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Individualism–collectivism and intergroup bias

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Abstract

The current article offers a focused review of the link between individualism–collectivism (Ind-Col) and intergroup bias. Despite the mutual relationship between culture and social groups, there remains a dearth of research that specifies cultural influence on intergroup behavior in general and intergroup favoritism in particular. Moreover, there is much confusion in the literature as to the role of Ind-Col in the emergence and manifestation of intergroup bias. The confusion has been aggravated by the simplistic assumption that equates collectivism with the social identity processes that lead to undesirable consequences in intergroup settings. Drawing on the previous work that examined how Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias at multiple levels, this review challenges the widely held expectation that collectivism is a conduit to various forms of intergroup bias and calls for research that takes into account the diverse viewpoints about the nature of group processes and intergroup behavior across cultures

KEY WORDS

individualism–collectivism, ingroup favoritism, intergroup bias, outgroup derogation

1 | INTRODUCTION

Culture refers to a meaning system made up of shared values and beliefs that guide the way people interpret the social world, together with a set of practices that enact the shared worldviews (Triandis, 1995). Cultural values and beliefs play a key role in how people think and behave within and between groups. Indeed, groups form and develop in a particular cultural context, and social groups are a critical context in which culture is enacted and reinforced (Brewer & Yuki, 2014; Earley & Gibson, 1998). Of the many dimensions along which cultures vary (see Cohen, 2014), individualism–collectivism (Ind-Col hereafter) has received by far the most scholarly attention (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). The current paper offers a focused review of how Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias, which has been generally defined as the perceptions, evaluations, and behaviours that favour one's ingroup over the outgroup (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010).

Identifying and promoting the conditions for harmonious relationships between social groups is a critical task in social psychology (Dovidio et al., 2012). Despite the mutual relationship between culture and social groups, there exists only a dearth of research that specifies cultural influence on intergroup relations in general and intergroup bias in particular. This state of affairs is problematic for two major reasons. First, it has long been argued that the psychology of groups is inextricably related to the nature of the larger social context in which groups are embedded (Bar-Tal, 1998) and that group processes “cannot be assumed to be universal” (Tajfel et al., 1971, p. 151). Although the scope of cultural psychology has expanded considerably over the past two decades (see Cohen & Kitayama, 2019), social psychological research on Ind-Col has focused primarily on cultural variations in individual cognition and behaviour, thereby missing critical opportunities to specify the role of culture in shaping behaviour in various group settings (Choi, 2024). Second, there is much

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confusion in the literature as to the role of Ind-Col in the emergence and manifestation of intergroup bias. The confusion has been aggravated by the simplistic assumption that equates collectivism with the social identity processes that often lead to undesirable consequences in intergroup settings. On the surface, the presumed link between collectivism and a strong orientation toward the ingroup (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995) parallels the consistent finding that intergroup bias is rooted in individuals' identification with their own group (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). As will be discussed, however, the notion that collectivism is a conduit to various forms of intergroup bias has been challenged on both conceptual and empirical grounds, calling for a more thorough analysis of the phenomenon (see Kavanagh & Yuki, 2017).

The current review begins with a discussion on the distinction between the two forms of bias, namely, ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation, followed by a discussion on the two major theoretical perspectives that specify the relationship between the individual and the group: Individualism–collectivism and the social identity perspective. The review also distinguishes cultural and social identification to clarify the critical difference between the two approaches in explaining intergroup bias. In what follows, the review offers a summary of the studies examining how Ind-Col at various levels relates to intergroup bias with a discussion on unresolved issues and areas of future research that might promote our understanding of the phenomenon.

2 | TWO FORMS OF INTERGROUP BIAS: INGROUP FAVOURITISM AND OUTGROUP DEROGATION

Intergroup bias can take on different forms, depending on the focus of bias (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). Ingroup favouritism refers to favourable evaluations and behaviours directed to one's own group, whereas outgroup derogation refers to prejudice and discriminatory actions directed toward outgroups. Ingroup favouritism has typically involved an extension of trust, positive evaluations, cooperation, allocation of resources, and empathy toward ingroup but not outgroup members, and this form of bias has been the primary target of research on intergroup bias. By contrast, outgroup derogation entails derogatory reactions and active components of aggression (e.g. animosity and belligerence toward an outgroup), and this form of intergroup bias has received relatively little attention in social psychological research (Hewstone et al., 2002; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010).

Although the two forms of bias share social categorization as a common foundation, ingroup favouritism does not necessarily translate into outgroup derogation (see Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Spears, 2021), and the process of ingroup identification is better understood as a bias in favour of the ingroup rather than hostility

and discrimination against the outgroup (Brewer, 1999; Mummendey & Otten, 2001). Moreover, research suggests that outgroup derogation may not be the sole function of social categorization as it involves several key moderators, such as strong negative emotions toward the outgroup (e.g. Doosje et al., 1998), perceptions of symbolic as well as realistic threats associated with the outgroup (e.g. Stephan & Stephan, 2000), and the numerical and power status of the ingroup (e.g. Bourhis, 1994). This line of work suggests that distinguishing the two forms of bias also has important implications for research on how Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias because most of the previous work in the Ind-Col literature has also relied on measures of ingroup favouritism.

