Social Identity and Close Relationships: What is the Connection?

Marilynn B. Brewer

Author contact information:

Marilynn B. Brewer
Department of Psychology
Ohio State University
1835 Neil Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210 U.S.A.
e-mail: brewer.64@osu.edu

Despite the centrality of intrapersonal processes of social cognition and affect, social psychology is ultimately the study of the connections *between* people. Even social cognition has become more interpersonal in recent years as topics such as shared cognition, transactional memory, and distributed cognition have become fruitful areas of social psychological research.

Apart from shared cognition, there are two large bodies of research literature in social psychology that deal directly with the interconnectedness between and among individuals. One is the study of close relationships, personalized bonds between individuals and members of small groups such as family, teams, and peer friendship groups. The other is the study of social identity, the more depersonalized bonds among individuals who share membership in large social groups or categories, such as organizations, nations, or ethnic and religious identity. Together these two areas of research account for the lion's share of articles published in the IRGP section of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, as well as in specialty journals devoted to those topics specifically. Yet, despite the fact that both close relationships and group membership underscore the fundamentally social nature of human beings, there is very little connection between research in these two domains. Close relationship researchers rarely cite or refer to social identity or embeddedness in social groups, and social identity theorists draw a sharp distinction between intergroup and interpersonal processes, relegating the latter to "personal" rather than "social" identity (cf Hogg, 2001).

A few years ago, Wendi Gardner and I tried to juxtapose the literatures on close relationships and social identity by postulating that relational ties and group

identities constitute two different levels of the "social self" (Brewer & Gardner,

1996). In place of existing dichotomies that contrasted individual/independent

versus interpersonal/interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama; Cross &

Madsen) on the one hand, or personal versus social/group identities (Turner; Hogg &

Abrams, 1988) on the other, we proposed a tripartite model, distinguishing among

individual, relational, and collective self representations. Further, we suggested that

these are not simply three aspects of a single self system, but rather three separate

systems with different identity properties, locus of agency, and motivational

concerns (see also Sedikides & Brewer, 2001).

The relational and collective levels of self postulated by Brewer and Gardner

(1996) represent two different forms of social identification, i.e., processes by which the

individual self is extended to include others as integral to the self-concept. One defining

distinction between these two social selves is that the relational self is *personalized*,

incorporating dyadic relationships between the self and particular close others and the

networks of interpersonal connections via the extension of these dyadic relationships. By

contrast, the collective self involves *depersonalized* relationships with others by virtue of

common membership in a symbolic group. Collective identities do not require

interpersonal knowledge or interaction but rely on shared symbols and cognitive

representations of the group as a unit independent of personal relationships within the

group (Etzioni, 1968; Turner et al., 1987).

Although the tripartite representation of the self has gained some recognition

(e.g., E. Kashima & Hardie, 2000; Y. Kashima et al., 2004; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001),

the consequence has been to further isolate the study of close relationships and group

identity. After all, if these are two separate and potentially independent forms of social bonding, then there is no need to study either in the context of the other. Little is known about the mutual influence that the relational and collective selves have on each other. In the present chapter I hope to correct this balkanization by exploring the parallels between close relationships and social identities and then considering how they interact as regulatory systems.

<div align="center">Two Types of Belonging</div>

In contrast to the distinctions drawn by Brewer and Gardner (1996), close relationships and inclusion in groups are considered essentially interchangeable forms of social connecting in the literature on belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and social exclusion (Williams, Forgas, & von Hippel, 2005). For example, in their comprehensive review of research related to the need to belong, Baumeister and Leary (1995) focus primarily on the need for close, caring interpersonal relationships. Nonetheless, at several points in the review they refer to group identification and inclusion in large social groups as further instantiations of belonging and need fulfillment. Similarly, Williams's (2001) review of social ostracism uses the same terms to refer to interpersonal exclusion (e.g., the "silent treatment") and ejection from social groups (e.g., excommunication or banishment)..

Personally, I would prefer to reserve the concept of "belonging" for inclusion in large social groups and would use a different term, such as "bonding," to refer to close personal relationships. At minimum, it should be recognized that these represent two different forms of belonging that should not be treated interchangeably. I would argue on evolutionary grounds that formation of close personal bonds and inclusion in relatively

large social groups serve different adaptive functions for humans as a social species (cf

Caporael, 1997). Personal ties (with mutual caring and concern) provide for a wide range

of reciprocal benefits. Among the primary benefits to each individual in such

relationships is that they are *personalized*; relationship partners are not interchangeable,

benefits are tailored to the needs of the specific person; and relationship partners are

privileged over others when there are multiple demands for scarce resources. But this

very feature of close relationships places limits on the number of such bonds an

individual can draw on. The size of one's circle of family and friends is inherently small.

