

The Influence of Identity Fusion on Patriotic Consumption

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Korea and the U.S.

Empirical Study

Authors

Jin Young Yoo, Ph.D*

(The first author)

Assistant Professor of Marketing
Department of Global Business Track
College of Business and Economics
Gachon University, Global Campus
Phone: 031-750-5177
Email: jinnieyoo@gachon.ac.kr

William B. Swann, Ph.D

Professor

Department of Psychology
College of Liberal Arts
University of Texas at Austin
Phone: +1 512-471-3859
Email: swann@utexas.edu

Kyung Ok Kim, Ph.D.

Department of Advertising
College of Communication
University of Texas at Austin
Phone: +1 512-466-3216
Email: kacykim@utexas.edu

The Influence of Identity Fusion on Patriotic Consumption

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Korea and the U.S.

ABSTRACT

This study proposes that there is a significant relationship between identity fusion with a country and patriotic consumption behaviors, and individuals' cultural backgrounds play an important role in this relationship. To test this idea, this study focuses on fused persons and explored how these persons reacted to advertising that contained patriotic messages. Further, to uncover possible cross-cultural differences in individuals responding to those patriotic ad messages depending on their fusion level, this study explores and compares people from two different cultural contexts; Korea vs. the United States. The results demonstrated that fused persons in both countries increased their willingness to be patriotic consumers by showing a high consumer ethnocentric tendency and favorable responses to patriotic advertising while such influences of identity fusion on patriotic consumption behaviors are stronger in the collectivistic country (i.e., Korea) than in the individualistic country (i.e., the U.S.). Additionally, the findings of study suggest that fusion can be a more influential factor to predict consumers' patriotic consumption behaviors than identification.

Key words: Patriotic Advertising, Social identity, Group Identification, Cross-cultural Advertising, Social Psychology, Identify Fusion

INTRODUCTION

A fundamental premise that bridges marketing communication and psychology is that consumers are often attracted to products and brands that are linked to their social identity (Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002). The logic of the social identity theory implies that an individual who more strongly identifies with an in-group will display a stronger bias in judgments of that group, because such judgments have more impact on the self if the in-group identity is more important (Tajfel, 1982). Several studies examined this reasoning within the context of nations and found that individual differences in the level of national identification were related to nationalistic bias in ratings of the own country versus foreign countries (Feather, 1981; Doosje et al., 1998). Findings from this line of research suggest that consumers' national identification leads to ethnocentric or patriotic consumption behaviors, revealing a positive bias in ratings of domestic (i.e., in-group) products. Further, individual differences in the strength of national identification lead to differences in the strength of this bias, and to differences in the evaluation of domestic vs. foreign products.

However, one of the fundamental assumptions of the social identity theory is that the process of identifying with the group reduces the capacity of people to think of themselves as individual actors with personal agendas. Instead, as identification increases, the individual becomes depersonalized and the personal self is less apt to guide behavior (Swann et al., 2010). Departing from this dominant social identity model, Swann et al. (2009) recently introduced the concept of *Identity Fusion*. Unlike social identity theory, it assumes that fused persons retain a salient personal self and associated feelings of personal agency. According to Swann et al. (2011), developing a feeling of oneness with the group does not cause fused persons to lose sight of their personal selves or subjugate the personal self to the group. Instead, the fusion process adds group-related action as a potential mode of personal self-expression.

Employing the concept of identity fusion, this study explores how identity fusion with one's own country influences consumers' patriotic consumption behaviors. Specifically, this study predicts that there would be a positive relationship between the level of identity fusion with country and responses to patriotic messages in advertising. Because fused persons are not merely identified with the group but are absolutely committed to it, among such individuals, increasing agency may amplify consumers' patriotic attitude and behavior beyond the effects of identification. In addition, the present research is also concerned with the influence of culture on identity fusion. Since the principal distinction between individualist and collectivist values is in the level of in-group loyalty and identity, the cultural orientation could be an influential factor for the identity fusion. Yet the extent to which the concept of identity fusion is applicable in different cultural contexts, including Eastern societies, has not been widely explored. In this respect, this study tries to uncover

how individuals' different cultural backgrounds affect identity fusion and patriotic consumption behavior by exploring and comparing two different cultural contexts – South Korea and the U.S.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship of Fusion to Identification

The association of a social identity with the self has generally been referred to as “strength of identification,” and it has been found to influence consumer attention to social identity-related stimuli, purchase intentions for social identity-related products, and reactions to social identity-congruent actors in advertising (Deshpandé, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Williams and Qualls, 1989). According to Brewer (2001), “social identification represents the extent to which the in-group has been incorporated into the sense of self, and at the same time, that the self is experienced as an integral part of the in-group” (p.21). Thus, individuals who strongly identify with a group are more likely to behave in a fashion consistent with that group's norms than are weak identifiers (Madrigal, 2001; Terry and Hogg, 1996). Identification is presumed to be high insofar as a group members' personal self-concept comes to agree with the characteristics expected from a prototypical group member. The greater this fit, the more the person is devoted to the group and finds that he or she is valued as a group member (Hogg and Hardie, 1991). According to some influential theorists working with the social identity theory tradition (e.g., Turner, 1985), there is a zero-sum relationship between personal and social identities: The more social identities are activated, the less personal identities are activated (Swann et al., 2009).

Although both fusion and identification theoretically involve strong alignment with a group, Swann et al. (2009) argue that identity fusion is conceptually and empirically distinct from previous forms of alignment with groups, such as group identification (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). High group identification refers to feeling strong ties to the group, and such feelings predispose individuals to engage in collective action on behalf of the group. According to social identity theory, insofar as group-related behavior is motivated by a salient “social self,” “personal self” contributes minimally to pro-group behavior. That is, the motivations for pro-social behavior depend on the relevant social identity rather than personal identity. Therefore, while individuals with high group identification are more likely to band together with other group members (Branscombe et al., 1999), they may not be willing to enact pro-group activities as individuals in isolation (Klandermans et al., 2002; Simon, and Klandermans, 2001). In contrast, the identity fusion approach assumes that fused person retains a salient personal self and associated feelings of personal agency (Swann et al., 2009), meaning that this person sees their social identity and personal identity as overlapping. When highly fused person enacts pro-group activities, his or her actions reflect both their personal and social identities, working together. That is, the personal and

social identities of highly fused person combine synergistically to motivate pro-group behavior. According to Swann et al. (2010), the porous boundaries exist between the personal and social self within the highly fused person. For this reason, activating either self activates the other, thus, promoting activities that reflect his or her commitment to the group (Swann et al., 2010).

Further, fused persons denote strong feelings of oneness with the group and reciprocal strength (Gomez et al., 2011). For these people, their goals and purposes are tied to their interpretation of the goals and purposes of the group. According to Gomez et al. (2011), rather than focusing on the group as a relatively abstract social category, fused persons perceive it as a “family” consisting of members who all share a common bond. Such familial attachment may engender a powerful sense of connectedness with other in-group members and foster the perception of reciprocal strength among the group members. The result of these perceptions of connectedness and reciprocal strength may be a powerful desire to act on behalf of the group, even if an extreme action is required (Allport, 1962).

