

Culture and perceptions of self–other similarity

Robert C. Satterwhite, Jack M. Feldman, Richard Catrambone, and Liang-Yu Dai

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA

In testing possible cultural effects of the use of the self as an habitual reference point to which others are compared, we expected that: (a) individualistic participants (i.e., those who give priority to personal goals) would rate self–other similarity higher when asked “How similar is X to you?” than when asked “How similar are you to X?”, whereas nondirectional similarity judgements (“How similar are these two people?”) would resemble the former directional comparison; (b) collectivistic participants (i.e., those who give priority to in-group goals) would show a weaker or, possibly, reversed pattern, especially using in-group comparison others. Neither hypothesis was upheld. However, the individualists perceived the in-group to be relatively more similar to themselves as compared to the collectivists. This difference cannot be explained by response bias, status asymmetry, or role differentiation. We propose an explanation in terms of the differential relationship between self and other representations for people from collectivist versus individualist cultures.

Cette étude examine les effets culturels possibles de l'utilisation du soi comme point de référence habituelle dans la comparaison avec autrui et formule certaines prédictions. (1) Les participants individualistes (i.e., qui donnent priorité à leurs buts personnels) évalueront plus fortement la similarité soi-autrui quand ils doivent répondre à la question “Jusqu'à quel point X vous ressemble-t-il?” que lorsqu'ils doivent répondre à la question “Jusqu'à quel point ressemblez-vous à X?”; les jugements de similarité non directs (“Jusqu'à quel point ces deux personnes se ressemblent-elles?”) seront semblables à ceux fournis en réponse à la première question. (2) Les participants collectivistes (i.e., ceux qui donnent priorité aux buts de leur groupe d'appartenance) présenteront un patron moins distinctif et possiblement inverse. Aucune des deux hypothèses n'est confirmée. Cependant, les participants individualistes perçoivent plus de similitudes que les participants collectivistes entre leur groupe d'appartenance et eux-mêmes. Cette différence ne peut s'expliquer par un biais de réponse, une asymétrie de statut ou une différenciation des rôles. Nous proposons une explication en termes de relation différentielle entre les représentations de soi et d'autrui dans les cultures individualistes et les cultures collectivistes.

Recently there have been proposals for multi-method approaches to the study of similarities and differences between cultures (e.g., Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). The implication is that convergence across methods will contribute to the growing evidence for cultural differentiation along a variety of dimensions, for instance Individualism-Collectivism (I/C). The current study contributes to this effort by comparing similarity judgements made by individuals from a relatively individualistic country (USA) to those made by individuals from two relatively collectivistic countries (Taiwan and Japan). Individualists are those who give priority to their personal goals whereas collectivists are those who give priority to in-group goals (Triandis, 1994).

Typically, research investigating the nature of the self does so by directly asking participants questions about themselves (e.g., Triandis, 1989; Watkins et al., 1998). For example, participants may be asked to complete sentences beginning with “I am . . .” (Triandis, 1989) or to rate the importance of different aspects of their

self-concept (e.g., physical, social, familial; Watkins et al., 1998). However, such questions may be constrictive because responses are guided by the nature of the questions themselves (Feldman & Lynch, 1988). In contrast, the current investigation explores the self by asking participants from different cultures to make similarity judgements between themselves and others. This methodology permits an exploration of the nature and theoretical implications of self-concepts without asking participants directly about themselves.

Research involving similarity judgements and the self has concluded that the self serves as an “anchor point or immobile point of reference” to which others are compared (Rogers, 1981). Tversky's (1977) contrast model has suggested that asymmetries in similarity judgements would be created as a result of a matching process between the features of the first-presented (i.e., subject) and the second-presented (i.e., referent) stimuli (e.g., X is like Y). A familiar stimulus (e.g., the self) will appear relatively dissimilar when it is the subject of a

Requests for reprints should be addressed to Robert C. Satterwhite, Applied Psychological Techniques, 1120 Post Road, 2nd Floor, Darien CT, 06820, USA (E-mail: rcsatterwhite@appliedpsych.com).

