

2015

# Identity Reconstruction as Shiduers: Narratives from Chinese Older Adults Who Lost Their Only Child

Yongqiang Zheng

*George Fox University*, [yzheng@georgefox.edu](mailto:yzheng@georgefox.edu)

Thomas Lawson

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw\\_fac](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/sw_fac)



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Previously published in *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 24(4). DOI: 10.1111/ijsw.12139 Posted with permission  
[http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1468-2397](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1468-2397)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Work at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - School of Social Work by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolf@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolf@georgefox.edu).

# Identity reconstruction as *shidu*ers: Narratives from Chinese older adults who lost their only child

Zheng Y., Lawson T.R. Identity reconstruction as *shidu*ers:  
Narratives from Chinese older adults who lost their only child

The purpose of this qualitative study was to illustrate how the identity of Chinese older adults who lost their only child changed after the traumatic event in the context of unique culture and policy settings. The individuals studied were 14 adults over the age of 50. Each respondent was interviewed concerning his or her post-loss experiences. Results indicated that these bereaved parents are not only deeply impacted by the loss of the most loved one, but are also stigmatized by the culture and victimized by the one-child policy. The collective identity as *shidu*er is defined not only by personal grief but also by cultural uniqueness and the unintended consequences of the one-child policy.

**Yongqiang Zheng, Thomas R. Lawson**

Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville,  
Louisville, KY, USA

Key words: older adults, *shidu*ers, grief, bereavement,  
one-child policy, China

Yongqiang Zheng, Kent School of Social Work, Patterson Hall,  
Room 110, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292, USA  
E-mail: yq.zheng@louisville.edu

Is there anything in the world more bitter than the death of your child? Yes, it is even more traumatic when the child is your only one, you are getting older and you live in a society where children are the source of care for aging parents. The loss of a child in a family is “the most distressing and long-lasting of all grief” (Gorer, 1965, p. 121). For parents, the impact of the loss of a child is universally similar, but a large group of parents in China are facing significantly different circumstances due to the policy and cultural context.

For the past 33 years, millions of families have been restricted in the number of children they can have by a policy known as “the family planning policy” or simply as “the one-child policy.” Aside from the debate about the violation of human rights, there are indeed several risks that a one-child family must face. One of them is the death of that only child, which is even more difficult if the child dies when the parents are older. The issue of loss of the only child emerged recently only because those who complied with the policy decades ago are now in their late fifties or sixties and aging with grief. These parents who have lost their only child have been labeled *shidu*ers (失獨者), which literally translates as “people whose child has died.” The magnitude of the *shidu*ers population has not yet been officially determined; however, the estimate ranges from one million to ten million. A generally accepted statement, based on the average death rate and total population between age 15 and 30, is that there are 76,000 new families who lose their only child each year nationwide (National Health Department of the People’s Republic of China, 2010).

The *shidu*ers’ intense grief is rooted in the high-risk structure of the one-child family, but questions related to the impact of the child’s death on their present view of themselves and their group have not received sufficient attention or been investigated. This study explored the *shidu*ers’ post-trauma world, focusing on the reconstruction of meaning for *shidu*ers in terms of their personal and social identities.

## Literature review

### Grief, identity, and identity reconstruction

Parents’ acute grief can last for a significantly long period and lead to impairment in mental and physical health (Lannen, Wolfe, Prigerson, Onelov, & Kreicbergs, 2008). According to Gillies and Neimeyer (2006), current grief theory asserts that loss often fosters a transition in the bereaved person’s sense of self. In the early 20th century, researchers postulated that identity is constructed and reconstructed through a dynamic interaction with others (Mead, 1934). Social constructivism views identity as symbolically co-constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Since the construction of identity is heavily influenced by the significant other, the removal of the significant other necessitates a reconstruction of the identity. Olberding (1997) pointed out that the death of a significant person serves to expose the self to a discontinuity, not only in the relationship, but also in the identity of the self. Universally, roles attached to family life are central for personal identities (Reitzes & Mutran, 2002), and it may be fair to conclude that all bereaved parents must

grieve their old identity and create a new sense of self in order to acknowledge the reality of the child's death (Rando, 1991).

