable analyzed in Steps 1 and 2 is the absolute difference. The dependent variable analyzed in Step 3 is the algebraic difference.

<sup>b</sup>Overraters: $n = 130$; underraters, $n = 122$. The dependent variable is the algebraic difference.

<sup>c</sup>W is dummy-coded. Wequals 0 when the self-rating is greater than the supervisor rating and 1 when the self-rating is less than the supervisor rating (see also footnote 2).

**$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

Table 3. Regression analysis on self rating component scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total sample&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Overraters&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Underraters&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Gender</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2: Other orientation</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>3.36**</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.66**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>7.05**</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: $W^c$</td>
<td>-0.75**</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$W \times$ Other orientation</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>18.28**</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>39.33**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>$n = 292$. The dependent variable analyzed in Steps 1 and 2 is the absolute difference. The dependent variable analyzed in Step 3 is the algebraic difference.

<sup>b</sup>Overraters: $n = 130$; underraters, $n = 122$. The dependent variable is the algebraic difference.

<sup>c</sup>W is dummy-coded. Wequals 0 when the self rating is greater than the supervisor rating and 1 when the self rating is less than the supervisor rating (see also footnote 2).

**$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$. 

The equation, summarized in Step 3 in the first column of Table 2, explained significantly more variance than the absolute difference equations ($R^2 = 0.58$, $F_{2,286} = 212.52$, $p < 0.05$), and the interaction of other orientation and the dummy coded variable was significant ($B = 0.06$, $t_{286} = 2.44$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.01$, $f^2 = 0.02$). This finding indicates that the relationship between other orientation and rating agreement depends on whether employees overrated or underrated their performance relative to their supervisors, providing initial support for Hypothesis 2.

We followed Edwards' (1995) recommendation for interpreting this interaction by estimating separate regression equations for participants who overrated and those who underrated their performance.

Table 4. Regression analysis on supervisor ratings component scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Gender</th>
<th>Total sample$^a$</th>
<th>Overraters$^b$</th>
<th>Underraters$^b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>$SE$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: Other orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: $W^c 	imes$ Other orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$W^c$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$F$ for $\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>26.95</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>67.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>67.31</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>67.31**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for overrating and underrating subgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Overraters$^a$</th>
<th>Underraters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender$^b$</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tenure</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Other orientation</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Supervisor performance ratings</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self ratings of performance</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$n = 292. The dependent variable analyzed in Steps 1 and 2 is the absolute difference. The dependent variable analyzed in Step 3 is the algebraic difference.

$^b$Overraters: n = 130; underraters, n = 122. The dependent variable is the algebraic difference.

$^c$W is dummy-coded. $W$ equals 0 when the self rating is greater than the supervisor rating and 1 when the self rating is less than the supervisor rating (see also footnote 2).

$**p < 0.05$; $^*p < 0.10$.

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for overrating and underrating subgroups

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<th>Overraters$^a$</th>
<th>Underraters</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Gender$^b$</td>
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<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$n = 130; underraters, n = 122.

$^b$Gender is coded 1 = female, 0 = male.

$^p < 0.05$. 

relative to their supervisors. The results, listed in the second and third columns of Table 2, reveal that other orientation was not related to rating agreement for participants who underrated their performance \((B = 0.02, t_{118} = 1.15, \text{n.s.})\). In contrast, this relationship was marginally related to agreement among participants who overrated their performance relative to their supervisors’ ratings \((B = -0.04, t_{126} = -1.88, p < 0.10, \Delta R^2 = 0.03, f^2 = 0.03)\). These results indicate that the negative relationship between other orientation and directional disagreement is not attributable to the tendency of persons high in other orientation to underrate their performance but, rather, to the tendency of persons low in other orientation to overrate their performance. Thus, consistent with Hypothesis 2, the findings suggest a tendency toward leniency among persons low in other orientation, as opposed to a tendency toward severity among persons high in other orientation.