3 | INDIVIDUALISM–COLLECTIVISM AND ITS PRESUMED LINK TO INTERGROUP BIAS

The central theme in research on Ind-Col is the contrast between the two worldviews regarding the nature of the relationship between the person and the group, with individualism giving priority to individual interests, whereas collectivism prioritizes group interests (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). Thus, individualistic societies emphasize individual accomplishments and promote thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in the direction of separating individuals from the group. By contrast, collectivistic societies emphasize collective achievements and promote thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in the direction of connecting with others and one's own group. The key characteristics of the culture-level Ind-Col have been generalized to different levels of analysis, including individuals, teams, and organizations (see Chiu & Hong, 2007; Triandis, 2001). Of particular importance regarding intergroup bias is the notion that, compared to individualistic cultures where individuals are viewed as autonomous entities, collectivism views individuals as component parts of social groups and represents a cultural context in which people clearly distinguish between their ingroup and outgroups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This assumption resonates with the argument that collectivism is not altruism but a form of groupism as it emphasizes ingroup well-being at the expense of harmonious relationships with outgroups (see Hofstede, 1994).

The clear distinction between one's ingroup and relevant outgroups has been considered one of the key conditions for individuals' identification with their ingroup and loyalty to the group (Brewer & Silver, 2000). Social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that people divide the social world into 'us' versus 'them' through the process of social categorization, and identification with a group confers self-esteem because individuals' self-esteem is closely tied to their membership in a social

group. Thus, to enhance self-esteem, people are motivated to view their ingroup favourably over the outgroup. This ingroup-favouring social comparison helps group members promote the positive distinctiveness of their ingroup relative to outgroups (Hogg & Abrams, 2003). In close connection with SIT, self-categorization theory (SCT, Turner et al., 1987) stipulates that group identification is a process of depersonalization in which individuals perceive themselves as an interchangeable exemplar of a social category. The theory argues that individuals learn the appropriate behaviours associated with their group membership, and their behaviour becomes congruent to the normative standards of the group as their group membership becomes more salient. When individuals identify with their ingroup through the process of depersonalization, they assign the stereotypic norms of the ingroup to themselves because doing so is conducive to differentiating the ingroup from the relevant outgroup, thereby maintaining a sense of social reality (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). From this standpoint, social stereotyping and ingroup favouritism are viewed as the consequence of categorization processes that are inherently comparative rather than stemming from individuals' need for self-esteem (Oakes & Turner, 1990).

The two theories differ regarding the key source of ingroup favouritism, but they share the notion that ingroup favouritism is rooted in the social identification processes that entail categorizing social groups into ingroups versus outgroups. Although the core arguments of the social identity approach have been supported in a large number of studies (see Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010), what remains to be seen is the applicability of the social identity perspective to cultural contexts other than the Western societies where the theory was established (Smith et al., 2013; Yuki, 2003). On the surface, the social identity perspective seems particularly applicable to collectivistic contexts in which collective identities are more frequently activated in everyday environments (Kitayama et al., 2007; Oyserman, 2011). Indeed, the notion that collectivism breeds strong ingroup identification and group loyalty has spawned a parallel assumption that, compared to individualism, collectivism is more likely to lead to intergroup bias.

As a case in point, Triandis and Gelfand (1998) advanced a refined model that distinguishes the horizontal versus the vertical aspects of culture and proposed that intergroup bias is a joint function of Ind-Col and the vertical-horizontal dimension. This model makes an overall prediction that, at both the cultural and the individual level, intergroup bias is more likely to be associated with collectivism than individualism because the former emphasizes group loyalty and attachment to one's ingroup. The model also stipulates that, compared to horizontal collectivism, which emphasizes equality among people, vertical collectivism is more likely to lead to intergroup bias because this cultural pattern facilitates perceptions of ingroup superiority over outgroups. By contrast, compared to horizontal individualism, vertical individualism

is more likely to lead to intergroup bias because this cultural pattern is associated with a tendency for people to put down outgroups as a way of feeling personally superior to others and achieving social status. This analysis has yielded a proposition that "prejudice and discrimination against outgroups will be high among vertical collectivists, followed by vertical individualists, followed by horizontal collectivists, and will be low among horizontal individualists" (Triandis, 1995, p. 127). This thesis has not received much attention in previous research despite its intuitive appeal, and as will be discussed, even the few studies that tested the idea have produced only mixed results.

4 | COLLECTIVISM AND SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION: SHADOWS OF EACH OTHER?

Research on how Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias has often relied on the assumption that collectivism and the process of social identification have a common foundation, namely, individuals' strong orientation toward the ingroup (see Kitayama & Salvador, 2024). This trend paved the way for a related but problematic assumption that cultural and social identification are conceptually equivalent. Ind-Col is a polythetic construct that specifies the primacy of social groups over individuals at multiple levels of analysis (Smith & Bond, 1999; Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). By contrast, the social identity perspective specifies how individuals relate to their own group in relation to relevant outgroups in intergroup contexts. Although these two theoretical perspectives seem to have much in common, they are not shadows of each other.

