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2004

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### ScholarWorks Citation

Arrow, H., & Sundberg, N. D. (2004). International identity: Definitions, development, and some implications for global conflict and peace. In B. N. Setiadi, A. Supratiknya, W. J. Lonner, & Y. H. Poortinga (Eds.), *Ongoing themes in psychology and culture: Proceedings from the 16th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. [https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp\\_papers/272](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/272)

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## INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY: DEFINITIONS, DEVELOPMENT, AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL CONFLICT AND PEACE

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What is international identity? Our conception of international identity – those aspects of a person's sense of self that transcend national boundaries – relates to three truths about people articulated by Kluckhohn and Murray (1953, p. 35): Every person is in certain respects like *all* others, like *some* others and like *no* other. Global-human identity arises from our recognition that we are like all other people. Social identities are based on our recognition that for many aspects of self we are like some people and unlike others. International ties in individual networks, which connect people to other people and places across the world, are unique to each person: each of us has a different set of acquaintances, friends, colleagues, family, and idiosyncratic connections to countries and places across the world.

Global identity is not a new idea, although few psychologists have studied it. Some scholars have discussed it using such terms as "world-mindedness" (Sampson & Smith, 1957) and "global-human identity" (Der-Karabetian & Balian, 1992). Its defining feature is identification with all peoples of the world, transcending national boundaries. Some typical items to measure global identity, from the global-human identity scale of Der-Karabetian and Rosen (1990) are "I'd rather be a citizen of the world than of any one country" and "I feel that people around the world are more similar than different." Historical figures who have expressed global identity in their speeches or writings include Socrates and Thomas Paine:

[I am] not an Athenian, nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world.

Attributed to Socrates (469-399 BC) by Plutarch, *Of Banishment*

My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809), *Rights of Man*

A second form of identity that crosses national boundaries is "social identification" with a large social group that includes people from other nationalities. Social identity and self-categorization have been popular topics of research in social psychology for the past few decades. Social identity is defined as membership in a social group that is seen as one's "in-group" (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherall, 1987), and may refer to large social categories such as female, Hispanic, lesbian, working class, or Baptist; to professions or occupations such as doctors or carpenters; to organizations such as fraternities and sororities; and to membership in other categories that have social meaning. Each person has many different social identities. Some refer to social groups located within a constrained geographic area, such as Gadjah Mada University students, but others may explicitly extend to all members of a category across national boundaries. A person with the social identity of Christian or Muslim or Buddhist, for example, may identify with others who have the same faith throughout the world.

This type of international social identity is a "cross-cutting" identity (Brewer, 1995) that cuts across the national identity of Indonesian or Lebanese or Canadian, but applies only to a subset ("some people") within each country – those who are seen as like oneself. Immigrants and their descendants may have a "hyphenated" identity, such as Japanese-Canadian, that connects them to others with Japanese heritage throughout the world, in Japan but also in the United States, Peru, and other countries. International forms of social identity may also be regional: European or Southeast Asian, for example.

The third form of international identity is the set of connections a person has to people and places in other countries. While social identity is part of the collective self, this personal set of connections is a more individualized, interpersonal aspect of international identity. It forms part of what Brewer and Gardner (1996) call the relational self, which involves specific relationships rather than the deindividuated categories of social identity. Each ego-centered network is a unique, idiosyncratic set of links that develops based on personal experience and history. Examples would be one's links to all the people and places to whom or which one feels a personal connection. Everyone who attended the 2002 meeting of IACCP, for example, now has a connection to Yogyakarta in their ego-centered network. Ego-centered networks should not be con-

fused with social networks that map out all the links among a specified set of people – for example, the links among all people attending a particular conference. An ego-centered network is the set of links a particular person has to other people, events, or places.

Figure 1 represents the different forms of international identity. The black oval indicates the focal person, a citizen of a “triangle” country. The world is a circle that includes many countries that are similar in some ways, different in others – hence the variety of shapes. Depending on what attributes a person views as important, the shapes might indicate the forms of government, the predominant religion, the main language spoken, or some other feature. Shaded areas indicate inclusion within international identity.