Ethological studies suggest that the limit on the number of an individual's close personal

ties is 15, and even extended networks of interpersonal connections are in the order of

150 (Dunbar, 1993; in press). Thus, close relationships provide for a certain form of

security but cannot provide for an extended range of resource sharing, cannot protect the

individual from major environmental disasters or marauding groups, and cannot meet

needs for "depersonalized" cooperation and aid (Brewer, 1981). One of the major

achievements of human evolution as a social species is the capacity for connection to

others through shared symbolic group identities. I argue that social identities at this

collective level are distinct from social identities forged in the context of close personal

relationships.

Attachment Styles: Interpersonal versus Group

Smith, Murphy, and Coates (1999) extended the concept of attachment styles,

derived from the literature on close relationships, to assess individual differences in

attachment to social groups. In a program of three studies, Smith and his colleagues

validated a new measure of group attachment, (attachment anxiety, and avoidance)

modeled after the Romantic Partner Attachment scale (Collins & Read, 1990) developed

to assess adult attachment styles in close interpersonal relationships. Parallels between

needs underlying interpersonal relationships and those underlying group identity were

drawn in their work extending attachment theory to the group level.

The group attachment scales proved to have good reliability and predictive and

construct validity with respect to group membership behavior and emotions, and also

proved to be distinct from scores on the relationship attachment measure at the

interpersonal level. The correlation between attachment anxiety for specific group

memberships correlated only .46 with interpersonal attachment anxiety, and similarly,

group avoidance correlated only .33 with the interpersonal measure of attachment

avoidance. Further, the group attachment measures uniquely predicted affect and

behavioral engagement with ingroups. Thus, it is possible for an individual to be

securely attached to their group memberships and yet be anxious or avoidant with respect

to interpersonal attachment, and vice versa.

Loneliness: Relational Connectedness versus Collective Connectedness

A similar distinction between interpersonal and group-based belonging emerged

from a large-scale study of the measurement of loneliness (Hawkley, Browne, &

Cacioppo, 2005). Factor analysis of responses to the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell,

Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980) from more than 2500 college students identified three distinct

(though correlated) factors, corresponding roughly to the individual, relational, and

collective levels of self. The first factor, labeled Isolation, consisted of items referring to

general dissatisfaction with social connectedness at the personal level (e.g., "I feel

isolated from others;" "I am unhappy being so withdrawn"). The second factor, labeled

Relational Connectedness, consisted of items dealing with feelings of familiarity, closeness, and support from others (e.g., "There are people I can turn to;" "There are people I feel close to"). The third factor, Collective Connectedness., consisted of items referring to feelings of group identification and inclusion (e.g., "I have a lot in common with the people around me;" "I feel part of a group of friends"). Although all of these factors could be subsumed under a general construct of Loneliness at a second-order factor level, the factor structure supported the conclusion that self-perceptions of loneliness-connectedness "originate from three highly related but distinct aspects of the social domain" (Hawkley et al., 2005; p. 801). Further this factor structure generalized across males and females and replicated in a diverse sample of older adults.

The results from these measurement studies of attachment and loneliness suggest that individuals are capable of distinguishing between social connectedness that derives from close interpersonal ties with specific others and connectedness that derives from inclusion in larger social groups. Further, satisfaction or security in one of these domains does not necessarily assure satisfaction in the other. Secure attachment and connection at both levels of the social self appear to be necessary for both mental and physical health (Cacioppo, Hawkley, & Berntson, 2003)..

Gender Differences in Connectedness

Although relational and collective aspects of social connectedness are evident for both males and females, a number of studies have revealed gender differences in the relative salience of these two forms of social identity. Cross & Madson (1997) argued that there is a fundamental difference between men and women in independence versus interdependence, with women generally higher in interdependent self-construal and

greater concern for close interpersonal relationships. In a comment on Cross and

Madson's review, Baumeister and Sommer (1997) took issue with the implication that

men are essentially noninterdependent and instead argued that men and women seek

social connection in two different "spheres of belonging."   They contended that men

have the same motivation for connectedness as women, but that motivation is expressed

through associations with large groups rather than through intimate relationships. In

effect, they argue that men and women differ in the relative emphasis on or importance of

relational versus collective forms of social bonding.

The thesis that there are gender differences in relational versus collective forms of

interdependence was tested empirically by Gabriel and Gardner (1999), who found

evidence for the predicted differences in self-construal, emotional experiences, selective

memory, and behavioral intentions. In spontaneous self-concept as assessed by responses

to the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), women produced a

significantly higher proportion of relational self-descriptors than did men, whereas mean

produced significantly more group or social category memberships (collective self-

descriptors) than did women. Consistent with Baumeister and Sommer's (1997)

contentions, males and females did not differ in the total number of interdependent self-

descriptions, only in the type. Further, Gabriel and Gardner (1999) found that women

scored higher than men on the Relational Interdependence Self-Construal Scale (Cross,

Bacon, & Morris, 2000), but men scored higher than women on a modified Collective

Interdependence version of the scale.