On a more macro level, identity is the consequence of a socio-historical context (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). People differentiate from each other significantly on acceptable ways and outcomes of identity reconstruction in grief. Using this macro framework, group-level sociopolitical variables could be linked with individual traumatic experiences and responses (Muldoon & Lowe, 2012). The concept of social identity highlights the inseparability of group membership and individual psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). From the perspective of social identity, people define their sense of self in terms of group membership in many social contexts. Research has shown that social identity has a positive impact on life satisfaction because it serves as a basis for effective mutual support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). On the other hand, identity loss can have a dramatic negative impact on mental health (Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002). Research has additionally suggested that belonging to a disadvantaged or stigmatized group poses a threat to the individual's well-being (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009). Riches and Dawson (1996) found that feelings of stigmatization and isolation are common among bereaved parents.

### The cultural and political characteristics of identity

In every culture, a context is provided for grieving, and situations and experiences that profoundly affect the living often become a major source of explanation for how deaths can occur (Rosenblatt, 2008). Western and Eastern cultures have different constructs of the self. In Eastern culture, especially East Asia, the self is characterized as an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), meaning "the self is made meaningful primarily in reference to those social relations of which the self is a participating part" (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997, p. 1247). Therefore, maintaining close relationships is central to maintaining a stable sense of self and self-esteem for people with interdependent self-construals. Empirical studies have revealed closeness or desired closeness with family members is consistently stronger among people with interdependent self-construals (Li, 2002). Furthermore, persons with interdependent self-construals could also be overly concerned about how other people think of them, be overly dependent on others, and strive to please others (Mak, Law, & Teng, 2010).

The personal identity of bereaved Chinese parents was embodied in the concrete identity constituted by the relationship with the deceased child (Weigert & Hastings, 1977). However, the death of children was viewed as a taboo associated with numerous

superstitions and customs (Lee, 1997). In Confucianism, "having no posterity is extremely non-filial" (不孝有三，無後為大), those who do not have a child are stigmatized as "juehu" (絕戶), which literally means "those who are going to become extinct." Research has indicated that parents in one-child families are highly child-centered "to rank having one child as the most important aspects of their lives, and to consider having a child a major life fulfillment" (Chow & Zhao, 1996, p. 44).

In terms of grief, Chinese parents' emotional loss is not individual in the context of the policy regulation. Craps (2010) indicated that focusing on individual psychology ignores and leaves unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic event. China's one-child policy is "the boldest and largest experiment in population control in the history of the world" (McLoughlin, 2005, p. 312). Once it led to hundreds of millions of one-child families; now it becomes the political cause of families that lost their only child. Thus, social identity could be used to explain "how structural inequality gets translated into subjective discontent" (Taylor & Whittier, 1992, p. 104), or how it spurs collective action (Fowler & Kam, 2007). The one-child policy and its unintended negative consequences that result from the loss of that only child are unique. Although current theories and empirical research have provided a general framework in understanding identity changes of the bereaved parents from a Western perspective, *shidu*ers provide a very different opportunity for investigation and one that has not been explored.

## Methodology

### Participants

Fourteen participants were recruited via several online *shidu*er support groups (失獨者QQ群). These groups are Internet communities that people spontaneously organized for information exchange and emotional support. Individuals in these groups use screen names instead of their real names. Participants were recruited in accordance with the following inclusion criteria:

- (1) Must be over 50 years old. For the purposes of the present study, the authors decided upon "older" being over the age of 50 years old. This was based on the fact that the one-child policy was strictly applied nationally in 1980 in the urban areas of China. Considering that the legal age of marriage for women is 20 years old, those who complied with the policy would be at least 50 years old today. Additionally, 50 years of age is commonly accepted as the upper age limit for women to give birth.
- (2) Could be either men or women.
- (3) Had strictly complied with the one-child policy in their childbearing age, and had only one child.