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comparison with a less familiar referent stimulus (e.g., another person) because a significant part of the familiar stimulus' features will not be features of the less familiar stimulus (Catrambone, Beike, & Niedenthal, 1996). In contrast, a familiar stimulus will seem more similar when it is used as the referent because a larger part of the subject's features will match its (i.e., the referent's) features (Catrambone et al., 1996).

Thus, when comparing the similarity of two stimuli, decision makers consider first, and weigh most heavily, the features of the first stimulus (i.e., the subject) and match these features to those of the other stimulus (i.e., the referent) (Catrambone et al., 1996). To illustrate, with a more familiar stimulus (e.g., China) in the subject position and a less familiar stimulus (e.g., Korea) in the referent position (i.e., "How similar is China to Korea?"), relatively few of the well-known characteristics of China (big, communism, antagonism with the West, geography, Asia) overlap with well-known characteristics of Korea (geography, Asia) and, thus, relatively little similarity is perceived. Conversely, with a less familiar stimulus (e.g., Korea) in the subject position and a more familiar stimulus (e.g., China) in the referent position (i.e., "How similar is Korea to China?"), a greater proportion of Korea's features are shared (e.g., geography, Asia) and, thus, more similarity is perceived. Indeed, this is exactly what Tversky (1977) demonstrated when he had participants make similarity judgements between China and Korea.

Likewise, asymmetries should appear when making comparisons between the self (a more familiar stimulus) and another person (a less familiar stimulus) depending upon whether the self is in the subject or in the referent position. In support, research has revealed lower similarity judgements when comparing the self to others than when comparing others to the self (Srull & Gaelick, 1983) using social/personality and physical dimensions (Holyoak & Gordon, 1983) as well as using prototypes (e.g., co-op member, pre-med student, business student; Catrambone et al., 1996). Moreover, using a nondirectional condition (e.g., "How similar are the following two people?"), Catrambone et al. found that not only did the asymmetries disappear, but the mean similarity ratings, regardless of whether the self was on the top or on the bottom, were the same as those resulting from the directional comparisons when the self was the referent. This suggested that the more *familiar* of two stimuli will be habitually used as the referent in making social comparisons of similarity.

Previous studies of the I/C continuum (e.g., Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Triandis, 1989) have suggested that individualists and collectivists may respond differently to judgements of similarity between the self and comparison others, given their differential elaboration of independent and interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). According to Markus and Kitayama, persons with independent self-construals (i.e., from individualistic cultures; Singelis & Sharkey, 1995) organize their behaviour with reference to their

own thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than with reference to those of others. In contrast, those with interdependent self-construals (i.e., from collectivistic cultures; Singelis & Sharkey, 1995) perceive themselves in terms of social relationships, thus making their behaviour contingent on the cognitions, emotions, and behaviours of others.

The implications are several. First, the more salient and complex the particular aspect of the self, the higher the probability that an element of that aspect will be sampled (Triandis, 1989). For example, Triandis has demonstrated that the private self is more frequently sampled, and the collective self less frequently sampled, the more individualistic the society. The second implication is that the cognitive network relating self-concepts to other-person concepts may be differentially linked depending upon an individual's cultural affiliation. Thus, for example, given that a collectivist's thoughts and behaviours are contingent on those of others, his or her mental self-representation may be considered "interrelated" with his or her mental representations of other persons. In contrast, the individualist, whose thoughts and behaviours are relatively more independent, may have a mental self-representation that is "isolated" from the mental representations of others.