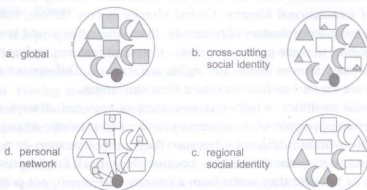


Figure 1. Forms of international identity.

When global identity is activated, the person identifies with all people in all countries (Figure 1a). This contrasts with social identities, which are more selective (1b and 1c). Suppose a person has a strong identification with the French language as a common element of global French culture. Based on this cross-cutting social identity, the person sees her- or himself as belonging to the same social category as all other French-speakers, both in Francophone countries (the fully shaded triangles) and also in countries in which some, but not all people speak French (the smaller triangles showing part of a country in Figure 1b). The image for the Japanese-Canadian example would be similar, except the focal person

would be in one of the countries with a small inset triangle, because he or she would belong to a minority within their own country.

The other variety of international social identity is a regional identity that connects the person to other near neighbors (Figure 1c). These neighbors may differ in their forms of government, language, ethnicity, or religion but are subsumed in the superordinate regional identity of "European" or "African."

The last image illustrates the ego-centered network that connects the person to other people and places that are located in various countries across the world (Figure 1d). As with global identity, the particular attributes of countries in which these people or places are located are not important.

To summarize, here are some key differences among the three aspects of international identity. Global identity is very diffuse, based on the common denominators of humanity. Everyone in the world is viewed as belonging to same group: humanity. Common features and universals such as basic human needs and rights are stressed. Differences among people are viewed as less important than similarities.

Social identities, whether cross-cutting or regional, always denote an in-group of people who are seen as similar and presume an out-group of people who are different – because they are not women or not African, because they are not Muslim, because they speak English instead of French, or because they come from a country that is rich, not poor. This aspect of international identity highlights common features when the focus is on the in-group and differences when the focus is on the out-group. Because the status of the in-group contributes to a person's own sense of self-worth, the out-group tends to be viewed less favorably than the in-group.

An individual's network is highly personal, and involves connections with specific others. Because a network involves person-to-person connections, individuating information is often available, so the person can be seen as both similar to self on some dimensions, and different from self on other dimensions. The basis of connection – family, friend, colleague, trading partner – will differ across links in the ego-centered network. The same is true for places. A place may have important associations because one lived there, because one traveled there for business or pleasure, because one's company has a branch office there, because

some ancestors lived there, because the place is featured in a favorite television program, or for many other reasons.

### **International Identity Development**

How does an international identity develop? Just as identification with a small interacting group of people can develop based on cognitive associations, interpersonal attraction, or common fate (Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999), we believe that international identity develops based on some combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral routes. The three routes are discussed in turn below, but of course each component influences and overlaps with the other two.

#### ***Cognitive Route***

Some people belong to more than one culture, because they have dual citizenship, because they are immigrants or refugees, because they married someone from a different country or because they are studying abroad. Having multiple cultural identities can create cognitive tension, especially if the two cultures or nationalities are very different or seen as incompatible. Belonging to two or more cultures can generalize to intercultural identity (Sussman, 2000), an inclusive global identity. Adopting either a global identity or a broader regional identity can resolve the tension among multiple cultural identities (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). For example, a woman with a German father and a French mother may find "European" a comfortable identity, less stressful than trying to be both German and French. Thus we predict that multiple cultural identities should promote international identity.

#### ***Affective Route***

For the cross-cutting social identity, an identity that is highly important to the self can promote empathy with all people and places that share that identity, across national boundaries. We tend to like and feel sympathy for people whom we see as similar to ourselves. For example the gender identity of a feminist may increase concern for the struggles of women everywhere; a Christian's religious identity can promote a sense of community with Christians everywhere in the world. Of course, people will not necessarily define their social categories so broadly. They

may see their social group as fellow members of a particular church, temple, or mosque in a particular locale, rather than co-religionists everywhere.