- (4) Had lost their only child over six months ago. (Those who lost their child in the last six months were not included based on the assumption that they are still in a highly intense stage of bereavement).

Of the 14 participants, 12 were female and 2 were male, and their age ranged from 51 to 63 with a mean of 55.6. Three participants were divorced, all women. The level of education ranged from high school through college. All of the participants were retired urban residents. The latest time since the child's death was 12 years, and the most recent death was 2 years ago. The main reasons for the child's death were accident (9), followed by illness (3) and suicide (2).

### Ethical issues

A written consent form was presented and explained to the participants before they agreed to be involved in the study. To address ethical concerns, the authors:

- (1) Ensured that the participants understood what was being asked of them and acquired the signed consent.
- (2) Explained to the participants that the interview might bring up emotional issues.
- (3) Reduced the potential for distress through developing an informal style of interviewing to create a relaxed atmosphere.
- (4) Maintained anonymity throughout the study process by using screen names.
- (5) Were mindful of any identifying details about the participants.

### Interview procedure

An introduction letter was posted to these Internet groups online asking potential participants to leave their phone number and if they left the number they would be contacted later by telephone, read a description of the study, and be invited to participate.

A semi-structured approach was used as it was assumed that the participants might not have had the opportunity to tell their life stories before and hence may have difficulties without some prompt questions. The interview began by asking open-ended questions about the person's life such as, "Tell me about yourself, please." Then questions about the person's current life were asked, such as, "Describe your daily life for me." The interview then moved on to asking about significant past events such as, "Can you tell me more about your child's death?" Then, questions relating to self-concept and social identity were asked including, "What is your personal experience after his/her death?" "How did your life change after his/her death?" Lastly, questions about their future life were asked, such as, "What are your hopes for the future?"

To facilitate the interview process, participants chose the places where they wanted to meet with the author; these places included small parks, public halls of restaurants, and quiet street corners. Some supplemental materials such as personal letters and online blogs were also included for analysis.

### Findings

By analyzing the final narrative materials, the two authors reached consensus on the interpretations and supporting quotes. Then, *shiduer* identity was divided into two themes: the personal identity in terms of "who I am" and the social identity in terms of "who we are."

#### Being a *shiduer* as a personal identity

*I am not a Mom anymore, I am a shiduer now.* Those families that strictly complied with the one-child policy were typically small (not an extended family) with only three people in the home: father, mother, and child. The disadvantage of this simple triangle structure is that it cannot handle the loss of any of its angles; the loss tends to dissolve the family structure itself and along with it the personal identity in the family, as father and mother. A woman whose screen name is Dier's Mom said, "*I buried myself with my daughter already, I am already dead as Dier's Mom, but I am alive as a shiduer, helplessly and desperately.*"

Family structure and dynamics are a central and powerful source of unique, particularistic, and highly valued personal identities. However, when the family becomes smaller, the potential for unsupported and irreplaceable personal identity loss increases (Weigert & Hastings, 1977). A woman, whose screen name is Baobei, described her deceased son as the "*center of her whole world.*" "*He was our sky. When he left, we felt the sky fell and nobody could hold the sky for us. What is the meaning of my life now?*"

Chinese *shidu*ers, with typical interdependent self-construals, define themselves in terms of connections and role relationships with significant others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the Confucian worldview, the most important relationship is son to father. Filial piety even goes further as the model of all social relationships (Klass & Goss, 2003). Therefore, without a child, the essentials of family relationship and the wholeness of family are gone. One woman, whose screen name is Meili, stated, "*Without our child, the connection between me and my husband was gone. We ate independently and slept independently. He didn't bring home his salary anymore, and he told me he used to do this for the family and now there was no family for us.*"