Cultural Influence on Identity Fusion

Theorists in cross-cultural psychology have identified a number of dimensions along which the major cultures of the world might be distinguished (Hofstede, 1980). Among these differences, the one that has received most attention is the distinction between societies that emphasize collectivistic values and those that emphasize individualistic values (Triandis, 1990). Both collectivism and individualism are multidimensional constructs, but theorists largely agree that the principal distinction between individualist and collectivist values is in the level of in-group loyalty and identity (Triandis et al., 1988; Yamaguchi, 1994). Individualists are less likely to show group loyalty, and they give priority to personal goals over the goals of collectives. In contrast, collectivists either make no distinction between personal and collective goals or, if they do so, they subordinate their personal goals to collective goals (Triandis, 1989). While a person is seen as a separate entity in individualist societies, the person’s identity is defined as part of a larger collective or group in collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1980; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989; Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis, McCusker and Hui, 1990). According to Triandis (1989), “A considerable literature suggests that collectivists automatically obey in-group authorities and are willing to fight and die to maintain the integrity of the in-group, whereas they distrust and are unwilling to cooperate with members of out-groups” (p. 509).

Regarding the cross-cultural differences in the self and group relationship, previous research found that there was similarity in the distinctions between collectivist versus individualist tendencies, and the distinctions between group members who identified strongly versus weakly with their social group. In other words, it is useful to distinguish between group members who are strongly committed to the group (high identifiers) and members who value their group membership less (low identifiers). For instance, research

has shown that low identifiers take a more individualist stance toward the group and are more likely to dissociate themselves from the group when their identity is threatened (Branscombe et al., 1993; Doosje and Ellemers, 1997; Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears, 1995; Jetten et al., 2000). In contrast, high group identification is likely to be associated with a more collectivist attitude toward the group. Indeed, previous research has shown that moderately strong relationships exist between group identification and perceptions of collectivism (Triandis et al., 1985).

Similarly, Gomez et al. (2011) propose the possible cross-cultural differences in identity fusion. They argue that whereas members of East Asian collectivistic cultures tend to perceive their group memberships in personal, relational terms (a “relational orientation”), members of Western individualistic cultures tend to perceive their group memberships in categorical terms (a “collective orientation”). To be more specific, group relationship in East Asian cultures is based on members’ personal connections and relationships with other group members (i.e., relational group tie) while group relationship in Western cultures is based on members’ perception of overlap between their own characteristics and prototypical properties of the in-group (i.e., collective group tie) (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). Whereas members of relational groups tend to perceive fellow members of the group as unique and hence irreplaceable members of a larger “family” (Brewer and Gardner, 1996), members of collective groups perceive fellow members as categorically undifferentiated and interchangeable (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Gomez et al. (2011) further suggest that the measures of identity fusion emphasize the degree of the relational orientation to the group, which is linked to the collectivistic cultures. Based on the previous research above, this study hypothesizes:

H1: There will be a cross-cultural difference in the level of identity fusion with a country. Specifically, people from a collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) will exhibit a higher level of identify fusion with a country than do those from an individualistic culture (i.e., U.S.).

Identity Fusion and Patriotic Consumption: Consumer Ethnocentrism

While it is a common tenet that fused persons are markedly more committed to acting on behalf of the group compared to non-fused persons (Swann et al., 2009), there may be considerable variability in how people translate fusion to the group into their behavior. For instance, for some Americans, fusion with country may mean steadfastly defending America against criticism; for others, it may mean sacrificing their lives in wartime (Swann et al., 2010). Among the variability in people’s behaviors, this study is particularly interested in investigating how people translate fusion to the country into patriotic consumption behavior, e.g., buying American cars.

An important theoretical construct relating to the patriotic consumption is consumer ethnocentrism. Shimp and Sharma (1987) defined consumer ethnocentrism as “the beliefs held by the consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products” (p. 280). Consumer ethnocentrism includes not only economic concerns, but also the issue of morality. In other words, an individual’s own economic behavior is extended to involve his or her morality of love and concern for his or her country. For ethnocentric consumers, purchasing imported products is considered harmful to their own country’s economy and thus undesirable and unpatriotic. Highly ethnocentric consumers tend to sense a moral obligation and preference towards domestic products while they have negative thoughts about and unfavorable attitudes towards foreign products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma et al., 1995).

Consumer ethnocentrism has been empirically investigated, especially in country-of-origin research in which ethnocentrism is found to be closely related to country-based bias (Balabanis et al., 2001). There have been various socio-psychological antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism identified through previous research, which includes cultural openness, internationalism, conservatism, animosity, materialism, and so forth. Among those, patriotism has been theorized as a distinct construct and identified as a key antecedent to consumer ethnocentrism (Lee et al., 2003). Patriotism is defined as commitment – a readiness to sacrifice for the nation – which entails a people’s feelings of attachment to one’s nation (Druckman, 1994). Consumer ethnocentric tendency pertains to these patriotic sentiments of responsibility and loyalty. There has been empirical support for a positive relationship between patriotism and consumer ethnocentric tendency (Han, 1988; Sharma et al., 1995; Klein and Ettenson, 1999). For example, Han (1988) found that consumer patriotism has significant effects on consumer choice between domestic and foreign products. Specifically, patriotic consumers were more likely to buy domestic products rather than foreign products compared to consumers who were not patriotic. Similarly, Sharma et al. (1995) found a positive correlation between patriotism and consumer ethnocentric tendencies.

In addition, several studies have conducted cross-cultural comparisons that examine how culture dimensions influence consumer ethnocentrism. Sharma et al., (1995) argue that as collectivists consider the effect of their actions on the larger group or the society, people with collectivistic goals tend to reveal more intensive ethnocentric tendencies than those with individualistic goals. Focusing on the relationship with a country, in collectivistic societies, patriotism that emphasizes loyalty, commitment and attachment to the country was the most important motive for consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis et al., 2001). Granzin and Olsen (1998) suggest that, in collectivistic cultures, economic patriotism works to induce pro-social purchase of domestic products and through such acts consumers consciously enact the role of altruistic “helpers” to fellow citizens whose employment is endangered by imported products.

In this respect, this study proposes that the identity fusion with one's own country is highly related to patriotism which influences consumer's ethnocentric tendency. Since fusion is associated with feelings of oneness and reciprocal strength with another person or group and amplifies pro-group behavior, it is expected that a person highly fused with his or her own country is likely to be more patriotic and more willing to be a patriotic consumer in favor of domestic products over imported products. Further, this study proposes that an individual's cultural background (i.e., individualism vs. collectivism) influences the relationship between identity fusion and consumer ethnocentric tendency.

H2a: Identity fusion with a country will positively influence consumer ethnocentrism.

H2b: There will be a cross-cultural difference in the relationship between identity fusion and consumer ethnocentric tendency. Specifically, the positive influence of identity fusion on consumer ethnocentric tendency will be stronger among consumers in the collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) than that among consumers in the individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.).