These differences suggest that aspects of the self will be differentially elaborated, accessible, and cognitively represented in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the former, given the emphasis on the individual, the private self will be a relatively more elaborated, accessible, and isolated concept relative to a comparison other. In the latter, however, given the emphasis on the group relative to the individual, the private self-concept will be relatively less elaborated and accessible, and more interrelated, relative to an individualistic culture (i.e., the self may always be more elaborated relative to comparison others, only less so in collectivistic cultures). Moreover, this priority of the group emphasizes an in-group-out-group distinction to a greater degree in collectivistic cultures than it does in individualistic cultures. For example, in Japan, classmates and neighbours maintain important in-group status to a greater extent than in Australia (Triandis, 1990). In China, important in-group status is given to family members to a greater degree than in an individualistic country (Bond, 1991).

Thus, given the relatively less elaborated and accessible, and more interrelated nature of the private self in a collectivist culture, compared to an individualist, the collectivist might be less likely to use the self as an habitual reference point when comparing the similarity of oneself to another (Rogers, 1981), a tendency that has been noted using samples of individualistic participants (e.g., Catrambone et al., 1996; Holyoak & Gordon, 1983; Srull & Gaelick, 1983). Rather, collectivists might use the collective as an habitual reference point, thereby creating patterns in self-other similarity judgements that are different from those typically found using individualistic samples. Indeed, Kitayama, Markus, Tummala,

Kurokawa, and Kato (1990, Study 1) demonstrated that significant asymmetries in perceived similarity using a sample of American participants were nonsignificantly reversed when using a sample of participants with Indian backgrounds. A second study using Japanese participants also failed to produce significant asymmetries in self-other similarity judgements (Kitayama et al., 1990, Study 2).

Compared to individualistic cultures, the relatively greater familiarity, importance, and elaboration of the collective relative to the individual in collectivistic cultures leads to different predictions when people make similarity judgements between the self and comparison others, especially in-group members. Specifically, in comparison to individualist cultures, the relatively weaker elaboration of the self versus the group could lead to weaker or reversed patterns of judgement in collectivist cultures, especially for in-groups.

To test for these effects, we followed Catrambone et al.'s (1996) method, using two different formats (directional vs. nondirectional) for the similarity judgements. In the directional format, participants are presented with questions like "How similar is X to you?" or vice versa. In the nondirectional format, participants are presented with questions in a vertical display using the question "How similar are the following two people?" with the self either above or below the comparison other. Based on Rogers' (1981) assertions, we expected asymmetries in judgement in the directional format (i.e., higher similarity ratings for "How similar is X to you?" than for "How similar are you to X?") and symmetries in the nondirectional format (i.e., the mean similarity ratings with the self placed either above or below the prototype should be of the same magnitude as the directional comparisons with the self as the referent) for the individualists. However, we expected participants' responses to show weaker or reversed patterns of judgement in the two collectivist countries, especially for the in-group. This prediction would be supported by a significant three-way interaction between the variables "position" (subject vs. referent), "format" (directional vs. nondirectional), and "country" (USA, Taiwan, and Japan) such that American participants would perceive higher similarity when the self was a referent as well as when the self was either above or below a comparison other, relative to the Japanese and Taiwanese participants.

This study extends the research by Kitayama et al. (1990) by including both a nondirectional format and an in-group/out-group distinction. In addition, although their similarity comparisons did not contain a subject-referent manipulation, this study extends research by Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988), who failed to demonstrate cultural differences in perceived similarity judgements between participants and various in-groups across three cultures (USA, Japan, and Puerto Rico).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 574 undergraduate university students: 181 from the Georgia Institute of Technology, USA; 291 from the University of Fu-Jen, Taiwan; and 152 from the University of Fukuoka, Japan.

