@Theoretical Application Paper

Self-presentation

In this paper I’m going to discuss the concept of “self-presentation” by comparing norms of self-presentation in the U.S. society and Japanese society. Throughout the whole of my life I’ve compared the two countries in different aspects because, while I was born and raised in Japan, I’m mixed with American, so it was really difficult to blend and interlay the two opposing cultures and norms together in my daily life. Therefore, in this essay I’m going to explore three points, self-presentation in terms of being popular, making friends, and making a good impression at work.

First of all, I will compare Japan and the U.S. in terms of self-presentation for being popular

In terms of personality, Japanese women tend to present themselves as cheerful and kind, soothing and reassuring to be with, and independent. In terms of appearance, women who are feminine, attractive, and healthy tend to be popular. In terms of behavior, women who are attentive and can read the mood will be liked. Included in the Japanese ideal of an attentive woman is one who is insightful, who can think ahead in her words and actions, who is amicable, caring, and supportive. What is meant by a woman who can read the mood is one who is able to listen to the feelings of others and has a flexible and cooperative attitude. On the other hand, what is the ideal of self-presentation for Japanese men? In terms of character, popular men tend to have the capacity to listen to what a woman has to say without denying it, they have the energy to make you feel that they have a promising future, they are good listeners with big reactions, they are so positive that they don't have time to worry, and they are hardworking and respectful people. In terms of appearance, men who have a moderately tight body shape, a hairstyle that suits their bone structure and head shape, well-groomed hair and eyebrows, and a pleasing fragrance are more likely to be popular. In terms of behavior, men who are polite to everyone, demonstrate integrity and do not make ad hoc promises, who are humble and do not flaunt their achievements, who have a positive attitude to improve their future, and can manage their own moods tend to be popular and easily supported by others.

Now let's look at American men and women. In terms of personality, many American women are self-loving, know how to respect and honor themselves, can adjust their own mood, have a positive attitude, are confident, do not compare themselves with others, and make self-presentations as interesting people. In terms of appearance, the U.S. is a more racially diverse country than Japan, so there are no detailed rules, but chic and attractive looks are more popular than cute and perky looks. Therefore, they often go to the gym and work out moderately, and they prefer to wear skirts that show their body lines rather than wear frilly dresses and skirts. In terms of behavior, women who are willing to take action are more popular than those who are passive, those who are light on their feet but have a high sense of virtue, and those who can listen well without talking too much about themselves tend to be popular. In terms of personality, American men tend to be confident and polite. In terms of appearance, men who take good care of their face, hair, and physique, who are passionate about something, and who are moderately self-confident and ambitious tend to be popular.

When comparing Japanese and American women, the difference in personality comes down to whether they prioritize the ideas of others or their own ideas and values. Japanese women get men to like them by being who they want them to be. For example, as I mentioned above, they become "a woman who heals" or "a woman who makes you feel at ease when you are with her.” So why do they behave this way? The reason is that Japanese society has expectations of men, and it is not considered good to brag about one's successes, so all men have the desire to be respected and recognized. Therefore, women who are emotionally stable, soft-spoken, open, always give a cute smile, and are generous and receptive are popular. Conversely, American women are expected to be good at taking care of themselves and establish a degree of independence and self-reliance before falling in love, so they prefer someone who is self-loving and has a strong sense of self. In Japan, patience is considered a virtue, so people tend to be patient. In the U.S., on the other hand, individual rights, freedoms, and responsibilities are respected, but one's own principles and assertions must be clearly expressed in order to be noticed, so many people speak up for themselves. One important value stressed in Japanese society is maintaining “wa,” (和) which means “group harmony," and this involves nonverbal behaviors such as not being too direct in contradicting prevailing group ideas and group consensus. (Meres, 1998) According to Geert Hofstede, a Swiss researcher who developed six cultural dimensions for comparing cultures, Japan scores much lower on the individualism dimension. Japan also scores higher on the power-distance dimension (Hofstede, 2011) which places a premium on moderating views or ideas that conflict with those of schoolmates or colleagues who are “above” us.

These aspects of Japanese culture shaped my social behavior. In my school and with my peers I sometimes “watched others’ eyes” to check how to act so as not to be too individualistic and “stand out” too much. In Japan there is a proverb about being too individualistic: “The nail that sticks out will be hammered back in.” I often felt inhibited by this. Also, with senior workers and older students I was careful about power distance. I always used respectful language called “sonkeigo” and was careful to regulate by attitude to show recognition of upper people.

So why is it better to give a modest impression in Japan? The reason is that in Japan, the value of "beauty concealed" has been deeply rooted since ancient times (Khyle, 2023). For example, in the Heian period (794-1185), women of high status hid their faces with a fan or a bamboo blind. Even historical books talk about the inner beauty of women, but do not specifically describe the features and beauty of their faces and bodies. Also, the function of the kimono is structured to hide the curves of the body so that it does not show unevenness. This is also evident in the ukiyoe prints of the Edo period, "abunae," in which the nude body is depicted poorly in the image of a woman bathing, with little expression or presence of the face. In contrast, however, the weight, curvaceousness, and voluptuousness of the female nude, as expressed in European paintings such as Venus, are depicted in an expansive manner. As this history shows, in Japan, it has been considered a virtue to be unobtrusive, to be vague, to be hidden, to be unassertive, to be reserved, to be uneven, to be unobtrusive, and to be uniform, which tends to prevent respect for individuality even today. In contrast, in Western Europe, the opposite is true: prominence, clarity, assertiveness, prominence, emphasis, concavity, presence, and individuality are considered virtues, and there is a tendency to recognize each other's individuality and respect each other's self-assertion. The next time we compare our behavior to each other, we will be different.

Next I will compare Japan and the U.S. in terms of self-presentation for making friends For Japanese, regardless of gender, first of all, people who are humble and can speak and act with compassion, people who have overcome something and have a strong sense of self, people with good listening skills and the ability to approve others, people who are positive and self-disclosing, and people who are fundamentally respectful without denial are popular and well-liked. In the U.S., people with light footwork, people who can take action on their own without leaving things to others, people with a broad perspective and heart who are self-disciplined and can care about others, and people with integrity are popular and well-liked.

Finally, let’s consider Japan and the U.S. in terms of self-presentation for making good impression at work. The type of person required to work in Japan depends on the type of job, but there are some basic requirements that are hard to meet without these elements. First of all, there are people who have teamwork skills, people who are polite, people who have the ability to read the air because of the high pulse culture, people who grow by being scolded, and people with a stable mindset who prefer to maintain the status quo. In addition to this, people with leadership skills and perseverance are sought after, and people with these elements are relatively successful. The people who are sought after to work in the U.S. are those who like to learn and can learn quickly due to the relatively fast-paced environment, those who can clearly express their opinions to others, those who are passionate about their work, and those who have teamwork skills are relatively successful.

In this essay I explored the concept of self-presentation as my anchor and how norms of self-presentation vary between Japan and the United States in terms of becoming popular, winning friends, and making an impression at work. I discussed norms of appearance and behavior for both males and females in Japan and the United States. Then I introduced aspects of Japanese history and culture that have shaped my own social behavior. My sensitivity to many of these differences has inspired me to consider psychology as a career path to help me handle these cultural differences and use my experiences to help others.

References

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