Consistent with these gender differences in social self-construal, Gabriel and

Gardner (1999) also found that men were more likely to recall emotional experiences that

were group-based whereas women recalled more relationship-based emotional

experiences, and that men showed greater selective memory for collective social

information compared to women, who selectively recalled more relational events.

Finally, male participants were significantly more likely to indicate behavioral intentions

that would benefit a collective over self-interest, whereas female participants were more

likely to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of a relationship. In later follow-up studies,

Seeley, Gardner, Pennington, and Gabriel (2003) found further that women's ratings of

the importance and value placed on their group memberships correlated with the extent to

which they were relationally attached to other group members, whereas men's ratings

were relatively more influenced by their attachment to the group identity.

Additional evidence of gender differences in the locus of the social self comes

from research using the Relational, Individual, and Collective Self-Aspects scale (RIC)

developed by Kashima and Hardie (2000) as an instrument to assess the relative

importance of the three aspects for an indivdiual's self-definition. The RIC scale consists

of 10 sentence stems dealing with different life issues (e.g., "I think it is most important

in life to…;" I would feel proud it…"), each followed by three options reflecting the three

self aspects (e.g., have personal integrity; have good personal relationships with people

who are important to me; work for causes to improve the well-being of my groups).

Respondents rate each option in terms of its applicability to the self, yielding three

subscale scores representing the relative prominence of each self-aspect. Research with

this scale has consistently found that female respondents score higher on the Relational

self-aspect component than do males (E. Kashima & Hardie, 2000; Y. Kashima et al.

2004). In addition, controlling for Relational subscale scores, males score relatively

higher on the Collective self-aspect subscale. Thus, several different self-report

measures, using different measurement formats, have replicated this basic gender

difference.

Also relevant are differences reported by Romero-Canyas and Downey (2005)

between males and females high in rejection sensitivity. Several of her studies suggested

that high RS females respond more intensely to threats of interpersonal rejection or loss,

whereas high RS males are more responsive to loss of social status, peer group rejection

and/or public rejection. These findings are consistent with the idea that rejection

sensitivity exacerbates sex differences that have been reported in other studies of social

belonging needs.

Based on these preceding studies of gender differences in social self-construal,

Maddux and Brewer (2005) assumed that men and women would defer in their default

interpretation of the meaning of "we," with women more likely to think in terms of

interpersonal relationships (personal ties) and men more likely to think of larger

collectives (social identities). They conducted an experiment in which male and female

participants were all primed with the concept "we" and then engaged in a decision task

that assessed their willingness to trust an anonymous stranger. Conditions of the

experiment varied in what minimal information was provided about the unknown "other."

In one condition, participants were told that the other person was from their own

university (shared ingroup membership); in a second condition, the other was identified

as someone from another university where the participant had no associations (outgroup

membership); and in a third condition, the stranger was from another university but one

where the participant had some personal acquaintance (outgroup with network

connection). As expected, both male and female participants trusted an ingroup member more than an outgroup member, and to the same degree. Where they differed was in the third condition where there was some indirect personal connection to the outgroup. In that condition, women showed higher trust than men. These results were interpreted as indicating that women were more influenced by the presence of indirect interpersonal ties to an outgroup member whereas males were responsive only to the ingroup-outgroup distinction itself.

In sum, there is now a large body of evidence that (at least in Western societies) women's self-construals tend to be more relational than men's and that men's social self-construals are more collective than women's, and that these differences in self-definition are associated with systematic differences in motivation, emotion, cognition, and social decision making.

Independent or Complementary?

The cumulative evidence of gender differences in the relative importance placed on close relationships versus collective group memberships as forms of social connection has sometimes been interpreted as evidence that the two forms of social belonging are substitutable (e.g., Baumeister and Sommer, 1997; Gabriel and Gardner, 1999). The implication is that individuals who are socialized to meet their needs for belonging through intimate interpersonal relationships have less need for identifying with larger social collectives and vice versa. This is consistent with the notion that social belonging is a single motive that can be satisfied in multiple ways.

I take issue with this contention that close relationships and inclusion in groups are two interchangeable means to meeting the same need for belonging. For one thing,

the evidence for sex differences in self-construal is relative rather than absolute. In almost all of the studies assessing gender differences in self-definition and importance of social connectedness, relational bonds are found to be more salient and important than collective identities for *both* men and women (Seeley at al., 2003). Where the sexes differ is in the relative importance of collective identities and group inclusion, above and beyond relational attachments. This is consistent with an evolutionary perspective in which relational bonds are viewed as primary and essential to survival and collective attachments as representing a separate adaptive mechanism that evolved later, both phylogentically and ontogentically (cf Bugental, 2000). I will speculate later in this chapter about why individuals might differ in the extent and importance of collective attachments, but first I will describe a model of relational and collective selves as distinct regulatory systems in the social domain, analogous in some ways to the distinction between hunger and thirst in the physical domain.