Social identification involves individuals' self-perceptions based on their membership in a specific group or social category. Thus, the effects of social identification are tied to a particular group rather than groups in general (Ellemers et al., 2004). Further, group or collective identities are inherently oriented toward intergroup comparisons because social categorization occurs in comparative contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By contrast, cultural identity derives from the beliefs and values shared among the members of a given culture, and cultural identification involves individuals' adherence to collectively shared beliefs, values, and practices in a given culture (Brewer & Yuki, 2014). Unlike the process of social identification that occurs in comparative contexts, cultural identification does not necessarily entail a strong intergroup focus. It is also important to note that previous research on the individual-level Ind-Col has typically examined the overall tendency to prioritize collective interests over personal interests (i.e. value orientation) rather than identification with a particular group (Roccas et al., 2008). Further, unlike collectivism, identification with a specific social group does not always accompany a collectivistic value orientation because individuals can strongly identify

with their group as long as group membership serves to fulfil their self-interests (Prentice, 2006). Consistent with this, multi-dimensional models of social identification do not include individuals' value orientation toward collective interests as a specific facet of social identification. As an example, Leach et al. (2008) found five key components of social identification, including self-stereotyping, perceptions of ingroup homogeneity, solidarity, satisfaction and centrality, none of which directly maps onto the value aspect of Ind-Col.

The distinction between cultural and social identification bears important implications for analysing cultural influence on intergroup behaviour. To the extent that collectivism is associated with a particular social group (e.g. a work team), it may be considered a property of a specific group membership. Conceptually speaking, however, cultural identification does not create conditions for intergroup bias. Cultural identification involves intersubjective cultural representation comprised of individuals' understanding of the beliefs, values, norms, and practices characteristic of the culture (Wan & Yu, 2014). Thus, what matters in cultural identification is knowledge about the symbolic meanings of a culture shared among individuals, not a shift from personal identity to collective identity through depersonalization. Unless someone mistakenly assumes that only collectivism, not individualism, entails an understanding and the acceptance of shared beliefs and values that endorse a preferential treatment of the ingroup over outgroups, there is no reason to view collectivism as the road to intergroup bias. Moreover, as discussed below, research has failed to obtain converging evidence that collectivism leads to intergroup bias *because* it is more conducive to the social identification process that underlies the bias.

5 | IND-COL AND INTERGROUP BIAS: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Research on the link between Ind-Col and intergroup bias revolves around the two topic areas in the intergroup literature, namely, ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation, as they represent an overarching framework for analysing the biased nature of intergroup attitudes and behaviour (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). In discussing the literature, the term *idiocentrism–allocentrism* (Triandis et al., 1985) will be used for the individual-level analysis to distinguish it from the culture-level analysis.

5.1 | IND-COL AND INGROUP FAVOURITISM

5.1.1 | Ingroup favouritism in evaluation

It has been suggested that compared to individualistic cultures, the distinction between ingroup and outgroups

is sharper and less permeable in collectivistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). A corollary of this idea is that, compared to individualistic cultures, collectivistic cultures are likely to promote more favourable evaluations of ingroups relative to outgroups (Triandis, 1972, 1995). Although this assumption has existed for a long time in cross-cultural psychology, 'what' of collectivism is associated with ingroup favouritism has been elusive (Oyserman et al., 2002). Some cross-national studies have even found that evaluative ingroup favouritism is more strongly associated with individualistic cultures than collectivistic ones. Comparing British students and Chinese students in Hong Kong, Bond and Hewstone (1988) found that British students' images of their ethnic ingroup were more favourable than those of Chinese students. Heine and Lehman (1997) also found that Canadians exhibited a stronger positivity bias than the Japanese in evaluating their family members and universities. Kinket and Verkuyten (1999) found a similar trend among children such that, compared to children in Turkey, children in the Netherlands were more in favour of their ethnic ingroup relative to ethnic outgroups.

In contrast to the early work that suggests a positive link between individualism and evaluative ingroup bias, Owe et al. (2013) have examined whether or not and why collectivism is more likely to be associated with ingroup favouritism in evaluation. These researchers have proposed the notion of contextualism as a specific facet of collectivism, which refers to the belief that social contexts (i.e. family, social groups, social positions) are critical in understanding people. They argued that the sharper distinction between ingroups and outgroups in collectivistic cultures can be explained by the general beliefs about the importance of context in understanding personhood. In societies with strong contextualist beliefs (i.e. collectivistic cultures), people differentiate between individuals based on group membership because they believe doing so provides valuable information about others. By contrast, in societies where the understanding of personhood is decontextualized (i.e. individualistic cultures), people receive differential treatment by their personal attributes, not by group membership. According to this perspective, ingroup favouritism is a natural byproduct of the contextualist belief that fosters differential treatment of others based on social group membership. To test this idea, Owe and colleagues obtained nation-level data from 19 countries and established a conceptual link between contextualism and collectivism at the national level. In a separate multi-national study that involved 35 cultural groups, they also found that nation-level contextualism predicted ingroup favouritism, controlling for other facets of Ind-Col.

The link between Ind-Col and ingroup favouritism at the individual level is far more complex (see Smith & Long, 2006). To say the least, research suggests that ingroup favouritism is associated with both collectivistic

and individualistic cultural orientations. That is, allocentrics are primarily motivated to promote their ingroup's well-being and show less consideration for the welfare of strangers (Schwartz, 1990), but idiocentrics, too, show less concern for others in general as they are primarily self-centered (Hui & Triandis, 1986). On the personality level, research (e.g. Seta & Seta, 1996) has suggested that people with high global personal trait self-esteem, such as individualists, show strong evaluative bias in favour of the ingroup (see also Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). Consistent with this is the finding that, at the individual level, independent self-construal positively predicts ingroup favouritism in intergroup attitudes, whereas interdependent self-construal does not predict this bias (Lee & Ward, 1998).

