

Culture shapes people's view of winners

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Everyone has theories of what it takes to win an Olympic gold medal and now a Stanford University study suggests the theories vary according to culture.

The researchers found when U.S. athletes and commentators explain exceptional performance, they emphasize the individual's athletic strength and skill, such as powerful feet, robotic stride and mental toughness.

But the study showed Japanese focus on athletes' training and preparation, such as studying judo since elementary school or overcoming previous athletic failures.

Japanese athletes and media are also more likely than Americans to believe the contribution of coaches and the athlete's emotional state are important factors in winning, the researchers said.

"By analyzing the products people make and consume we find that people understand the 'same' world very differently," lead author Hazel Rose Markus said. "If we don't understand the context-specific theories or models that others are using ... we are likely to seriously misunderstand the behavior of others."

The research appears in the current issue of *Psychological Science*.

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