Regulating Belonging: Opposing Motives

Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness model was developed as a motivational theory of social identity and attachment to large social groups. According to the optimal distinctiveness model, social identities derive "from a fundamental tension between human needs for validation and similarity to others (on the one hand) and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation (on the other)" (Brewer, 1991, p. 477). More specifically, it is proposed that social identities are selected and activated to the extent that they help to achieve a balance between needs for inclusion and for differentiation in a given social context.

The basic premise of the optimal distinctiveness model is that the two identity needs (inclusion/assimilation and differentiation/distinctiveness) are independent and work in opposition to motivate group identification. Individuals seek social inclusion in order to alleviate or avoid the isolation or stigmatization that may arise from being highly individuated (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). On the other hand, too much similarity or excessive deindividuation provides no basis for comparative appraisal or self-definition and hence individuals are also uncomfortable in situations in which they lack distinctiveness (Fromkin, 1972; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000).

As opposing drives, the inclusion motive and the differentiation motive hold each other in check. As the individual is immersed in larger and more inclusive social units, activation of the need for inclusion is decreased but the level of activation of the differentiation motive is increased. Conversely, as the individual moves toward disconnection from large social collectives in the direction of differentiation into smaller, more exclusive social units, the need for differentiation subsides but the level of activation of the need for inclusion is increased. The resultant counterpressures lead the individual toward an equilibrium point where the sense of self is extended to collectives that are sufficiently inclusive and sufficiently exclusive to satisfy both needs simultaneously. Optimal group identities are those that satisfy the need for inclusion within the ingroup and simultaneously serve the need for differentiation through distinctions between the ingroup and outgroups. To satisfy the needs simultaneously, individuals will select group identities that are inclusive enough that they have a sense of being part of a large collective but exclusive enough that they provide some basis for distinctiveness from others.

Extending the Optimal Distinctiveness Model

Optimal distinctiveness theory was originally intended to apply exclusively to the collective social self. However, Brewer and Gardner (1996) noted that analogous opposing needs for differentiation and assimilation may also be involved in individual and relational selves to determine optimal identities at those levels as well (see also Brewer & Roccas, 2001). This extension of the opposing motives model is depicted in **Table 1**. At the collective level, the conflict is between belonging and inclusion on the one hand, and separation and distinctiveness on the other. At the individual level, the needs are expressed in the opposition between the desire for similarity on the one hand and the need for uniqueness on the other (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).[1] At the interpersonal (relational) level, the tension is represented by conflicts between the need for autonomy and the need for interdependence and intimacy with specific others. At each level, the person must achieve some optimal balance between these conflicting motives for defining self in relation to others.

The extended optimal distinctiveness model views the individual social self as a complex of regulatory systems. In order to survive and function effectively, each person must maintain an optimal level of self-integrity, achieve and sustain a sufficient number of close relationships that meet competing needs for intimacy and autonomy, and maintain secure inclusion in optimally distinctive groups. Fulfilling each of these needs requires the basic components of a regulatory system, including an assessment function that monitors and registers the individual's current state of need satisfaction, a comparator function that evaluates the current state against an ideal or goal state, and an activation (monitoring and coping) function that responds to discrepancies detected by

the comparator and remains active until the discrepancy is reduced or eliminated (Pickett & Gardner, 2005). Just as hunger and thirst respond to different cues of physiological deprivation and activate different cravings and goal representations, the relational and social self are regulated by different dues to satisfaction and deprivation. Each system is sensitive to different states of social connectedness (e.g., what is my current level of intimacy in my relationship with X? am I feeling too different from others in this social context? are the boundaries of my group being maintained?) and the individual must be prepared to respond with appropriate corrective action when assessed states of separation and assimilation deviate from optimal balance at any level of the social self.

Cross-system Effects

To postulate that relational and collective bonds are regulated by distinct systems is not to argue that the two are entirely independent or have no influence on each other. To the contrary, it is very likely that there is a good deal of transfer, both positive and negative, between satisfaction at one level of the social self and the other. Just as drinking 16 ounces of water can temporarily dampen hunger or cravings for food, so immersion in a large social collective can temporarily numb feelings of loneliness or isolation deriving from lack of close intimate relationships. Similarly, experiencing strong intimacy in an interpersonal relationship may, at least temporarily, reduce sensitivity to social inclusion ("it's just us against the world…").