Another line of work closely related to evaluative ingroup favouritism is the previous research on intergroup attribution bias. Intergroup attribution bias (Hewstone & Jaspars, 1982) refers to the tendency for people to make internal (*external*) attributions for positive outcomes and external (*internal*) attributions for negative outcomes of one's ingroup (*outgroup*). This tendency represents a form of bias because it contributes to the perceptions of ingroup positivity relative to outgroups. Research has examined the central idea that the need for positive ingroup distinctiveness is greater in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures, and thus, intergroup bias in attribution would be more strongly associated with collectivism. In an illustrative study, Al-Zahrani and Kaplowitz (1993) compared Saudis (collectivistic) and US Americans (individualistic) on how they attribute positive versus negative outcomes (e.g. success vs. failure) of their ingroup versus the outgroup (i.e. nationality). These researchers found that, on a measure of ingroup favouritism that captures the difference between ingroup-serving versus outgroup-serving attributions, Saudis showed more ethnocentric bias than US Americans did. However, complexity remains as this finding contradicts other studies that show the opposite trend. An earlier study by DeVos (1968) reported that Germans (individualistic) engaged in more intergroup attribution bias than the more collectivistic Turks did, and Hewstone et al. (1989) replicated this pattern with children. Similarly, Bond et al. (1985) found less intergroup attribution bias among Chinese than US Americans in male–female relationships. It is worth noting that cross-cultural research on social perception has shown that attribution involving disposition versus situation is culture-specific (see Choi et al., 1999), but it is not known whether this pattern generalizes to intergroup situations. To the extent that situational factors loom larger in attribution in collectivistic societies, one might expect that intergroup attribution bias would be less prevalent in East Asia because negative as well as positive outcomes of outgroups are likely to be attributed to external factors.

5.1.2 | Unpackaging the hodge-podge of Ind-col in evaluative ingroup bias

5.1.2.1 | *The issue of sufficiency in predicting ingroup-serving evaluations*

Controversies regarding the role of Ind-Col in evaluative ingroup favouritism revolve around whether or not the distinction between individualism and collectivism is *sufficient* to reveal any meaningful differences. In this vein, Hinkle and Brown (1990) proposed a taxonomy that distinguishes two dimensions presumed to be orthogonal: individualism versus collectivism and autonomous versus relational orientation. At the individual level, some people evaluate their ingroup relative to other groups (i.e. relational), while others evaluate their ingroup separately from outgroups (i.e. autonomous). Thus, for the latter, social comparison may not always be used to define the value of the ingroup. With this distinction, the researchers predicted that ingroup favouritism would be found only in groups that are collectivistic and relational. This prediction received some support in studies that used individual-level measures of relational orientation (e.g. Brown et al., 1992). By contrast, Capozza et al. (2000) tested the idea in two experiments by examining the interaction between the three key individual-level variables: group identification, collectivism, and relational orientation. The studies did not reveal any evidence for the hypothesis that ingroup favouritism is present only in the collectivism-relational quadrant. Instead, the most general finding was the reliable correlation between group identification and ingroup favouritism for idiocentrics, not for allocentrics. Further, for allocentrics, ingroup favouritism was not correlated with group identification.

An important question to be answered is why the link between group identification and ingroup bias was observed only for idiocentrics. Capozza and colleagues speculated that individualists are characterized by high self-esteem, being inclined to formulate self-evaluations that positively distinguish them from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, idiocentrics may particularly be motivated to establish positive ingroup distinctiveness as a way of promoting their self-esteem. In addition to this interpretation, it is also possible that allocentrics have a relationship with other members of the ingroup based on many reciprocal needs; thus, they might be less influenced by problems of self-esteem and social identity enhancement (Kitayama et al., 2007).

5.1.2.2 | *East–west differences in the meaning of social self*

A drastically different argument can be made on the link between Ind-Col and evaluative ingroup bias if one considers the fundamental cultural differences in the meaning and cognitive representation of the

social self. Scholars (Choi et al., 1993; Ho, 1993; King & Bond, 1985; Yamagishi et al., 1998) have argued that people in collectivistic East Asia can be more accurately understood in terms of their strong relationship orientation rather than the intergroup orientation featured in the social identity perspective. Based on this, Yuki and colleagues (Brewer & Yuki, 2007; Yuki & Takemura, 2014) have challenged the social identity perspective, distinguishing the collective self that is depersonalized by virtue of common group membership from the relational self that is based on interpersonal connections and relational ties with other people (see also Prentice et al., 1994). According to this analysis, perceptions of the ingroup as a depersonalized entity are prevalent in individualistic cultures, whereas people are more likely to represent their ingroups as personalized networks in East Asian cultures. Thus, social identification in collectivistic cultures may not be driven by the need for positive ingroup distinctiveness relative to outgroups but a necessary consequence of their motivation to maintain harmonious and reciprocal relationships within the group.

Research has generally supported the proposition that people in individualistic cultures (e.g. North America) are more strongly motivated to acquire and maintain higher ingroup status relative to outgroups, and this motive is appropriately captured in the notion of collective self. By contrast, those in East Asia emphasize the maintenance of reciprocal relationships among group members, which accompanies a strong emphasis on relational rather than collective self. Watkins et al. (1998) reported that people in collectivistic cultures (e.g. China, India) generated more references to relationships and role identities in their spontaneous self-descriptions, whereas those in individualistic cultures (e.g. USA, Canada) were more likely to generate references to social groups and category memberships. Similarly, Yuki (2003) found that relational factors were the sole determinants of ingroup identification and loyalty among Japanese people, whereas both the relational factors and the categorical factors predicted US Americans' responses. Comparing peoples' spontaneous attention to intergroup status differences versus intragroup relationships, Takemura et al. (2010) also found that US American participants' memory was biased toward the information containing intergroup status differences over the information about intragroup relationships, whereas this trend was not found in the memory performance of the Japanese participants.

