

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**SEEKING AND AVOIDING I CONTACT:
WHEN SUBJECTIVE OVERLAP APPEALS AND WHEN IT REPELS**

A Thesis in

Psychology

by

Anson E. Long

© 2007 Anson E. Long

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2007

The thesis of Anson E. Long was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Elizabeth C. Pinel
Associate Professor of Psychology
Thesis Adviser
Chair of Committee

Karen Gasper
Associate Professor of Psychology

Theresa K. Vescio
Associate Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies

Michael P. Johnson
Associate Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Women's Studies,
and African and African American Studies

Melvin M. Mark
Professor of Psychology
Interim Head of the Department of Psychology

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Previous research demonstrates the positive interpersonal effects of I-sharing (i.e., sharing subjective experiences; Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006). In the present research, I examined people's desire to I-share as a function of the target's likability, along with three moderators. Study 1 examined the effect of experiential versus rational mindset (Epstein, 1994); Study 2 examined the effect of expectations regarding sharing experiences and the effect of objective similarity. Results support the plausibility of the phenomena of *subjective assimilation* (i.e., seeking I-sharing) and *subjective differentiation* (i.e., avoiding I-sharing), and elucidate the roles of the three moderators.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter 2. STUDY 1.....	21
Method.....	21
Results.....	28
Discussion.....	30
Chapter 3. STUDY 2.....	31
Method.....	32
Results.....	37
Discussion.....	41
Chapter 4. GENERAL DISCUSSION.....	44

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations Between Study 1 Variables.....	27
Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Between Study 2 Variables.....	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The effect of dissimilar targets' likability and participants' experience expectations on subjective assimilation/differentiation.....	39
Figure 2. The effect of similar targets' likability and participants' experience expectations on subjective assimilation/differentiation	40

**Seeking and Avoiding I Contact:
When Subjective Overlap Appeals and When It Repels**

I can't even touch the books you've read

– Bob Dylan, *Idiot Wind*

In his song *Idiot Wind*, Bob Dylan sings about despising a former lover so much that he would not want to go so far as to touch the same books that she reads. Although this kind of reaction may seem extreme, I believe Dylan's sentiment bespeaks a more general phenomenon, whereby people avoid experiencing the same stimuli that people they dislike experience. I refer to this type of distancing – distancing at the level of experience – as *subjective differentiation*.

In contrast, people who like one another often seem to strive for shared experiences. They watch movies and TV together, trade their favorite books and music, and compare notes about everything from Architecture to Zoroastrianism. I refer to this phenomenon – seeking similarity at the level of experience – as *subjective assimilation*.

The terms subjective differentiation and subjective assimilation derive from William James' (1910/1968) theoretical distinction between two parts of the self – the Me and the I. The Me refers to the more stable self-as-object, the self-picture, or self-concept. The I, on the other hand, refers to the self-as-subject, that part of the self that constantly changes as it experiences and interprets the world. As an analogy to this distinction between the Me and the I, picture a woman looking at herself in a mirror. The reflection that she sees – that vision of herself upon which she can reflect, that relatively stable image of who she is and what she looks like that she sees each time she steps in front of the glass – represents her Me. The part of her that stands in front of the glass, reflecting on the image, experiencing the picture that lies before her, represents her I.

Should she shift her gaze, her experience will change and so too will her I. Indeed, the very transience of the I prompted James to describe it as “passing states of consciousness.”

Drawing from James’ distinction between these two aspects of the self, subjective assimilation refers to those times when people seek to align their own subjective self – their I – with that of someone else, and subjective differentiation refers to those times when people seek to distinguish their subjective self from that of someone else. More specifically, subjective assimilation occurs when one consciously or non-consciously strives to have the same subjective experience as another person, and subjective differentiation occurs when one consciously or non-consciously strives to have a different subjective experience than another person. In the case of subjective assimilation, this means seeking exposure to stimuli that a target is experiencing (or will experience); in the case of subjective differentiation, this means avoiding exposure to stimuli that a target is experiencing (or will experience). Indeed, the clearest signs of subjective assimilation occur when people know what stimulus a target person is experiencing, and then they expose themselves to the same stimulus. The clearest signs of subjective differentiation occur when people know what stimulus a target person is experiencing, and then they avoid exposure to that stimulus. Both subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation should be more likely to occur when one has reason to believe that she would experience those stimuli in the same way as the target, because people seek or avoid shared *experiences*, not simply shared exposure.

Why do people engage in subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation? Subjective assimilation behaviors probably are motivated by the draw of I-sharing. Pinel

and colleagues (Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006; Pinel, Long, Landau, & Pyszczynski, 2004) have shown that I-sharing (i.e., sharing phenomenological experiences, or similarity with respect to the subjective self) promotes liking and feelings of closeness. According to Pinel and colleagues, the allure of I-sharing stems from its ability to relieve people's persistent state of existential isolation (Yalom, 1980), and help them to feel existentially connected. Because existential isolation – a universal element of the human condition – prevents people from ever truly knowing another person's subjective experience, it eliminates the possibility of knowing for certain how another person feels, thinks, or perceives the world. However, when people I-share, they believe that they have overcome this existential barrier, that they do know another person's subjective experience, and someone else knows their own subjective experience, because they believe that they feel, think, and perceive exactly the same thing. In light of the research on I-sharing, perhaps it is not surprising that people would seek out shared subjective experiences with people they like. People engage in subjective assimilation to reap all the benefits of I-sharing – the mutual liking, feelings of closeness, and existential connection that I-sharing provides.

However, although Pinel and colleagues have tended to focus on its benefits, perhaps I-sharing does not always represent such a positive occurrence. The overlapping experience inherent in I-sharing entails a certain amount of intimacy – intimacy at the deepest level of how people perceive, interpret, and react to the world. Perhaps there are some people with whom one would never want to feel so intimate, some people with perspectives one would never want to see. If one were to I-share with an axe murderer, a child molester, or a KKK member, for instance, one would likely feel frightened,

repulsed, or disgusted. People likely reject the very idea of any sort of intimacy with undesirable characters such as these, and they may reject with particular vehemence intimacy at such a fundamental level as experience.

Thankfully, people do not often meet axe murderers, child molesters, or KKK members in their daily lives. But people may engage in subjective differentiation even with those who merely annoy, provoke, or rub them the wrong way – i.e, those they merely dislike. People probably do not want to share their subjective experiences with that smugly arrogant colleague, surly neighbor, or lecherous acquaintance, if they can avoid it.

This brings me to the primary motivation behind subjective differentiation: people want to avoid subjective overlap with those whom they dislike. When people I-share, they experience a moment of great intimacy, a merging of two (or more) subjects, if only for a brief moment. When two people believe that they I-share, they believe that they experience firsthand what the other person thinks and feels, that they too think those thoughts and feel those feelings. This can be very appealing when it occurs with close friends, lovers, family members, or even with strangers one is just getting to know. But the features that make I-sharing so alluring when it occurs with people we like may actually make I-sharing repulsive when it occurs with people we despise. I-sharing with people we dislike may simply feel too intimate – it breaks down barriers between our phenomenological experiences that we might rather keep intact.

In sum, I propose that people seek out situations that offer an opportunity to I-share with liked others. In contrast, people avoid situations in which the specter of

unwanted subjective overlap looms. Thus, people engage in subjective assimilation with liked targets, and subjective differentiation with disliked targets.

Distancing with Respect to the Objective Self

Previous research offers support for the idea that people seek to align themselves with liked others and distinguish themselves from disliked others, at least when it comes to the objective self. For example, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Sideris, and Stubing (1993) demonstrated that people alter their self-ratings so as to differentiate themselves objectively from the terminally ill, presumably as a distal defense against unwanted thoughts of their own mortality. Specifically, people rated their own personality characteristics – which represent an aspect of their Me – as more different from those of a patient with stomach cancer as opposed to a patient with a sprained ankle.

Schimmel, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, O'Mahen, and Arndt (2000) showed that people also differentiate themselves objectively from people who possess negative characteristics that they fear they themselves may also possess. These researchers led participants to believe that they either did or did not possess a high degree of a repressed negative characteristic (either anger or dishonesty). Participants then read about a violent or a dishonest target, viewed the target's ostensible personality ratings, and rated themselves on the same personality traits. Those who believed they possessed a high level of repressed anger provided ratings different from the violent target but not the dishonest target, and those who believed they possessed a high level of repressed dishonesty provided ratings different from the dishonest target but not the violent target. Thus, it appears that people attempt to differentiate themselves objectively from people who pose a self-specific threat.

Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski, and Solomon (2002) have shown that this type of objective differentiation occurs even among ingroup members. Under normal circumstances (i.e., when negative thoughts about the ingroup are not salient), mortality salience leads people to align themselves with their ingroup as a way of increasing self esteem. Yet Arndt and colleagues have shown that people actually distance themselves from ingroup members when both mortality and negative thoughts about the ingroup are salient. These researchers exposed Hispanic participants, in some of whom they had primed thoughts of death, to either positive or negative stereotypes about Hispanic people. Then they exposed them to either a White or a Hispanic target, and the target's personality ratings. When asked to then rate their own personality characteristics, participants for whom mortality and negative stereotypes about Hispanics were salient rated their own personality quite differently from the Hispanic target, but not from the White target. Thus, mortality salience can lead people to seek self esteem by objectively differentiating themselves from ingroup members when they have been reminded about stereotypes regarding the ingroup's negative qualities.

Taken together, this research makes clear that people sometimes distance themselves with respect to their self-definitions, and thus, their objective self. I would like to argue that people also align and distance themselves with respect to their subjective self. In a moment, I will present some preliminary evidence supporting this idea, and discuss some of the conditions that might foster subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation behaviors. Before that, however, I will review some related research on the subjective self.

By focusing on the integral, critical role of the I, subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation join other research topics that feature the self-as-subject. In this section, I review these topics, paying particular attention to Pinel and colleagues' work on I-sharing.

Research on the Subjective Self

In recent years, the subjective self – or I – has enjoyed a surge of research interest. Consider, for example, Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). This research demonstrates that people feel happiest and most alive when immersed in a task that requires their focus and concentration – when exercising their I, or as Csikszentmihalyi would say, when they are in a state of flow. Brown and Ryan (2003) have elaborated a similar concept in mindfulness, a state of heightened attention to and awareness of one's current experience. When in a state of mindfulness, people manifest their subjective self while their objective self takes a backseat. Contributing to the notion that people are happiest when engaging their I, Brown and Ryan have demonstrated that states of mindfulness produce feelings of well-being and positive emotions.