Under some conditions, satisfaction of needs for optimal relationships and optimal group identities may be mutually facilitative. For example, choosing friends and lovers from within one's own social ingroup may enhance both intimacy within the relationship and secure inclusion in the collective. Close others who share a common

ingroup identity are more likely to understand one's need to express group loyalty and adherence to collective symbols and norms, which in turn can enhance compatibility at the interpersonal level. However, even with intragroup relationships, the demands of maintaining close interpersonal bonds and responsibilities may conflict with the demands and obligations of group membership and establishing oneself as a good and loyal group member. When identity needs at different levels of the self conflict, it may be necessary that satisfaction at one level dominates over satisfaction at the other. It is here that individual differences in values and beliefs will determine how the two systems interact. In the final section of this chapter I will consider the dynamic relationship between individual and cultural value differences and the interaction between individual, relational, and collective self-regulation.

Individual and Cultural Differences in Relative Importance of the Social Selves

It is difficult to discuss issues of independence and interdependence, autonomy and intimacy, or personal and social identity without at some point taking into account the influence of cultural differences in values and beliefs about social relationships. According to ODT, all human beings have some need for inclusion and some need for differentiation, and some resultant collective social selves. Although the principles incorporated in the model are presumed to be universal, the model can also accommodate individual, situational, and cultural differences in the relative activation of inclusion and differentiation needs and the nature of optimal identities. Particularly relevant are cultural differences associated with the dimension of individualism – collectivism (Triandis, 1995). Although individualism and collectivism are multi-faceted constructs, they refer basically to variations across cultures in whether individuals are viewed as separate and

autonomous entities or as interconnected and embedded in interdependent social

relationships, along with normative prescriptions and values about the priority to be given

to individual, interpersonal, and group interests (Brewer & Chen, 2007).

Two Types of Collectivism

All societies must meet primary needs for both individual and social identity and

provide for an effective interface between individual self-interest and collective interests

and welfare. Although the capacity for social identity is postulated to be universal, the

locus and content of social identities are clearly culturally defined and regulated. Across

all societies, individuals maintain close personal relationships, small-group interpersonal

networks, and membership in large, symbolic groups. But cultural systems rely more or

less heavily on these different forms of social connection as the primary locus for

defining the social self and exercising social control over individual behavior. Thus,

people in all cultures have three levels of social orientation – individual, relational, and

collective levels of the self. What differs among people across cultures is the salience

and priority of these three different selves (Brewer & Yuki, in press).

Consistent with Brewer and Gardner's (1996) comparison between relational

social identities and collective social identities, I make a further distinction between two

types of collectivism (Brewer & Chen, 2007). One form of collectivism (relational

collectivism) stresses interpersonal relationships, mutual cooperation, dependence, and

concern for specific persons within in a closely interconnected social network. Relational

collectivism is associated with the degree of felt obligation and responsibility to one's

family, close friends, and immediate community. The second form of collectivism

(group-based collectivism) stresses dependence on and obligation to a group as a whole,

valuing obedience to group norms and authority and subordinating individual interests to those of the collective. Collectivist values are not directed to fellow group members as individuals but to the group as a whole.

Individualism, relational and group-based collectivism are not mutually exclusive value systems, but they do specify priorities that may sometimes be in conflict with each other. In such instances, the relative importance of individualistic values, relational values, or collectivist values determines what an individual decides to do when personal preferences conflict with the preference of others, or when meeting the needs of a close personal relationship conflicts with duties and responsibilities to the collective. An individual's primary value orientation is the one that takes precedence over competing values at any particular time.

Although the three levels of self-representation are hypothesized to be distinct self-systems, it is reasonable to assume that the way needs for identity and esteem are met at one level will have some influence on the activation of parallel motives at other levels. Cultural values and group norms that emphasize either separation or assimilation at each level have carry-over effects at other levels. For instance, if the needs for autonomy and intimacy are optimized by relatively high levels of intimacy (relative to autonomy) at the interpersonal level, there may be a particularly strong activation of the need for uniqueness (difference relative to similarity) at the individual level. Similarly, the relative emphasis on autonomy and uniqueness versus interdependence and similarity at the individual and interpersonal levels may influence the relative activation of the needs for inclusion and differentiation at the collective level.

Some nonobvious implications of this interplay between optimal identity at different levels of self-construal were drawn out by Brewer and Roccas (2001). Their reasoning follows from some assumptions about the implications of collectivist and individualistic value systems for the nature of the connections between individuals and their social groups and the meaning of ingroup membership (and collective identity) itself. Relational collectivist values place considerable emphasis on obligation, mutual interdependence, and responsibility to close others (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Thus, interpersonal attachments for relational collectivists represent a high-investment commitment. The benefits of connections are high in that they provide security and guaranteed mutual aid. But the costs of inclusion are commensurate with the benefits in terms of obligations and duties to close others that demand time and resources on a nonnegotiable basis.