The model proposed by Yuki and colleagues offers insights into the East Asian ways of relating to social groups. Nonetheless, ingroup favouritism is ubiquitous in all cultures (see Fischer & Derham, 2016), with an evolutionary pathway (De Dreu et al., 2011). Moreover, some evidence also suggests a positive link between collectivism and evaluative ingroup bias. Thus, what is

difficult to know at this point is precisely why and how a strong relationship focus, presumed to be prevalent in East Asia, leads to evaluative ingroup favouritism. A possible answer to this question has been proposed in a socio-ecological analysis of group behaviour (Kavanagh & Yuki, 2017; Yuki & Takemura, 2014). According to this analysis, societies differ regarding how much freedom and opportunities individuals have in forming, changing, or dissolving interpersonal relationships and groups based on their personal preferences (i.e. relational mobility, Yuki & Schug, 2012). Societies low on relational mobility, typically Japan, afford fewer chances to form or join new groups. Thus, people have a propensity to maintain a harmonious relationship with *specific others* and adopt strategic choices that will maximize mutual benefit. To the extent that evaluative ingroup bias represents one such benefit, this approach seems to suggest that evaluative ingroup bias observed in East Asian societies is a result of strong intragroup orientation in highly interdependent interpersonal networks rather than a result of a strong intergroup orientation embedded in common identity groups (Yuki & Takemura, 2014).

The argument that differences in relational mobility, rather than Ind-Col, explain the East Asian model of ingroup bias is consistent with the findings that East Asians prefer equality over equity within the ingroup (Leung & Bond, 1984) and avoid conflict when they are concerned about the disintegration of the ingroup (Leung, 1997). Nevertheless, research is needed to disentangle relational mobility from Ind-Col more clearly, as these findings can also be interpreted within the Ind-Col framework. Moreover, work is needed to directly test the unique role of relational mobility in predicting evaluative ingroup bias across societies with varying levels of relational mobility. Evaluating the validity of the proposition advanced by the relational mobility account is further complicated by the finding that, when positive group distinctiveness is undermined by the superior performance of the outgroup relative to the ingroup, Chinese participants were more likely to show evaluative ingroup bias compared to the more individualistic Canadians (see Chen et al., 1998, 2002).

Smith et al. (2013) suggested another way to understand why studies have often found less ingroup favouritism in collectivistic cultures by noting the SCT's explicit emphasis on the fluidity of group identities. SCT assumes a process by which the entire basis and meaning of group memberships are constructed depending on temporary features of the comparative context. Although the East Asian interdependent self is also fluid and context-dependent, the fluidity primarily involves variations in role identities across different social relationships that are relatively stable and clearly defined (e.g. family, leader-follower relationship). From these, Smith and colleagues argued that if the meanings of social identities in

East Asia are more stable than those in the West, there should be less of a chronic need to promote positive ingroup distinctiveness.

5.2 | Ingroup Favouritism in resource allocation

Sociology and political science have long discussed the selfishness of more individualistic societies (see Putnam, 2000). The social psychological literature on the link between Ind-Col and ingroup favouritism in resource allocation suggests a similar picture. Within the tradition of social identity theory, intergroup bias in resource allocation has typically been observed in the minimal group paradigm (Tajfel et al., 1971), in which group membership is categorically defined based on arbitrary distinctions. Using this paradigm, researchers focused on how Ind-Col at the nation and the individual level relates to a differential allocation of resources between the ingroup and the outgroup. In a study that involved samples from Japan and the USA, Falk et al. (2014) found that ingroup favouritism in minimal group settings was less common among Japanese students than their US American counterparts, presumably because the self-enhancement motive that underlies ingroup bias is less likely to form the basis of the allocation decision among the Japanese. Similarly, Buchan et al. (2006) found that US American participants exhibited significant ingroup favouritism in an investment game, but this pattern did not emerge among Chinese participants. It was also found that in both cultural groups, idiocentrics showed greater ingroup favouritism than allocentrics did. The study also included samples from Korea and Japan, but the only significant difference in ingroup bias was found between the Chinese sample and the US American sample, adding complexity to the presumed link between Ind-Col and ingroup bias in resource allocation.

In recognition that the minimal group paradigm lacks one of the defining features of social groups, namely, interdependence among the members, scholars have explored the possibility that ingroup favouritism in collectivistic cultures is more a function of interdependence within a group rather than the process of depersonalization. Studies that typically involved Japanese participants suggested that interdependence among group members, rather than perceptions of a shared social category *per se*, is a critical condition that elicits ingroup favouritism in the minimal group paradigm. Most notably, studies by Yamagishi and colleagues (Karp et al., 1993; Yamagishi et al., 1998, 2008) have shown that, in Japan, ingroup favouritism in minimal group settings occurs only when participants expect reciprocal favour to be provided within the group. By contrast, research conducted in individualistic cultures (e.g. North America, Australia, Perreault & Bourhis, 1998) has found that ingroup favouritism in the minimal group paradigm was

the sole function of a shared group membership and interdependence among the members was not associated with the bias.

