Intergroup comparison versus intragroup relationships: 
A cross-cultural examination of Social Identity Theory in North American and East Asian 
cultural contexts 

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A review of the theoretical and empirical literature suggests that social identity theory 
does not account well for collectivistic behaviors among East Asians. I hypothesize that 
the central theme of East Asian group behavior is cooperation within a group; this is 
cognitively represented as an interpersonal network among the members, with the 
emphasis on the relational self. Results of a survey of 122 Japanese and 126 American 
respondents largely supported this hypothesis. For Americans, ingroup loyalty and identity 
with their small and large ingroups were positively correlated with perceived ingroup 
homogeneity and ingroup status. No such correlation was found for Japanese 
respondents, however. Instead, Japanese ingroup loyalty and identity were predicted by 
respondents’ knowledge of the relational structure within the group, knowledge of the 
individual differences between members of the group, and feelings of personal 
connectedness with ingroup members. I discuss the meaningfulness of comparing group 
processes in different cultures.