Under such a system of values, both the benefits and latent costs of belonging are related to the size and exclusivity of the interpersonal network. When intragroup obligations are strong and underwritten by group norms and sanctions, the benefits of group inclusion can be met within a relatively small, exclusive social unit. (To put it more formally, as the probability of receiving help and support from a fellow group member approaches 1.00, the fewer group members are needed to assure that help will be available when needed.) By the same token, when obligations to others are strong, it becomes especially important to limit the scope of obligation to those who are clearly a part of the same system of reciprocal aid and mutual obligation (Takagi, 1996: Yamagishi, Jin, & Kiyonari, 1999). With relational collectivist values and norms, it is very costly to extend the bounds of the group too widely or to bestow the benefits of

group membership to those who do not clearly meet group norms. Thus, relational

collectivists should be highly concerned with ingroup distinctiveness and should make

sharp distinctions between norms that apply to ingroup and those that apply to outgroup

others. Relational values should be associated with strong social identification with

relatively small social groups and with high sensitivity to changes that would increase

ingroup size. Connectedness to others based on strong interpersonal ties and networks

may inherently conflict with a depersonalized representation of social groups and

associated values.

A number of comparative studies have supported this idea that relational

collectivist values are associated with high differentiation of ingrouper (close others) and

outgroupers. For example, Leung (1988) found that, in responses to conflict scenarios

between two disputants, Hong Kong Chinese college students were less likely to pursue a

conflict with an ingroup disputant (close friends) and more likely to pursue a conflict

with an outgroup disputant (strangers) than were American students. Similarly, studies

on distributive justice have shown that people from collectivist cultures apply different

reward allocation norms to ingroup and outgroup. Leung and Bond (1984), for instance,

found that Chinese participants shared the rewards more equally with the friends, but

with an out-group stranger they adhered to the equity norm more closely than did the

Americans. Likewise, Mahler, Greenberg, and Hayashi (1981) asked students in Japan

and the United States how rewards should be divided in a set of stories describing two

workers. American participants tended to favor an equity allocation based on relative

contribution of the two workers, regardless of whether the workers were friends or not.

Japanese participants, on the other hand, favored an equality allocation when the two

workers were described as strongly connected, though their allocation preferences were

the same as Americans when the story presented implied that the two workers were not

strongly connected.

Compared to relational collectivist values, individualistic value orientations have

very different implications for the demands and level of investment associated with

interpersonal relationships. With its emphasis on autonomy and agency at the individual

level, individualism suppresses the need for intimacy vis a vis autonomy and reduces felt

obligation and commitment to close relationships. At first glance, it may appear that

individualistic values are incompatible with the very notion of collective social selves. To

the contrary, I believe that individualism has very direct effects on the need for inclusion

in larger social units. Members of individualistic groups and societies are dependent on

each other just as members of collectivist groups are. The difference is in how this

interdependence is negotiated and reflected in shared values. Consistent with the ideas

presented by Simon and Kampmeier (2001), I argue that individual autonomy and

collective identity (especially identification with large, inclusive groups) are quite

compatible.

Individualism gives greater weight to personal interests and preferences in

resolving potentially conflicting demands of individual achievement and the welfare of

others. In such a value system, obligations to others are not absolute or highly reliable.

Thus, the potential benefits of ingroup inclusion are diffused and probabilistic, and

individuals need to be part of larger and more inclusive social units in order to reap the

benefits of security and mutual aid associated with group membership. .Ironically, then,

the characteristics of individualistic value orientations lead to relatively chronic

activation of the need for inclusion and relatively low arousal of the need for differentiation (a need that is chronically met by the emphasis on individual responsibility and self-expression). Individuals with individualistic value orientations, then, should exhibit moderately high levels of social identification across a wide range of social groups and be relatively tolerant of within-group diversity and intergroup similarity.

Somewhat paradoxically, I am arguing that individualists are more likely to focus on the collective level of the social self than are relational collectivists. Connectedness to others based on strong interpersonal ties and networks may inherently conflict with a depersonalized representation of social groups and associated values. This argument is consistent with the findings reviewed earlier on gender differences in social belonging when it is recognized that in Western societies, males tend to be higher in individualism than females (Cross & Madson, 1997; Watkins et al., 1998). It is also consistent with findings from cross-cultural studies of individualism-collectivism indicating that Americans (who generally score high on measures of individualism) are found to be no less collectivistic than East Asians (particularly Japanese and Korean), depending on the scale contents of collectivism (Oyserman et al., 2002). For instance, compared to the Japanese, Americans score higher on collectivism items such as "belonging to the ingroup," and "seeking others' advice," while lower on collectivism items such as "valuing group harmony," "valuing hierarchy and groups goals," and "preference for working in groups."