Along these lines, Yamagishi et al. (1998) advanced a group heuristic account of ingroup bias, arguing that people intuitively assume a generalized exchange system with ingroup members but not outgroup members. Intergroup contexts automatically activate this heuristic, and as a result, individuals expect reciprocity of favour and trust within, not between, group boundaries. According to this perspective, ingroup favouritism is an ecologically adaptive strategy that enhances an individual's reputation, helping him/her avoid exclusion and benefit from indirect reciprocity. The group heuristic account awaits further testing as most of the research involved only Japanese samples without Western comparison groups. Testing the validity of the model in other East Asian nations is also important because if the unique behavioural outcomes observed in Japan are closely linked to the country's socio-ecological context, it is likely that other East Asian nations have also developed different psychological processes that underlie ingroup favouritism based on their unique social and ecological environments. Moreover, the idea that indirect reciprocity is bounded by group membership has been challenged, as studies have shown that reputation-based cooperation can also extend to outgroup members (for a review, see Imada et al., 2023).

5.3 | Ind-col and outgroup derogation

Mirroring the trend in the intergroup literature, only a few studies have examined how Ind-Col relates to outgroup derogation that involves prejudice and hostility toward outgroups. Available evidence from this line of work suggests that the role of Ind-Col in outgroup derogation is also inconclusive. Unlike the expectation that prejudice and discrimination against outgroups are more likely to be associated with collectivism, especially in combination with the vertical aspects of culture (Triandis, 1995), evidence suggests that outgroup prejudice is more strongly associated with individualism. In an individual-level study conducted in Spain, Gouveia (2011) found that, compared to allocentrics, idiocentrics were more likely to express prejudice against a minority outgroup (i.e. Gypsies). They also found that the horizontal, not vertical, aspect of culture was more important in determining the link between Ind-Col and outgroup prejudice. Consistent with this, analysis of large-scale European data (Leong, 2008) has revealed that individual-level individualism predicts anti-immigrant attitudes. Using an individual-level measure of collectivism in Korea (i.e. beliefs in group goal priority), Lee et al. (2022) also reported that collectivism was negatively associated with group-focused enmity (Zick et al., 2008), which refers to a generalized belief

that some social groups in the society (e.g. North Korean defectors, migrant workers) deserve unequal treatment.

Implications of these individual-level studies are complicated by the cross-national data. Schröder et al. (2013) have reported that compared to the United States and German samples, affective meanings of stereotypes associated with various groups among Japanese students are characterized by less favouritism toward social ingroups (e.g. students) but more negative evaluations of social minorities (e.g. the homeless). Given the paucity of data in social psychology that examined outgroup derogation across cultures, the culture-level specification of outgroup derogation awaits further testing. Along these lines, it is informative to consider the theoretical perspective that specifies 'when' outgroup derogation is more likely to be observed.

According to intergroup threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), prejudice and discrimination against outgroups are associated with the perception that outgroups cause material or symbolic harm to the ingroup. Within this framework, the role of perceived threat in anti-immigrant prejudice in the Western world has been reported by Jackson et al. (2001). Using the Eurobarometer data, these researchers found that perceived threat to the shared values predicted anti-immigrant attitudes in 14 of the 15 European nations. Cohrs and Stelzl (2010) extended this study by examining samples from 16 European nations and the United States. They found that anti-immigrant prejudice was stronger in nations where immigrants were perceived as a threat to society. Because these studies examined responses from Europe and the United States, comparative research is still needed to illuminate the interplay between Ind-Col and threat perceptions in outgroup derogation.

In this regard, a few studies conducted during the period of global health risk are particularly noteworthy. Kim et al. (2016) tested how Ind-Col relates to xenophobic responses during the 2014 Ebola scare in the United States. They found that perceptions of personal vulnerability to Ebola positively predicted xenophobic responses. More importantly, this relationship was moderated by individual-level Ind-Col such that the positive link between vulnerability perceptions and xenophobia was especially pronounced among people scoring high on individualism and low on collectivism. The researchers also found the same pattern of moderation with state-level collectivism. As for the COVID-19 pandemic, research suggests that xenophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice arose during the COVID-19 pandemic in general (Huang et al., 2023), but prejudice associated with ethnicity and race was more prevalent in individualistic than in collectivistic societies (Zhu et al., 2020). To illustrate, Han et al. (2023) analysed cross-national data from 23 countries and found that, independent of disease threat, both the duration and the severity of COVID-19-related lockdowns positively predicted individuals' perceived threat of immigrants. These lockdown effects on

threat perceptions were only significant in Europe and the United States, not in Asia. Han and colleagues speculated that the adverse effects of lockdown in Western societies may reflect a greater degree of frustration resulting from the restriction of individual freedom. In light of the association between threat perceptions and outgroup derogation reported in the literature, one might also infer an association between outgroup derogation and individualism, not collectivism, during a health crisis.

6 | DISCUSSION

Purposefully, the current review focused on the two key aspects of intergroup bias to draw scholarly attention to conceptual and methodological advancements needed for future research. As the current review suggests, the extant literature does not represent a stage where researchers can draw conclusions about how Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias. In an extreme sense, the literature in its current state may not even allow for developing a comprehensive model that effectively disentangles the complex phenomenon. At a minimum, the available evidence points to the possibility that both individualism and collectivism have seeds for bias in intergroup situations, and thus, testing a main effect hypothesis regarding the overall impact of Ind-Col on intergroup bias may not be fruitful.