Not only are people's own subjective selves important to their experience of daily life, but sharing their subjective selves with others plays a key role in relationships. In particular, researchers have shown that assimilation goals produce shared subjective experiences. For example, Anderson, Keltner, and John (2003) examined emotional convergence in relationship partners and roommates, and found that dyad members came to exhibit increasingly similar emotional experiences over time. Furthermore, pairs who demonstrated more emotional convergence reported greater satisfaction with and

commitment to the relationship, suggesting that shared subjective experiences are important to people and contribute to liking. Similarly, Fridlund's (1991) work on the social nature of emotional reactions points to people's desire to share their subjective experiences with others.

Moreover, interest in the subjective self extends beyond emotions to research on nonconscious behavioral mimicry (i.e., mirroring another person's gestures, posture, etc.), another index of shared subjective experience (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). This work indicates that simultaneously enacting the same bodily reactions to the environment serves an important evolutionary function by producing affiliation and group cohesion (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng, & Chartrand, 2003).

I-sharing

Research on emotional convergence, the social nature of emotional reactions, and behavioral mimicry all point to a similar conclusion: people find shared subjective experiences alluring and compelling. Recently, Pinel and colleagues (2004, 2006) have introduced the construct of I-sharing to refer to such experiences. According to these researchers, the allure of I-sharing comes from two sources: people's persistent existential isolation and the integral nature of the subjective self. As noted above, according to Yalom (1980), people suffer from existential isolation, in that they can never know for sure how others experience, interpret, feel, or think about the world, because the nature of the human condition prevents them from ever getting inside one another's heads to find out for sure. Pinel and colleagues argue that the closest people can come to achieving existential connection occurs when they have reason to believe that other people share their experience of a stimulus – when they I-share.

Although their existential isolation prevents people from knowing with complete certainty that they I-share, certain sets of cues facilitate I-sharing inferences (Pinel et al., 2006). The most convincing I-sharing circumstances arise when people have identical and simultaneous reactions to the same stimulus. When people laugh together in response to the same joke, cry together in response to the same sad song, or shiver together in response to the same scary sight, they infer that they experience that joke, song, or sight in the exact same way, and thus, that they I-share. In the absence of these most convincing circumstances, people make I-sharing inferences on the basis of other cues. For instance, people may infer that they I-share when they encounter the same evocative situation, such as awaiting an anxiety-provoking appointment (Schachter, 1959) or experiencing the same life-changing event (Hodges, Klein, Veach, & Villanueva, 2004). I-sharing inferences also follow from sharing objective characteristics. Without evidence to the contrary, people tend to assume that they I-share with objectively similar others (e.g., those who share their sexual orientation) more than with objectively dissimilar others (e.g., those who do not share their sexual orientation; Pinel & Long, 2007). Moreover, people may sometimes infer that they I-share even with people whom they do not personally know. For example, when people read a book, hear a song, or watch a movie that resonates with their own personal experience, they may infer that they I-share with the author, singer, or director.

Of course, because of people's existential isolation, I-sharing inferences may not reflect reality. Therefore, Pinel and colleagues consider any time a person believes that he or she has the same experience as another person to be an instance of I-sharing.

Regardless of their veracity, I-sharing experiences help people feel existentially connected. In so doing, I-sharing eases two problems that follow from existential isolation. I-sharing helps people meet their needs for belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995) and belief validation (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991; Swann, 1990, 1996).

Baumeister, Leary, and their colleagues have argued that the need for belonging amounts to a fundamental human motive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary et al., 1995). To support their claim, they draw upon evidence indicating that people willfully and readily establish relationships; that people invest energy and effort to maintain existing relationships; that feelings of belonging derived from relationships are associated with health benefits; and that feelings of not belonging that stem from a lack of relationships are associated with health deficits. Furthermore, relationships help relieve the paralyzing terror that accompanies reminders of one's own mortality (Mikulincer, Florian, & Hirschberger, 2003). When confronted with the fear of death, people given an opportunity to establish new relationships or commit to existing relationships engage in fewer of the behaviors that typically follow from mortality salience, such as derogating outgroup members. That relationships help people cope with their fear of death represents another reason underlying the powerful human need for belonging. By helping people feel existentially connected to one another, I-sharing helps people meet their need for belonging. In fact, one could argue that I-sharing amounts to belonging to a group of two or more people who share the same experience, or view the world in the same way. Because the sense of belonging provided by I-sharing constitutes a sense of

shared consciousness, it may provide particularly potent satisfaction for people's need for belonging.

In addition to satisfying the need for belonging, I-sharing also helps people satisfy their need for belief validation. Existential isolation makes it difficult for people to know whether their perceptions of the world reflect objective truth or even mirror the perceptions of any other person. This can pose a larger problem to the extent that it interferes with people's ability to verify their perceptions of themselves (Swann, 1990, 1996) and the world around them (Pyszczynski, et al., 1997; Solomon, et al., 1991). Yet when people I-share, they believe that at least one other person perceives and experiences the world in the exact same way that they do, and this belief helps them feel confident that their perceptions of the world really do reflect reality. In this way, I-sharing helps people meet their need for belief validation.

In addition to relieving people's persistent existential isolation, and thereby helping them meet their needs for belonging and belief validation, I-sharing derives its power from another source: the integral nature of the self-as-subject. As evidence for the centrality of the I, consider the research on flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989), mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), emotional convergence (Anderson et al., 2003), the social nature of emotional reactions (Fridlund, 1991), and behavioral mimicry (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Lakin et al., 2003). All of these topics of research contend that the subjective self has important implications and consequences for the person as a whole. That I-sharing involves such an integral component of the self represents another reason underlying its compelling nature.

Using a variety of manipulations, we have found that I-sharing promotes liking and that it differs from Me-sharing (i.e., the sharing of objective characteristics such as family composition, ethnicity, or political leanings) in important qualitative ways. In an initial series of scenario studies (Pinel et al., 2006), we asked participants to imagine interacting with an objectively similar other (someone from their hometown) and an objectively dissimilar other (someone from another country). They also imagined that one of these people – either the objectively similar target or the objectively dissimilar target – I-shared with them (i.e., giggled or did not giggle at the same time in response to a strange voice, or made a face of pleasure or distaste upon hearing the name of a favored or despised band), and that one of them did not I-share with them (i.e., had a different response than they did). We found that liking for the objectively similar and objectively dissimilar targets depended on which one I-shared with the participant. Participants preferred the objectively similar partner when that partner I-shared with them, but they preferred the objectively dissimilar partner when that partner I-shared with them.

We have also manipulated I-sharing in high-impact studies. In one set of studies (Pinel et al., 2006), participants exchanged objective and/or subjective information with an ostensible partner over the computer. Reasoning that word associations represent a form of subjective experience, we operationalized I-sharing as similarity with respect to word associations. Thus, the subjective information consisted of a word association task, in which participants viewed the first half of a series of compound words (e.g., down) and chose how to complete each word (e.g., fall, draft, stream, town). The objective information consisted of self-views; participants chose which of a set of personality characteristics best described them. Immediately after participants provided their

response (their word association or self-view), the ostensible partner's response appeared on the computer screen. For participants assigned to the similar condition, the partner's responses mirrored their own the majority of the time; for participants assigned to the dissimilar condition, the partner's responses differed from their own the majority of the time. We found that participants – particularly those who felt existentially isolated – preferred I-sharers to non-I-sharers. Specifically, when we measured trait levels of emotional reliance (a proxy for existential isolation), the more emotionally reliant people were, the more they liked I-sharing partners and disliked non-I-sharing partners. In contrast, emotional reliance had no effect on feelings toward Me-sharers and non-Me-sharers. That our proxy measure of emotional reliance moderated participants' liking for I-sharers and non-I-sharers but not for Me-sharers and non-Me-sharers points to a critical qualitative difference between subjective and objective similarity. Consistent with the notion that I-sharing is so compelling in part because of its ability to alleviate feelings of existential isolation, in a similar study where we manipulated (rather than measured) existential isolation, we again found that those made to feel existentially isolated manifested an especial preference for I-sharers over Me-sharers.

In another set of studies (Pinel & Long, 2007), which we designed to test whether subjective similarity can even overcome long-standing objective differences, we manipulated I-sharing via a computer game called Imaginiff. This game requires participants to view a series of celebrities, and imagine if a certain celebrity (e.g., Jennifer Aniston) were something else (e.g., a tool), what kind of that “something else” (e.g., cocktail mixer, screwdriver, sledge hammer, toenail clippers), would she be? Because most people have never considered such questions, they cannot draw upon any extant

thoughts or beliefs (i.e., their objective self) in order to answer them. Therefore, we reasoned that participants' responses to the Imaginiff questions must constitute a manifestation of their subjective self, and that similarity with respect to these responses constitutes subjective similarity, and thus I-sharing. We manipulated Me-sharing in these studies via group membership: gender, race, and sexual orientation in three respective studies. We found that participants preferred I-sharers over non-I-sharers, even when the I-sharer was an outgroup member, and thus objectively dissimilar to them. Moreover, participants overwhelmingly chose to work with I-sharers over non-I-sharers on a subsequent experimental task, even when the I-sharer was of a different gender, race, or sexual orientation. This research indicates that the draw of subjective similarity can outweigh that of objective similarity at least in some circumstances.

In another study, we asked whether people revise impressions based on objective similarity information when new information about subjective similarity comes to light, and vice versa (Long & Pinel, 2007). Here we manipulated I-sharing by having participants exchange their immediate, gut-level reactions to unfamiliar musical samples with an ostensible partner over the computer. Because participants had never heard these musical samples before, they could not draw on any history with them, or any previous thoughts or feelings about them, and so we reasoned that their gut-level reactions to the musical samples would represent an expression of their subjective selves. Partners who revealed similar expressions of their subjective selves would thus constitute I-sharers, and partners who revealed different expressions of their subjective selves would constitute non-I-sharers. We manipulated Me-sharing by having participants exchange their musical self-views with their partner over the computer. We found that new information

about subjective similarity caused people to change feelings of liking for and comfort with their partner that were based on initial information about objective similarity. In contrast, new information about objective similarity caused people to revise feelings of liking for their partner, but not feelings of comfort with him or her, that were based on initial information about subjective similarity. Again, it appears that subjective similarity can outweigh objective similarity at least in some situations.

In summary, I-sharing draws people together, causing them to like one another and spend time together. Pinel and colleagues propose that I-sharing has these effects because it relieves people's existential isolation, thereby helping them satisfy their needs for belonging and belief validation, and because of the integral nature of the I. Because people want to feel like others understand them and know them at their core, at the deepest level of how they experience the world, I-sharing often feels very alluring.

