

Understanding Response Patterns in Dyadic Conflict: An Interactive Approach

Combining Self-Construal and Opponent's Dominance-Submissiveness

Abstract

Previous works on the effect of self-construal in interpersonal behaviors tend to adopt a main effect approach. The present research proposes an interactive approach in understanding two response patterns in dyadic conflict by combining self-construal and the stance of the opponent. Independent self-construal was hypothesized to be associated with a self-centred pattern of conflict response, which is characterized by taking contending responses regardless of whether the stance of the opponent is dominant or submissive. Relational self-construal was hypothesized to be associated with a tuning-in pattern of conflict response, which is characterized by showing contending responses when the opponent is submissive but yielding responses when the opponent is dominant. With trait self-construal measured and opponent's stance manipulated, Study 1 provided initial support for the hypotheses. Study 2 showed a three-way interaction effect between trait self-construal, manipulated self-construal, and the opponent's stance on actual conflict responses during discussion of a scenario. The effect of self-construal manipulation was only observed among people who were low in trait independent self-construal and average in trait relational self-construal. The results pinpoint the importance of considering personal and opponent factors simultaneously in understanding the dynamics of dyadic conflict processes.

Keywords: dyadic conflict, independent self-construal, relational self-construal, opponent's stance, dominance-submissiveness

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Ever since the seminal article by Markus and Kitayama (1991), self-construal has occupied an important position in the research on self-processes. Recently, works on self-construal have moved beyond cognitive processes to interpersonal and social behaviors (e.g., Gore & Cross, 2006; Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002). With respect to interpersonal conflict, previous research has shown that self-construal is related to how people construe conflict situations and formulate conflict responses. For instance, independent self-construal is related to the use of dominating conflict style and competitive tactics, whereas interdependent self-construal is related to the use of compromising conflict style and cooperative tactics (Oetzel, 1998a, 1998b).

In the present research, we look at the role of self-construal in the response patterns in dyadic conflict. However, instead of testing a main effect model of how self-construal influences conflict responses directly, we adopt an interactive approach by taking into account the stance of the conflict opponent when examining the effects of self-construal. Thus both personal and opponent factors are considered in explaining conflict responses. Such an approach would provide a better picture in distinguishing the effects of different self-construal dimensions. Since our research examines conflict involving only two persons, we focus on independent self-construal and relational self-construal in our conjecture. Specifically, we hypothesized two distinct patterns of conflict responses. A self-centred pattern of conflict responses is associated with independent self-construal. A tuning-in pattern of conflict responses is associated with relational self-construal. To elaborate these hypotheses, we first discuss the effect of an opponent's stance and self-construal per se, then how they would interact to influence conflict responses.

Opponent's Stance and Conflict Responses

In a conflict situation involving two parties of equal power, an individual will be affected by how the opponent behaves. Opponent's stance (dominant vs. submissive) is supposed to influence conflict responses. An individual is more likely to yield to a dominant opponent but is more likely to compete with a submissive opponent. Negotiation research has shown that people tend to concede more to dominant opponents but less to submissive opponents (Komorita & Brenner, 1968). Mismatching behaviors in negotiation style (Pruitt & Syna, 1985), which refers to responding to an opponent's high demand with a low demand, or vice versa, can also be seen as an effect of an opponent's stance. Nevertheless, we posit that the effect of an opponent's stance can be understood more clearly when it is examined with reference to self-construal of the conflict party.

Independent Self-Construal and Conflict Responses

Independent self-construal refers to the use of personal attributes in defining the self. According to Brewer and Gardner (1996), people with a high independent self-construal emphasize individual uniqueness and self-worth. In an interpersonal setting, these people will focus on being distinct from others. They will highlight their strengths to reassure their self-worth. Extrapolating this process to dyadic conflict, a person with a high independent self-construal will uphold his/her uniqueness and self-worth. When facing a dominant opponent, the person can react submissively so as to remain distinct from the opponent. This is obviously undesirable because succumbing to the opponent will threaten one's self-worth. Alternatively, the conflict party can respond dominantly. Individual uniqueness is reinforced by focusing on conflicting views. Self-worth is also reassured if the conflict party can force the opponent to succumb. When facing a submissive opponent, a person with a high independent self-construal should react

dominantly. Uniqueness and self-worth can be upheld by adopting a different view and compelling the opponent to succumb.

