students at their university, and their best friend on a variety of traits and abilities (e.g., competent, friendly, and well-liked). Figure 5.9 shows the findings. Although the Japanese students were generally more modest than the Americans, they were just as apt to regard themselves and their best friend more positively than they regarded most other students at their university. Moreover, the more important the trait, the greater the gap between self, best friends, and most other people. Along with other research, these findings suggest that the better-than-most effect is a general, universal phenomenon (Kobayashi & Brown, 2003; Kurman, 2001; Kurman & Sriram, 1997; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003).

One other aspect of these data merits comment. Figure 5.9 shows that only the Japanese participants rated their best friends more positively than they rated themselves. This finding fits with other evidence that people from collectivistic cultures have a broad extended self that incorporates others, leading them to glorify their family, friends, and fellow group members (Hetts, Sakuma, & Pelham, 1999).

2. Do People Think They Are Biased?

Considering that the better-than-most effect is so extensive, you might think people are aware that they are biased. Not so. Most of us steadfastly deny that we are biased in any way, believing instead that other people are biased. For example, when discussing politics, we believe our opinions are well supported by facts but that other people’s opinions are driven by ideology (Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995). We also believe that our judgments are less distorted by greed, self-aggrandizement, or personal gain than are other people’s judgments (D. T. Miller & Ratner, 1998; Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002; Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004).

B. Egocentric Biases

In his landmark research with children, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget noted that young children are very egocentric (Piaget, 1929). They tend to believe the world