Seeking and Avoiding I Contact

With all of these benefits to I-sharing, it may seem quite intuitive that people would seek out I-sharing, at least under some circumstances. Yet, even though I-sharing often constitutes such a positive occurrence, this does not mean that people want to I-share with simply anyone. As discussed above, subjective overlap may feel inappropriately intimate – even repulsive – when it occurs with disliked others. People may not want those toward whom they feel animosity to have such an unfettered – albeit brief – view into their psyche, and, in turn, they may not want to peer into the minds of those disliked others. The melding of minds that occurs in I-sharing may feel like more of a violation than anything else when the I-sharer is disliked. When it comes to those they dislike, people may actually derive comfort from their existential barriers and want

them to remain intact, making the very idea of I-sharing a most unpleasant occurrence. Thus, feelings toward the target may constitute a critical moderator of subjective assimilation and differentiation behavior.

Preliminary evidence for the effect of the target's likability on subjective assimilation and differentiation comes from a scenario study I recently conducted. Participants imagined themselves at a listening booth in a music store, choosing a CD that they would like to listen to. They have narrowed their choice down to two CDs, and they are leaning slightly toward one of them. Just then they notice that someone they either like very much or completely despise is standing at a nearby preview booth, listening to one of the CDs they are considering – either the one they were leaning toward listening to themselves, or the other one. After imagining themselves in this scenario, participants rated the extent to which they would like to listen to each of the two CDs. I found that participants preferred the CD they had originally been leaning toward in two situations: when they imagined a liked target listening to that CD, or when they imagined a despised target listening to the other CD. But when participants imagined a despised target listening to the CD they themselves had been leaning toward listening to, their preference for that CD disappeared, indicating their desire to avoid exposing themselves to the same stimulus as a despised target – and thus subjective differentiation. Participants' preference for the CD they had originally been leaning toward also disappeared when they imagined a liked target listening to the other CD, indicating their desire to share a subjective experience with someone they like – and thus subjective assimilation. Thus, this study suggests that the target's likability does indeed affect people's propensity to engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors –

people subjectively assimilate toward liked individuals, and they subjectively differentiate from disliked individuals.

Intrigued by this initial finding, I began theorizing about factors that might moderate the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors. One potential moderator stems from Epstein's (1994) distinction between rational and experiential thought processes. Epstein argues that rational thought processes occur when people emphasize logical and systematic thinking, whereas experiential thought processes result from gut-level, emotionally-driven thinking. Subjective assimilation and differentiation represent quintessential examples of the experiential thought process, in that they often result not from an objective assessment of facts, but from a visceral reaction to the idea of I-sharing – a positive reaction when it comes to liked others, and a negative reaction in the case of disliked others. Because of the experiential nature of subjective assimilation and differentiation, not only may experiential thought processes promote their expression, but rational thought processes may even go so far as to hinder their expression. Thus, people may be more likely to engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation when they are in an experiential mindset than when they are in a rational mindset.

The results of a study on impression revision hint at this possibility. In this study, we led people to believe that an ostensible partner was subjectively or objectively similar or dissimilar to them. Then we provided them with opposing information about the other kind of similarity. Thus, people were assigned to one of four conditions: subjective similarity followed by objective dissimilarity, subjective dissimilarity followed by objective similarity, objective similarity followed by subjective dissimilarity, or objective

dissimilarity followed by subjective similarity. After receiving each type of information, people rated their liking for their partner and the extent to which they would feel comfortable with their partner if left alone with him/her. We observed that people altered their liking ratings in accordance with the similarity information; an increase in similarity (be it objective or subjective) sparked a corresponding increase in liking, and a decrease in similarity sparked a corresponding decrease in liking. In contrast, comfort ratings changed in the face of new information about subjective similarity, but not objective similarity. Noting the experiential wording of the comfort question, which invited people to imagine what it would feel like to be left alone with their partner, we realized that the match between the experiential nature of the question and the experiential nature of subjective similarity may have contributed to the different pattern of results observed on the comfort variable.

The inherently experiential nature of subjective assimilation and differentiation, combined with these preliminary findings, suggest that mindset – experiential versus rational – ought to moderate the tendency to engage in these behaviors. I specifically propose that when people adopt an experiential – as opposed to rational – mode of thought, they will be more likely to engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation. The present research examines this possibility.

Another factor that may moderate the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation stems from people's expectations regarding sharing experiences. According to the subjective assimilation and differentiation perspective, people strive to share (or not share) *experiences*, not simply exposure. People want to I-share with targets they like, and they want to avoid I-sharing

with targets they dislike. But exposure to the same stimulus with no expectation of sharing the experience of that stimulus should not provoke the same type of striving. I speculate that exposure to the same stimulus as a liked target, with no expectation of sharing the experience of that stimulus, is not particularly enticing to people. Similarly, exposure to the same stimulus as a disliked target, with no expectation of shared experience, is not terribly threatening. Shared exposure – without shared experience – poses little prospect of intimacy or closeness. Thus, it provides little motivation to engage in subjective assimilation or differentiation. For these reasons, I propose that expectations as to sharing experiences may moderate the relationship between the target’s likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors. Specifically, I hypothesize that people should be most likely to engage in subjective assimilation toward liked targets and subjective differentiation from disliked targets when they have reason to expect shared experiences – to believe that they and the target would experience a given stimulus in the same way if both of them were exposed to it. I examine this potential moderator in the current research.

In the experiments presented here, I examine a basic prediction of the subjective assimilation and differentiation perspective: that people seek shared experiences with liked others and avoid shared experiences with disliked others. In two studies, I manipulate the target’s likability – by leading some people to like their partner, and others to dislike their partner – and then offer participants an opportunity to subjectively assimilate with or differentiate from this partner. I also examine both of the potential moderators of subjective assimilation and differentiation described above. In Study 1, I examine the mindset moderator, by situationally manipulating experiential versus rational

mindset. In Study 2, I examine the experience expectations moderator. In both studies, I also attempt to distinguish subjective assimilation and differentiation from their objective counterparts, by including a trait-rating task modeled on previous objective distancing research (Arndt et al., 2002; Pyszczynski et al., 1993; Schimel et al., 2000).

Study 1

I have argued that people are driven to align their subjective self with that of liked others, and to distance their subjective self from that of disliked others. If so, people should seek exposure to the same stimuli as liked others and avoid exposure to the same stimuli as disliked others. I test this hypothesis in the present experiment. I also examine the moderating role that mindset – i.e., whether one is in an experiential or a rational mindset – may play in the relationship between the target’s likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors. Because these behaviors stem from visceral feelings – of attraction to the idea of existential intimacy with liked others, and of revulsion at the idea of existential intimacy with disliked others – I propose that subjective assimilation and differentiation will emerge more strongly when people are in an experiential mindset than when they are in a rational mindset.

To examine these hypotheses, I primed in participants either an experiential or a rational mindset, and led them to either like or dislike another person. Then I gave them an opportunity to engage in subjective assimilation and/or differentiation. To help distinguish these phenomena from their objective counterparts, I also gave participants an opportunity to align themselves with or distance themselves from the target objectively.

Method

Participants and Design

Eighty-one students participated in exchange for credit in their psychology class. Participants were randomly assigned to condition in a 2 (Likability: likable, unlikable) X 2 (Mindset: experiential, rational) between subjects factorial design. The distribution of males and females was approximately equal across conditions.

Procedure and Materials

Participants came to the lab one at a time, where an experimenter greeted them. The experimenter introduced participants to a study comparing written and computer communication, and said that another (in fact, bogus) participant – heretofore, their partner – would undergo the same procedure in a nearby lab. She then obtained participants' signed consent.

Participants first engaged in a written communication task with their partner. They learned that, through an ostensible random assignment procedure, one would be assigned as the writer, and the other the reader. The writer would write a short paragraph about him/herself, and the reader would read and comment on the writer's paragraph. In fact, I assigned all participants to the writer role. Participants had approximately 3-5 minutes to write their paragraph.

Similarity manipulation. After the experimenter collected the paragraph, she instructed participants to begin the computer portion of the experiment. Participants exchanged demographic information with their partner over the computer. All participants learned that their partner was White, 18 years old, a psychology major, and their same gender. In addition, all participants learned that their partner was objectively similar to them, in that they shared the same political orientation (either liberal or conservative).

Liking manipulation. After the demographic exchange, the experimenter returned to the lab and gave participants their paragraph, on which the ostensible partner (in fact, the experimenter) had written either "You seem interesting" or "You seem boring." This written comment served as the manipulation of the partner's likability. Participants

assigned to the likable target condition received the “interesting” comment from their partner; participants assigned to the unlikable target condition received the “boring” comment from their partner.

Piloting attests to the separability of the likability and objective similarity manipulations. A separate group of 41 participants were randomly assigned to condition in a 2 (Comment: insult, compliment) X 2 (Political Orientation: same, different) between subjects factorial design. Participants imagined meeting someone of either their same political orientation or a different political orientation, who goes on to tell them that they seem either interesting or boring. Then they rated their liking for this target person, and their objective similarity with this person. I submitted the liking composite to a 2 (Comment: compliment, insult) X 2 (Political Orientation: same, different) ANOVA. A main effect of Comment emerged, $F(1, 37) = 46.67, p < .001$, such that participants liked complimentary targets ($M = 6.90, SD = 1.55$) more than insulting targets ($M = 3.52, SD = 1.64$). No other effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's $> .23$. I submitted the objective similarity composite to a 2 (Comment: compliment, insult) X 2 (Political Orientation: same, different) ANOVA. A main effect of Political Orientation emerged, $F(1, 37) = 4.05, p = .051$, such that participants felt more similar to targets of their same political orientation ($M = 6.12, SD = 1.81$) than to targets of a different political orientation ($M = 4.95, SD = 2.01$). A marginally significant main effect of Comment also emerged, $F(1, 37) = 3.18, p = .083$, such that participants tended to feel more similar to complimentary targets ($M = 6.05, SD = 1.98$) than to insulting targets ($M = 5.01, SD = 1.89$). Importantly, the interaction did not reach significance, $p > .26$.

Experiential and rational mindset manipulation. Next participants completed another written task, which served as the manipulation of experiential and rational mindset. Specifically, participants assigned to the experiential condition wrote a paragraph about how the color green makes them feel, and participants assigned to the rational condition listed 15 things that are the color green. Participants learned that their responses on this task would be private, so that their partner would not be able to see what they wrote.