Identity Fusion and Patriotic Consumption: Response to Patriotic Advertising

Patriotic appeals have long been used in advertising, especially when there are major national events – natural or man-made. For instance, in the aftermath of 9/11, the relationship between consumption and citizenship in the U.S. market was dramatically reinforced in the use of patriotic appeals in advertising. The high emotional impact of 9/11 prompted advertisers to use the patriotic message format in hopes of evoking positive attitudinal and behavioral responses. Ads using symbols such as the Statue of Liberty, the American flag, patriotic colors (e.g., red, white, and blue) and phrases such as “God bless America” and “United We Stand” began appearing in TV, newspapers, and magazines to drive home the perception of companies' commitment to and pride in the nation (Kinnick, 2003). In addition, the use of “Made-in-the-USA” and other similar slogans with patriotic appeals and references also significantly increased. In patriotic advertising, the use of such symbols or phrases is meant to give rise to patriotic thoughts and feelings. A strong association of the self with one's own country encourages individuals to hold a host of attitudes regarding national concepts such as the national flag or other patriotic symbols and beliefs. A consumer who possesses a strong national identity can use the evaluative content associated with what the country to facilitate product choices that will further support and reinforce the identity (e.g., purchasing a domestic automobile).

McGovern (1998) proposes that advertising metaphors transform consumption into a ritualistic means of affirming one's national identity. He found that patriotic ad, which communicated pride in America and its values using symbols such as flags or the colors red, white, and blue and words, helped consumers evoke patriotic emotions which, in turn, lead to favorable advertising evaluation. Tsai (2010) also found participants' interpretations of

patriotic commercials that used words with strong patriotic connotations (such as “freedom,” “independence” and the “American Dream”) similarly reflected the cultural meanings of consumption as an important element in the configuration of an American identity. Further, some participants were clearly moved by the patriotic story and imagery in ads such as Miller’s “America the Beautiful” and the Anheuser-Busch’s “Thank You” commercial in that, in the process of identifying with the ad message and imagery, participants embraced advertisers as “one of us.” Tsai (2010) further suggests that when people express patriotic support for domestic products, they did so out of nationwide altruism to assist their fellow citizens.

Patriotic advertising tries to appeal to the emotional involvement of people with their country and promote their in-group feelings. That is, patriotic advertising evokes a powerful sense of connectedness with the country and other people in the country. Consequently, as a positive feeling, the attitude toward the advertising and other advertising effectiveness measures, i.e., attitude toward the brand and purchase intention may be influenced positively.

Although patriotic messages have been used in advertising for a while, there has been very limited number of formal studies that measure their effectiveness. Further, the research that examines cross-cultural differences in consumers responding to patriotic advertising messages is even more scarce. In this respect, the major goal of this study is to uncover the cross-cultural difference in relationship between the level of identity fusion and consumer responses to the patriotic messages in advertising. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H3a:** Highly fused people (vs. less fused people) will show a more favorable attitude toward the ads featuring patriotic messages than toward the ads with no patriotic message.
- H3b:** Highly fused people (vs. less fused people) will show a more favorable attitude toward the brands being advertised with patriotic messages than toward those with no patriotic message.
- H3c:** Highly fused people (vs. less fused people) will be more likely to purchase the products being advertised with patriotic messages than those with no patriotic message.
- H4a:** The influence of identity fusion on attitude toward the patriotic ads will be greater among consumers from the collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) than that among consumers from the individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.) while such influences will not be significant for non-patriotic ads.
- H4b:** The influence of identity fusion on attitude toward the brands being advertised with patriotic messages will be greater among consumers from the collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) than that among consumers from the individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.) while such influences will not be significant for non-patriotic ads.

H4c: The influence of identity fusion on intent to purchase the product being advertised with patriotic messages will be greater among consumers from the collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) than that among consumers from the individualistic culture (i.e., the U.S.) while such influences will not be significant for non-patriotic ads.

METHODOLOGY

Experimental procedure

In order to examine cross-cultural differences in the relationship between identity fusion and patriotic consumption behaviors, the data was collected in both South Korea and the U.S. 206 Korean participants were selected among undergraduate students from three universities in Korea, and 313 American undergraduate students were recruited from one university in the United States.

An experimental study was performed to examine possible cross-cultural differences with different levels of identity fusion as participants responded to either advertising with patriotic messages or with no patriotic messages. The experiment was conducted online. The participants were invited to the website created for this study. In each country, participants completed the measure of Identity Fusion (Gomez et al., 2011) and an Identification Scale (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Additionally, participants were asked to complete ratings on the consumer ethnocentrism scale (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). In the following section, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions (ads). Each participant was given a set of print ads, and after participants were exposed to ads, they were asked to answer questions that measured their evaluations of each ad. Finally, they completed self-construals measures and answered several demographic questions. For Korean participants, all the measures and questionnaires were translated into Korean using the back-translation technique.

Stimuli

Each set of advertisements contained five different types of products with either patriotic messages or no patriotic message. The five product categories selected were a cell phone, beer, automobile, running shoes, and laundry detergent. The product categories were selected because (1) the consumption rate of the domestic brands of these product types is high in both countries; (2) the perceived quality of the domestic products in these categories is high in both countries; and (3) all the product categories are familiar to the participants. Therefore, no product type would be perceived as a better fit for one country than the other. Additionally, using the different types of products in a set, the involvement with the products (i.e., high/low and think/feel) can be taken into account, which may affect participants' responses toward the given advertisements.

For the advertisements with patriotic messages, national symbols for each country and phrases that are meant to evoke patriotic thoughts and feelings were used. Specifically, ad stimuli created for the U.S. participants featured the U.S. national symbol (e.g., U.S. national flag) and phrases such as “Cheers! America!,” “Pride of America,” “Run America,” and so on, while ad stimuli created for Korean participants contained the Korean national symbol (e.g., Korean national Flag) and phrases such as “Cheers! Korea!,” “Pride of Korea,” “Run Korea,” and so on.

For controls (i.e., advertisements with no patriotic message), the products being used and all other settings in the advertisements were identical with the experimental condition, with the only difference being the existence of patriotic stimuli. In addition, fictitious brand names for the products were created to avoid the influence of preexisting brand inferences.

Measures

Identity Fusion with the Country. To measure the level of identity fusion, as stated earlier, the verbal measure of identity fusion was used. The measure of identity fusion ($\alpha = .89$) developed by Gomez et al. (2011) consists of 7 items which includes “I am one with my country,” “I will do for my country more than any of the other group members would do,” “I make my country strong,” and so on. For each item, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that the statement reflected their relationship with their country on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

National Identification. To measure national identification, Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) Group Identification Scale was modified with the reference to the country ($\alpha = .86$), i.e., “Korea” or “United States”. The scale consists of 6 items, such as “When someone criticizes my country, it feels like a personal insult,” “I am very interested in what others think about my country,” and “When I talk about my country, I usually say “we” rather than “they”.” Each item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Consumer Ethnocentrism. Consumer ethnocentricity was measured using the 17-item CETSCALE ($\alpha = .94$) developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987), which includes statements such as “American people should always buy American-made products instead of imports,” “Only those products that are unavailable in the US should be imported,” and “Purchasing foreign-made products is un-American.” Each item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Advertising Evaluations. For each ad, participants completed the measures on attitude toward the advertisement (Aad), attitude toward the brand (AB), and purchase intention (PI). Aad ($\alpha = .92$) was measured by using six 7-point semantic differential scales that include bad/good, unattractive/attractive, unpleasant/pleasant, convincing/unconvincing, believable/unbelievable, and not at all interested/very interested (MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch, 1986). To assess AB ($\alpha = .94$), five 7-point semantic differential scales were used and

anchored by bad/good, unsatisfactory/satisfactory, unfavorable/favorable, dislike/like, and inferior/superior (Batra and Stephens, 1994). Lastly, PI ($\alpha = .85$) was measured by four 7-point scales, including the potential for “trying”, “buying”, “seeking out”, and how likely the respondent would patronize the advertised product (Baker and Churchill, 1977).