The status of valued in-groups is theorized to have implications for self-esteem (for a recent review of the literature investigating this hypothesis, see Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Based on this hypothesized relation, it seems plausible that people who belong to less favored minorities in their home country may be motivated to identify with similar others elsewhere as a way to bolster the positive distinctiveness of their group. Chinese-Americans comprise a minority ethnic group in their home country (the United States), but by identifying across national boundaries, they can take pride in belonging to the largest ethnic group in the world. African-Americans can identify with the continent of Africa and its multitudes of cultures as a strategy to counter the lower status of their ethnic group within the United States. Lesbians, gays, and bi-sexuals who are greatly outnumbered by heterosexuals can nevertheless reassure themselves that "we are everywhere."

The same line of reasoning suggests that people who live in smaller, less prominent countries in the world will be more motivated to develop a regional identity that highlights their connection with neighboring countries. The identity of North American, for example, should be endorsed more by Canadians and Mexicans than by U.S. nationals; European identity should be emotionally more appealing to the Dutch than to German or British citizens; and Asian identity should be more attractive to Singaporeans and Vietnamese than to citizens of the People's Republic of China.

### ***Behavioral Route***

Travel, migration, making friends or dating people from other countries, involvement with international organizations, learning other languages, and reading about other cultures can all contribute to international identity (Sundberg & Fry, 1997). These all create interpersonal or affective links with people and places beyond one's own nation. Global economic networks allow people to trade goods across national boundaries. People can of course be moved to act by self-categorization and affective ties, as when a feminist woman becomes involved in working on international women's rights issues and travels to an international

conference in China, or when a Muslim makes the pilgrimage to Mecca. These trips will in turn strengthen the emotional connection to the social identity. Sister city and partner church programs connect cities and churches in different countries, promoting a sense of connection among their residents and members. International phone service and electronic mail and the Internet also make communication across national boundaries very easy, facilitating the behavioral route toward developing an international personal network. Other aspects in the development of international identity include opportunities, personality, and cultural dimensions such as individualism and collectivism.

### ***Individual Differences in Opportunity and Personality***

People differ in the opportunities life affords them for developing international identity. Higher social class and greater affluence afford more opportunities for travel, and literacy opens the door to reading about other cultures and peoples. Given equivalent opportunities, we also believe that personality factors may predispose some people to develop an international identity. Of the big five personality dimensions, for example, we expect that openness to experience would be associated with more interest in people and places outside one's own country, and hence with the development of international identity. The individual level construct of allocentrism, which involves a relatively greater emphasis on social connections than on individuating personal traits (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clark, 1985) should also be associated with the formation of more transnational affective and interpersonal ties, provided that relevant opportunities are available. We speculate that there may also be individual differences in the propensity to identify with superordinate categories versus smaller groups or subgroups. This would of course have implications for international identity, making it more or less likely that global identity, a social identity, or personal international connections would be activated in a particular person and context.

### ***Individualism and Collectivism***

Although we expect allocentrism (the individual-level counterpart to collectivism) to be associated with international identity, we predict that the opposite relationship should hold for the cultural level of individualism and collectivism. According to Triandis (1994, p. 170), movement among



groups is easier in more individualist cultures than in more collectivist cultures, where it is more difficult to join groups. Hence people in individualist societies are likely to hold a wider variety of group memberships, although the contacts with people in these groups may be more superficial. According to Roccas and Brewer (2002), membership in many different groups (multiple social identities) can lead to greater social identity complexity, which can foster the development of superordinate social identities and global identity, making international identity more likely in individualist cultures.