Piloting attests to the validity of this manipulation. The same set of 41 pilot participants described above were randomly assigned to one of two prime conditions. One group wrote about how the color green makes them feel, and the other group listed 10 things that are the color green. Then all participants completed a state-oriented version of the Rational Experiential Inventory (REI; Pacini & Epstein, 1999). Because I had modified the scale items to make them state oriented, I performed a factor analysis, and computed composites of the top 5 items loading on the experiential scale and the top 5 items loading on the rational scale. I submitted these composites to a 2 (Prime: list, feelings) X 2 (REI: rational items, experiential items) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor. A Prime X REI interaction emerged, $F(1, 39) = 7.69, p = .008$. Participants who wrote about how the color green makes them feel scored significantly higher on the experiential scale ($M = 6.63, SD = 1.38$) than the rational scale ($M = 5.54, SD = 1.77$), $F(1, 39) = 6.85, p = .013$. Participants who listed 10 green things scored higher on the rational scale ($M = 6.29, SD = 1.59$) than the experiential scale ($M = 5.76, SD = 1.26$), although this contrast did not reach significance, $p = .208$. To strengthen the

manipulation, in the present research participants assigned to the rational condition listed 15 green things, instead of 10.

Subjective assimilation and differentiation. After undergoing the manipulations of the partner's likability and experiential/rational mindset, participants received an opportunity to engage in subjective assimilation/differentiation and objective assimilation/differentiation. The subjective assimilation/differentiation task involved tasting either the same food as the target or a different food. To provide a cover story for this task, electronic instructions explained that one purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of certain foods on people's task performance. Participants learned that, ostensibly because only bananas were left in their partner's lab, their partner would eat a banana. They, however, could choose between a banana and an orange.

Pilot testing indicates that people regard bananas and oranges as equally desirable. A separate group of 88 participants rated the extent to which they like, and are usually in the mood to eat a wide variety of foods, using a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 10 (high). Participants rated oranges ($M = 6.38$, $SD = 2.37$) and bananas ($M = 6.44$, $SD = 2.67$) nearly equivalently, $t(87) = -.21$, $p = .834$, power = .75.

Participants went on to rate their desire to eat each food, including the extent to which each food would taste good to them right now, they think that they would enjoy eating each food right now, they feel like they are in the mood to eat each food right now, and they would like to eat each food right now, using a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 9 (very much). I created composites of these measures by combining the four measures pertaining to the banana (Cronbach's alpha = .98), and the four measures pertaining to the orange (Cronbach's alpha = .97). After participants made these ratings, as a manipulation

check, they were asked to recall which food their partner was going to eat. Four participants incorrectly recalled which food their partner would eat, and so I deleted their data.

Objective assimilation and differentiation. I modeled the objective assimilation/differentiation task on a similar task used in objective differentiation research (Arndt et al., 2002; Pyszczynski et al., 1993; Schimel et al., 2000). Participants rated themselves on a series of 10 moderately positive and 10 moderately negative personality characteristics, in full view of their partner's self-ratings on the same traits. These were the same traits used by Schimel et al. (2000): witty, bold, neat, self-satisfied, philosophical, meticulous, prudent, obedient, reserved, progressive, clumsy, restless, tiresome, extravagant, overcautious, unpoised, boastful, strict, conforming, and forgetful. To provide a cover story for why participants were able to see their partner's personality ratings, after participants had rated their desire to watch each film clip, the computer instructions informed them that the next questionnaire had not been uploaded to the computer yet, and that they must request a paper copy from the experimenter. The experimenter then explained that, because she did not realize that this questionnaire had not been uploaded to the computer yet, she had not had any copies made. She did find one copy, which she already gave to the partner, and she suggested that, when the partner was finished, the participant could write his/her responses on the same sheet in a different color ink. All participants agreed. After a brief delay (to allow the ostensible partner time to complete the questionnaire), she brought into the lab a completed questionnaire and asked participants to write their responses next to their partner's. In this way, I ensured that participants were aware of their partner's ratings when they rated themselves

on the same traits. The partner's self-ratings appeared near the midpoint of the scale, and were the same for all participants. The extent to which participants' self-ratings diverged from the partner's self-ratings constituted the measure of objective assimilation/differentiation. For each trait, I computed the absolute value of the difference between the participant's self-rating and the partner's self-rating, and then I computed the mean of these absolute values (Cronbach's alpha = .62). Higher numbers on this composite indicate greater objective differentiation from the partner.

Finally, the experimenter returned to the lab, probed participants for suspicion, explained that they did not have to eat anything, described the true nature of the experiment, thanked them for their time, and dismissed them.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations Between Study 1 Variables.

	Likability	Mindset Prime	Subjective Assimilation/Differentiation Composite	Objective Distancing Composite
Likability		.01	.22*	.03
Mindset Prime			.07	.18
Subjective Assimilation/Differentiation Composite				.01
Objective Distancing Composite				1.62 (0.41)

* $p < .05$. Means and standard deviations are presented on the diagonal.

Results

Subjective Assimilation and Differentiation

Did participants strive to share a food experience with liked targets and/or to avoid sharing a food experience with disliked targets, and did this outcome depend on the mindset prime to which they had been assigned? Because subjective assimilation and differentiation entail a relative preference for one stimulus over another, to address these questions, I first calculated a difference score by subtracting participants' desire to eat the orange from their desire to eat the banana. Thus, scores greater than 0 indicate subjective assimilation, and scores lower than 0 indicate subjective differentiation. I submitted this preference score to a 2 (Likability: likable, unlikable) X 2 (Mindset: experiential, rational) between subjects ANOVA. A main effect of Likability emerged, $F(1, 73) = 4.23, p = .043$, such that participants demonstrated subjective assimilation toward likable targets ($M = .21, SD = 3.99$) and subjective differentiation from unlikable targets ($M = -1.48, SD = 3.25$). Although the main effect of Mindset did not reach a conventional or marginal level of significance, $p > .49$, a marginally significant interaction between Likability and Mindset emerged, $F(1, 73) = 2.63, p = .109$. Within the experiential condition, planned contrasts revealed a significant difference between participants assigned to the likable target and the unlikable target, $F(1, 73) = 6.51, p = .013$, such that participants in the experiential condition sought to share their food experience with the likable target ($M = 1.15, SD = 3.24$) and avoided sharing their food experience with the unlikable target ($M = -1.87, SD = 3.43$). In contrast, within the rational condition, planned contrasts revealed no significant difference, $p > .75$, and in fact, participants in

the likable target condition demonstrated subjective differentiation ($M = -.74$, $SD = 4.47$) just as participants in the unlikable target condition did ($M = -1.10$, $SD = 3.12$).

To more carefully examine the amount of subjective assimilation/differentiation that emerged in each condition, I also compared these means to 0, the baseline I observed in pilot testing, which indicated that people have no preference between a banana and an orange. Beginning with the experiential mindset condition, among people assigned to the likable target condition, the extent of subjective assimilation that emerged was only marginally significantly above 0, $t(17) = 1.51$, $p = .075$, one tailed. Among people assigned to the unlikable target condition, the extent of subjective differentiation that emerged significantly differed from 0, $t(18) = -2.37$, $p = .015$, one tailed. Turning to the rational mindset condition, the extent of subjective differentiation that emerged did not significantly differ from 0 among people assigned to the likable target condition, $t(18) = -.72$, $p = .482$, or among people assigned to the unlikable target condition, $t(20) = -1.61$, $p = .123$.

Objective Assimilation and Differentiation

Did participants' desire to affiliate and/or differentiate themselves from their partner extend to the objective realm of trait ratings? To find out, I submitted the objective distancing composite to a 2 (Likability: likable, unlikable) X 2 (Mindset: experiential, rational) between subjects ANOVA. I observed a marginally significant main effect of Mindset, $F(1, 73) = 2.61$, $p = .111$, such that participants who received the experiential mindset prime ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .42$) tended to distance themselves from their partner more than participants who received the rational mindset prime did ($M = 1.55$, SD

= .39). No other effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's > .44.

Discussion

Confirming prediction, in the experiential mindset prime condition, I observed a significant difference on the measure of subjective assimilation/differentiation between people assigned to the likable target condition and people assigned to the unlikable target condition. People in an experiential mindset subjectively assimilated toward likable targets, and subjectively differentiated from unlikable targets. In the rational mindset prime condition, I observed no difference according to the target's likability. People in a rational mindset tended to subjectively differentiate from likable and unlikable targets, although these means were not significantly different from the baseline value of 0. These results suggest that an experiential mindset may promote subjective assimilation and differentiation, and/or that a rational mindset may hinder subjective assimilation and differentiation.

In contrast, the manipulations did not appear to have a strong effect on objective assimilation and differentiation. I observed only a marginally significant main effect of mindset prime. People in an experiential mindset tended to distance themselves from their partner more than people in a rational mindset did.

That I observed different results for the subjective and objective assimilation/differentiation measures suggests that the two constructs are separable and not interchangeable. The factors that contribute to the manifestation of subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors may be quite different from the factors that contribute to the manifestation of objective assimilation and differentiation behaviors.

Study 2

Having discovered some evidence of the moderating role that experiential and rational mindset play in the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors in Study 1, in Study 2 I turn to examining the second proposed moderator of this relationship: expectations regarding shared experience. I have argued that people do not simply want to share (or avoid sharing) *exposure* to a stimulus; they want to share (or avoid sharing) their *experience* of that stimulus. Thus, when people expect a shared experience, exposure to the same stimulus as a liked target may appear particularly desirable, and exposure to the same stimulus as a disliked target may appear particularly repugnant. If my reasoning is correct, people should engage in subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation more strongly when they believe that they and the target would experience a given stimulus in the same way if both of them were exposed to it. I test the viability of experience expectations as a moderator of the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation in this experiment.

As a secondary goal, I also explore the effect of objective similarity on subjective assimilation and differentiation. Research on objective distancing has shown objective similarity to be a critical factor; people reframe their self-definitions to appear different from a disliked person when they have reason to believe that they are objectively similar to that person in some way, such as shared group membership (Arndt et al., 2002) or possession of the same negative characteristic (Schimel et al., 2000). Does objective similarity play an equally important role when it comes to aligning and distancing with respect to the subjective self? Although I did observe evidence of subjective assimilation

and differentiation in Study 1, those results cannot provide an answer to this question, because I led all participants to believe that their partner was objectively similar to them. Thus, I cannot know whether the same results would have emerged if participants believed their partner was objectively dissimilar to them. To remedy this limitation of Study 1, I include objective similarity as an independent variable in Study 2. If objective similarity plays the critical role in subjective assimilation and differentiation that it does in objective distancing, then people should exhibit more subjective assimilation and differentiation with similar targets than with dissimilar targets.

To test these ideas, I led participants to either like or dislike another person, and to believe that they were objectively similar to or dissimilar to that person. I also attempted to manipulate participants' expectations as to whether people exposed to the same stimulus tend to experience that stimulus in the same way or in different ways. Then I gave participants an opportunity to engage in subjective and objective forms of assimilation and differentiation.

