

Short Communication

The Developmental Significance of the Social Context as an Additional Self-Continuity Strategy: A Comparison of Emerging Adults From Brazil and the United States

Jonathan B. Santo^{1*} , Josafa M. da Cunha² , Annesha Mitra¹

¹Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA

²Department of Theory and Fundamentals of Education, Federal University of Parana, Brazil
E-mail: jsanto@unomaha.edu

Received: 6 April 2022; **Revised:** 30 June 2022; **Accepted:** 5 August 2022

Abstract: Self-continuity refers to the strategies individuals use to justify a stable sense of self despite the various changes they experience. Among young adults, in particular, self-continuity over time has been associated with indicators of mental health. The aim of the current project was to identify whether aspects of the social context are measurably distinct from other established strategies of self-continuity. Data were collected from emerging adults from the US Midwest ($n = 309$) and southern Brazil ($n = 285$). Self-continuity and its opposite, self-discontinuity, were measured, in addition to essentialism or narrativism and the social context as strategies. Structural equation modeling supported the contention that self-continuity is positively associated with strategies of essentialism, narrativism, and the social context. Models confirmed that the social context was measurably distinct from the other strategies of self-continuity and higher among older emerging adults. Finally, though the factor structure was largely identical between the two samples, some mean differences emerged.

Keywords: self-continuity, self-continuity strategies, social context

1. Introduction

A key component of identity development in adolescence and early adulthood is a sense of personal persistence or self-continuity (Breakwell, 2015). Self-continuity is defined as the “process where an individual explains connections between themselves in the past, present, and future, and develops a strategy for perceiving their sameness despite inevitable change” (Chandler et al., 2003). Essentially, self-continuity reflects the manner in which people reconcile the various physical and psychological changes that they undergo into a cohesive self-concept. Self-discontinuity, on the other hand, is conceptualized as its opposite, the lack of a coherent strategy to accommodate the myriad of changes undergone during this period (Santo et al., 2018). Recently, the processes underlying individual (Bluck & Liao, 2013) and collective (Smeeke & Verkuyten, 2015) self-continuity has been of interest to social psychologists (see Sani [2008] for a review). We maintain these issues are even more important during emerging adulthood (i.e., between adolescence and adulthood), where a number of identity development challenges become salient (Chandler et al., 2003).

However, the various self-continuity strategies used during emerging adulthood have yet to be fully explored

(Martin-Storey et al., 2020). Essentialism reflects how one characteristic or trait remaining the same serves as a strategy for self-continuity, whereas narrativism uses the connectivity of the parts of the self-identity that are likely to change over time (Chandler et al., 2003). While these strategies have been examined in relation to collective self-continuity (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2015), more remains to be understood in how individuals use a combination of processes to reconcile their change with a cohesive sense of self, specifically their social context.

A recent international study of self-continuity identified social factors (termed “associative links”) as an additional underpinning of self-continuity (Becker et al., 2018). Not only does this specific study punctuate the need to assess the social components of self-continuity but particularly during emerging adulthood and especially in samples outside of North America. However, we would go so far as to propose that the social context (having stable social relationships) has the potential to serve a unique aspect of one’s self-continuity. Furthermore, stability within the social context may serve as an additional strategy by which emerging adults bolster their persistence over time.

1.1 The social context of identity theory

The concept of individual identity and its underpinnings was popularized in Western culture by James (1890). Even in this early conceptualization of James’, there was a social dimension that comprised how one is perceived by others. From the study of self-esteem to self-concept, a number of components of identity have been proposed, with many also containing a social aspect. Notably, work by Swann and colleagues (1989) helped disentangle the processes by which individuals reconcile accurate feedback about themselves (self-verification) from self-serving positive feedback (self-enhancement). More recently, Stryker and Burke (2000) outlined how the social structure of identity is co-constructed with internal, self-referential aspects of self-meaning.