The third and final step in the procedure outlined by Edwards (1995) involved determining the source of rating agreement or disagreement. This step assessed whether self–supervisor agreement among other-oriented employees was due to lower self ratings as opposed to higher supervisory ratings.

In this set of equations, we decomposed the difference score and regressed the component scores (self ratings and supervisor ratings) on the control and predictor variables. We performed these analyses for the total sample and for the subsamples of overraters and underraters. Results summarized in Table 3 indicate that the equations for the self and supervisor ratings listed in the first column were jointly significant \((\Lambda = 0.39, F_{10,570} = 34.78, p < 0.01)\). Univariate analyses indicate that other orientation was negatively related to self ratings \((B = -0.03, t_{288} = -2.66, p < 0.10, \Delta R^2 = 0.02, f^2 = 0.02)\) and was unrelated to supervisor ratings \((B = -0.00, t_{288} = -0.21, \text{n.s., } \Delta R^2 = 0.00, f^2 = 0.00)\). This finding indicates that the significant and negative relationship between other orientation and absolute rating differences noted in Table 2 (Column 1, Step 2) is attributable to the influence that other orientation has on self ratings, rather than any influence it may have on supervisors’ perceptions of participants’ performance. This pattern of results provides further support and clarity to Hypothesis 1, in that it suggests that other orientation affects disagreement because it influences self-evaluations.

The multivariate test of the moderating role of overrating versus underrating was also significant \((\Lambda = 0.97, F_{2,285} = 3.76, p < 0.05)\). Further subgroup analyses revealed joint significance for the equations involving overraters \((\Lambda = 0.97, F_{2,285} = 3.76, p < 0.05)\) but not for underraters \((\Lambda = 0.98, F_{2,117} = 0.98, p < 0.05)\). In other words, other orientation was negatively related to participants’ tendency to overrate relative to their supervisors but it did not have a similar influence on underrating. The univariate regression equations in the second column of Tables 3 and 4 revealed that, among overraters, other orientation was negatively related to self ratings \((B = -0.05, t_{126} = -2.92, p < 0.05, \Delta R^2 = 0.06, f^2 = 0.06)\) but not to supervisor ratings \((B = -0.01, t_{126} = -0.41, \text{n.s.})\). That is, the relationship between other orientation and overrating appears to be largely attributable to the tendency of participants low in other orientation to overrate themselves, rather than the tendency of supervisors to underrate participants low in other orientation. These findings indicate that the relationship between other orientation and directional disagreement noted in Table 2 (Column 1, Step 3) is attributable to the negative influence of other orientation on relative leniency in self ratings. This pattern of results is illustrated in the regression lines for self and supervisor ratings among overraters and underraters plotted in Figure 1. These findings provide further support for Hypothesis 2 and are consistent with the self-reflection (hansei) explanation for leniency bias proposed by Heine et al. (1999).


\(^3\)We also used a univariate regression procedure to test Hypothesis 2. Specifically, we regressed self-ratings of performance on other orientation while controlling for supervisor ratings. The results indicated that, equating employees on supervisor ratings, participants who were low in other orientation rated their performance higher than did those who were high in other orientation \((B = -0.03; \text{SE} = 0.02, t_{297} = -2.64; p < 0.05, \Delta R^2 = 0.02, f^2 = 0.02)\). This finding also supported Hypothesis 2.
Discussion

Although the problems of self–supervisor disagreement and leniency in self ratings are widely documented, understanding of what individual characteristics influence agreement is somewhat limited. Recent cross-cultural research provides insight into the role of individual differences in other orientation: the tendency to be concerned with and helpful to others. Specifically, studies have found that the self ratings of persons from other-oriented Eastern cultures are less lenient than those of persons from individualistic Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, research has not been clear about the process responsible for this effect (Heine et al., 1999). Moreover, studies that have examined self–supervisor performance rating agreement in other-oriented collectivist cultures (Farh et al., 1991; Yu & Murphy, 1993) have reached opposite conclusions. These conclusions have prompted researchers to advocate designs that measure other orientation at the individual level (Cialdini et al., 1999; Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Yu & Murphy, 1993). In this study we employed a design that was consistent with these recommendations. That is, we examined the effect of individual differences in other orientation on self–supervisor rating agreement. We also employed an analytical methodology, recommended by Edwards (1995), which avoided the problems of interpretation and reliability.