Method

Participants and Design

One hundred ninety-five students participated in exchange for credit in their psychology course. Because of computer error, the data from four participants were lost, leaving a sample of 191. Participants were randomly assigned to condition in a 2 (Likability: likable, unlikable) X 2 (Experience Expectations: same experience, different experiences) X 2 (Objective Similarity: similar, dissimilar) between subjects factorial design. The distribution of males and females was approximately equal across conditions.

Procedure and Materials

Participants came to the lab one at a time, where an experimenter greeted them. The experimenter introduced participants to a study comparing written and computer communication, and said that another (in fact, bogus) participant – heretofore, their partner – would undergo the same procedure in a nearby lab. She then obtained participants' signed consent.

Using the same cover story as in Study 1, participants next wrote a paragraph about themselves, ostensibly to be read and commented on by their partner.

Objective similarity manipulation. Participants then completed the same computerized demographic exchange as in Study 1 with their partner, except that here some participants learned that their partner held the same political orientation as they did, and others learned that their partner held an opposing political orientation (liberal or conservative). This information about the partner's political orientation served as the manipulation of objective similarity.

Likability manipulation. After the demographic exchange, participants received their paragraphs back. I manipulated the partner's likability in the same way as in Study 1, by writing on participants' paragraphs the comment "You seem interesting" (in the likable condition) or "You seem boring" (in the unlikable condition).

After undergoing the manipulations of the partner's likability and objective similarity, participants received opportunities to engage in subjective and objective forms of assimilation and differentiation.

Subjective assimilation and differentiation task. Electronic instructions explained to participants that they and their partner would view one of two 10 minute film clips:

Here's to Ann or Plain to See. I selected these titles based on the results of pilot testing, in which the same set of participants who judged the foods used in Study 1 rated them as equally unfamiliar and equally interesting. Eighty-eight participants rated the desirability and familiarity of a wide array of fictional film titles, using a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 10 (high). With regard to desirability, participants rated Here's to Ann ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.95$) and Plain to See ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.81$) as equally desirable, $t(87) = .72$, $p = .473$, power = .75. With regard to familiarity, participants rated Here's to Ann ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 2.15$) and Plain to See ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 2.09$) as equally unfamiliar, $t(87) = .31$, $p = .76$, power = .75.

Experience expectations manipulation. I manipulated participants' expectations regarding whether they and their partner would experience the film clips similarly via electronic instructions. All participants read that "both film clips are emotionally evocative, and inspire deep feelings in the people who watch them." Then participants assigned to the same experiences condition read that "people who watch the same film clip tend to experience the very same progression of emotions, feelings, and thoughts as they watch the film clip" and participants assigned to the different experiences condition read that "people who watch the same film clip tend to experience a variety of emotions, feelings, and thoughts that often differ from each other as they watch the film clip."

Although I did not pilot test this manipulation, I did include a manipulation check at the end of the experiment. Using a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 9 (very much), participants rated their expectations for the similarity between their own experience of a film clip and that of their partner, including the extent to which they would have the same emotional reactions to it, have the same thoughts and feelings while watching it, would

interpret its meaning similarly, and would respond to the characters in the same way. I combined the four items (Cronbach's alpha = .89), and submitted the composite to a 2 (Likability: likable, unlikable) X 2 (Objective Similarity: similar, dissimilar) X 2 (Experience Expectations: same experience, different experiences) between subjects ANOVA. This analysis revealed a main effect of Likability, $F(1, 170) = 27.42, p < .001$, such that participants in the likable condition ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.30$) expected to share their experience with their partner more so than participants in the unlikable condition did ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.38$). A Likability X Objective Similarity X Experience Expectations interaction also emerged, $F(1, 170) = 4.89, p = .028$. No other effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's $> .26$. To examine the 3-way interaction, I split the file by Likability and Objective Similarity and submitted the experience expectations composite to a one-way ANOVA with Experience Expectations (same experience, different experiences) as the independent variable. Only in the unlikable/similar condition did the main effect approach significance, $F(1, 44) = 3.05, p = .088$, such that participants in the same experience condition ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.73$) expected more similar experiences than participants in the different experiences condition did ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.19$). In all other conditions, the main effect failed to reach conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's $> .15$.

It is interesting to note that people believe they will share their subjective experiences with likable others more than with unlikable others. More importantly, though, the predicted pattern – that people in the same experiences condition would expect more similar experiences than people in the different experiences condition – did not emerge. Because the Experience Expectations manipulation did not function as

anticipated, I elected to use the continuous experience expectations manipulation check composite in all remaining analyses.

Subjective assimilation and differentiation ratings. After reading the description of the subjective assimilation/differentiation task, participants learned that their partner would watch *Here's to Ann*, ostensibly because that was the only film available on their partner's computer. Because both films were available on their computer, however, participants could choose which one they wanted to watch. Participants completed three measures of their desire to watch each film clip – the extent to which they thought they would enjoy watching the film, felt like they were in the mood to watch the film, and would like to watch the film – on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 9 (very much). I computed a composite for each film by combining the three measures pertaining to *Here's to Ann* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) and the three measures pertaining to *Plain to See* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). Then participants answered a manipulation check that asked them to recall which film their partner was going to watch. Thirteen participants incorrectly recalled which film their partner was assigned to watch, so I deleted their data, leaving a sample of 178.

Objective assimilation and differentiation. I employed the same objective assimilation/differentiation task here as in Study 1. To quantify the extent of objective assimilation/differentiation across traits, I again computed the absolute value of the difference between participants' self-rating and their partner's self-rating for each trait, and computed the mean of these absolute values (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$). Again, higher numbers on this composite indicate greater objective differentiation from the partner.

Finally, the computer instructions asked participants to find the experimenter and ask her to set up their desired film clip. The experimenter returned to the lab, probed participants for suspicion, explained that they did not have to watch a film clip, described the true nature of the experiment, thanked them for their time, and dismissed them.

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Between Study 2 Variables.

	Likability	Similarity	Experience Expectations	Experience Expectations Manipulation Check Composite	Subjective Assimilation/Differentiation Composite	Objective Distancing Composite
Likability		-.01	.03	.37**	.08	-.01
Similarity			-.01	.07	.12	.01
Experience Expectations				.09	-.05	-.01
Experience Expectations Manipulation Check Composite				4.36 (1.44)	.13	-.21*
Subjective Assimilation/Differentiation Composite					-.13 (1.61)	-.06
Objective Distancing Composite						1.50 (.42)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$. Means and standard deviations are presented on the diagonal.

Results

Subjective Assimilation and Differentiation

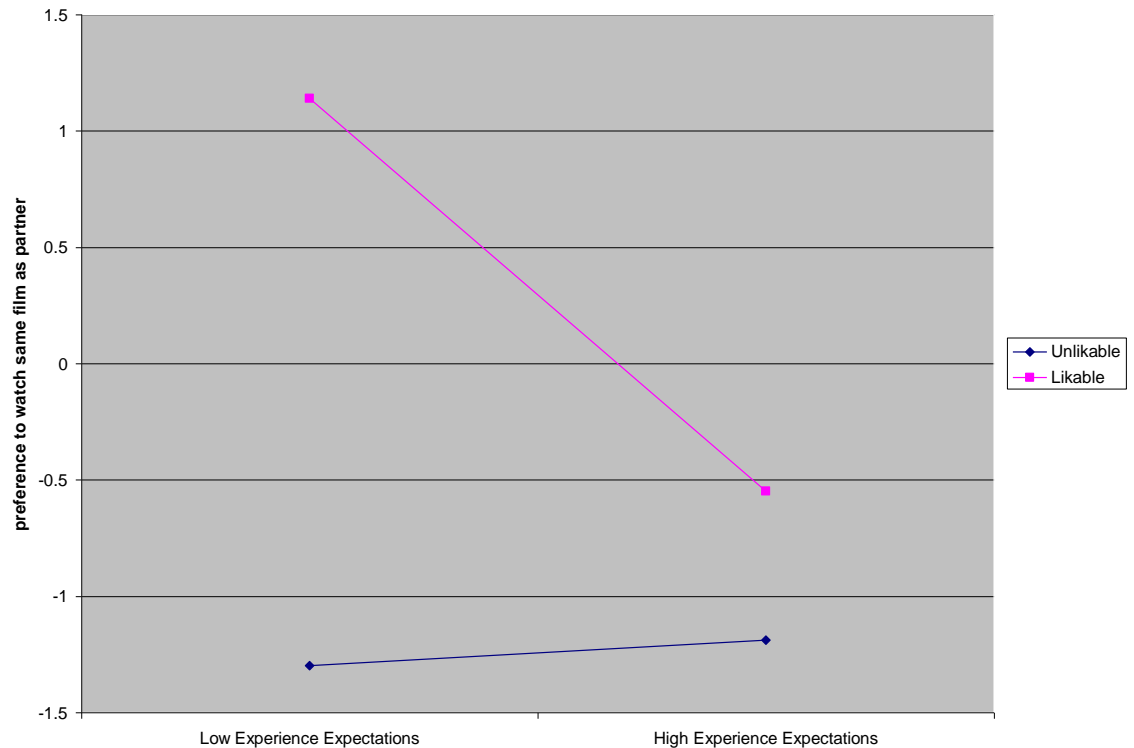
I began by examining my main research questions: did people seek to watch the same film as liked targets and/or avoid watching the same film as disliked targets? And did this outcome depend on the experience expectations or objective similarity condition to which they had been assigned? To answer these questions, as in Study 1, I computed a

preference score by subtracting the desire to watch a different film than the partner from the desire to watch the same film as the partner. Thus, as in Study 1, scores greater than 0 indicate subjective assimilation and scores lower than 0 indicate subjective differentiation. Because of the continuous nature of the Experience Expectations measure, I analyzed these data using regression. Specifically, I submitted the preference score to a regression with a) Likability (with likable coded as 1 and unlikable coded as 0), b) Objective Similarity (with similar coded as 1 and dissimilar coded as 0), c) the continuous measure of Experience Expectations centered on its mean, d) the three 2-way interaction terms, and e) the 3-way interaction term as predictors. I observed a marginally significant main effect of Objective Similarity ($\beta = .20, t = 1.72, p = .088$), a marginally significant main effect of Likability ($\beta = .19, t = 1.62, p = .107$), and a marginally significant 2-way interaction between Likability and Objective Similarity ($\beta = -.26, t = -1.85, p = .066$). All of these effects were qualified by a 3-way interaction between Likability, Objective Similarity, and Experience Expectations ($\beta = .37, t = 2.27, p = .024$). No other effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's > .7.