Materials

Participants were asked to make judgements of similarity (using a 7-point scale where 1 = "very similar" and 7 = "very dissimilar") between themselves and 20 other people. Comparison others were chosen based on two separate pre-tests using two different samples of American participants. In the first pretest, participants were asked to list those people they considered similar to and different from themselves and to rate the familiarity of each on a 7-point scale (from "not at all familiar" to "very familiar"). Those people listed in this first pre-test as similar and relatively more familiar, and different and relatively less familiar, were then randomly ordered into a new list. Two additional groups of participants were then asked to circle either people from the new list they considered to be similar to themselves or to circle those they considered to be different from themselves. As a result, the following comparison others were identified: 10 in-group members (mom, dad, sister closest in age, brother closest in age, closest friend, classmate, student in your major, student in your university, typical person of your race, and typical person of your country) and 10 out-group members (typical rich person, typical farmer, typical celebrity, typical artist, typical athlete, typical dancer, typical politician, typical poor person, typical priest, and typical musician). The final list of in-group and out-group members was consistent with previous cross-cultural research (see Triandis, 1994).

Twenty similarity judgement questions were then created and randomly ordered; five different versions were used in order to control for context effects (see Knowles, 1988). The rationale was that randomization would decrease the effect that serial position might have on item response.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four between-subjects conditions that corresponded to the four previously described formats of similarity judgements (Catrambone et al., 1996). Two were directional conditions, in which the self was either in the subject position (e.g., "How similar are you to X?") or in the referent position (e.g., "How similar is X to you?"). Two nondirectional conditions were displayed vertically; the self was always presented in the top position or always presented in the bottom position. In the nondirectional conditions participants responded to the comparison question "How similar are these two people in general?"

In addition, we assessed the strength of the idio-centric/allocentric values of each of the participants

using an instrument based on research by Triandis et al. (1990). Idiocentric and allocentric values are the individual-level reflections of individualism and collectivism, respectively. Participants' responses to the idiocentric-allocentric scale reflect the degree to which they personally adhere to their own culture's values. The scale has demonstrated adequate validity and reliability using a variety of different samples (Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985; Triandis et al., 1990). Responses to the scale yielded one score for each participant in terms of his or her relative standing on the individualism/collectivism dimension; participants' scores were then averaged to obtain the relative standing of each country on this dimension.

Both the similarity questionnaire and the idiocentric/allocentric questionnaire were translated into Chinese and Japanese, and checked for accuracy by back-translation into English.

RESULTS

Prior to analyses, a composite variable was computed based on mean similarity ratings for the 10 in-group members; a similar composite variable was also computed based on mean similarity ratings for the 10 out-group members.

The reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) of both the similarity scale and the idiocentric/allocentric scale were high (.789 and .791, respectively).

In-group and out-group similarity judgement means were calculated for each country collapsed across all formats. Within-country *t*-tests revealed that in-group members were rated significantly more similar ($ps < .001$) to participants than were out-group members: $t(134) = 19.39$, USA; $t(294) = 25.79$, Taiwan; $t(154) = 15.66$, Japan. Specifically, in-group means were 2.99 (USA), 3.54 (Taiwan), and 3.71 (Japan); out-group means were 4.71, 4.87, and 5.13, respectively. These results replicate previous research (e.g., Triandis, 1994) and confirm the results of the two pre-tests.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) using country (USA vs. Taiwan vs. Japan) as the independent variable and each country's relative standing on the I/C dimension as the dependent variable was conducted to investigate whether the USA mean was significantly higher than those of Taiwan and Japan (higher scores indicate relatively greater individualism and lower scores relatively greater collectivism). Results were highly significant, $F(2, 582) = 14.3$, $p < .001$, and in the predicted direction; US participants had higher scores (mean = 6.27) relative to those from Taiwan (mean = 5.98) and Japan (mean = 5.87), who did not differ, Tukey B post hoc, $p < .05$. Although Triandis' (1990) scale assesses values at an individual rather than a cultural level, the aggregate of individuals' responses is a reflection of cultural norms. Thus, results supported the characterization of American participants as relatively individualistic, and

the Taiwanese and Japanese participants as relatively collectivistic.