Self-construals. To examine the difference in self-views with others between the two cultural contexts (i.e., individualistic vs. collectivistic), Singelis’s (1994) independent ($\alpha = .80$) and interdependent self-construals ($\alpha = .79$) scale was used. The scale consists of 30 items such as “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects (independent),” and “I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in (interdependent).” Each item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

First of all, this study assumed that Korea represents a collectivistic culture, consisting of people with interdependent self-construals, and the U.S. represents an individualistic culture, consisting of people with independent self-construals. To confirm the assumption, independent t-tests were conducted. The results showed that American participants exhibited significantly stronger independent selves on the Singelis scale items compared to Korean participants (American = 73.7, Korean = 69.7, $t[519] = 3.912$, $p < .001$). In contrast, Korean participants were significantly higher on the interdependent-self measure compared to American participants (American = 71.9, Korean = 74.9, $t[519] = 3.2$, $p = .001$). This means that relatively more American participants had relatively high independent self-construals, whereas Koreans were more likely to have relatively high interdependent self-construals. This result is consistent with prior theory and supports the assumption of the present study.

Second, to determine the degree to which participants perceived the ads as patriotic in the experimental condition versus in the control condition, another independent t-test was conducted. The result showed a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on participants’ perception of the ads. That is, the participants who were exposed to the ads with patriotic cues perceived them as patriotic whereas the participants in the control group did not perceive the ads as patriotic ($M_{\text{patriotic}} = 5.0$, $M_{\text{nonpatriotic}} = 1.8$, $t[519] = 20.38$, $p < .001$). In addition, 97.7% of the participants who were exposed to the ads containing patriotic cues identified the products being advertised as domestic while 86.9% of participants who were exposed to the ad without patriotic cues did not identify the country of origin of the products.

Hypotheses Testing

Cross-cultural Difference in Identity Fusion. Three separate t-tests were conducted to determine if there are any significant cross-cultural differences on the level of identity fusion with a country and national identification. The results confirmed the cultural effect on both identity fusion with a country and national identification. Specifically, the results showed Korean participants scored significantly higher on identity fusion ($M_{\text{Korean}} = 4.41$, $M_{\text{American}} = 3.73$, $t[519] = 6.74$, $p < .001$) than American participants. Also, Korean participants scored significantly higher on national identification than American participants ($M_{\text{Korean}} = 5.0$, $M_{\text{American}} = 4.69$, $t[519] = 2.95$, $p < .01$). In other words, the study found that people from a collectivistic culture (i.e., Korea) exhibited a higher level of identify fusion with the country and national identification than those from an individualistic culture (i.e., U.S.), thus supporting H1.

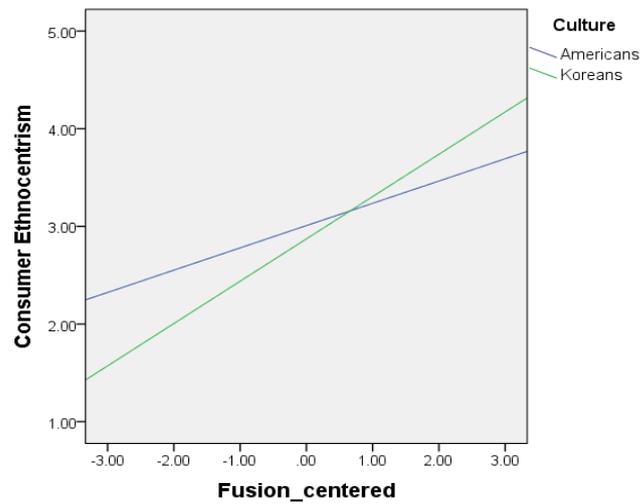
Influence of Identity Fusion on Consumer Ethnocentrism. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the level of fusion influences participants' consumer ethnocentrism tendency and to test the possible cross-cultural difference in the relationship between the fusion and consumer ethnocentrism, while controlling for identification. The predictors were fusion, identification, and all two-interactions. Cultural orientations (i.e., collectivistic vs. individualistic) was effects coded (1, -1) and, fusion and identification with a country (i.e. Korea or the U.S.) was centered. The result showed the main effect of identity fusion on consumer ethnocentrism ($B = .293$, $t[519] = 6.151$, $p < .001$), thus, supporting H2a (see Table 1); i.e., highly fused participants scored higher on consumer ethnocentrism than low scorers. More interestingly, there was a significant interaction effect between fusion and cultural orientations on consumer ethnocentrism tendency. As shown in Figure 1, the influence of fusion with the country on consumer ethnocentric tendency was stronger among Korean participants ($B = .361$, $t[519] = 6.015$, $p < .001$) than did among American participants ($B = .211$, $t[519] = 3.122$, $p = .002$), thus, supporting H2b. Identification did not significantly predict consumer ethnocentrism, while controlling for fusion ($p > .18$).

Table 1. ANOVA Results: Culture × Identity Fusion on Consumer Ethnocentrism

DV	Factor	B	β	t-value	Sig
CE	Culture	.065	.061	1.409	.159
	Fusion	.293	.331	6.151	.000*
	Culture×Fusion	.103	.112	2.659	.008*

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$, CE = Consumer Ethnocentrism, a. R^2 (Pictorial) = .131 (Adjusted = .124)

Figure 1. Culture × Identity Fusion on Consumer Ethnocentrism



Influence of Identity Fusion on Ad Responses. Lastly, to determine if fusion predicted the outcome measures – attitude toward the ad (Aad), attitude toward the brand (AB), and purchase intention (PI) – while controlling for identification, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. The predictors were fusion, identification, all two-interactions, and triple interactions. Both cultural orientations (i.e., collectivistic vs. individualistic) and types of ad messages (patriotic vs. non-patriotic) were effects coded (1, -1) and, fusion and identification with the country (i.e. Korea or the U.S.) was centered. The results indicated significant three-way interactions among fusion, advertising messages (patriotic vs. non-patriotic), and cultural orientations (Korea vs. U.S.) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Culture × Identity Fusion × Ad Message on Aad Responses