*Is there no "me" beside family?* Traditionally, Chinese women achieve a sense of status, security, and



happiness in life through the experience of having and rearing children, especially sons (Wolf, 1972). Research indicates that a significant other's death to individuals from an interconnectedness culture is more detrimental to the person's sense of self than it is in other cultural groups (Catlin, 1993). Families in the West are commonly encouraged to get on with life and avoid dwelling on the death (Walsh & McGoldrick, 1991). The converse occurs with *shidu*ers who try to restore a family model in which they can define themselves as parents or grandparents. Meigui remarked, "When my son died, I really wanted to have another child, but I was 52 years old then, and I could not give birth anymore. I even thought about adoption, but do I really have the ability to raise a young kid to his adulthood? I don't know."

Another mom, screen name Dongdong, told the authors her story of trying to continue the bloodline:

*My daughter-in-law was pregnant at that time, I begged her, and I begged her so much. I said please keep the baby, please. You don't need to take care of the baby; you can just leave when you delivered the birth. We can give you money or anything for this baby. We can sell our house; you just leave us a small roof, which is enough for your father-in-law and me. You know after our death, everything that belongs to us will belong to you and this child. But she did not keep the baby. I did not blame her, she was a young woman then, and how could she give birth to the dead husband's child and hope to marry again? I as a woman probably would not do this either, but it would be so much better if we could have my son's child, his blood.*

These bereaved parents seldom talked about "I" as an individual: does this mean they have no pure "self" outside of the family? Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, and Nisbett (1998, p. 925) pointed out that "living interdependently does not mean the loss of self, the fusion of self with the other, or the absence of self-interests. What it does mean is that attention, cognition, affect, and motivation are organized with respect to relationship and norms." Therefore, their personal identity is more likely than those of Westerners to be influenced by significant others (Yuki, 2003).

### Being *shidu*ers as social identity

*It's better if there is no more social.* Research on Vietnam veterans found that a certain social identity as veterans led to the isolation of individuals (Summerfield, 2001). In the case of *shidu*ers, bereavement itself usually ushers in a time of social marginality and social isolation, especially for elderly persons (Lund, Caserta, Dimond, & Gray, 1986).

Meigui explained why she did not want to be involved in any of her previous social life after her child's death:

*I never wanted to be around my old social life after my child's death. What do those who are my age talk about? Children, it's always children: children's achievement, children's higher education, marriage, or even the next generation – children's children. What could I say when I was there? With me there, they probably need to be mindful of their topics; but without me, maybe they are more open and relaxed.*

The important effect of social isolation and subsequent impairment of identity must be recognized, since social isolation creates additional stress which serves to undermine self-esteem (Whitehead, 2006).

*We are the unlucky ones.* The concept of "juehu" is a cultural stigmatization for people without a child. "Jue" (絕) in Chinese has a "bad luck" connotation such as terminated, broken or lost. In this sense, *shidu*er is a social identity that is stigmatized because it is considered as a mark of failure or shame, tainting the self in the eyes of others (Goffman, 1963). Meiyin, a female respondent, told the authors her story:

*Once it was a spring festival, and several shidu couples went south for vacation, including us. We reserved a table at this restaurant. The waiter was curious that this table was full of old couples with not a single child with them. So he asked and found out we were shiduers. Then we were asked to leave, actually forced to leave.*

The negative social meanings of stigma to one's self-concept could be internalized (Frost, 2011) and then attached to one's identity. A woman, whose screen name is Tiantangyu, said:

*One of my son's friends was going to get married; my son was invited but he couldn't attend the wedding because he was dead. I thought I should keep my son's promise. So I went to their wedding and gave the bridegroom our gifts, representing my son. But I did not go beyond their door, because I am unlucky.*

Western research has shown that possessing an identity with greater cultural stigma attached to it will be related to increased psychological distress (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009) and also poorer health outcomes (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

*Tong Ming Ren* (同命人) *Shidu*ers often identify themselves with other *shidu*ers as Tong Ming Ren, which literally means "those who share the same destiny." After the child's death, the Internet has become a main source for those Chinese parents

seeking those who have experienced the same loss, accessing support, and organizing. For them, “the Internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self” (Turkle, 1995, p. 180).