As such, the importance of social relationships to identity development is not a new concept. This notion was eloquently described by Sullivan (1953), who first believed that intimacy between same-sex peers and, later on, other-sex peers leads to a cohesive sense of identity. More importantly, Sullivan (1953) elucidated the critical role that stable positive relationships with peers serve in promoting self-esteem and overall mental health. In his interpersonal theory of psychiatry, social relationships or “chumships” beginning in childhood through adolescence and into adulthood play a crucial role in individual identity development.

Close relationships during this period of the lifespan are unique in that they represent relations that are voluntary, reciprocal, and comprise of a strong affective bond (Rubin et al., 2006). Positive relationships serve as an emotional resource as well as a cognitive resource and potential models of subsequent relationships. In sum, through social relationships (with family and friends), an individual can learn about themselves. Based on Sullivan’s (1953) theory, there’s a growing literature examining the burgeoning importance of social relationships for identity development in late adolescence and early adulthood (Borghuis et al., 2017). These affordances are all the more significant for emerging adults. Arnett (2007) highlighted that the years 19-25 are a crucial period of the lifespan because of the changing roles, opportunities, and expectations youth experience. It is during this period that the social context of identity plays a crucial role.

1.2 The social context as an additional self-continuity strategy

One particular aspect of identity theory that is gaining attention is self-continuity (Sani, 2008). Sometimes conceptualized as cultural continuity or personal persistence (Chandler et al., 2003), self-continuity refers to the internal processes by which individuals reconcile the various physical, cognitive and societal changes they experience over their lifespan into a cohesive (and importantly) stable sense of self (Negele & Habermas, 2010). Meanwhile, self-discontinuity has been portrayed as the opposite of self-continuity, representing the degree to which an individual might feel like a different person from moment to moment. Interestingly, two strategies have been put forward as aspects by which individuals bolster their self-continuity. Essentialism centers around identifying particular aspects of the self that remain stable over time (one’s soul, genes, or brain, for example), whereas narrativism uses the interconnectedness of an individual’s experiences to form an overarching narrative (much like separate chapters in a larger story).

Regardless of these separate strategies, self-continuity overall has been demonstrated to play an adaptive role among young people, mitigating suicide rates among Canadian First Nation young adults (Chandler et al., 2003), buffering the impact of homophobic harassment among gender minority university students (Martin-Storey et al., 2020),

and immunizing early adolescents to the depressive effects of peer victimization (Santo et al., 2018), to name a few. Schwartz and Pantin (2006) provide a rigorous review of the various affordances of self-continuity to the mental health of adolescents and young adults. In sum, several studies have punctuated the relevance of self-continuity for the healthy development of young adults, perhaps especially because they undergo so many changes during this period of their lifespan.

What each of these studies highlights, once again, are the interconnections between a person's social interactions and how they conceive of themselves. To our knowledge, however, no one has attempted to test whether an aspect of the social context can be used as an additional measurable strategy of self-continuity, separate from essentialism (which relies on a stable internal trait) and narrativism (which connects individual experiences). Should it be measurably distinct, it may be that the social context also has a positive impact on identity development through self-continuity, similar to the other strategies. The current study was designed to incorporate the relevance of social relationships to the measurement of self-continuity using the social context as an additional strategy of self-continuity beyond other traditional strategies.

1.3 The current study

Our goals in the current study are multi-faceted. First, we wanted to replicate the negative relationship between self-continuity and discontinuity using structural equation modeling (Santo et al., 2018). We hypothesized that self-continuity and discontinuity would be negatively related, and the resulting model would be an acceptable fit to the data. Moreover, it was our intent to demonstrate how these latent factors are associated with traditional strategies of self-continuity, namely essentialism and narrativism. We wanted to go beyond the measurement of these strategies and identify whether the social context is measurably distinct from others. Specifically, we predicted that modeling the social context as a separate construct would be a better fit to the data. Given the increased importance of social relationships during emerging adulthood, personal persistence theory (Chandler et al., 2003) would dictate that the social context as a strategy would be more strongly related to self-continuity as young people get older (i.e., hypothesizing that the latent construct of the social context would be positively associated with age). Finally, we expected that the factor structure was invariant across two samples, one from North America and the other from Brazil, two countries for whom measures of self-continuity and, more importantly, the specific strategies of self-continuity have been validated (Santo et al., 2013).