6.1 | Conceptual issues

One way to make strides in future research is to develop theoretical models that incorporate diverse viewpoints about the nature of group processes in the two cultural contexts. Existing research is limited because the fundamental differences across cultures in how people relate to social groups have been largely ignored (Yuki & Brewer, 2014). This issue is particularly relevant to the previous approach on how collectivism relates to intergroup bias based on the key assumptions driven from the social identity perspective. From a critical psychology point of view, the literature on Ind-Col and intergroup bias reflects another form of bias in that researchers conduct comparative studies by simply assuming how people behave within and between groups is reducible to the shift in self-perceptions from personal to social. Along these lines, clarifying the conceptual core of Ind-Col and its potential relationship with intergroup bias at multiple levels is an important first step toward a more refined approach. Existing studies vary widely by the definition of Ind-Col, making it difficult to integrate the observed relationships with intergroup bias. The confusion in the literature is understandable if one considers that Ind-Col is a multi-component construct encompassing a diverse range of variables

(Triandis, 1995). Thus, researchers first need to define clearly *what* of Ind-Col relates to intergroup bias in their research and use appropriate measures that reflect the construct being used.

At the individual level, treating psychological collectivism as equivalent to identifying with a specific social group fails to capture the conceptual core of collectivism that represents individuals' beliefs in group goal priority (i.e. value orientation), perceptions of self as an interdependent being, and beliefs in group agency over personal agency (Brewer & Chen, 2007). To the extent that psychological collectivism is not just another name for ingroup identification, researchers must examine the known differences between individualists and collectivists in the core elements and how the differences predict intergroup bias. For example, it would be informative to examine intergroup bias in situations of value conflict (i.e. group vs. personal goal priority) and illuminate how endorsing individualistic versus collectivistic values affects intergroup attitudes and behaviour, potentially through different mechanisms than group identification alone.

Important insights can also be driven by considering the joint impact of Ind-Col subcomponents at the individual level. At the individual level, Ind-Col subcomponents are conceptually distinct as a person's values, self-representations, and agency beliefs do not necessarily converge (Bond et al., 2004; Vignoles et al., 2016). Moreover, research (Choi et al., 2018; Choi & Euh, 2019; Lee et al., 2022; see also Choi, 2024) has shown that a specific combination of the subcomponents leads to differential effects within and between groups. For example, Choi and Euh (2019) have shown that South Koreans exhibited outgroup-benefitting attitudes and intentions in a real-world intergroup victimization situation (i.e. discrimination against migrant workers) when they combined a collectivistic value orientation and perceptions of self-uniqueness. Relatedly, a more nuanced model differentiating key aspects of selfhood across cultures may also provide useful insights. Scholars have questioned the utility of the broad distinction between the Western independent versus the East Asian interdependent self-concept and proposed that distinguishing different ways of being independent and interdependent across cultures helps explain cultural variations in social behaviour (e.g. Morrison et al., 2004; Noguchi, 2007). Particularly relevant to the current question is the multi-dimensional model of selfhood (Vignoles et al., 2016), which shows that an emphasis on self-uniqueness, self-direction, self-expression, and self-interest characterizes the individualistic West, whereas an emphasis on self-other similarity, harmony, and situational variability characterizes the selfhood in collectivistic Asia. These characteristics were identified at both the cultural level and the individual level. Thus, examining how each or a specific combination of the dimensions relates to intergroup bias in the relevant cultural context may lead to new insights.

At the cultural level, collectivism informs us of the degree to which a society overall values the group over the individual, along with how the society institutionalises specific norms and the developmental pathways that have formed the basis of a collectivistic culture (e.g. cooperation, social harmony, role responsibilities, familism, Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). Each country's historical background, cultural traditions, economic conditions, political systems, and natural environment combine to form a unique socio-ecological context (Berry, 2018; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). Thus, reducing the culture of collectivism to group identification will miss the critical socio-ecological and historical grounding that distinguishes collectivistic societies from more individualistic societies. In this regard, the socio-ecological analysis of group behaviour (Yamagishi et al., 1998; Yuki & Takemura, 2014) and research that illuminates the cultural pathways of specific intergroup biases such as colourism (Bettache, 2020) would offer valuable insights. This more nuanced approach would also suggest that even the key moderators of outgroup derogation, such as threat perceptions, negative affect, and power dynamics, must be examined within the historical context of intergroup conflict in a given society.

Obviously, acknowledging the different theoretical positions and disambiguating Ind-Col from the process of social identification will help researchers go beyond the simplistic assumption linking collectivism to the perilous effects of ingroup identification in intergroup settings. With this, researchers might test both the independent and the interactive effects of Ind-Col and social identification at multiple levels of analysis. One might explore the role of social identification as a variable that mediates the Ind-Col effects on intergroup behaviour (see Halloran & Kashima, 2006). Ind-Col can also be conceptualized as descriptive norms (see Fischer et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2002). Thus, researchers might also examine how Ind-Col as a normative standard in a given cultural context interacts with group identification in producing intergroup bias. This line of work may be informed by the previous research showing that strong identification with ingroups in an individualistic context leads to perceptions and behaviours consistent with *individualistic* cultural orientation (Jetten et al., 2002).

Conceptual refinements are also needed to more clearly illuminate the link between social identification and intergroup bias across cultures. A notable development is a framework of group identification by Roccas et al. (2008), which integrates the social identity perspective with Ind-Col, nationalism–patriotism, and organizational identification. This model proposes four conceptually distinct modes of identification: Importance, commitment, superiority, and deference. Of the four dimensions, importance and commitment map closely onto horizontal collectivism, whereas deference closely matches vertical collectivism. More importantly, superiority (i.e. how much a person views his/her

group as superior to other groups), the key predictor of intergroup bias in the social identity perspective, does not conceptually overlap the typical characteristics of collectivism.