They call their face-to-face activities Bao Tuan (抱團), which means “hold together.” Thus, Bao Tuan can be viewed as their way of responding to social stigmatization and reconstructing a new form of social life. In addition, some level of peer support may be expected from such activities. The perception of support from similar others has been shown to reduce the negative effects of stigma on health and well-being (Fribley, Platt, & Hoey, 1998).

The supportive role of Tong Ming Ren appears critical and may have an additional important function as professional help for *shidu*ers barely exists in China. Baobei remarked:

*We came to those who had just lost their kid; told them our story of going through it ourselves. Sometimes we provide help to each other in a more practical way. Last time, a woman named Jiao was in the hospital for surgery. We organized to provide care and raise funds, like her family should do. We even came to the funeral when one person in the group left us.*

More or less, Tong Ming Ren’s support seems to ease their ultimate fear of being a *shidu*er – a lonely death.

*Are we victims?* Except for various reasons for how their child died, Chinese bereaved parents tend to attribute their problems to the one-child policy. Pan, a male respondent, said in an agitated voice:

*Doesn’t the existence of the one-child policy certainly lead to this result? Wasn’t it a situation they should have thought about when they made this policy a law? Nobody ever thought about this result? I don’t think so. Nobody wants to take responsibility. That is what I think.*

The shared identity as *shidu*er emerged from the collective experience of the traumatic event. In effect, such an identity can validate and thus increase feelings of group-based anger derived from the emotional experiences of injustice based on a collective disadvantage (Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). *Shidu*ers face not only the loss itself, but also the injustice of being given no social recognition or social support. Their experiences increase their identification as the victims of social inequality (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). A male respondent, Ziran, remarked, “*I was obedient to the Party’s words and had only one child. But now, I feel I am a fool.*”

Most importantly, this shared collective identity fosters an interactive sense of “we-ness” and serves as a collective agency of social change (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). With a social identity, members of disadvantaged groups can work together to buffer themselves from the negative consequences of their circumstances (Blaine & Crocker, 1995).

*Public expression of being shidu*ers. In June 2012, May 2013, and April 2014, *shidu*ers from across China came to Beijing to petition the government (上訪). Hundreds of them stood outside the door of the National Committee of Population and Family Planning, wearing the same white hat with the black Chinese characters of *shidu*er. These two colors are the same as those typically used in funerals in China. This highly organized and conceptualized collective action became a public expression of the self (McDonald, 2002). Collective identities are expressed in many cultural materials, for example names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals, clothing (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Dier’s Mom is one of the advocates of the petition. She published a public letter online to the National People’s Congress (NPC), the highest legislative body of China. In the letter, she described “*Shidu*ers as a group that sacrificed themselves for national interests. They have taken the risk of the policy, and the government should take the responsible of correcting the defective policy by compensating them.”

Theoretically, people tend to conceal their stigmatized identity, because revealing has a direct effect on distress, social devaluation, and rejection (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). The rationale of publicizing one’s identity as *shidu*er is to reframe experiences of stigma-related stress as opportunities for activism and social change to improve one’s social position (Frost, 2011). From victim to sacrificer, *shidu*ers want to change the collective identity’s connotation by removing the negation. Humans are active and selective in their self-identification (Rosenberg, 1979). Therefore, collective identities, using strategies of social protest, are being constructed, deconstructed, celebrated, and enacted (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). For its part, the government is trying to reduce the negative connotation of the name “*shidu*er” by a small change in the policy. Now, in an official change by the government, families who lost their only child are called “families with special difficulty due to the family planning policy (計生困難家庭).”