Cross-cultural studies also have found that American individualists show no less, if not more, ingroup favoritism than East-Asian collectivists when the ingroup is a social category or large collective. For instance, Bond and Hewstone (1988) found that British

high school students in Hong Kong had more positive images of their in-group than did

Chinese students. Similarly, Rose's (1985) cross-national comparative study found that

Americans had more favorable views of their country than did Japanese. Moreover,

Snibbe, Kitayama, Markus, and Suzuki (2003) found less ingroup bias among Japanese

football fans, compared with their American counterparts, even though both cultural

groups equally identified with their university and the sports team. In general, ingroup

identity among East Asians and other relational collectivists is based primarily on loyalty

and attachment to interpersonal relationships within the group, but ingroup bias among

individualists is based on loyalty and attachment to the group as a whole in comparison to

other groups (Yuki, 2003).

Reprise

Again, the existence of individual and cultural differences in relative strength of

relational versus collective forms of social bonding could be used as evidence of

substitutability of the two modes of belonging. But I am arguing that the differences

represent interactions across systems, based on how competing needs for assimilation and

differentiation are balanced at each level of the social self. When autonomy trumps

intimacy at the relational level, the need for inclusion in larger collectives is enhanced;

when relational ties are strong, interpersonal obligations may take precedence over

collective interests. But dominance of one mode over the other is relative rather than

absolute, emerging under conditions where the demands of one form of social bonding

are in conflict with the other. Across the lifespace, all individuals need both forms of

social connectedness to function effectively and long-term deficits in either domain will

not be compensated for by high degrees of belonging in the other. As complex social

animals, human beings require both personalized and depersonalized forms of

interdependence—belonging *with* and belonging *to*.

References

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachment as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*, 497-529.

Baumeister, R. F., & Sommer, K. L. (1997). What do men want? Gender differences and two spheres of belonging. Comment on Cross and Madson. *Psychological Bulletin, 122*, 38-44.

Bond, M.H., & Hewstone, M. (1988). Social identity theory and the perception of intergroup relations in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *12*, 153-170.

Brewer, M.B. (1981). Ethnocentrism and its role in interpersonal trust. In M. Brewer and B. Collins (eds.). *Scientific Inquiry and the Social Sciences.* (pp. 345-360). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brewer, M.B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475-482.

Brewer, M. B., & Chen, Y. (2007). Where (who) are collectives in collectivism? Toward conceptual clarification of individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Review,*

Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is the "we"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71,* 83-93.

Brewer, M. B., & Roccas, S. (2001). Individual values, social identity, and optimal distinctiveness. In C. Sedikides & M. Brewer (Eds.), *Individual self, relational self, collective self* (pp. 219-237). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Brewer, M.B., & Yuki, M. (in press). Culture and social identity. In S. Kitayama & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Handbook of Cultural Psychology.* Guilford Press.

Bugental, D. B. (2000). Acquisition of the algorithms of social life: A domain-based approach. *Psychological Bulletin, 126*, 187-219.

Cacioppo, J. T., Hawkley, L. C., & Berntson, G (2003). The anatomy of loneliness. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 12*, 71-74.

Caporael, L. R. (1997). The evolution of truly social cogntion: The core configurations model. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 1*, 276-298.

Collins, N. L., & Read, S. J. (1990). Adult attachment, working models, and relationship quality in dating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*, 644-663.

Cross, S. L., Bacon, P., & Morris, M. (2000). The relational-interdependent self-consrual and relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 791-808.

Cross, S. E., & Madson, L. (1997). Models of the self: Self-construals and gender. *Psychological Bulletin, 122*, 5-37.

Dunbar, R.I.M. (1993). Coevolution of neocortex size, group size and language in humans. *Behavior and Brain Science, 16*. 681-735.

Dunbar, R. I. M. (in press). The social brain hypothesis and its relevance to social psychology. In J. Forgas, M. Hazelton, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *Evolution and the social mind...*

Etzioni, A. (1968). *The active society*. New York: Press Press.

Fromkin, H.L. (1972). Feelings of interpersonal undistinctiveness: An unpleasant affective state. *Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, 6,* 178-182.

Gabriel, S., & Gardner, W. L. (1999). Are there "his" and "hers" types of interdependence? The implications of gender differences in collectiver versus relational interdependence for affect, behavior, and cognition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 642-655.

Hawkley, L. C., Browne, M. W., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2005). How can I connect with thee? Let me count the ways. *Psychological Science, 16*, 798-804.

Hogg, M. A. (2001). Social identity and the sovereignty of the group: A psychology of belonging. In C. Sedikides & M. Brewer (Eds.), *Individual self, relational self, collective self* (pp. 125-143). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes.* London: Routledge.