To examine the 3-way interaction, I split the file by Objective Similarity condition, and submitted the preference score to a regression with a) Likability (with likable coded as 1 and unlikable coded as 0), b) the continuous measure of Experience Expectations centered on its mean, and c) the 2-way interaction term as predictors.

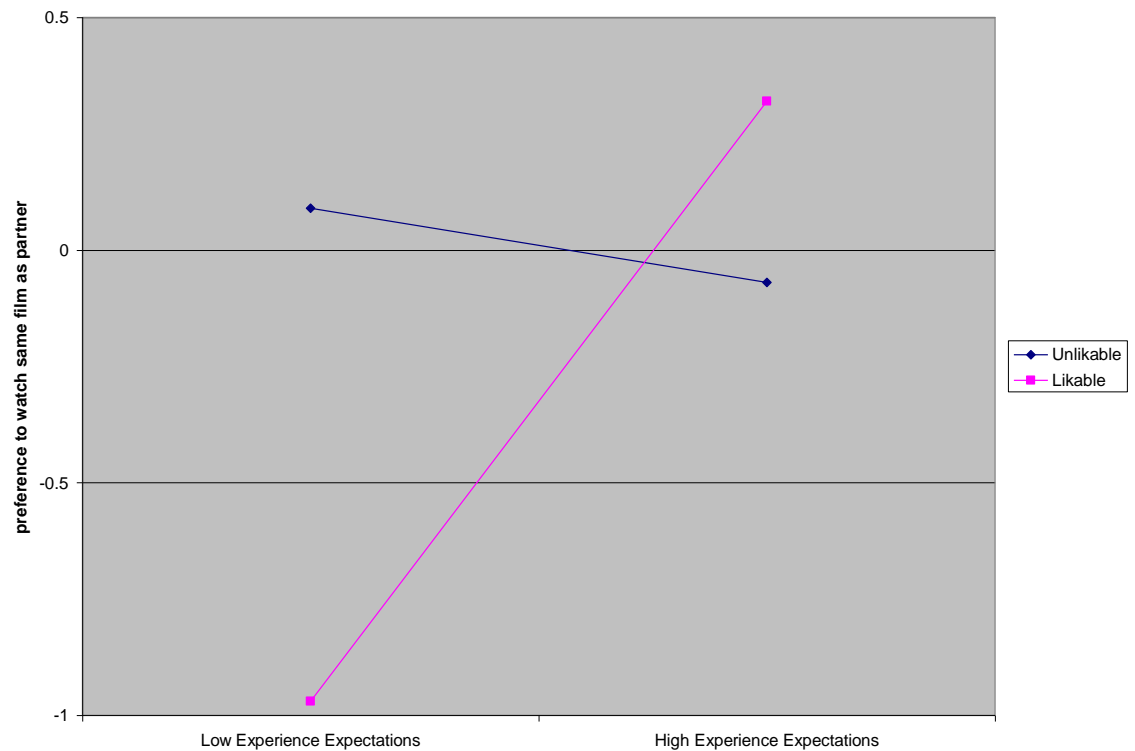
In the Dissimilar condition, no effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's > .13 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The effect of dissimilar targets' likability and participants' experience expectations on subjective assimilation/differentiation.



In the Similar condition, although neither main effect approached significance, p 's $> .3$, I did observe a significant interaction between Likability and Experience Expectations ($\beta = .46, t = 3.36, p = .001$). To examine this interaction, I further split the file by Likability, and submitted the preference score to a regression with the continuous measure of Experience Expectations centered on its mean as the sole predictor. In the similar/unlikable condition, Experience Expectations did not have a significant effect, $p > .4$. In the similar/likable condition, however, I did observe a significant main effect of Experience Expectations ($\beta = .44, t = 3.35, p = .002$). The more people expected to share their experience with similar, likable others, the more they engaged in subjective assimilation toward them. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of this interaction.

Figure 2. The effect of similar targets' likability and participants' experience expectations on subjective assimilation/differentiation.



Objective Assimilation and Differentiation

Did participants distance themselves from their partner on the objective traits measure? To find out, I submitted the objective distancing composite to a regression with a) Likability (with likable coded as 1 and unlikable coded as 0), b) Objective Similarity (with similar coded as 1 and dissimilar coded as 0), c) the continuous measure of Experience Expectations centered on its mean, d) the three 2-way interaction terms, and e) the 3-way interaction term as predictors. No effects reached conventional or marginal levels of significance, p 's > .19.

Discussion

The primary goal of Study 2 was to examine the effect of expectations regarding sharing experiences with a target – who varied on the dimensions of likability and objective similarity – on people’s desire to subjectively assimilate with or differentiate from that target. Among people who interacted with an objectively dissimilar target, I found no effect of the target’s likability or of experience expectations on people’s tendency to engage in subjective assimilation or differentiation. Even among people who interacted with an objectively similar target, I found no evidence that people subjectively differentiated themselves from unlikable targets. I did find evidence that people subjectively assimilated with objectively similar, likable targets, but only when they expected to share their experience with those targets.

Thus, I observed the predicted effect of experience expectations in only one condition: among people who interacted with objectively similar, likable partners. The more people expected to share their cinematic experience with their similar, likable partner, the more they wanted to watch the same film as their partner. Given the importance of objective similarity in the objective distancing literature (Arndt et al., 2002; Schimel et al., 2000), perhaps it is not terribly surprising that experience expectations played a role only among people who interacted with objectively similar partners, and not objectively dissimilar partners. But why did experience expectations not have a corresponding effect on subjective differentiation from objectively similar, unlikable targets? One would suspect that the more people expected to share their cinematic experience with their unlikable, similar partner, the *less* they would want to watch the same film as their partner. However, this effect did not emerge. In fact, that

preference scores hovered around 0 suggests that people in this condition did not have a strong preference either for watching the same film as their partner or for watching a different film. Perhaps the contrasting nature of the objectively similar information with the likable information left people feeling ambivalent about whether they would want to subjectively assimilate with or differentiate from their partner, and so they did neither. It will be important to determine whether this effect – or lack thereof – replicates in future research.

In sum, these results provide some evidence of the role that experience expectations may play in subjective assimilation and differentiation, if only when it comes to subjective assimilation toward likable, similar targets.

In contrast, I did not observe any effects on the objective assimilation/differentiation measure. Participants distanced themselves equally from all targets, regardless of their likability, objective similarity, or perceived likelihood of sharing participants' own experience.

In interpreting the findings of Study 2, I must acknowledge the problems that emerged with my Experience Expectations manipulation. I simply did not find that people assigned to the same experience condition believed that they would share their film experience with their partner more so than people assigned to the different experiences condition did. Instead, experience expectations appeared to hinge on the target's likability, such that people expected to share experiences with likable targets more than unlikable targets. It is noteworthy that people expect to share experiences with those they like more than those they dislike. Perhaps this accounts for why relationship partners tend to show one another the stimuli they find evocative, hoping and expecting

that their partner will share their reaction, and why they get so frustrated if their partner does not share their reaction.

That one's feelings toward the target predict one's expectations for sharing experiences with that target certainly represents an interesting finding. But why did the Experience Expectations manipulation not function as expected? Perhaps these expectations – for sharing experiences with liked others, and for not sharing experiences with disliked others – are too deeply ingrained in people to be overcome experimentally. Or perhaps my manipulation simply was not strong enough.

Whatever the reason for the failure of this manipulation, I handled it by opting to use the continuous experience expectations manipulation check measure as an independent variable, and therefore analyze the data using regression. Although this strategy limits the causal conclusions I can draw from this study, I believe it nonetheless represents an intriguing initial inquiry into the potential of experience expectations to moderate the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation. Because experience expectations represent a critical component of the subjective assimilation and differentiation perspective, it would be useful for future research to continue seeking a viable manipulation of this construct.

General Discussion

The two experiments presented here investigate the phenomena of subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation. In Study 1, where all targets were objectively similar to participants, I found that an experiential mindset led people to subjectively assimilate with likable targets and subjectively differentiate from unlikable targets. In contrast, people in a rational mindset tended to subjectively differentiate from both likable and unlikable targets, although these means did not significantly differ from the baseline value of 0. In Study 2, I discovered that experience expectations moderate the relationship between the target's likability and subjective assimilation – but only when it comes to likable, objectively similar targets. The more people expected to share their experience with likable, similar targets, the more they subjectively assimilated with them by seeking exposure to the same film. Experience expectations did not appear to play a role in subjective assimilation or differentiation when it came to dissimilar or unlikable targets.

Taken together, these studies build on the pilot evidence from the CD study described above. In that study, participants imagined themselves at a music store listening booth, deciding between two CDs, one of which they were leaning toward. Then they imagined seeing someone they either liked very much or despised at a nearby listening booth, listening to one of the CDs they were considering – either the one they were leaning toward, or the other one. Participants preferred the CD they had originally been leaning toward in two situations: when a liked target was listening to that same CD, and when a despised target was listening to the other CD. But that preference completely disappeared when participants imagined a liked target listening to the other CD,

suggesting a desire to subjectively assimilate with the liked target. Participants' original preference also disappeared when they imagined a despised target listening to the CD they had been leaning toward, suggesting their desire to subjectively differentiate from the despised target. The results of this CD pilot study attest to the plausibility of the subjective assimilation and differentiation phenomena and the moderating role played by the target's likability, by indicating that people really do strive to share experiences with liked targets and avoid sharing experiences with disliked targets. The current research provides additional evidence to support the plausibility of these constructs and the role played by the target's likability, while also suggesting important roles for three moderators: experiential/rational mindset, experience expectations, and objective similarity.

Looking first at experiential and rational mindset, Study 1 showed that people in an experiential mindset subjectively assimilated toward likable, similar targets, and subjectively differentiated from unlikable, similar targets. In contrast, people in a rational mindset tended to subjectively differentiate from similar targets, whether they were likable or unlikable, although these means did not significantly differ from the baseline value of 0. Why did mindset play this role? By definition, experiential thinking fosters a reliance on gut-level instincts, whereas rational thinking fosters a reliance on systematic reasoning. Because the motivation to subjectively assimilate or differentiate comes from one's gut, from one's visceral reaction to the prospect of I-sharing with a certain target person, it follows that listening to one's gut and following one's instincts – the very behaviors that occur under an experiential mindset – would foster subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors. In contrast, the focus on systematic thinking

that follows from a rational mindset may lead people to ignore the signals coming from their gut, and thereby hinder the expression of subjective assimilation and differentiation.