Unlike some radical social protestors who aim at the abolishment of the one-child policy, *shidu*ers petitioned within the context of the policy, advocating for their care in later life and for the government to show concern. Ziran said, “*What we asked is another form of support for the one-child policy. If the government*

could not take care of us, who would comply with this policy later? Then who would believe in this anymore? We were asking for the respect we deserve.” Baobei said the same, “Did we ask too much? Absolutely not! We just ask for a later life with dignity and a death with dignity.” Unfortunately, there is no effective system that could provide help to *shidu*ers and meet their needs; the one-child policy provides no legal basis for those who have lost their only child. *Shidu*ers are profoundly experiencing the deficiencies of the law.

## Discussion

The results of this investigation suggest that the *shidu*ers’ new identity is based on traumatic loss and embedded in the societal and cultural context. Unlike their counterparts in the Western world, *shidu*ers do not have only a personal identity as a person who is mourning the loss of their only child, but also a social identity which culturally stigmatizes and politically victimizes them. Identity theory views the self as having multiple identities, some of which will be more salient than others (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The most important characteristic of the *shidu*er’s identity is its collectivity, which is significantly different from their Western counterparts. A *shidu*er’s identity is as much social as personal.

This study attempted to provide a perspective for researchers, both Western and Eastern, to better understand *shidu*ers. Symbolic interactionism, social constructivism, and Markus and Kitayama’s theory of interdependent self-construals all claim that the self is constructed within the surrounding context. Additionally, Giddens (1991) stated that individuals must continually construct and reconstruct their identity in the modern world. Identity emerges and is forged in historical time and cultural place through the social actions of persons maintained and sustained by the reproduction of such actions (Greenwood, 1994). Thus, self is not a passive entity. Theories not only question the assumed universality in human psychological behaviors but also remind us that a *shidu*er’s cognition, emotion, and motivation in their identity reconstruction cannot be simply understood through study of their counterpart in Western culture. The *shidu*ers themselves in their narratives focus on the great importance of shifting from “I am” to “We are,” from their individual identity to their identities in the larger social context. A central feature of identity is its tendency toward continuity (Strauss, 1997). However, the loss of a child represents the greatest breach in the continuity of past and future. *Shidu*ers are a group who are attempting to reconstruct the damaged self in continuity with its past; even more, they are a group who are aging. These factors contribute to *shidu*ers’ long-lasting grief. Furthermore, their grief is more and more

becoming a public health and policy issue that is jeopardizing social stability and potentially leading to other social problems.

Being bereaved and grieving because of oppression by a social policy has formed the *shidu*ers’ political agenda. Their traumatic emotions have become the source and the “strength” of the identity in collective action (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001). Their claims articulate the importance of connecting private emotion to loss and grief in the public sphere. *Shidu*ers, as a large group, are suffering from the negative effects of both the one-child policy and culture, and deserve sufficient societal concern to address their needs.

This study has certain limitations. The sample was small, and the participants were self-selected by volunteering to be called. Therefore, the findings may be biased. Further investigation that addresses the socio-cultural context of the *shidu*er phenomenon is needed. With a larger sample, gender differences in the processing of identity reconstruction could be explored. Also, *shidu*er identity and the question of divorce need to be studied, considering that in this sample only the women were divorced.

Considering the huge population of *shidu*ers, their mental health impairment due to long-lasting grief, their social exclusion, and the lack of a sufficiently supportive policy, the tragedy of Chinese *shidu*ers presents an urgent mandate for social action. At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the one-child policy was eased to allow parents who come from one-child families to have more than one child. The government is currently strengthening adult children’s responsibility for caring for their elderly parents through new legislation, but this does not solve the problem for *shidu*ers who have no children. The government continues to ignore the need to rectify the unintended outcome of the one-child policy. The population of China is rapidly aging. A comprehensive policy that is systematically designed to provide for the overall welfare of the majority while also meeting the needs of the *shidu*ers is urgently needed.