Our findings for Hypothesis 1 were consistent with cultural expectations. That is, the self ratings of employees who were higher in other orientation exhibited greater agreement with ratings provided by their supervisors. Our results also supported Hypothesis 2, indicating that the positive relationship between other orientation and self–supervisor agreement is largely attributable to the effect of other orientation on leniency bias. Follow-up analyses clarified the process responsible for this relationship. By separately examining effects for persons who overrated and underrated their performance, we found that greater self–supervisor agreement was caused by lower self ratings on the part of overraters who were higher in other orientation. These findings suggest that, in accordance with the tendency of persons from other-oriented cultures to engage in greater self-reflection (i.e., hansei), other-oriented employees are more disposed to accept negative feedback from their immediate supervisors.

Figure 1. The relationship between other orientation, self ratings, and supervisor ratings for overraters and underraters
Other individual differences such as self-esteem (Farh & Dobbins, 1989) and cognitive ability (Mabe & West, 1982) have been found to relate to leniency and self–other rating agreement. However, in addition to being conceptually different from other orientation, these characteristics appear to be uncorrelated with other orientation. Among a sample of 265 undergraduates, we found a nominal correlation ($r = -0.16$) between the value of concern for others and a measure of generalized self-efficacy, a construct related to self-esteem (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Moreover, research using a variety of measures of other orientation, including altruism (Ma & Leung, 1991), social interest (Fry, 1976), interdependent self-construal (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997), and individualism–collectivism (Goodwin & Hernandez Plaza, 2000), indicates that self-esteem and other orientation are distinct constructs with independent effects on outcomes. Moreover, in an unpublished study of 71 MBA students, we found no relationship ($r = -0.01$) between cognitive ability (as measured by Graduate Management Admission Test scores) and the value of concern for others. Similarly, Marlowe (1986), found that two different measures of other orientation (i.e., prosocial attitude and empathy) were essentially uncorrelated with cognitive ability. Thus, neither self-esteem nor cognitive ability appears to provide a credible explanation for our findings in this study.

**Theoretical implications**

Our results address the inconsistent findings of previous research on other-oriented cultures regarding self–supervisor rating agreement. Some scholars have argued that persons from other-oriented cultures exhibit a tendency referred to as hansei (Heine et al., 1999), which is the propensity to focus on the negative evaluations of others and on self-improvement (Heine & Lehman, 1999). Consistent with this view, Farh et al. (1991) found that employees in collectivist cultures exhibited less leniency in their self ratings of performance than did their counterparts from more individualistic cultures. However, other scholars argue that self-enhancement is a universal phenomenon (Sedikides et al., 2003). In support of this view, Yu and Murphy (1993) found employees from Eastern (i.e., other-oriented) cultures exhibited the same tendency toward leniency that had previously been observed in Western cultures. We contribute to this cross-cultural debate on other orientation by directly measuring other orientation within a particular culture, rather than assuming differences based on national origin. Our findings are consistent with the hansei explanation (Heine et al., 1999), suggesting that other orientation leads to less leniency because persons high in other orientation tend to seek out and accept information from others about their poor performance.