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Data were collected from 309 emerging adults (mean age = 21.88 years, $SD = 1.84$, 75.1% female) recruited at the university in the US Midwest and 285 emerging adults (mean age = 22.45 years, $SD = 1.44$, 65.6% female) recruited at a university from a city in southern Brazil. Both samples came from public institutions reflecting a metropolitan community from comparable socio-economic groups (Dutra-Thomé & Pereira, 2017).

2.2 Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was secured from the Institutional Review Board of each University. Instructors in the Arts & Sciences and Education programs at each institution provided approval to the research team to recruit their students. The participants were approached in their classrooms, and a short description of the study goals and procedures was given to all students. Interested participants (between the ages of 19-25) were provided with a link to the study website. The data from this paper were part of a larger project on emerging adult socio-emotional development.

2.3 Measures

Self-continuity strategies were assessed using a previously established measure that uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" (as validated by Santo et al., 2013). Self-continuity and

discontinuity were measured using three items for each (see Table 1 for the specific items). Self-continuity strategies were also assessed in three items which tasked participants to rate their agreement with statements that either reflected essentialism or narrativism (again, see Table 1). The social context was measured using two additional items (e.g. "...because of my family" or "...because of my friends").

2.4 Analytic strategy

Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling in Mplus (version 7.20; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). First, we created a latent model of self-continuity and discontinuity. Next, we regressed the latent factors of essentialism, narrativism, and the additional strategy of the social context. We were then able to test whether the social context was measurably distinct from the other strategies. Once this was established, we modeled the associations between the latent constructs as a function of age. Finally, we tested for measurement invariance of the factor structure between the samples. Models were rejected if they worsened the fit (as measured by a significant increase to the χ^2) and/or provided comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), or standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) values that were unacceptable (CFI < .90, RMSEA > .10, and SRMR > .08).

3. Results

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1, and zero-order correlations are provided in Table 2. Model building began by first creating latent constructs of self-continuity and discontinuity using three indicators of each. The resulting model was a good fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(8)} = 75.18, p < .05$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06). All of the factor loadings were significant and positive (coefficients > .70). The estimated reliability of each of the factors were also acceptable (self-continuity = .91; discontinuity = .83). Not surprisingly, self-continuity and discontinuity were negatively associated with each other ($r = -.25, p < .05$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the study variables with standardized factor loadings and the correlation with age

Items	Mean	SD	Loading	$r_{(age)}^{sig}$
Self-Discontinuity				
01. I'm a completely different person all the time.	3.41	1.19	.82 ^{<.001}	.01 ^{.899}
02. I change more than I stay the same.	3.30	1.09	.70 ^{<.001}	-.05 ^{.523}
03. From day to day, I'm a different person.	3.21	1.25	.83 ^{<.001}	-.04 ^{.698}
Self-Continuity				
04. I am the same person today as five years ago.	2.98	1.35	.84 ^{<.001}	.03 ^{.684}
05. When I am an adult, I will be the same person I am now.	2.72	1.19	.89 ^{<.001}	-.06 ^{.539}
06. I will be the same person in five years that I am today.	2.79	1.21	.92 ^{<.001}	.04 ^{.737}
I stay the same over time...				
Narrativism				
07. ...because of my experiences	2.75	1.07	.73 ^{<.001}	.04 ^{.539}
08. ...because my choices show who I am.	2.63	1.02	.76 ^{<.001}	.05 ^{.416}
09. ...because of the things I have done.	2.80	1.04	.85 ^{<.001}	-.02 ^{.843}
Essentialism				
10. ...because I have the same brain.	2.62	1.03	.71 ^{<.001}	-.15 ^{.020}
11. ...because I have the same personality.	2.71	1.08	.64 ^{<.001}	-.02 ^{.729}
12. ...because I have the same soul.	2.67	1.05	.81 ^{<.001}	.07 ^{.298}
Social Context				
13. ...because of my family.	2.51	1.03	.83 ^{<.001}	.12 ^{.044}
14. ...because of my friends.	2.56	1.00	.80 ^{<.001}	.16 ^{.030}

Scores ranged from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree". The *p* values are presented in superscript.