DV	Factor	B	β	t-value	Sig
Aad	Fusion×Culture	.122	.148	3.128	.002*
	Fusion×Ad Message	.271	.339	7.049	.000*
	C×F×A	.123	.104	3.140	.002*
AB	Fusion×Culture	.101	.118	2.457	.014*
	Fusion×Ad Message	.303	.367	7.492	.000*
	C×F×A	.135	.158	3.262	.001*
PI	Fusion×Culture	.111	.137	2.840	.005*
	Fusion×Ad Message	.278	.356	7.253	.000*
	C×F×A	.117	.145	2.995	.003*

* Indicates significance at $p < .05$, a. R^2 (Aad) = .352 (Adjusted R Squared = .342), b. R^2 (AB) = .327 (Adjusted R Squared = .316), c. R^2 (PI) = .325 (Adjusted R Squared = .315)

For Aad responses, a significant two-way interaction between fusion and message types (patriotic vs. non-patriotic) was emerged ($B = .271$, $t[519] = 7.049$, $p < .001$), thus

supporting H3a (see Figure 2-1). Following the procedures recommended by Aiken and West (1991; see also West et al., 1996), this interaction was decomposed by creating a coding system. The analysis showed that the fusion effect on Aad was strong when participants were exposed to patriotic ad messages ($B = .555$, $t[519] = 15.886$, $p < .001$), meaning that highly fused participants were likely to be more favorable to patriotic ads. In contrast, such effect was not found when ads contained no patriotic messages ($B = -.011$, $t[519] = -.217$, $p > .828$). Furthermore, the analysis also revealed a significant cross-cultural difference in the relationship between identity fusion and attitude toward the ads by the ad message, indicating a three-way interaction ($B = .123$, $t[519] = 3.140$, $p = .002$), thus supporting H4a. To be more specific, as shown in Figure 2-2, follow-up analyses indicated that the tendency for identity fusion to increase favorable attitude toward patriotic advertising was significant among American participants ($B = .449$, $t[519] = 8.564$, $p < .001$), but much stronger among Korean participants, ($B = .823$, $t[519] = 16.096$, $p < .001$). While controlling for fusion, no significant interactions between identification and attitude toward patriotic advertising and cultural influence on this relationship was found ($p > .21$), indicating that identity fusion was a better predictor of consumers' attitude toward patriotic ads than identification.

Figure 2-1. Identity Fusion \times Ad Message on Aad

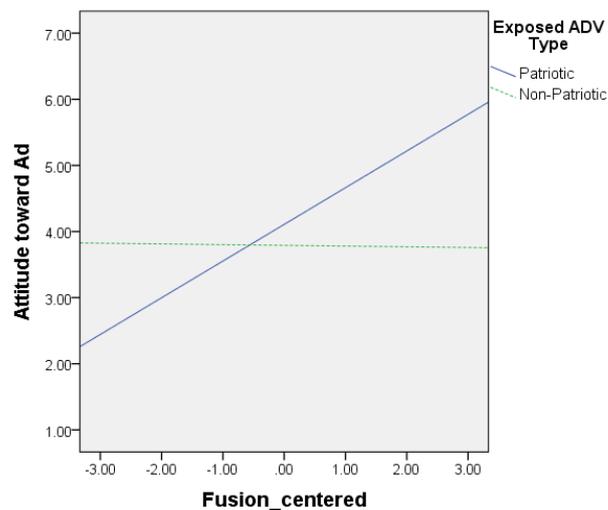
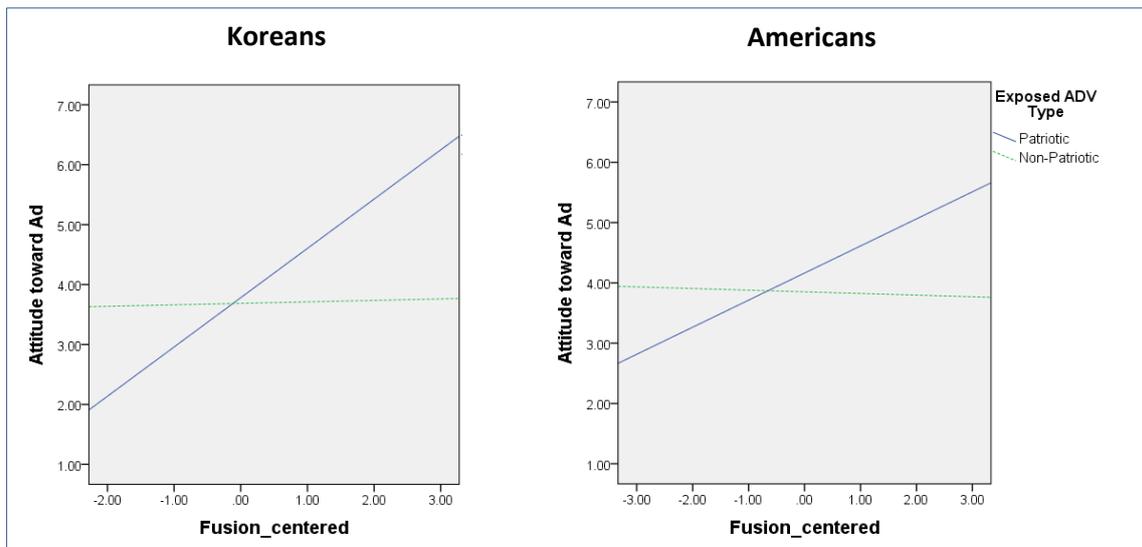


Figure 2-2. Culture × Identity Fusion × Ad Message on Aad



For AB responses, as expected, a significant two-way interaction between fusion and ad message was found ($B = .171$, $t[519] = 4.132$, $p < .001$), thus, supporting H3b (see Figure 3-1). Specifically, the more the participants were fused with their own country, the more they are favorable toward the brand paired with patriotic messages ($B = .555$, $t[519] = 15.811$, $p < .001$), while such an effect was not emerged when they were exposed to non-patriotic ads ($B = -.050$, $t[519] = -.919$, $p > .359$). More importantly, a significant three-way interaction of culture by fusion by ad message was found, indicating there was a significant cross-cultural difference in the relationship between identity fusion and attitude toward the brands by the ad message, thus supporting H4b ($B = .135$, $t[519] = 3.262$, $p = .001$). As shown in Figure 3-2, the fusion effect in increasing participants' favorable attitude toward the brand paired with patriotic messages was much stronger among Koreans ($B = .802$, $t[519] = 15.525$, $p < .001$) than among Americans ($B = .456$, $t[519] = 8.554$, $p < .001$). As did for Aad responses, no significant influence of identification on AB was found ($p > .38$), while controlling for fusion.

Finally, an index of purchase intention was analyzed. As expected, there was a significant two-way interaction between fusion and ad type ($B = .278$, $t[519] = 7.253$, $p < .001$); that is, the more the participants were fused, the more they were likely to buy the products featured with patriotic messages ($B = .512$, $t[519] = 14.674$, $p < .001$), while no such effect was found when the products were featured with no patriotic messages ($B = -.047$, $t[519] = -.936$, $p > .350$). Thus, H3c was also supported (see Figure 4-1). Further, there was a significant cross-cultural difference in the relationship between identity fusion and purchase intention by the ad message ($B = .117$, $t[519] = 2.995$, $p = .003$), thus supporting H4c (see Figure 4-2). Specifically, the tendency for identity fusion to increase participants' intention to purchase the products featured with patriotic messages was significant among

Americans ($B = .378$, $t[519] = 7.754$, $p < .001$), but much stronger among Koreans, ($B = .786$, $t[519] = 13.876$, $p < .001$). Again, no interactions between identification and ad messages (patriotic vs. non-patriotic) on participants' purchase intention was found ($p > .43$), while controlling for identity fusion.

