

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.