Table 2. Zero-order correlations between the study variables for the US sample (above the diagonal) and Brazil sample (below the diagonal)

Items	01.	02.	03.	04.	05.	06.	07.	08.	09.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	Mean	SD
Self-Discontinuity																
01. I'm a completely different person all the time.	-	.52*	.60*	-.06	-.16*	-.12*	.03	.02	.00	-.01	-.03	-.07	-.16*	-.09	4.07	0.98
02. I change more than I stay the same.	.43*	-	.56*	-.12*	-.24*	-.25*	.03	-.02	-0.01	-.15*	-.14*	-.08	-.22*	-.19*	3.71	1.00
03. From day to day, I'm a different person.	.40*	.42*	-	-.09	-.21*	-.17*	.07	-.04	0.04	-.18*	-.07	-.08	-.13*	-.13*	3.95	0.93
Self-Continuity																
04. I am the same person today as five years ago.	-.13*	-.20*	-.09	-	.54*	.59*	.21*	.20*	.19*	.21*	.12*	.16*	.17*	.22*	3.91	0.97
05. When I am an adult, I will be the same person I am now.	-.11	-.24*	-.08	.62*	-	.70*	.16*	.09	.14*	.21*	.16*	.17*	.21*	.16*	3.38	1.04
06. I will be the same person in five years that I am today.	-.05	-.24*	-.07	.64*	.79*	-	.13*	0.1	.17*	.25*	.26*	.21*	.24*	.19*	3.47	1.05
I stay the same over time...																
Narrativism																
07. ...because of my experiences	-.03	-0.06	.02	.25*	.27*	.25*	-	.32*	.60*	.30*	.17*	.27*	.37*	.31*	3.13	1.07
08. ...because my choices show who I am.	-.07	-.25*	-.05	.27*	.30*	.30*	.42*	-	.45*	.30*	.24*	.27*	.30*	.33*	2.89	1.05
09. ...because of the things I have done.	-.09	-.23*	-.05	.38*	.37*	.32*	.47*	.52*	-	.24*	.24*	.30*	.35*	.30*	3.08	1.04
Essentialism																
10. ...because I have the same brain.	-.07	-.23*	-.15*	.34*	.36*	.35*	.43*	.52*	.50*	-	.63*	.67*	.43*	.44*	2.65	1.06
11. ...because I have the same personality.	-.04	-.17*	-.06	.19*	.26*	.33*	.33*	.46*	.35*	.44*	-	.70*	.40*	.35*	2.72	1.11
12. ...because I have the same soul.	-.01	-.20*	-.06	.23*	.27*	.35*	.24*	.39*	.46*	.54*	.62*	-	.49*	.45*	2.72	1.07
Social Context																
13. ...because of my family.	-.12*	-.27*	-.17*	.22*	.22*	.25*	.38*	.42*	.49*	.47*	.52*	.54*	-	.70*	2.31	0.98
14. ...because of my friends.	-.13*	-.24*	-0.11	.28*	.28*	.23*	.30*	.45*	.51*	.47*	.41*	.47*	.69*	-	2.63	1.07
Mean	2.71	2.85	2.44	2.02	2.02	2.06	2.34	2.36	2.5	2.58	2.69	2.62	2.73	2.48		
SD	0.96	1.01	1.06	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.91	.92	.96	1.01	1.05	1.02	1.04	0.93		

* = $p < .05$, values in bold reflect the correlations between indicators of a latent factor. Variable names are provided in Table 1.

At this point, we expanded the model by regressing the latent factors of the strategies of essentialism, narrativism, and the additional strategy of the social context on the self-continuity factors. The model remained a good fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(70)} = 296.27$, $p < .05$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .08) again with all factor loadings significant and positive (coefficients $> .65$). Also, the estimated reliability of each of the factors were acceptable (essentialism = .77; narrativism = .83; and the social context = .79).