In addition to providing evidence to support the hansei explanation for leniency (Heine et al., 1999), our findings are consistent with a recent model of other orientation proposed by Meglino and Korsgaard (in press). Based on theory and research on altruism (Caporael, Dawes, Orbell, & van de Kragt, 1989; Simon, 1990, 1993), these authors propose that individual differences in other orientation reflect basic differences in rational self-interested judgment. Specifically, persons high other orientation, who are proposed to be less rationally self-interested, should be disposed to accept social information regardless of its implications for the self. In contrast, individuals low in other orientation, who are more likely to process information in a rational, self-interested manner, are apt to screen information based on its psychological or material benefit for the self. Consistent with this argument, these authors found that persons higher in other orientation were more disposed to act on information embedded within a negative performance evaluation (Korsgaard et al., 1997). One consequence of this process is that persons low in other orientation should discount performance feedback that does not support their favorable view of themselves, ultimately leading to relatively inflated self views. Our finding of greater leniency among persons low in other orientation is consistent with this model.
Moreover, our findings may shed new light on how context influences self–supervisor disagreement. Theory and research indicate that numerous contextual factors contribute to other orientation and, hence, the tendency to act less in accordance with rational self-interest. For example, research on interpersonal conflict and negotiation suggests a number of situational factors that might stimulate a prosocial motivation, including task instructions, incentive structure, mood, and the strength of interpersonal relationships (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000). Theory suggests that these factors induce a concern for others and de-emphasize a concern for the self (Pruitt & Lewis, 1975). When these conditions are present, individuals are less likely to be focused on maximizing their own outcomes as they are on joint maximization. Consequently, individuals with a stronger prosocial motivation are more apt to arrive at integrative agreements (De Dreu et al., 2000). Although this research focuses on the impact of prosocial motivation on cooperative behavior, the basic process is similar to the self-interested process underlying leniency in self-ratings. Thus, contextual factors that motivate a prosocial or other orientation may induce employees to be more open to negative feedback and may lead to self-evaluations that are more consonant with those of others.

**Practical implications**

At a practical level, the previous findings have consequences for how organizations implement performance appraisal systems. As noted earlier, allowing employees to rate their own performance can enhance their belief in the fairness of an appraisal system (Folger & Greenberg, 1985) and stimulate greater acceptance of the appraisal process (Latham & Wexley, 1981). However, these advantages can be seriously compromised when employees rate their performance higher than do their supervisors. Our findings show that employees who are low in other orientation had greater rating disagreement with their supervisors despite having recently received performance feedback from their supervisors. Thus, managers may need to employ different tactics in providing feedback to employees lower in other orientation. Specifically, our findings would suggest the importance of clearly framing ideas for performance improvement in relation to how it affects the employee’s personal outcomes, since those with lower levels of other orientation will interpret suggestions for improvement through a lens of self-interest.

Additionally, our findings offer implications regarding the need for training in the area of performance evaluation for both the supervisor and the employee. An underlying factor in self–supervisor evaluations is ambiguity regarding the standards against which performance is evaluated (Schrader & Steiner, 1996). An increased understanding of how performance will be evaluated should thus reduce the likelihood that employees that are low in other orientation will suffer from over-inflated views of their own performance. Supervisors and employees should be well versed on the job descriptions for the position (and realize the importance of keeping that description updated). Moreover, the supervisor should be trained in using the performance appraisal instrument and clearly communicating the behaviors that represent good performance under each performance criterion.

While other orientation is certainly descriptive of individuals, it also characterizes various groups (Rokeach, 1973) and organizations. For example, Holland’s (1985) theory of vocational personalities identifies ‘social’ types of persons who prefer teaching, training, and developmental professions and who also exhibit high levels of other orientation. Similarly, attraction–selection–attrition mechanisms (Schneider, 1987) can result in groups of employees holding values that reflect varying degrees of other orientation. For example, research conducted by Crandall and Harris (1976) shows that members of volunteer organizations exhibit higher levels of other orientation. Thus, managers may anticipate greater acceptance of performance ratings and self–supervisor agreement within certain types of occupations or organizations.
Our findings may also have implications for supervisor–subordinate relationships in different cultural environments. While previous research on self–supervisor performance rating agreement in other-oriented cultures has been equivocal (Farh et al., 1991; Yu & Murphy, 1993), the values of the participants in these studies may not have accurately represented the values of their culture. Because the measure of other orientation that we employed in this study is very similar to the traditional cultural descriptor of individualism–collectivism (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Hofstede, 1984; Triandis et al., 1986), managers may anticipate less conflict between supervisors and subordinates in organizations when employees’ values reflect the other orientation of their culture. Clearly, this is an area that calls for further investigation.