Figure 3-1. Identity Fusion × Ad Message on AB

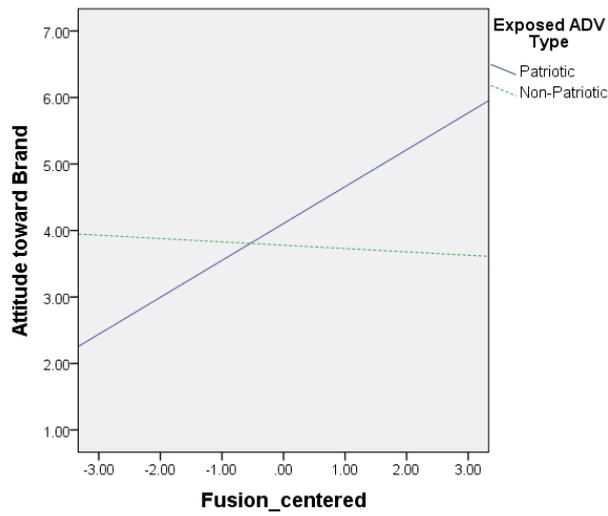


Figure 2-2. Culture × Identity Fusion × Ad Message on AB

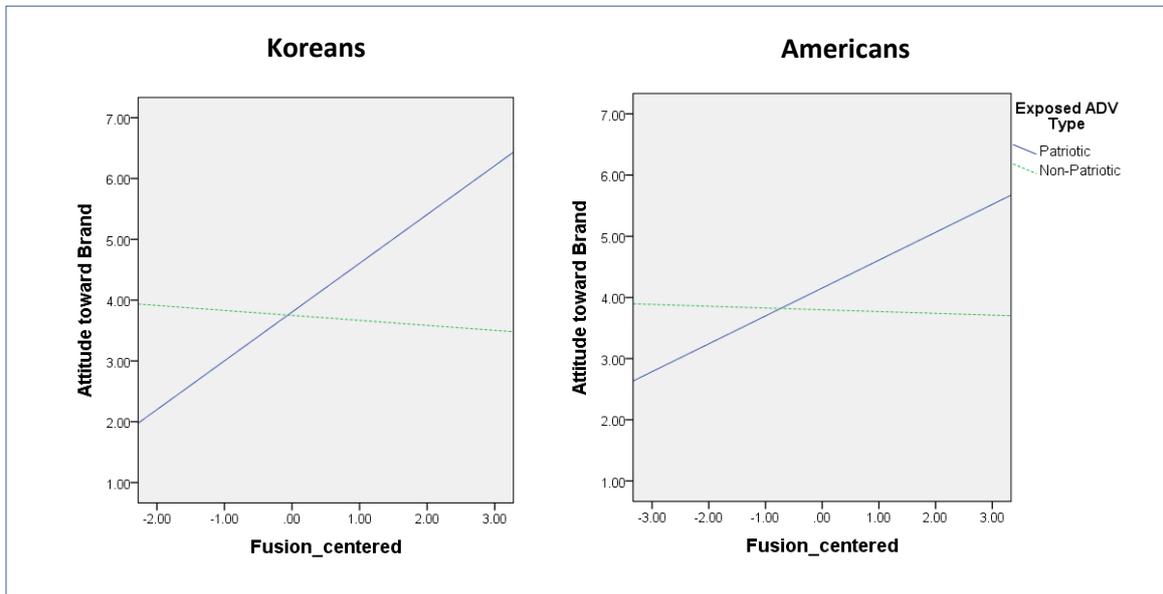


Figure 4-1. Identity Fusion × Ad Message on PI

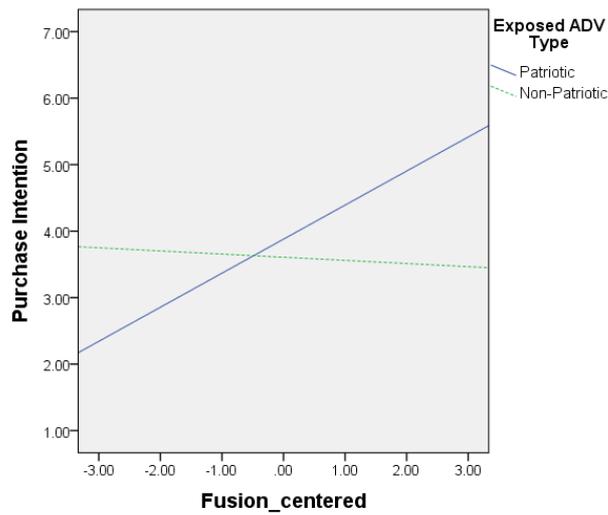
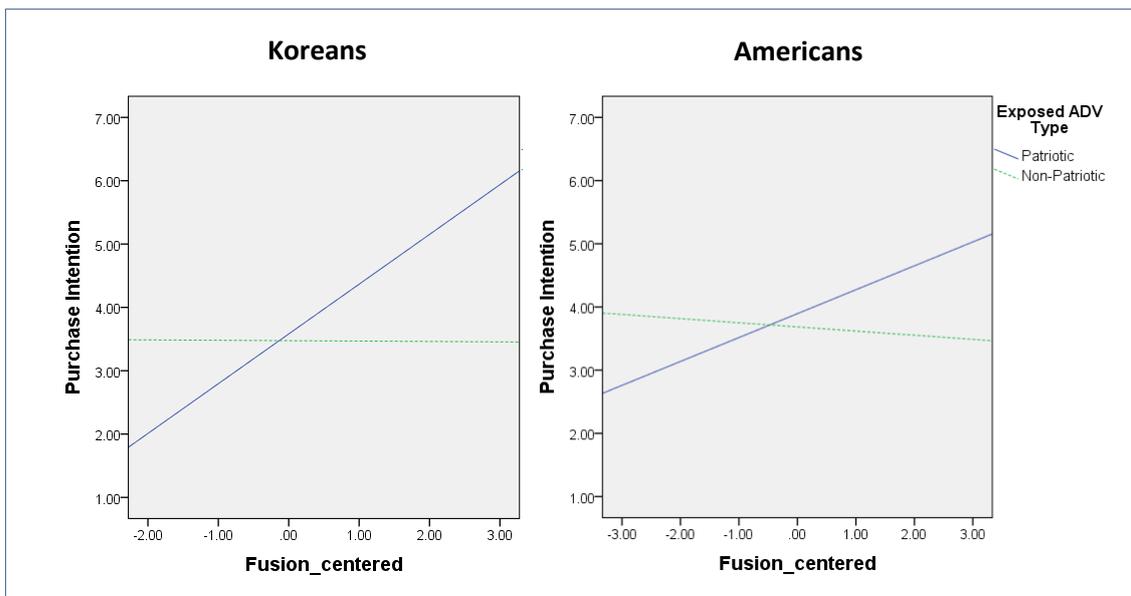


Figure 4-2. Culture × Identity Fusion × Ad Message on PI



DISCUSSION

This study proposed that there might be a significant relationship between identity fusion with a country and patriotic consumption behaviors, and individuals' cultural backgrounds would play an important role in this relationship. To test this idea, this study focused on fused persons and explored how these persons reacted to advertising that contained patriotic messages (e.g., national symbols or patriotic phrases). Further, to uncover possible cross-cultural differences in individuals responding to those patriotic ad messages depending on their fusion level, this study explored and compared people from

two different cultural contexts; Korea vs. the United States. The results demonstrated that fused persons in both countries increased their willingness to be patriotic consumers by showing a high consumer ethnocentric tendency and favorable responses to patriotic advertising while such influences of identity fusion on patriotic consumption behavior was stronger in the collectivistic country (i.e., Korea) than in the individualistic country (i.e., the U.S.).