Self-continuity was a significant positive correlate of essentialism ($\beta = .52$, standard error [S.E.] = .05, $z = 11.72$, $p < .05$), narrativism ($\beta = .30$, S.E. = .05, $z = 5.92$, $p < .05$) and the social context ($\beta = .15$, S.E. = .06, $z = 2.53$, $p < .05$). Finally, we compared this model to ones in which the social context indicators were subsumed into the constructs of essentialism and narrativism, separately. The resulting models were significantly worse ($\Delta\chi^2_{(3)} = 128.02$ and 225.25 respectively, $p < .05$) and were not an acceptable fit to the data (CFI $< .90$, RMSEA $> .10$, SRMR $> .10$). This step provided support for the contention that the social context is a unique strategy for self-continuity, measurably distinct from either essentialism or narrativism.

We then tested for age differences in the latent constructs by regressing all of the latent factors on age. The

resulting model remained a good fit ($\chi^2_{(79)} = 257.31, p < .05, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06$). There was only one significant effect of age, namely, age was a significant positive correlate of the social context strategy ($\beta = .10, S.E. = .04, z = 2.79, p < .05$). To explain, older participants rated the importance of the strategy of the social context higher (see Figure 1).

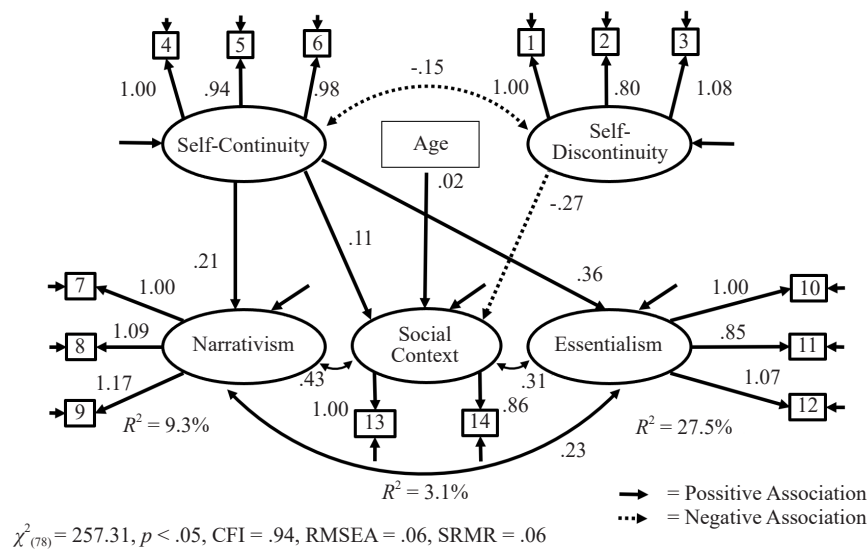


Figure 1. Unstandardized coefficients of the model (#5) of the latent constructs of self-continuity and discontinuity with measured strategies of narrativism, essentialism and the new construct, social context. All associations are statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Finally, we tested for measurement invariance of the model to ensure that the factor structure was the same in both samples. The various steps of the measurement invariance process and resulting fit statistics are presented in Table 3. We found structural invariance (i.e., configural), factor loading invariance (i.e., metric), intercept invariance (i.e., scalar), partial error variance invariance, partial factor invariance, and factor covariance invariance. Specifically, some error variances were allowed to vary across the samples, as was the variability in the latent factors of narrativism and essentialism. Otherwise, all of the remaining components of the model were constrained to be equal across the groups. Stated another way, the factor structure of self-continuity, the strategies of self-continuity, their associations with each other, and age can be assumed to be comparable in the sample from Brazil and the US. Figure 2 illustrates the final model estimates. The final model remained an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(200)} = 454.95, p < .05, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .08$).