## References

- Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (No. 10). London, UK: Penguin.
- Blaine, B. & Crocker, J. (1995). Religiousness, race, and psychological well-being: Exploring social-psychological mediators. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(10), 1031–1041.
- Catlin, G. (1993). The role of culture in grief. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 133(2), 173–184.
- Chow, E. N. L. & Zhao, S. M. (1996). The one-child policy and parent-child relationships: A comparison of one-child with multiple-child families in China. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 16(12), 35–62.



- Cohen, S. & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357.
- Craps, S. (2010). Wor(l)ds of grief: Traumatic memory and literary witnessing in cross-cultural perspective. *Textual Practice*, 24(1), 51–68.
- Fiske, A. P., Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Nisbett, R. E. (1998). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In D. T. Gilbert & S. T. Fiske (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (pp. 915–981). New York, USA: McGraw-Hill.
- Fletcher Fominaya, C. (2010). Collective identity in social movements: Central concepts and debates. *Sociology Compass*, 4(6), 393–404.
- Fowler, J. H. & Kam, C. D. (2007). Beyond the self: Social identity, altruism, and political participation. *Journal of Politics*, 69(3), 813–827.
- Frabie, D. E., Platt, L., & Hoey, S. (1998). Concealable stigmas and positive self-perceptions: Feeling better around similar others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(4), 909–922.
- Frost, D. M. (2011). Social stigma and its consequences for the socially stigmatized. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(11), 824–839.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and identity in the late modern age*. London, UK: Cambridge.
- Gillies, J. & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Loss, grief, and the search for significance: Toward a model of meaning reconstruction in bereavement. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 19(1), 31–65.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, USA: Prentice Hall.
- Goodwin, J. & Pfaff, S. (2001). Emotion work in high-risk social movements: Managing fear in the US and East German civil rights movements. In J. Goodwin, J. M. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics: emotions and social movements* (pp. 282–302). Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Gorer, G. (1965). *Death, grief, and mourning*. New York, NY, USA: Doubleday.
- Greenwood, J. D. (1994). A sense of identity: Prolegomena to a social theory of personal identity. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 24(1), 25–46.
- Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., Postmes, T., & Haslam, C. (2009). Social identity, health and well-being: An emerging agenda for applied psychology. *Applied Psychology*, 58(1), 1–23.
- Jetten, J., O'Brien, A., & Trindall, N. (2002). Changing identity: Predicting adjustment to organizational restructure as a function of subgroup and superordinate identification. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(2), 281–297.
- Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., Matsumoto, H., & Norasakkunkit, V. (1997). Individual and collective processes in the construction of the self: Self-enhancement in the United States and self-criticism in Japan. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(6), 1245–1267.
- Klass, D. & Goss, R. (2003). The politics of grief and continuing bonds with the dead: The cases of Maoist China and Wahhabi Islam. *Death Studies*, 27(9), 787–811.
- Labov, W. & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 74–104). Seattle, USA: University of Washington Press.
- Lannen, P. K., Wolfe, J., Prigerson, H. G., Onelov, E., & Kreicbergs, U. C. (2008). Unresolved grief in a national sample of bereaved parents: Impaired mental and physical health 4 to 9 years later. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 26(36), 5870–5876.
- Lee, E. (1997). *Working with Asian Americans: A guide for clinicians*. New York, NY, USA: Guilford.
- Li, H. Z. (2002). Culture, gender and self-close-other(s) connectedness in Canadian and Chinese samples. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32(1), 93–104.
- Lund, D. A., Caserta, M. S., Dimond, M. F., & Gray, R. M. (1986). Impact of bereavement on the self-conceptions of older surviving spouses. *Symbolic Interaction*, 9(2), 235–244.
- Major, B. & O'Brien, L. T. (2005). The social psychology of stigma. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 56(1), 393–421.
- Mak, W. W., Law, R. W., & Teng, Y. (2010). Cultural model of vulnerability to distress: The role of self-construal and sociotropy on anxiety and depression among Asian Americans and European Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42(1), 75–88.
- Markus, H. R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98(2), 224–253.
- McDonald, K. (2002). From solidarity to fluidity: Social movements beyond 'collective identity' – The case of globalization conflicts. *Social Movement Studies*, 1(2), 109–128.
- McLoughlin, C. S. (2005). The coming-of-age of China's single-child policy. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42(3), 305–313.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. Chicago, IL, USA: University of Chicago press.
- Muldoon, O. T. & Lowe, R. D. (2012). Social identity, groups, and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Political Psychology*, 33(2), 259–273.
- National Health Department of the People's Republic of China. (2010). *National health statistics yearbook*. Beijing, China: Peking Union Medical College Press. Retrieved from: <http://wsb.moh.gov.cn/htmlfiles/zwgkzt/ptjnj/year2010/index2010.html>
- Olberding, A. (1997). Mourning, memory, and identity: A comparative study of the constitution of the self in grief. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 37(145), 29–44.
- Polletta, F. & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 283–305.
- Quinn, D. M. & Chaudoir, S. R. (2009). Living with a concealable stigmatized identity: The impact of anticipated stigma, centrality, salience, and cultural stigma on psychological distress and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(4), 634–651.
- Rando, T. A. (1991). *How to go on living when someone you love dies*. New York, NY, USA: Bantam Books.
- Reitzes, D. C. & Mutran, E. J. (2002). Self-concept as the organization of roles: Importance, centrality, and balance. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 43(4), 647–667.
- Riches, G. & Dawson, P. (1996). Communities of feeling: The culture of bereaved parents. *Mortality*, 1(2), 143–162.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York, NY, USA: Basic.
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2008). Grief across cultures: A review and research agenda. In M. S. Stroebe (Ed.), *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention* (pp. 207–222). Washington, DC, USA: American Psychological Association.
- Strauss, A. L. (1997). *Mirrors and masks: The search for identity*. New Brunswick, NJ, USA: Transaction publishers.
- Stryker, S. & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(4), 284–297.
- Summerfield, D. (2001). The invention of post-traumatic stress disorder and the social usefulness of a psychiatric category. *British Medical Journal*, 322(7278), 95–98.
- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup theory. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago, IL, USA: Nelson Hall.
- Taylor, V. & Whittier, N. (1992). Collective identity in social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization. In