Identifying other variables or cultural dimensions that interact with Ind-Col to predict intergroup bias could also lead to new insights. In particular, examining how group motivations intersect with Ind-Col might be a valuable addition. People join social groups and identify with them for different motivations (e.g. to affiliate with others, to cope with the fear of mortality, to reduce self-uncertainty; Hogg et al., 2008). Specifying how each of these different motives relates to different manifestations of intergroup bias is an important question to explore. The differences between Western analytic thinking and East Asian holistic thinking (Nisbett et al., 2001) also seem informative. One might infer that intergroup bias in Western societies is tied to the analytic thinking style in which people categorize social groups based on their defining attributes that are mutually exclusive. In such a context, establishing positive ingroup distinctiveness relative to outgroups may be particularly important as it implicates that the ingroup is superior to outgroups in the essence. In East Asian societies where people are more prone to holistic thinking, distinguishing social groups based on their essential properties may not fulfil their epistemic needs. Because holistic thinking emphasizes interconnectedness between entities, one might even propose that intergroup bias in East Asia stems from an absence of relational ties between individuals, regardless of their group membership.

Other than uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001), which was found to be a significant predictor of ingroup favouritism (see Fischer & Derham, 2016), cultural beliefs about the definition of a nation also seem promising. Drawing on multi-national data, Pehrson et al. (2009) found that national identification was associated with anti-immigrant prejudice at the national level. More interestingly, the relationship was stronger in countries where people endorse a definition of national membership based on an essentialist term (i.e. language). Researchers might also examine ecological factors related to ingroup favouritism. Van de Vliert (2011) has proposed that ecological threats to survival have led to national cultures that differ in baseline levels of ingroup favouritism. This research found that three forms of ingroup favouritism (i.e. compatriotism, nepotism, familism) are strongest in lower-income countries with demanding cold or hot climates. Another important but neglected issue in previous research is the link between political ideology and social discrimination. Bettache (Bettache et al., 2020; Bettache & Chiu, 2019) has argued that neo-liberalism, characteristic of North America and parts of Europe, inherently supports inequality and discrimination, forming the ideological basis of intergroup bias in Western individualistic societies. From this

standpoint, existing studies are limited as they neglect the critical role of the political environment that affects intergroup behaviour. To the extent that neoliberal ideology has become the primary political agenda in many, if not all, Asian societies (see Bettache et al., 2020), research that systematically integrates the interplay between Ind-Col and the predominant political ideology in producing intergroup discrimination represents a promising new avenue.

6.2 | Methodological issues

An important issue to be resolved is the choice of groups in comparative research on intergroup bias. For example, the salience and importance of specific groups (e.g. work groups versus family, local community versus a larger national group) being used for cross-cultural comparisons may bias the link between Ind-Col and intergroup bias. Acknowledging this potential bias and exploring ways to account for it could strengthen the validity of research findings. Fischer and Derham (2016) proposed that people in collectivistic societies are likely to exhibit ingroup favouritism if the target is real-life groups rather than artificial or novel ones. In collectivistic societies, individuals are strongly embedded in social ingroups in their daily lives. Thus, ingroup favouritism is more likely when the focus is on those groups with which people identify. By contrast, in individualistic societies where individuals are not strongly embedded in naturally occurring groups, a need for group affiliation may ironically lead to ingroup favouritism (see Hogg, 2007) even when the focus is given to a novel or an artificial social category, as shown by the minimal group research.

In a related vein, it is also important to consider the variations in the availability and salience of different groups in a society. Societies may differ in terms of the number of groups open to new members and the degree of stability in group memberships (see Triandis, 1995), and this difference might affect the degree of correlation between the two forms of intergroup bias. For instance, in a society where groups constantly emerge while people continue to vie with each other for status and membership, outgroup derogation may not be in the service of individual members. Additionally, it is important to note that both forms of intergroup bias are likely to emerge when intergroup comparisons are salient due to the existence of competition between groups and threats from the outgroup (e.g. Mummendey & Otten, 2001; Riek et al., 2006; Scheepers et al., 2006). When these factors are taken into account, the correlation between ingroup favouritism and outgroup derogation may turn out to be bigger than it has been reported. In research on the link between Ind-Col and intergroup bias, the disconnection between 'ingroup love' and 'outgroup hate' (Brewer, 1999, 2007; Spears, 2021; Weisel & Böhm, 2015) represents an opportunity for a discovery.

7 | CONCLUSION

The role of Ind-Col in intergroup bias has been examined in various contexts, with each of the studies touching on different aspects of Ind-Col. This is reminiscent of what Triandis has pointed out: “Research on individualism and collectivism is like the parable of the blind men, each touching a different side of an elephant” (1993, p. 157). At least for now, it is fair to say that there is no clear indication that collectivism is a fertile ground for intergroup bias relative to individualism. Nevertheless, intergroup bias is a ubiquitous feature of all societies. Thus, a more productive approach would be to specify the factors that facilitate or inhibit the bias in each cultural context and the psychological processes that underlie the observed differences and similarities across cultures.

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Hoon-Seok Choi: Conceptualization; formal analysis; investigation; project administration; resources; writing – original draft.

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