Table 3. Model fit indices for all steps of the model building process

Items	χ^2 (df) sig.	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
1. Baseline model of self-continuity and discontinuity	75.18 ₍₆₇₎ <.001	.95	.08	.06
2. Added self-continuity strategies	296.27 ₍₇₀₎ <.001	.93	.07	.08
3. Social context variables as essentialism (rejected)	521.52 ₍₇₃₎ <.001	.85	.10	.10
4. Social context variables as narrativism (rejected)	424.29 ₍₇₃₎ <.001	.88	.10	.09
5. Model with age	257.31 ₍₇₈₎ <.001	.94	.06	.06
6. Full model split by sample	235.15 ₍₆₇₎ <.001	.94	.07	.06
7. Structural invariance (configural)	210.01 ₍₁₃₄₎ <.001	.97	.04	.04
8. Factor loading invariance (metric)	223.86 ₍₁₄₃₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08
9. Item intercept invariance (scalar)	415.95 ₍₁₇₄₎ <.001	.88	.07	.09
10. Total error variance invariance (rejected)	484.39 ₍₁₈₈₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08
11. Partial error variance invariance	423.08 ₍₁₈₃₎ <.001	.89	.07	.10
12. Total factor variance invariance (rejected)	456.08 ₍₁₈₉₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08
13. Partial factor variance invariance	438.91 ₍₁₈₇₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08
14. Factor covariance invariance	448.61 ₍₁₉₇₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08
15. Constrained effect of age across samples	454.95 ₍₂₀₀₎ <.001	.90	.07	.08

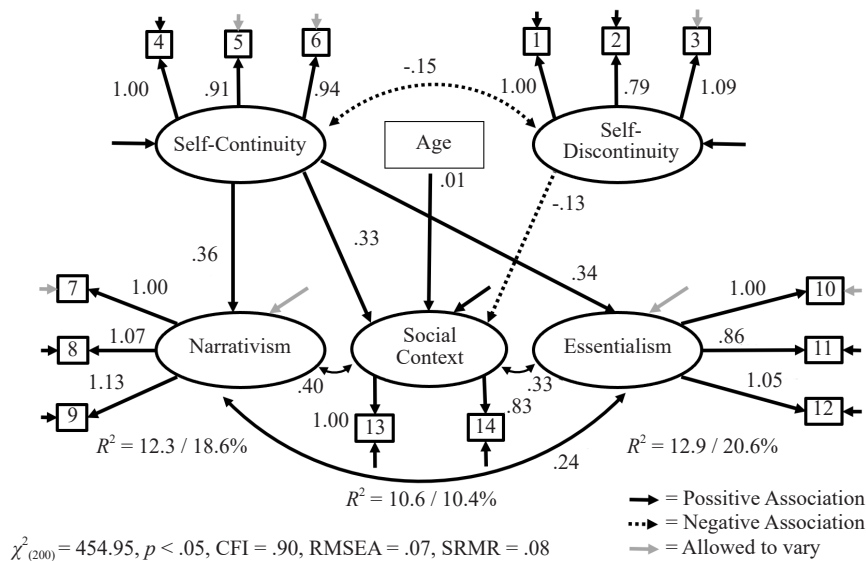


Figure 2. Unstandardized coefficients of the final model (#15) of the latent constructs of self-continuity and discontinuity with measured strategies of narrativism, essentialism and the new construct, social context. All associations are statistically significant ($p < .05$). R^2 values are provided for the US/Brazil samples

The final model also provided indication of mean differences in the latent factors across the samples. The largest differences were for values of self-continuity (diff = -1.62, $z = -15.48, p < .05$) and discontinuity (diff = -1.32, $z = -16.44, p < .05$), which were significantly lower in the Brazilian sample compared to the US participants. Whereas there was no difference between the groups in essentialism (diff = -.09, $z = -.96, p > .05$), the Brazilian participants reported significantly more narrativism (diff = .50, $z = 4.66, p < .05$). Perhaps, the most interesting difference is that Brazilian participants also reported significantly higher values for the social context as a strategy for self-continuity (diff = .77, $z = 5.32, p < .05$). Pairing these mean differences with the tests of factorial invariance hints to interesting nuances in how self-continuity is construed in the two samples. As we were able to support a largely invariant set of associations

between the factors of interest, mean differences nevertheless emerged. It is worth noting that even though the Brazilian sample reported lower continuity AND discontinuity, they simultaneously reported higher narrativism and the social context as a self-continuity strategy.

