

Abstract

As different operationalizations of self-enhancement have yielded divergent effects, it is unclear whether self-enhancement has positive or negative impact on mental health. The sources of ambiguity were revealed by partitioning a perception rating into various components. The operationalization used in studies Taylor and Brown (1988) marshaled to support their argument was confounded with one's socially agreed standing (i.e., the target effect); whereas the operationalization Colvin, Block and Funder (1995) used was confounded with one's general tendency to view others (i.e., the perceiver effect). A viable alternative was thus proposed using Social Relations Model analysis (Kenny & La Voie, 1984) to operationalize self-enhancement. The patterns of correlates for the perceiver and target effects gave insight into explaining the conflicting findings from previous research. The new measure of self-enhancement was negatively correlated with social adjustment. The external correlates of this refined measure made theoretical sense, providing empirical support for the usefulness of the new approach.