Kashima, E., & Hardie, E. A. (2000). The development and validation of the Relational, Individual, and Collective Self-Aspects (RIC) Scale. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 3*, 19-48.

Kashima, Y., Kokubo, T., Kashima, E., Boxall, kD., Yamaguchi, S., Macrae, K. (2004). Culture and self: Are there within-culture differences in self between metropolitan areas and regional cities? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*, 816-823.

Leung, K. (1988). Some determinants of conflict avoidance. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 19*, 125-136.

Leung, K., & Bond, M.H. (1984). The impact of cultural collectivism on reward allocation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *47*, 793-804.

Maddux, W.W., & Brewer, M.B. (2005). Gender differences in the relational and collective bases for trust. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 8,* 159-171.

Mahler, I., Greenberg, L., & Hayashi, H. (1981). A comparative study of rules of justice: Japanese versus American. *Psychologia*, *24*, 1-8.

Markus, H.R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.

Oyersman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluaiton of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 3-72.

Pickett, C. L., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). The social monitoring system: Enhanced sensitivity to social cues as an adaptive response to social exclusion. In K Williams, J. Forgas, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying* (pp. 213-226). New York: Psychology Press.

Romero-Canyas, R., & Downey, G. (2005). Rejection sensitivity as a predictor of affective and behavioral responses to interpersonal struess. A defensive motivational system. In K Williams, J. Forgas, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying* (pp. 131-154). New York: Psychology Press.

Rose, R. (1985). National pride in cross-national perspective. *International Social Science Journal*, *103*, 85–96.

Russell, D., Peplau, L. A., & Cutrona, C. E. (1980). The revised UCLA Loneliness Scale: Concurrent and discriminant validity evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*, 472-480.

Sedikides, C., & Brewer, M. B. (Eds.) (2001). *Individual self, relational self, collective self*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Seeley, E. A., Gardner, W. L., Pennington, G., & Gabriel, S. (2003). Circle of friends or members of a group? Sex differences in relational and collective attachment to groups. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 6*, 251-263.

Simon, B., & Kampmeier, C. (2001). Revisiting the individual self. Toward a social psychological theory of the individual self and the collective self. In C. Sedikides & M. Brewer (Eds.), *Individual self, relational self, collective self* (pp. 199-218). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Smith, E. R., Murphy, J., & Coats, S. (1999). Attachment to groups: Theory and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*, 94-110.

Snibbe A.C., Kitayama S., Markus H.R., Suzuki T. (2003). They saw a game. A Japanese and American (football) field study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34*, 581-595.

Snyder, C. R., & Fromkin, H. L. (1980). *Uniqueness: The human pursuit of difference.* New York: Plenum Press.

Takagi, E., (1996). The generalized exchange perspective on the evolution of altruism. In W. Liebrand & D. Messick (Eds.), *Frontiers in social dilemmas research* (pp. 311-336). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*, Boulder, CO: Westview.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M., Oakes, P., Reicher, S., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Vignoles, V. L., Chryssochoou, Z., & Breakwell, G. M. (2000). The distinctiveness principle: Identity, meaning, and the bounds of cultural relativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4,* 337-354.

Watkins, D., Adair, J., Akande, A., Gerong, A., McInerney, D., Sunar, D., Watson, S., Wen, Q. F., & Wondimu, H. (1998). Individualism-collectivism, gender and the self-concept: A nine culture investigation. *Psychologia, 41*, 259-271.

Williams, K. D. (2001). *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford Press.

Williams, K. D., Forgas, J. P., & von Hippel, W. (Eds.) (2005). *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying*. New York: Psychology Press.

Yamagishi, T., Jin, N. & Kiyonari, T. (1999). Bounded generalized reciprocity: Ingroup boasting and ingroup favoritism. *Advances in Group* Processes, *16*, 161-197.

Yuki, M. (2003). Intergroup comparison versus intragroup cooperation: A cross-cultural examination of social identity theory in North American and East Asian cultural contexts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66, 166-183.

Table 1

Opposing Drives and Levels of Self Representation

Motivational Pole

Level of Self	Differentiation	Assimilation
Individual	uniqueness	similarity
Relational	autonomy	intimacy/interdependence
Collective	separation	inclusion/belonging

Adapted from Brewer and Roccas (2001) (Table 12.1, p. 223)

Footnotes

---

[1] The distinction between inclusion-differentiation on the one hand and similarity-uniqueness on the other is subtle but important. Similarity refers to the <u>degree</u> or extent of overlap between one's own characteristics (attributes, attitudes, etc.) and those of another individual or a group prototype. Inclusion refers to the <u>number</u> of others with whom one shares a collective bond (which may be based on a single shared characteristic).