4. Discussion

The purpose of the current project was twofold, to illustrate that the social context may serve as an additional strategy of self-continuity and that there would be age-related differences reflecting developmental differences in emerging adulthood. Using two different samples, we were also able to show that the associations mirror each other through tests of measurement invariance. As in previous literature, self-continuity and self-discontinuity were negatively correlated with each other (Santo et al., 2018). The social context was expected to have a separate and positive association with self-continuity, which would be more susceptible to age-related differences given the developmental importance of peer relations in emerging adulthood. Our findings supported these assertions and provided the initial groundwork to use the social context as another self-continuity strategy. The findings from this study replicate others (Santo et al., 2013) in that essentialism and narrativism are two separate strategies that emerging adults use to justify their self-continuity. To our knowledge, the social context as a self-continuity strategy has not been explored before.

The contention that the social context serves as an additional self-continuity strategy has the potential to change how personal persistence is conceptualized. This reflects a different notion of how social relationships fit distinct from a framework of either narrative or essentialist strategies for self-continuity. Sullivan's (1953) theory provides a scaffold for this qualified new strategy. In particular, the role of social relationships in the development of the self has been demonstrated in a myriad of ways, including better interpersonal understanding, empathy, feelings of self-worth, resiliency, strength, buffers of environmental stressors, and targeted attacks on the integrity of the self (Rubin et al., 2006). It bears repeating that for adolescents and early adults, positive relationships serve a number of fundamental developmental functions (Sullivan, 1953). One of the means by which Sullivan's "chumships" foster identity development may be by providing people with yet one more resource with which to anchor a persistent sense of identity. Specifically, through their positive social relationships with friends and family, separate from aspects of the self that remain constant (reflecting essentialist strategies) or the inter-connected nature of the self (i.e., narrativist strategies).

On the other hand, these findings provide little clarity regarding self-discontinuity. A central conceit of the current study, which the data support, is that the different strategies (essentialism, narrativism, and the social context) are related to self-continuity. The only associations modeled with discontinuity were with self-continuity and the social context, both of which were negative. This is similar to past research that has measured both self-continuity and discontinuity in that discontinuity shows few (if any) significant effects. One likely interpretation may be that though self-discontinuity is reliably measurable, it may be less salient as an aspect of self-concept. For example, people are more likely to describe themselves based on their roles (i.e., father, sister, spouse, etc.) and not the lack thereof (e.g., childless, only-child, single, etc.).

Finally, there were several interesting mean differences that emerged from the final model. Even though the Brazilian participants reported lower self-continuity and discontinuity, they were higher in narrativism and the social context as strategies. As a reminder, these differences across the groups arose above and beyond, having constrained the various associations between the factors. These hint at nuanced ways in which the samples may still differ from each other in ways that should be replicated. Moreover, these differences intimate that additional contextual distinctions remain to be revealed. Beyond having the findings replicated in US and Brazilian samples, we would like to conduct similar studies in other contexts as well.

The current study is not without limitations, however. One notable limitation is based on the measurement of the social context. In our study, we only used two items as indicators of the latent construct. Even though the two items provided us with acceptable indicators of model fit and reliability, additional items would be recommended. In addition, each group was recruited from one city in each country. As such, any comparisons about the differences between US and Brazilian participants must be taken cautiously as the subjects may not be representative of the populations they are meant to represent. Finally, the current study used a sample of emerging adults (ages ranging from 19-25). Although we did find a significant effect of age on the social context as a self-continuity strategy, the lack of any other effects of age

might be due to range restriction. Future studies should replicate these findings using a sample with a more varied range of ages.