As explained earlier, we expected asymmetries in judgement in the directional format (i.e., higher similarity ratings for "How similar is X to you?" than for "How similar are you to X?") and symmetries in the nondirectional format for the individualistic participants. However, we expected collectivistic participants' responses to show weaker or possibly reversed patterns of judgement, especially for the in-group.

A 2 (position) \times 2 (format) \times 3 (country) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test these predictions. Dependent variables were the composite similarity scores for in-group and out-group (i.e., mean similarity judgements made using the in-group and out-group as comparison others, respectively). Contrary to expectation, the three-way interaction was not significant, $F(4, 1126) = 1.29$, n.s. There was no support, even in the American sample, for the self as a habitual referent, $F(4, 1058) = 1.43$, n.s.¹ The interaction between position and country, $F(4, 1058) = 0.911$, n.s., was also nonsignificant.

There was, however, a Format \times Country interaction, $F(4, 1058) = 3.10$, $p < .05$, and a main effect of country, $F(4, 1058) = 19.00$, $p < .001$, on similarity judgements (see Table 1). For the interaction, tests of between-subjects effects demonstrated significant differences in terms of in-group similarity ratings only, $F(2, 1058) = 5.68$, $p < .01$. Simple main effects demonstrated significant differences between the directional and nondirectional formats for Japan only, $F(1, 152) = 8.42$, $p < .01$. Specifically, participants perceived a higher degree of similarity between themselves and others using the nondirectional format.

In terms of the main effect of country, significant between-subjects effects were demonstrated for both in-group, $F(2, 1058) = 34.50$, $p < .001$, and out-group, $F(2, 1058) = 10.46$, $p < .001$, similarity ratings. Tukey B post hoc tests ($p < .05$) revealed that American participants viewed the in-group as significantly more similar to themselves relative to the Taiwanese and the Japanese participants, who did not differ (see Table 1). American and Taiwanese participants, who did not differ, perceived the out-group as significantly more similar to themselves relative to the Japanese participants.

Given the tendency of US students to respond lower on the similarity scale (i.e., more similar), especially on

¹ Hypotheses were not upheld even after testing whether perceptions of self-other similarity judgements depended on participants' endorsement of their culture's putative particular values (i.e., America: Individualism; Taiwan and Japan: Collectivism) (e.g., Kitayama et al., 1990); using the idiocentric/allocentric scores as covariates to test if the interactive and main effects on judgements differed when controlling for individual values; computing analyses using data standardized across participants within each country (to control for response bias); or performing individual-level analyses by dummy coding idiocentric/allocentric scores (i.e., 1 through 5.5 = 0, $N = 124$; 6.75 through 9 = 1, $N = 133$) and looking at its interaction with position and format on similarity judgements.

TABLE 1
Similarity ratings of self and other as a
function of position, format, and country

Comparison other	Format				Mean
	Directional		Nondirectional		
	Self as subject	Self as referent	Self on top	Self on bottom	
<i>USA</i>					
In-group	2.88	3.02	2.98	3.06	2.99 ^a
Out-group	4.61	4.66	4.80	4.78	4.71 ¹
<i>Taiwan</i>					
In-group	3.37	3.60	3.67	3.50	3.54 ^b
Out-group	4.90	4.85	4.89	4.83	4.86 ²
<i>Japan</i>					
In-group	3.87	3.97	3.31	3.72	3.71 ^b
Out-group	5.01	5.20	5.04	5.28	5.13 ³

Based on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = very similar and 7 = very dissimilar; Mean = Average *across* conditions; values with different alphabetic superscripts indicate in-group differences between countries, $p < .05$, Tukey B post hoc test; values with different numeric superscripts indicate out-group differences between countries, $p < .05$, Tukey B post hoc test.

in-group comparisons, and Taiwanese and Japanese students to respond in the middle to upper part of the similarity scale (i.e., neutral to less similar), we checked the idiocentric/allocentric scale for a similar type of response bias. There was, however, no systematic tendency for the American participants to respond lower nor for the Taiwanese or Japanese participants to use the middle to upper portions of the scale; rather, of the 50 questions on the scale, all 3 countries' mean scores were in the 4- to 6-point range on a 9-point scale. Thus, the similarity results are unlikely to be due to response bias.