Social identity, or strength of group identification, has been found to influence a variety of consumer attitudes and behaviors including spokesperson response, advertising response, media usage, brand loyalty/organizational patronage, and information processing tendencies. However, in this study, the measure of identification failed to predict participants' responses to patriotic ads after fusion was taken into account. The fact that fusion but not identification induced favorable responses to the patriotic messages supports Swann et al. (2009)'s argument that identity fusion is not merely a variant of identification but is instead a unique and distinct construct that emphasizes synergistic self – other influence processes. Indeed, researchers have recently provided a wealth of evidence that identity fusion consistently out-predicts identification in predicting the tendency for people to protect fellow group members and to endorse extreme pro-group behavior (Swann et al. 2009; Swann, Gomez, Dovidio, et al., 2010; Swann, Gomez, Huici, et al., 2010; Gomez, Brooks, Buhrmester et al. 2011). However, the impact of identity fusion on consumer behaviors is still largely unexplored. This study suggests further possibility of identity fusion as an important variable to explain group-related consumption behaviors. That is, activating the personal selves and/or social selves synergistically, fused individuals would autonomously engage in proactive consumption behaviors on behalf of the group.

This study, first of all, tested whether there is a cross-cultural difference in individuals' level of identity fusion. While there has been some evidence that strong relationships exist between group identification and cultural orientations (individualism vs. collectivism), the cross-cultural difference in identity fusion has not been widely tested yet. The findings of this study indicated that there is a significant cross-cultural difference in the level of identity fusion with a country and national identification. Specifically, Koreans were significantly higher on their fusion level compared to Americans. This result implies that people from collectivistic cultures tend to be relatively more fused with their groups, showing more willingness to work for the group, giving priority to group goals, conforming to group standards and norms and being attentive to the needs of other group members, than people from individualistic cultures.

To determine if identity fusion with a country influences patriotic consumption behaviors, this study examined how fusion related to individuals' consumer ethnocentric tendency. The result showed highly fused persons scored higher on consumer ethnocentrism than did less fused persons, suggesting that identity fusion can possibly be one of the key antecedents to consumer ethnocentrism. Fused people might be inclined to ask “what should

I do as a consumer for my country?" thus, exhibiting more positive attitudes for domestic products, compared to imported products in accordance with their patriotism and sense of duty to country (Hooley, Shipley, and Kreiger 1987). In addition, the study also found a significant cross-cultural difference in the relationship between identity fusion and consumer ethnocentrism. That is, the results not only showed that Koreans' consumer ethnocentric tendency was higher than American's, but also showed that the influence of fusion on consumers' ethnocentric tendency was stronger among Korean participants than did among American participants.

Finally, this study posited that persons who are highly fused with their country would actually react more favorably to the ads featuring patriotic messages than less fused persons. Consistent with the expectation, as fusion level rises, participants' advertising responses to patriotic ads became increasingly favorable. This implies that patriotic appeals in advertising messages can be helpful to elicit positive evaluations of advertising and the brand (product) being advertised from highly fused consumers while those messages may relatively less effective for those who are low in fusion. As expected, a significant cross-cultural difference was also found in the relationship between identity fusion and the responses to patriotic vs. non-patriotic ad messages. Although both highly fused Koreans and Americans were favorable to patriotic advertising, highly fused persons in Korea scored significantly higher on patriotic advertising for all three dependent measures than did highly fused Americans. This result implies that while patriotic messages in ads can be effective for fused people fostering patriotic consumption behaviors in both cultures, such messages might be more influential to fused people from collectivistic cultures than to those from individualistic cultures.

Together, this study highlights the influential role of a highly agentic, proactive personal self in group-related consumption behaviors, finding identity fusion to be a driving factor contributing to triggering their patriotic consumption behaviors. Highly fused individuals would frame the purchase of domestic products as altruistic helping behavior and base their economic decisions on patriotic concern for fellow citizens. Further, patriotic advertising appeals may induce the fused persons to elicit a higher level of collectivistic consciousness and stimulate their internalized sense of patriotic responsibility to aid worthy in-group members.

While this study contributes to understanding consumers' patriotic and ethnocentric consumption behaviors with a new approach employing the concept of identity fusion developed by Swann et al. (2009), it is important to acknowledge several methodological and sampling limitations of the study. First, the participants of this study were drawn from convenience samples, selected from several universities in Korea and the U.S. To generalize the result, a much larger country-wide random sampling is required. Further, this study assumed that Korea represents a collectivistic culture and the U.S. represents an individualistic culture. Although the U.S. and Korea have been treated respectively as

prototypic representatives of individualistic and collectivist cultures, to confirm the cross-cultural difference in identity fusion and subsequent consumption behaviors, more empirical investigations are needed considering other individualistic and collectivistic countries. Second, while this study only used national symbols such as national flags and simple phrases as patriotic cues, the potential exists for other ad cues such as a model's ethnicity to affect viewer's attitude toward the ads or products. In future research, different types of cues such as models, artifacts, and other cultural symbols in ad messages may be considered. Third, this study might overlook other significant variables, such as ethnicities, geographic areas, gender, age, the level of education, and so on, which may influence identity fusion and patriotic consumption behaviors. It would be beneficial to consider either including those variables as a factor or controlling for the effects of them in future research.