Future studies should also replicate these results and examine in depth how the social context relates to essentialism and narrativism. It would also be worthwhile to look at these factors in children or early adolescents. To the best of our knowledge, no other study has looked at the social context distinct from essentialism or narrativism. Ultimately, identifying an additional strategy with which people base their self-continuity would have implications in the area of mental health and would serve as an additional protective factor for emerging adults (Chandler et al., 2003).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

- Arnett, J. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for? *Child Development Perspectives*, 1(2), 68-73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2007.00016.x>
- Becker, M., Vignoles, V. L., Owe, E., Easterbrook, M. J., Brown, R., Smith, P. B., Abuhamdeh, S., Cendales Ayala, B., Garðarsdóttir, R. B., Torres, A., Camino, L., Bond, M. H., Nizharadze, G., Amponsah, B., Schweiger Gallo, I., Prieto Gil, P., Lorente Clemares, R., Campara, G., Espinosa, A., ... Lay, S. (2018). Being oneself through time: Bases of self-continuity across 55 cultures*. *Self and Identity*, 17(3), 276-293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2017.1330222>
- Bluck, S., & Liao, H. -W. (2013). I was therefore I am: Creating self-continuity through remembering our personal past. *The International Journal of Reminiscence and Life Review*, 1(1), 7-12. <https://journals.radford.edu/index.php/IJRLR/article/view/151>
- Borghuis, J., Denissen, J. J. A., Oberski, D., Sijtsma, K., Meeus, W. H. J., Branje, S., Koot, H. M., & Bleidorn, W. (2017). Big Five personality stability, change, and codevelopment across adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(4), 641-657. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000138>
- Breakwell, G. M. (2015). *Coping with threatened identities* (Vol. 5). Psychology Press.
- Chandler, M. J., Lalonde, C. E., Sokol, B. W., & Hallett, D. (2003). Personal persistence, identity development, and suicide: A study of Native and non-Native North American adolescents. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 68(2), vii-130.
- Dutra-Thomé, L., & Pereira, A. S. (2017). Emerging adulthood in Brazil: Socioeconomic influences and methodological issues in the study of young adults. In D. D. Dell'Aglío & S. H. Koller (Eds.), *Vulnerable children and youth in Brazil: Innovative approaches from the psychology of social development* (pp. 141-153). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65033-3_10
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. Henry Holt and Co.
- Martin-Storey, A., Recchia, H. E., & Santo, J. B. (2020). Self-continuity moderates the association between sexual-minority status based discrimination and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(12), 2075-2096. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1733350>
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998-2017). *Mplus user's guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.
- Negele, A., & Habermas, T. (2010). Self-continuity across developmental change in and of repeated life narratives. In K. C. McLean & M. Pasupathi (Eds.), *Narrative development in adolescence: Creating the storied self* (pp. 1-21). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-89825-4_1
- Rubin, K. H., Bukowski, W. M., & Parker, J. G. (2006). Peer interactions, relationships, and groups. In N. Eisenberg, W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Social, emotional, and personality development* (6th ed., Vol. 3, pp. 571-645). John Wiley & Sons.
- Sani, F. (Ed.). (2008). *Self continuity: Individual and collective perspectives*. Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203888513>
- Santo, J. B., da Cunha, J., Saldarriaga L. M., Recchia H. E., Martin-Storey A., Stella-Lopez L., Carmago, G., & Bukowski W. M. (2013). Measurement invariance of self-continuity strategies: Comparisons of early adolescents from Brazil, Canada and Colombia. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 10(4), 518-525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513758.2013.828885>

g/10.1080/17405629.2012.707313

- Santo, J. B., Martin-Storey, A., Recchia, H., & Bukowski, W. M. (2018). Self-continuity moderates the association between peer victimization and depressed affect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 28(4), 875-887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12372>
- Schwartz, S. J., & Pantin, H. (2006). Identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood: The interface of self, context, and culture. In A. Columbus (Ed.), *Advances in psychology research* (Vol. 45, pp. 1-40). Nova Science Publishers.
- Smeeke, A., & Verkuyten, M. (2015). The presence of the past: Identity continuity and group dynamics. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 26(1), 162-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2015.1112653>
- Stryker, S., & Burke, P. J. (2000). The past, present, and future of an identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(4), 284-297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695840>
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., Pelham, B. W., & Krull, D. S. (1989). Agreeable fancy or disagreeable truth? Reconciling self-enhancement and self-verification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(5), 782-791. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.782>