DISCUSSION

Although our sample reflected common conceptions of the USA as individualistic and of Taiwan and Japan as collectivistic, there was no systematic tendency for the judgements made by the former to be significantly more similar when the self was in the referent position than when it was in the subject position relative to similarity judgements made by the latter. Higher similarity ratings were expected when the self was in the referent position (e.g., Catrambone et al., 1996; Holyoak & Gordon, 1983), but, as in Triandis et al. (1988), this did not occur; nor were the patterns found in Kitayama et al. (1990) replicated. Given the lack of significant findings regarding this first prediction, it was no surprise that the collectivistic participants did not differentiate between the in-group and out-group in their similarity judgements.

The absence of hypothesized asymmetries for the individualistic participants suggests that, at least in this particular sample, the self did not serve as an "anchor point or immobile point of reference" to which others are compared (Rogers, 1981). These results run contrary to

those of others (e.g., Catrambone et al., 1996; Holyoak & Gordon, 1983; Kitayama et al., 1990; Srull & Gaelick, 1983). Although the relatively greater importance and elaboration of the collective self (and, by implication, one's representation of important in-groups) is supported by other data (e.g., Trafimow et al., 1991), it did not influence similarity judgements in our data.

Kitayama et al. (1990) did find the hypothesized effect. They, however, used quite different (and fewer) questions to those included in the present study, and did not randomize order of presentation. They also assessed individual values quite differently. Whether some, or all, of these differences contribute to the differences in results is unknown.

The failure of the manipulation to create asymmetries in similarity judgements for the American participants is somewhat enigmatic. However, recent research by Karylowski and colleagues (Karylowski, 1990; Karylowski & Skarzynska, 1991), who also failed to demonstrate asymmetries in self-other judgements, suggests that significant asymmetries found by others may have been a result of inadvertent priming with self-report surveys prior to participants' similarity ratings. For example, Holyoak and Gordon (1983) had subjects complete a self-monitoring scale before making self-other similarity judgements. Thus, the fact that the idiocentric/allocentric questionnaires in the current study were completed *after*, rather than before, the similarity ratings may account for the absence of asymmetries in similarity judgements by all participants, especially the individualists.

Also contrary to expectation was the fact that the US participants, with their relatively more elaborated, accessible, and isolated self-concepts, perceived in-group comparison others as more similar to themselves than did those from Taiwan and Japan, with their relatively less elaborated and accessible, and more interrelated, self-concepts. There are several possible explanations for this nationality difference in similarity ratings. For example, response set, or response bias, is the tendency for individuals from particular cultures to favour extreme or midpoint responses (see Hui & Triandis, 1989; Stening & Everett, 1984; Zax & Takahashi, 1967). However, this possibility was rejected given the absence of a similar response set/bias on Triandis et al.'s (1990) idiocentric/allocentric scale. Another explanation might be in terms of each countries' relative standing on power distance (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance suggests that individualists (collectivists) might perceive a greater (lower) similarity between themselves and comparison others given their emphasis on egalitarian values (hierarchy). A related explanation might be in terms of a greater emphasis on role differentiation in collectivistic cultures relative to individualistic cultures (e.g., Trafimow et al., 1991). However, these explanations were not supported by the data. Specifically, if similarity ratings made by collectivistic participants were based either on perceptions of status asymmetry or on role differentiation, one would expect the highest similarity judgements between siblings

(brother and sister) and the self, moderate similarity judgements between mom and the self, and the lowest similarity judgements between dad and the self. However, this was not found.