### **International Commitment**

In a preliminary exploration of the relationship between travel and international identity, Sundberg and Fry (1997) proposed a distinction between shallow and deep travel experiences. Shallow travel involves minimal contact with local nationals, no language preparation, lodging in international chain hotels that serve familiar foods, and visits to famous sites. Deep travel involves seeking out local people, food, customs, and less well-known places to visit, plus language preparation and exposure to local media. Sundberg and Fry also apply the metaphor of shallow versus deep to international identity. Internationalism can be a shallow veneer of sophistication that does not engage important social identities or emerge from close interpersonal connections. It can be a core aspect of self. Or it can lie somewhere between these extremes. The hypothesized greater propensity of people from individualist cultures to develop an international identity, and the greater opportunity of those at higher socioeconomic levels to travel internationally, may also be linked to a more shallow manifestation of this identity.

In their review of literature on the self and social identity, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (2002) note that the content of social identities and the strength of association with a particular identity are often confused. Their strategy for keeping the two distinct is to use the term "social identity" to refer to the content of identity and the term "commitment" to refer to the strength of people's ties. Following their lead we propose that the shallow/deep dimension be viewed as a measure of commitment to international activities and connections. For one traveler, a visit to a foreign shrine may be simply an opportunity to take a few photo-

graphs, involving minimal commitment. For another traveler, who has read several books about the country before arriving and talked to locals about what makes the site so special, a visit to the same shrine is an opportunity to learn more about local religious beliefs, history, and art. Both are making an international personal link, and both will feel some connection to the country they have visited. The degree of international commitment, however, is quite different.

### **Implications for Peace and Conflict**

We believe all three forms of international identity can have both positive and negative implications. These are described, with examples, below.

#### ***Global Identity***

Global identity promotes working for the good of the whole, with its emphasis on universal human rights. At its best, it inspires coordination and cooperation among the people of all nations to improve the quality of life for all. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, defined this type of commitment as fundamental to the United Nations: "Almost by definition, and certainly according to its charter, the United Nations exists to promote human rights" (Robinson, 1998). Those who work for international aid agencies such as Oxfam, that are concerned with the well-being of people everywhere, exemplify the positive actions inspired by global identity.

Yet people who see themselves as "world citizens" may not fully appreciate or respect national differences. Well-intentioned internationalists may over-generalize a practice that has proved useful in their own country and take an inappropriate "one-size fits all" approach that is actually based on ethnocentric assumptions. Less well-intentioned internationalists may take an imperialist view of the world as a field of operations for oneself and one's country, often with scant regard for the aspirations of people whose interests are not in harmony with one's own. The anti-globalization movement can be viewed as a protest against a dark side of global identity by people who are, paradoxically, themselves motivated by a broad identification that we would classify as global human identity.

### ***Social Identity***

Regional or cross-cutting social identity promotes cooperation across national boundaries with similarly identified others, through trade, political ties, or mutual aid. We can see this, for example, in the international women's movement, and in the outpouring of sympathy and aid to Palestinians by other Arabs and Muslims who identify with their cause. The emergence of the European Union, a prime example of regional "European" identity, has brought much closer integration and cooperation among member nations. While these nations will continue to argue amongst themselves about agricultural and monetary policies, the likelihood of armed hostilities among member nations now seems remote, in sharp contrast to the situation during much of the last century.

Whenever social identities are activated, however, intragroup benefits are frequently gained at the expense of positive relations with out-group members. Cross-national sympathy for the Palestinian cause, for example, inspires anger and hatred for Israelis and, through a process of generalization, also fuels anti-Semitism. Those on the other side reciprocate with hatred of Palestinians, and by the same generalization process, distrust and dislike of Muslims generally. Emotional connection and identification with one party to a conflict at the expense of the other parties makes it harder for outsiders to mediate the conflict. Stronger commitment to the in-group may worsen the chances for reconciliation. Among people who encountered information about the negative behavior of their in-group, less committed members felt more guilt (Doosje, Haslam, Spears, Oakes, & Koomen, 1998) and were more inclined to support apology to and restitution for the victimized out-group as strategies (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, in press) than were those who were highly committed to the in-group. It may be that the ability to shift focus to the global identity that highlights commonality and the human rights of all is constrained by a strongly committed social identity for any in-group.