Finally, our findings may inform on how to address self–supervisor rating disagreements. As noted above, research on negotiations indicates that other orientation, whether situationally induced or driven by individual differences, has a positive impact on conflict resolution (De Dreu et al., 2000). To the extent that self–supervisor rating disagreements do occur, employees who are high in other orientation are more likely to successfully resolve those disagreements. Thus, encouraging other orientation may not only minimize self–supervisor disagreement, but it may also positively impact the resolution of rating disagreements.

**Limitations**

The preceding practical implications are tempered by concerns over the practical significance of our findings. The effect sizes for the main tests of our hypotheses (for Hypothesis 1: $f^2 = 0.02$; for Hypothesis 2: $f^2 = 0.02$) were relatively small. However, observed effect sizes for interactions are likely to be smaller than conventional guidelines would suggest (Cohen, 1977, identified small, medium, and large effect sizes as 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively). Aguinis and Stone-Romero (1997) noted that effect sizes for interactions in applied psychology, particularly in field settings, are generally smaller and designated the levels of 0.01, 0.075, and 0.145 as small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively. By this standard, our effect sizes were slightly above a small effect.

The findings of our investigation are also limited by certain methodological considerations. Although the use of a temporal separation of measurement and multiple sources of data provide some confidence, the correlational design of our study limits our ability to draw causal inferences. Also, our sample and procedure may have restricted the observed variance in the phenomenon of interest. The workforce at our research site consisted mostly of women, who are apt to exhibit less leniency in self ratings, as compared to men (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997). Further, participants were told that the performance data were collected for research purposes, which is likely to result in less self-enhancement than when data are collected for administrative reasons (Farh & Werbel, 1986).

While the measure of other orientation that we employed in this study captures the same underlying characteristic as the cultural value of individualism–collectivism (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Triandis, 1995; Triandis et al., 1986), our study should not be considered a substitute for well-constructed, comparative research across cultures. Cultures differ in ways that are not easily captured by current value typologies (Erez & Earley, 1993). Therefore, future research should examine issues of employee self ratings in different cultural settings.

The measures we used to assess self and supervisor ratings of job performance addressed whether employees had generally completed their job duties and had met their formal performance requirements. Because these measures did not describe particular job duties, their less specific content could have been responsible for the comparatively weak ($r = 0.11$) correlation between self and supervisor ratings of performance (see Borman, 1979). Although recent meta-analyses (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Viswesvaran, Schmidt, & Ones, 2002) indicate that rating format is not a particularly strong
moderator of rating agreement, uncorrected correlations for self–supervisor ratings using a global rating scale were comparably low \( r = 0.18; \) Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988).

Conclusion

Past research on self-evaluation has identified numerous contextual, cultural, and individual factors contributing to self–other rating disagreement. In this investigation, we focused on individual differences in other orientation, a factor implicated in cross-cultural research findings, but as yet not directly measured. Our findings, which involved a decomposition of underlying causes, generally supported our hypotheses, and provided insight into the nature of self–supervisor disagreement, its causes, and ways in which it might be addressed. Understanding these issues will be enhanced by further research on the cultural and contextual influences on other orientation and subsequent effects on self-evaluation. Additional research on how other orientation influences the processing of feedback and the formation of self-assessments will provide further insight into how self–supervisor disagreements can be reconciled and how employees might best utilize the feedback they receive.

Author biographies

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References