Recent research by Niedenthal and Beike (1997) suggests a plausible explanation in terms of the presence or absence of mental links between a self-concept and other-person concepts. They suggest that some self-concepts derive their meaning via cognitive links to other-person concepts, whereas other self-concepts are characterized as cognitively isolated. Specifically, Niedenthal and Beike contrast "interrelated" self-concepts, defined in terms of mental links to other-person concepts, and "isolated" self-concepts, defined as concepts with their own intrinsic meaning (i.e., with no reference to other-person concepts) in terms of the presence or absence of cognitive connections between one's self-concept and other-person concepts. They reasoned that when one's self-concept is interrelated with an other-person concept, the former will be defined in terms of *differences* from the latter using less abstraction (i.e., more specific features) than when a self-concept is isolated from an other-person concept. To illustrate, a "woman might define herself as *athletic*, and the features of this concept might be *strong*, *fast*, and *coordinated*. However, if her self-definition in this domain were interrelated with her concept of her brother, features of this concept might be *fast tennis player*, in order to distinguish her athletic ability from that of her brother, the *fast swimmer*" (Niedenthal & Beike, 1997, p. 116). Indeed, Niedenthal and Beike, using instructions that led participants to temporarily represent the self and a sibling as either interrelated or isolated, demonstrated that increases in perceived relatedness between the self and a sibling were associated with tendencies to represent self-concepts in a more differentiated (i.e., less similar) manner using subordinate level (i.e., more specific) traits.

It is reasonable to expect that people from collectivistic cultures would display more accessible collective, "interrelated" self-concepts (Trafimow et al., 1991), and thus would focus on distinguishing attributes when comparing the self to others. Those from individualistic cultures, whose accessible "private" self is more likely to be "isolated," would see others in terms of the same, more abstract and inclusive, concepts when comparing the self to others. Support for this perspective can be seen in those ratings for which one would expect higher similarity judgements by collectivists relative to individualists, namely the in-group. Contrary to intuition and in support of Niedenthal and Beike's (1997) position, participants from the individualistic culture perceived the in-group as significantly more similar to themselves relative to those from collectivistic cultures, who did not significantly differ. In short, the individualist may perceive a greater proportion of overlapping features than does the collectivist when asked to compare the self to others, and thus perceive greater similarity between the self and in-group others. In contrast, when the collectivist considers the self, it is differentiated from other, interrelated person

concepts and thus the collectivist perceives less similarity. This logic is consistent with the idea of "broad, but shallow" in-groups in individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1994).

The absence of similar cultural differences with regard to out-group similarity ratings was somewhat surprising. However, results might have depended on how the in-group and out-group were defined. Based on a reviewer's suggestion, the in-group in the current study was constructed to include "typical person of your country" and "typical person of your race." While an examination of means suggested that these comparison others did in fact belong in the in-group, previous research has not included them as in-group members (e.g., Triandis, 1994). Indeed, their inclusion as *out-group*, rather than in-group, members demonstrated results consistent with those found with in-group similarity ratings. Specifically, post hoc tests ($p < .05$) demonstrated that American participants (mean = 4.10) perceived the out-group as significantly more similar to themselves relative to the Taiwanese (mean = 4.60) and, especially, the Japanese participants (mean = 4.90).

Although these differences do not suggest that one definition is superior to the other, they do suggest that researchers need to approach the in-group/out-group as a hypothetical construct whose definition depends on each sample's cultural background. In other words, in-group/out-group definitions may be broad or narrow depending on which cultures are included in a particular study. Future research should include broader samples of cultures so that a variety of in-group/out-group definitions could be tested.

Our data support a general and interesting cultural difference based on cognitive links between self- and other-representations that may, in fact, be interpreted as adding to the utility of the Individualism/Collectivism distinction. Also they may be reasonably interpreted as consistent with an important structural theory of the self based on isolated and interrelated self-concepts. We may not have obtained the answers we expected, but we seem to have a start on some interesting new questions.

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