- P. M. Nardi & B. E. Schneider (Eds.), *Social perspectives in lesbian and gay studies* (pp. 349–365). New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Tetlock, P. E., Kristel, O. V., Elson, S. B., Green, M. C., & Lerner, J. S. (2000). The psychology of the unthinkable: Taboo trade-offs, forbidden base rates, and heretical counterfactuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(5), 853–870.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the internet*. Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press.
- Van Zomeren, M., Spears, R., Fischer, A. H., & Leach, C. W. (2004). Put your money where your mouth is! Explaining collective action tendencies through group-based anger and group efficacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(5), 649–664.
- Walsh, F. & McGoldrick, M. (1991). Loss and the family: A systemic perspective. In F. Walsh & M. McGoldrick (Eds.), *Living beyond loss: Death in the family* (pp. 1–29). New York, NY, USA: W. W. Norton.
- Weigert, A. J. & Hastings, R. (1977). Identity loss, family, and social change. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1171–1185.
- Whitehead, L. (2006). Toward a trajectory of identity reconstruction in chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis: A longitudinal qualitative study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 43(8), 1023–1031.
- Wolf, M. (1972). *Women and the family in rural Taiwan*. Stanford, CA, USA: Stanford University Press.
- Yuki, M. (2003). Intergroup comparison versus intragroup relationships: A cross-cultural examination of social identity theory in North American and East Asian cultural contexts. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66(2), 166–183.