REFERENCES

- Aiken, L. S., and West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Allport, F. H. (1962). A structural-conceptual conception of behavior: Individual and collective: I. Structural theory and the master problem of social psychology. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 64, 3–30.
- Baker, M.J. and Churchill, G.A. (1977). The Impact of Physically Attractive Models on Advertising Evaluations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14 (November), 538-555.
- Balabanis, G., Diamantopoulos, A., Mueller, R. D., Melewar, T.C. (2001). The impact of nationalism, patriotism and internationalism on consumer ethnocentric tendencies. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 32, 157-175.
- Batra, R. and Stephens, D. (1994). Attitudinal Effects of Ad-Evoked Moods And Emotions: The Moderating Role of Motivation. *Psychology and Marketing*, 11 (3), 199-215.
- Belk, W., Mayer, R., and Bahn, K. (1982). The eye of the beholder: individual differences in perceptions of consumption symbolism, In Mitchell, A. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, 9, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 523-530.
- Branscombe, N. R., Ellemers, N., Spears, R., and Doosje, B. (1999). The context and content of social identity threat, In Ellemers, N., Spears, R. and Doosje, B. (Eds.), *Social identity: Context, commitment, content*, Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Branscombe, N.R., Wann, D. L., Noel, J.G., Coleman, J. (1993). In-group or out-group extremity: Importance of the threatened social identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 381–388.
- Brewer, M. B., and Gardner, W. L. (1996). Who is this “we”? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 83–93.
- Deshpandé, R., Hoyer, W. D. and Donthu, N. (1986). The intensity of ethnic affiliation: A study of the sociology of Hispanic consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (2), 214-220.
- Doosje, B., Ellemers, N. (1997). Stereotyping under threat: The role of group identification, In Spears, R., Oakes, P.J., Ellemers, N., Haslam, S.A. (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, Blackwell: Oxford, 257–272.
- Doosje, B., Ellemers, N., Spears, R. (1995). Perceived intragroup variability as a function of group status and identification. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31, 410–436.
- Druckman, D. (1994). Nationalism, patriotism, and group loyalty: A social psychological perspective. *International Studies Quarterly*, 38(51), 43-68.
- Feather, N.T. (1981). National sentiment in a newly independent nation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40(8), 1017–1028.
- Feather, N. T. (1994). Values, National Identification and Favouritism Towards the In-group. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 33:467-76.

- Forehand, M. R. and Deshpandé, R. (2001). What we see makes us who we are: Priming ethnic self-awareness and advertising response. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38 (3), 336-348.
- Forehand, M. R., Deshpandé, R., and Reed, A (2002). Identity salience and the influence of differential activation of the social self-schema on advertising response. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(6) 1086-1099.
- Gomez, A., Brooks, M. L., Buhrmester, M. D. Vazquez, A., Jetten, J. and Swann, W. B. (2011). On the Nature of Identity Fusion: Insights Into the Construct and a New Measure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(5), 918–933.
- Good, L.K., Huddleston, P. (1995). Ethnocentrism of Polish and Russian consumers: Are feelings and intentions related? *International Marketing Review*, 12, 35-48.
- Granzin, K.L., Olsen, J.E. (1998). Americans' choice of domestic over foreign products: A matter of helping behavior? *Journal of Business Research*, 43, 39-54.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences*. Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.
- Hogg, M. A. (2003). Social Identity Theory. In Leary, M.R. and Tangney, J.P. (Eds.), *Handbook of Self and Identity*, New York: Guilford Press, 462-479.
- Hogg, M. A. and Hardie, E. A. (1991). Social attraction, personal attraction and self-categorization: A field study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 175–180.
- Jetten, J., Postmes, T. and McAuliffe, B. J.(2002). We're all individuals': Group norms of individualism and collectivism, levels of identification and identity threat. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32, 189-207.
- Jetten, J., Spears, R., Hogg, M. A., Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). Discrimination constrained and justified: The variable effects of group variability and in-group identification. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 36, 329–356.
- Klandermans, B., Sabucedo, J.M., Rodriguez, M., and de Weerd, M. (2002). Identity processes in collective action participation: Farmers' identity and farmers' protest in the Netherlands and Spain. *Political Psychology*, 23, 235–251.
- Lee, S.J., Lee, W.N. and Hong, J.Y. (2003). Communicating with American consumers in the post 9/11 climate: An empirical investigation of consumer ethnocentrism in the United States. *International Journal of Advertising*, 22, 487-510.
- MacKenzie, R. J., Lutz, S. B. and Belch, G. E. (1986). The Role of Attitude toward The Ad As Mediator of Advertising Effectiveness: A Test of Competing Explanations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23, 130-143.
- Madrigal, R. (2001). Social identity effects in belief attitude intentions hierarchy: Implications for corporate sponsorship. *Psychology and Marketing*, 18 (2), 145-165.
- Mael, F. A., and Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 103–123.
- Markus, H. R. and Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253.

- McGovern, C. (1998). Consumption and citizenship in the United States, 1900-1940. In S. Strasser et al. (Eds.), *Getting and spending: European and American consumer societies in the twentieth century*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, pp. 37-58.
- Sharma, S., Shimp, T. A. and Shin, J. (1995). Consumer Ethnocentrism: A Test of Antecedents and Moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(1), 26-37.
- Shimp, T. A. and Sharma, S. (1987) Consumer ethnocentrism: Construction and validation of the CETSCALE. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24(3), 280-289.
- Simon, B., and Kampmeir (2001). Revisiting the individual self: Toward a social psychological theory of the individual and the collective self. In Sedikides, C. and Brewer, M.B. (Eds.), *Individual self, relational self, collective self*, Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Singelis, T.M. (1994). The Measurement of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 580-591.
- Swann, W. B., Gomez, A., Seyle, D. C., Huici, C., and Morales, J. F. (2009). Identity Fusion: The Interplay of Personal and Social Identities in Extreme Group Behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 995–1011.
- Swann, W. B., Gómez, A., Dovidio, J. F., Hart, S. and Jetten, J. (2010). Dying and killing for one's group: Identity fusion moderates responses to intergroup versions of the trolley problem. *Psychological Science*, 21(8) 1176–1183.
- Swann, W. B., Gomez, A., Huici, C., Morales, J. F. and Hixon, J. G. (2010). Identity Fusion and Self-Sacrifice: Arousal as a Catalyst of Pro-Group Fighting, Dying, and Helping Behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(5), 824–841.
- Tajfel, H. ed. (1982). *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In Austin, W.G. and Worchel, S. (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole, 33-47.
- Tajfel H, Turner JC. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In Worchel, S. and Austin, W.G. (Eds), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Nelson Hall: Chicago, IL; 7–24.
- Terry, D. J. and Hogg, M. A. (1996). Group norms and the attitude behavior relationship: A role for group identification. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 776-793.
- Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 506–520.
- Triandis, H., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., and Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 323–338.
- Triandis, H. C., McCusker, C., Hui, C. H. (1990). Multimethod probes of individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 1006–1020.

- Tsai, W.S. (2010). Patriotic advertising and the creation of the citizen-consumer. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 2(3), 076-084.
- Turner, J. C. (1985). Social categorization and the self-concept: A social cognitive theory of group behavior. In Lawler, E.J. (Eds.), *Advances in group processes: Theory and research*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- West, S. G., Aiken, L. S., and Krull, J. L. (1996). Experimental personality designs: Analyzing categorical by continuous variable interactions. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 1–48.
- Williams, J. D. and Qualls, W. J. (1989). Middle-Class black consumers and intensity of ethnic identification. *Psychology and Marketing*, 6 (4), 263-286.
- Yamaguchi, S. (1994). Collectivism among the Japanese: A perspective from the self. In Kim, U., Triandis, H.C., Kagitcibasi, C., Choi, S., and Yoon, G. (Eds.), *Individualism and Collectivism: Theory, method, and applications*, Sage: London; 175–188.

APPENDIX

Examples of Ad Stimuli (Patriotic ads for US sample)