### ***International Personal Links***

Personal links that connect people to other countries promote collaboration, a sense of community, and engender empathy and concern for the well-being of people in other nations. If an earthquake occurs in India, for example, those of us living elsewhere will think most immediately of the people we know — "Is my friend all right? Is my cousin's family okay?" —

but that concern is easily generalized when we realize that even if our friend and our extended family is fine, it is quite likely that the friends of our friends, or *their* extended family, or *their* colleagues or neighbors may be affected. In his study of ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims, Varshney (2002, p. 127) found that civic associations that connected people across ethnic boundaries protected a community from communal violence at times of ethnic tension within the country as a whole. These associations generated multiple layers of interpersonal connections in people's personal networks: their children played together, and the adults ate together in social settings, discussed books together in reading clubs, and were joint members of ubiquitous trade associations. While this study focused on conflict within a nation, we believe the same logic should hold for interpersonal connections across nations. Volunteer organizations such as the Peace Corps in the United States or World Accord in Canada send people to work on site in a host country. Whether the commitment is for years or a matter of weeks, the personal ties these contacts create promotes positive attitudes and cross-national identification for the people involved.

Of course, one cannot assume that all personal links are positive. Negative personal links can work against peaceful international relations. An example has been the deeply personal animosity between Sharon and Arafat, which has promoted continuing conflict and worked against any initiatives for peace. Conflict also creates negative personal links, and can sour existing links that were once positive. This is one of the bitterest results of civil wars and other conflicts among close neighbors. Overall, however, we believe that international connections embedded within people's personal networks are among the most promising resources for peace.

### ***Application to the September 11<sup>th</sup> Attacks***

To connect our ideas about international identity with a specific event, we asked ourselves how they might frame our thinking about the events of September 11, 2001. The motivation for the attack can easily be connected to an international cross-cutting social identity. The social identification of al Qaeda members with their international radical Islamic militant group inspired action on behalf of this in-group against the out-group of infidels and the United States in particular. Commitment of the members to this international identity was clearly strong.

In terms of initial consequences for international identity, the attack on the Pentagon had different implications than the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. The attack on Pentagon, a U.S. symbol, activates the national social identity of American. The attack on the World Trade Center, however, evokes a more international identity. The twin towers were located in the same world city where the U.N. is located, and were part of a global network of World Trade centers. These international associations cue global identity and the feeling that this is a tragic event for the world, not just for people who live in New York. New York is also a "hub" in the global network that connects people. It is a city of immigrants and a popular tourist destination, and millions of people have seen images of the New York skyline even if they have never been there themselves. People in many nations are thus connected to New York City either directly or via a small number of personal links. The victims included people from many nations. This promotes empathy and concern for all victims of the attack, in a way that probably doesn't generalize to victims of the attack on the Pentagon, a military center for a single country.

### Conclusion and Further Questions

International identity refers to those aspects of a person's sense of self that transcend national boundaries. Three types of international identity can be distinguished — global world citizenship, such as what Socrates espoused; shared memberships in a social category such as scientist or transnational religious or regional memberships; and idiosyncratic personal links, that connect a person to other people and places across national boundaries. Among the many implications of international identity for peace and conflict, we wonder what approaches to peace-making or negotiation promote (or inadvertently discourage) positive aspects of international identity among combatants and third parties, and vice versa. How do people balance global identity and international personal networks with the pull of social identification, with its emphasis on in-groups and out-groups? We think of these different forms as all being potentially present in each person's self structure. But how are they organized? Does the activation of one form facilitate or inhibit the activation of other forms? These and many other questions await further attention and research.

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### Author Note

We thank Dr. Johana Hadiyono, first for encouraging us to submit this paper to the IACCP Congress and second for arranging for the paper to be presented at the Congress when emergency health problems made it impossible for the second author to attend. The original paper was presented with Sundberg as the first author and Arrow as the second author. We also thank Dr. George Sheridan of the University of Oregon for helpful discussions on the concept of international identity, and those who gave helpful feedback when we presented a very preliminary version of our ideas at the Institute for Cognitive and Decision Sciences seminar series, also at the University of Oregon.

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