So does an experiential mindset increase the expression of subjective assimilation and differentiation behaviors, or does a rational mindset decrease their expression, or both? I would argue the latter – that an experiential mindset enhances these behaviors, and a rational mindset inhibits them. However, because I did not include a no-prime control condition, the current research does not allow me to draw this conclusion. Therefore, this remains an empirical question that awaits further testing.

Of course, experiential mindset does not represent the only experience-related moderator variable studied in the present research. I also examined people's expectations regarding whether or not they would share their experience. Recall that in Study 2, I met with little success when I attempted to manipulate experience expectations, and so I elected to use the continuous experience expectations manipulation check composite as an independent variable. I discovered an effect of experience expectations, but only among people who interacted with likable, similar targets. The more people expected to share their cinematic experience with targets who were likable and objectively similar to them, the more they wanted to watch the same film as those targets. Experience expectations did not play a role when it came to unlikable or dissimilar targets.

Why not? One might guess that a reduced range of experience expectations ratings for unlikable and dissimilar targets might be the cause. However, the range and variance were comparable across all conditions: the standard deviation for likable/similar targets was 1.3, and it ranged from 1.3 to 1.5 for the other three target conditions.

If not a statistical answer, then perhaps a theoretical one. Taking the objective distancing literature as a starting point, it seems reasonable that people would not engage in subjective assimilation or differentiation from objectively dissimilar targets. After all, that literature shows that people primarily distance themselves objectively from those whose similarity to the self makes them particularly threatening; people do not feel a need to distance themselves from those who are already safely dissimilar (Arndt et al., 2002; Schimel et al., 2000). Thus, if there is no motivation in the objectively dissimilar conditions for people to engage in subjective assimilation or differentiation – no link between the target's likability and subjective assimilation and differentiation – then there is no relationship for experience expectations to moderate.

Although this line of reasoning can explain why no effect of experience expectations emerged in the two objectively dissimilar conditions, it does not explain why experience expectations had no effect on people who interacted with an unlikable, objectively similar partner. Perhaps people in this condition felt some ambivalence toward their partner. After all, people may expect to like objectively similar others, especially when that similarity occurs on a dimension that would seem to be rather revealing of the self, such as political orientation, the dimension used here. When similarity fails to translate into likability, people may feel uncertain as to how to evaluate the target. These feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty could explain why participants in this condition did not demonstrate subjective assimilation or differentiation; their preference scores hovered around 0, indicating no preference either to watch the same film as the partner or a different film.

Of course, let me once again point out that the results of Study 2 are based upon a continuous measure of experience expectations, and not a manipulation of this variable. Because of the importance of experience expectations as a moderator in the subjective assimilation and differentiation perspective, future research should continue to seek a viable manipulation of this construct. I am doing so in my current work.

In my discussion of experience expectations, I also described the role of objective similarity on subjective assimilation and differentiation that came to light in the present research. There appears to be some evidence that objective similarity may play a role akin to the role that it plays in the objective distancing literature (Arndt et al., 2002; Schimel et al., 2000). That is, people may be more likely to engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation when it comes to objectively similar others, as opposed to objectively dissimilar others. These findings suggest that subjective and objective information, although theoretically different, may not be entirely separable in practice. Subjective and objective information may intermingle in people's minds, with only a blurry distinction between the two. Indeed, some of our previous work demonstrates that people make subjective inferences on the basis of objective information, and vice versa (Long & Piel, 2003; Long & Piel, 2007; Piel et al., 2004, 2006). Although disentangling these constructs proves difficult, future research should continue the effort.

In sum, the findings of the present research, together with the pilot data presented above, attest to the plausibility of the phenomena of subjective assimilation and differentiation. Clearly, people do react to liked and disliked others by seeking and avoiding shared experiences with them, and the current findings suggest important

moderational roles for experiential/rational mindset, experience expectations, and objective similarity.

If I have succeeded in showing that people subjectively assimilate with liked others and subjectively differentiate from disliked others, still I hasten to acknowledge that the idea that people seek out things they associate with liked others and avoid things they associate with disliked others is not new. Balance and consistency theorists (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958; Rosenberg & Abelson, 1962) have made this claim numerous times. However, I take a somewhat more nuanced perspective. I do not argue that people seek out simply anything they associate with liked others and avoid simply anything they associate with disliked others. Rather, I argue that people seek out – with liked others – and avoid – with disliked others – shared *experiences*. It is not the thing itself, but the shared experience of that thing that people either seek out or avoid. That people's expectations as to whether or not likable, similar partners would share their experience of a stimulus predicted people's desire to expose themselves to that stimulus in Study 2 provides some evidence for this perspective.

If people seek out shared experiences with liked others, perhaps this does not come as a surprise, given the burgeoning research suggesting that shared experiences are a powerful interpersonal attractor (Anderson et al., 2003; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Fridlund, 1991; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Lakin et al., 2003; Pinel et al., 2004, 2006). Liking leads to subjective assimilation, and subjective assimilation creates more liking.

The pattern may not be so simple for subjective differentiation, however. I have argued that people avoid I contact with disliked others because they anticipate that subjective overlap with these people would feel inappropriately intimate, uncomfortable,

and perhaps even repulsive. And maybe they are right. Perhaps the underlying reasons that usually contribute to the power of I-sharing – existential connection, belief validation, belonging, and the integral nature of the I – may actually detract from the allure of I-sharing with disliked others.

First, I-sharing relieves people's persistent existential isolation, and makes them feel existentially connected. Often this marks a welcome reprieve from one of the banes of the human condition. But when it comes to those they dislike, people may actually derive comfort from their existential barriers and want them to remain intact, making I-sharing an unpleasant occurrence.

Second, although the feelings of belonging that accompany I-sharing typically constitute a benefit, people do not want to feel that they belong with just anyone. If they did, social psychologists would not dedicate so much time and energy to the study of intergroup relations (for a review see Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002), ostracism (e.g., Case & Williams, 2004; Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004, 2005), and social exclusion (e.g., Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002, 2003). To the extent that I-sharing could foster feelings of belonging with people one would rather keep at arm's length, the less desirable I-sharing with those disliked others will seem. Thus, although the feelings of belonging that follow from I-sharing constitute a boon with regard to liked I-sharers, perhaps they would constitute a bane with regard to disliked I-sharers.

Third, belief validation may not feel particularly satisfying when it comes from agreeing with disliked others. If it did, then why would people so often go so far as to change their attitudes and opinions to make them different from the attitudes and

opinions of disliked others (e.g., Cooper & Jones, 1969)? I-sharing with disliked others on dimensions that indicate a shared attitude could cause people to question or even alter that attitude, thereby negating the benefit of belief validation that Pinel and colleagues argue usually follows from I-sharing with liked others.

Fourth, the integral nature of the subjective self contributes to the allure of I-sharing with liked others. Presumably, one's sense of sharing and connection increases along with the importance and potency of the self feature that one shares with another, and, in I-sharing, the shared feature – the subjective self – constitutes a critically important component. Yet, the integral nature of the subjective self could have the opposite effect on I-sharing with disliked others – the importance of the I could work against the allure of subjective overlap with disliked others. Even if people do not mind overlap with disliked others when it comes to minor, petty features of themselves, such as earlobe shape or number of parking tickets, perhaps they feel increasingly uncomfortable overlapping with disliked others the more personal and central the self feature on which the overlap occurs. And what could be more personal or central than their very experience of the world around them?

But would people really despise I-sharing with people they dislike as much as they think they would? There are several reasons to believe that people who I-share with disliked others might enjoy the experience more than they expect, and perhaps even come to like that person more. Consider the affective forecasting literature, which indicates that people are often incorrect in their predictions about how they would feel if an undesirable event occurred. For example, people overestimate the amount of negative affect they would feel and the length of time that negative affect would last if their

relationship ended, or if their preferred gubernatorial candidate lost the race, or if they failed to achieve tenure (Gilbert, Pinel, Wilson, Blumberg, & Wheatley, 1998). Gilbert and colleagues argue that people fail to consider the role that their natural psychological resources play in helping them feel better after such occurrences. Similarly, people may overestimate how bad they would feel if they were to I-share with a disliked other. Moreover, research indicates that people do not always have the self-insight to accurately determine which of two options would provide them with the most lasting happiness, and they often must suffer the consequences of making an ill-informed choice (Wilson, Centerbar, Kermer, & Gilbert, 2005). Subjective differentiation may represent a similar situation, wherein people avoid having an experience that they think would be undesirable, but which in fact would be rather rewarding (for a similar perspective see Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2007).

If the affective forecasting literature suggests that people might enjoy I-sharing with disliked others more than they think, Festinger's (1957) work on cognitive dissonance suggests that I-sharing might actually lead people to improve their opinions of those disliked others. According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, when people hold two conflicting beliefs they feel the discomfort of inconsistency, and this discomfort motivates people to bring their conflicting thoughts in line with each other. Applying this reasoning to I-sharing with a disliked person, if a person dislikes someone and yet believes that she is subjectively similar to that person, these thoughts would be inconsistent and thus create dissonance. One way to resolve this dissonance would be to increase liking for that person. Thus, I-sharing with a disliked person might actually lead to increased liking for the target.

Previous research on I-sharing lends further support to the perspective that I-sharing with disliked others can lead people to increase their liking for them. For example, Pinel & Long (2007) have shown that I-sharing with outgroup members causes people to like those outgroup members more. Similarly, Long & Pinel (2007) have shown that I-sharing causes people to increase their liking for objectively dissimilar others. More generally, I-sharing appears to be a powerful phenomenon that can provoke liking in many situations (Pinel et al., 2006; Pinel & Long, 2007).

Clearly, competing predictions can be generated as to the repercussions of I-sharing with a disliked target. Examining the accuracy of people's forecasts regarding how they would feel if they I-shared with people they dislike represents a promising avenue for future research.

Although I have focused on the target's likability as the primary moderator of subjective assimilation and differentiation behavior, I can think of at least two other conditions under which this behavior might occur. First, people may engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation out of a need for optimal distinctiveness, to feel both similar to and yet distinct from others (Brewer, 1991). When people feel particularly existentially isolated, as though their perspective on the world is too unique, they may seek out shared experiences as a way of validating their subjective self. And although people may thirst for and respond favorably to subjective similarity (see Pinel et al., 2004, 2006), their need for optimal distinctiveness could put limits on just how much subjective similarity they desire. Were people to I-share with others with respect to absolutely every stimulus they encountered, they might begin to miss having some unique subjective experiences. Without their own unique experience, after all, they

might wonder just what distinguishes them from everyone else. Thus, they might engage in subjective differentiation as a way of distinguishing their own subjective experience from that of other people. When maintaining an optimally distinctive subjective self motivates people to engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation, feelings of subjective similarity would play the moderating role, not the target's likability.

