

# The Benefits of Belonging

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*Julie L. Martin, Duke University, presented her research on “The Benefits of Belonging: State Belonging and Motivation for Social Reconnection Following Rejection” at the 2014 APS Annual Convention in San Francisco. Martin received a 2014 APSSC Student Research Award for this work.*

According to the Social Reconnection Hypothesis, social exclusion increases the motivation to forge new social bonds in an effort to restore belonging. While this hypothesis might lead one to think that the desire to affiliate increases in proportion to how much belonging decreases, it is also possible that the desire to avoid further rejection may override social reconnection goals once belonging becomes too low.

In the current study, we experimentally tested this hypothesis by manipulating belonging (low/high belonging prime) and rejection (rejected versus not rejected). Within the no-rejection condition, low-belonging participants showed greater motivation to work with others than high-belonging participants. However, low belonging participants' desire to work with others decreased following rejection, while high belonging participants' desire to work with others increased. Furthermore, low-belonging participants who experienced rejection rated neutral-expression faces as significantly more hostile than low-belonging participants who weren't rejected, suggesting an increased vigilance to social threat.

Together, these findings suggest that low state belonging motivates social connection, but only up to a point. They also suggest that belonging serves as a resource in the face of rejection, allowing people to pursue their social reconnection goals over their self-protection goals.

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