Regardless of their attitude toward the target, people would engage in subjective assimilation when feeling too subjectively distinct from others, and they would engage in subjective differentiation when feeling too subjectively similar to others.

Second, people may engage in subjective assimilation and differentiation as a way of manifesting a differential power relationship with another person. Whereas subjective assimilation may allow people to validate another person's experience, subjective differentiation enables them to exert power over another person by invalidating his or her experience. By refusing to share another person's subjective experiences, people may hold back all of the benefits of I-sharing from that person, keeping her in a state of existential isolation, and making it difficult for her to satisfy her needs for belonging and belief validation. This may leave her unsure of her own perceptions and skeptical about trusting her own senses. Using subjective differentiation in this way to exert influence over a less powerful target may represent a form of coercive power (French & Raven, 1959). Here, the key moderator of subjective differentiation would be power motive. People high in the need for power (see McClelland, 1975) or those with a situationally manipulated power goal would be more likely to engage in subjective differentiation than people low in power motivation or those without this power goal.

Future research should explore these and other motivations for subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation.

Regardless of the motivations behind it, the subjective assimilation and differentiation perspective posits that although people sometimes seek out shared experiences, at other times they avoid shared experiences. Yet this is hardly the first perspective to argue that people sometimes seek to distance themselves from others. In fact, a sizable tradition in social psychology documents people's propensity to maintain and exercise their right to be different. For examples, consider psychological reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), anticonformity (e.g., Cooper & Jones, 1969; MacDonald, Nail, & Levy, 2004; Nail, MacDonald, & Levy, 2000), and objective differentiation (Arndt et al., 2002; Pyszczynski et al., 1993; Schimel et al., 2000). Subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation add to the existing literature on topics such as these through their emphasis on experience. Whereas these other areas of study concentrate on attitudes, behavior, and self-definition, subjective assimilation and differentiation focus on moment-to-moment subjective experience. This perspective shifts the focus from the objective self to the subjective self, describing another very different arena in which people align with and differentiate themselves from others.

Conclusion

The research presented here points to the existence of the phenomena of subjective assimilation and subjective differentiation. Taken together, these studies suggest the importance of three moderators: experiential mindset, experience expectations, and objective similarity. This research sheds light on those times when people choose to seek out or avoid subjective overlap. It furthers the literature in social

psychology by adding to the realm of domains in which people seek to align themselves with or distance themselves from others a qualitatively different domain: the subjective self.

References

- Anderson, C., Keltner, D., & John, O. P. (2003). Emotional convergence between people over time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 1054-1068.
- Arndt, J., Greenberg, J., Schimel, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Solomon, S. (2002). To belong or not to belong, that is the question: Terror management and identification with gender and ethnicity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 26-43.
- Baumeister, R. F., DeWall, C. N., Ciarocco, N. J., & Twenge, J. M. (2005). Social exclusion impairs self-regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*, 589-604.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachment as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*, 497-529.
- Baumeister, R. F., Twenge, J. M., & Nuss, C. K. (2002). Effects of social exclusion on cognitive processes: Anticipated aloneness reduces intelligent thought. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*, 817-827.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1). New York: Basic Books.
- Brehm, J. W. (1966). *A theory of psychological reactance*. New York: Academic Press.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475-482.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 822-848.

- Case, T. I., & Williams, K. D. (2004). Ostracism: A metaphor for death. In J. Greenberg, S. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.) *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 336-351). New York: Guilford Press.
- Chartrand, T. L., & Bargh, J. A. (1999). The chameleon effect: The perception-behavior link and social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 893-910.
- Cooper, J. & Jones, E. E. (1969). Opinion divergence as a strategy to avoid being miscast. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13*, 23-30.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & LeFevre, J. (1989). Optimal experience in work and leisure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*, 815-822.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). If we are so rich, why aren't we happy? *American Psychologist, 54*, 821-827.
- Epstein, S. (1994). Integration of the cognitive and the psychodynamic unconscious. *American Psychologist, 49*, 709-724.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Oxford, England: Row, Peterson.
- French, J. R. P., Jr., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed), *Studies in social power* (pp.150-167). Oxford, England: University of Michigan.
- Fridlund, A. J. (1991). Sociality of solitary smiling: Potentiation by an implicit audience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 229-240.
- Gilbert, D. T., Pinel, E. C., Wilson, T. D., Blumberg, S. J., & Wheatley, T. P. (1998). Immune neglect: A source of durability bias in affective forecasting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*, 617-638.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. Oxford, England: Wiley.

- Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., & Willis, H. (2002). Intergroup bias. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*, 575-604.
- Hodges, S. D., Klein, J. K., Veach, D., & Villanueva, R. (2004). Giving birth to empathy: The effects of similar experience on empathic accuracy, empathic concern, and perceived empathy. Manuscript in preparation.
- James, W. (1910/1968). The self. In C. Gordon & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *The self in social interaction* (pp. 41-49). New York: J. Wiley & Sons.
- Lakin, J. L., & Chartrand, T. L. (2003). Using nonconscious behavioral mimicry to create affiliation and rapport. *Psychological Science, 14*, 334-339.
- Lakin, J. L., Jefferis, V. E., Cheng, C. M., & Chartrand, T. L. (2003). The chameleon effect as social glue: Evidence for the evolutionary significance of nonconscious mimicry. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 27*, 145-162.
- Leary, M. R., Tambor, E. S., Terdal, S. K., & Downs, D. L. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 518-530.
- Long, A. E., & Pinel, E. C. (2003, February). *From ME to I: Social Identity as a Proxy for the Self-as-Subject*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Los Angeles, CA.
- Long, A. E., & Pinel, E. C. (2007). Impression revision as a function of subjective and objective similarity. Manuscript in preparation.
- MacDonald, G., Nail, P. R., & Levy, D. A. (2004). Expanding the scope of the social response context model. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 26*, 77-92.

- Mallett, R.K., Wilson, T.D., & Gilbert, D.T. (2007). Expect the unexpected: Failure to anticipate similarities when predicting the quality of an intergroup interaction. Manuscript in preparation.
- McClelland, D. C. (1975). *Power: The inner experience*. Oxford, England: Irvington.
- Mikulincer, M., Florian, V., & Hirschberger, G. (2003). The existential function of close relationships: Introducing death into the science of love. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7, 20-40.
- Nail, P. R., MacDonald, G., & Levy, D. A. (2000). Proposal of a four-dimensional model of social response. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 454-470.
- Pacini, R., & Epstein, S. (1999). The relation of rational and experiential information processing styles to personality, basic beliefs, and the ratio-bias phenomenon. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 972-987.
- Pinel, E. C., & Long, A. E. (2007). When I's meet: I-sharing and the robust preference for fellow group members. Manuscript in preparation.
- Pinel, E. C., Long, A. E., Landau, M. J., Alexander, K., & Pyszczynski, T. (2006). Seeing I to I: A pathway to interpersonal connectedness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 243-257.
- Pinel, E. C., Long, A. E., Landau, M. J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2004). I-sharing and the problem of existential isolation. In J. Greenberg, S. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 352-368). New York: Guilford Press.

- Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (1997). Why do we need what we need? A terror management perspective on the roots of human social motivation. *Psychological Inquiry*, 8, 1-20.
- Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., Sideris, J., & Stubing, M. J. (1993). Emotional expression and the reduction of motivated cognitive bias: Evidence from cognitive dissonance and distancing from victims' paradigms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 177-186.
- Rosenberg, M. J., & Abelson, R. P. (1962). An analysis of cognitive balancing. In M. J. Rosenberg et al., (Eds.) *Attitude organization and change* (pp.112-163). New York: Gaines Dog Research Center.
- Schachter, S. (1959). *The psychology of affiliation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Schimmel, J., Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., O'Mahen, H., & Arndt, J. (2000). Running from the shadow: Psychological distancing from others to deny characteristics people fear in themselves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 446-462.
- Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (1991). Terror management theory of self-esteem. In C. R. Snyder & D. R. Forsyth (Eds.) *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp. 21-40). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, Inc.
- Swann, W., B., Jr. (1990). To be adored or to be known? The interplay of self-enhancement and self-verification. In E. T. Higgins & R. M. Sorrentino (Eds.) *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior* (Vol. 2, pp. 408-448). New York: Guilford Press.

- Swann, W. B., Jr. (1996). *Self-traps: The elusive quest for higher self-esteem*. New York: Freeman.
- Twenge, J. M., Catanese, K. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2002). Social exclusion causes self-defeating behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 606-615.
- Twenge, J. M., Catanese, K. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2003). Social exclusion and the deconstructed state: Time perception, meaninglessness, lethargy, lack of emotion, and self-awareness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *85*, 409-423.
- Wilson, T. D., Centerbar, D. B., Kermer, D. A., & Gilbert, D. T. (2005). The pleasures of uncertainty: Prolonging positive moods in ways people do not anticipate. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88*, 5-21.
- Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Zadro, L., Williams, K. D., & Richardson, R. (2004). How low can you go? Ostracism by a computer is sufficient to lower self-reported levels of belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*, 560-567.
- Zadro, L., Williams, K. D., & Richardson, R. (2005). Riding the 'O' train: Comparing the effects of ostracism and verbal dispute on targets and sources. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *8*, 125-143.

Anson Elizabeth Long
Curriculum Vitae

Education

The Pennsylvania State University, Ph.D., Psychology, 2007

The Pennsylvania State University, M.S., Psychology, 2004

Washington and Lee University, B.S., Psychology, 1998

Awards, Honors, and Funding

Bruce V. Moore Graduate Fellowship, 2007, The Pennsylvania State University

RGSO Travel Award, 2004, 2005, 2006, The Pennsylvania State University

Carolyn Wood Sherif Memorial Research Fund Travel Award, 2004, 2005, 2006,
The Pennsylvania State University

Publications

Pinel, E. C., **Long, A. E.**, Landau, M., Alexander, K., & Pyszczynski, T. (2006). Seeing I to I: A pathway to interpersonal connectedness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*, 243-257.

Pinel, E. C., **Long, A. E.**, Landau, M. & Pyszczynski, T. (2004). I-sharing, the problem of existential isolation, and their implications for interpersonal and intergroup phenomena. In J. Greenberg, S. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 352-368). New York: The Guilford Press.

Research and Professional Experience

Research Assistant to Dr. Elizabeth Pinel, Fall 2001 - Spring 2007

Research Assistant to Dr. Melvin Mark, Spring 2002 and 2003

Research Methods Lab Instructor for Dr. Theresa Vescio, Fall 2002 and 2003

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Elizabeth Pinel's Advanced Seminar on the Self, Fall 2001