This suggests that a conflict party with high independent self-construal will engage in dominant conflict responses regardless of whether the opponent is dominant or submissive, thus a self-centred pattern of conflict responses. Past research has suggested that independent self-construal is associated with the use of dominating strategies in interpersonal settings (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011). People with high independent self-construal engage in more direct communication and are expressive of their own preferences and thoughts (Gudykunst et al., 1996). They also tend to be confrontational (Oetzel, 1998b).

Relational Self-Construal and Conflict Responses

Relational self-construal refers to the use of significant relationships in defining the self. According to Brewer and Gardner (1996), people with a high relational self-construal emphasize the maintenance of significant relationships. It can be illustrated by the research on complementarity in dyadic interactions. Interpersonal complementarity was first examined by studying interactions in clinical settings. It was later developed into a circumplex model containing basic interpersonal dimensions (Wiggins, 1979). Regarding the interpersonal dimension of control, complementarity refers to a person reacting to the dominant behaviors of an opponent submissively but to the submissive behaviors of an opponent dominantly. Complementarity has been observed in nonverbal behaviors (Tiedens & Fragale, 2003). In addition, Tiedens, Unzueta, and Young (2007) found that perception of a task partner followed a pattern of complementarity: participants with high self-ratings of dominance tended to perceive their task partner as less dominant, whereas participants with low self-ratings of dominance tended to perceive their task partner as more dominant.

The need for complementarity is stronger for people with high relational self-construal. People with high relational self-construal tend to engage in relationship-promoting behaviors such as accommodating the needs of their partner (Cross et al., 2011). When there is a conflict of interest, people with high relational self-construal tend to see the outcome positively even when it favors their partner (Gore & Cross, 2011). Putting these findings in the context of dyadic conflict, one can expect that a conflict party with high relational self-construal, in order to achieve complementarity, will show submissive conflict responses when the opponent is dominant, but show dominant conflict responses when the opponent is submissive. This is a tuning-in pattern of conflict responses.

Research Overview

The above discussion suggests that two different patterns of conflict responses may be associated with the two dimensions of self-construal. These patterns can be revealed when the effect of self-construal is considered alongside that of an opponent's stance. With respect to the self-centred pattern of conflict responses, a conflict party with high independent self-construal will show dominant conflict responses regardless of the opponent being dominant or submissive. Thus the effect of an opponent's stance will attenuate for a conflict party with high independent self-construal, but not with low independent self-construal. With respect to the tuning-in pattern of conflict responses, a conflict party with high relational self-construal will show submissive conflict responses when facing a dominant opponent, but will show dominant conflict responses when facing a submissive opponent. Thus the effect of an opponent's stance will exacerbate for a conflict party with high relational self-construal, but not with low relational self-construal. In other words, we hypothesized that the two self-construals will moderate the effect of an opponent's stance in an opposite manner. We conducted two studies to

test these hypotheses. In Study 1, self-construal was measured as an individual difference variable. In Study 2, self-construal was measured as well as manipulated.

Study 1

Method

Participants. One hundred and sixty-five students at a university in Hong Kong received course credit or a payment of HK\$40 (about US\$5) for participation (66% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.25$).

Procedure. Participants completed the study individually or in groups of up to five. They were told that they participated in two separate studies. First, they completed a questionnaire containing the trait measure of self-construal and other filler items. They then worked on one of the two versions of a scenario questionnaire distributed randomly. All materials were in Chinese and the entire session took about 30 minutes to complete.

Scenario. The conflict scenario was about two executive members of a student society. The principal character was presented as “you” to the participants. The other character was named A, and was always of the same sex as the participants indicated by the pronoun. This controlled for the possible effect of gender composition in a dyad which was not the focus of the study. The student society was organizing an orientation camp for the incoming freshmen. Two members were appointed to develop a proposal for the camp and present it to other members for consideration. The two persons discussed the proposal before the general meeting. In the conflict scenario, the principal character had worked hard developing what he/she thought was the best plan before discussing it with A. However, during the discussion, A criticized the proposal and suggested major changes. The principal character was uncomfortable with A’s counterproposals and was considering how to resolve the conflict.

Opponent's stance manipulation. The scenario described the conflict opponent as either dominant or submissive. In the dominant version, it read "After hearing your ideas, A responds in a firm manner by proposing the following modifications to your plan ... [followed by the three counterproposals]... You can see that such attitudes fit A's personality; being self-confident, assertive, and relatively firm in standpoint." In the submissive version, it read: "After hearing your ideas, A responds in a stammering tone by proposing the following modifications to your plan... [followed by the same three counterproposals]... You can see that such attitudes fit A's personality: being self-effacing, self-doubting, and relatively meek in standpoint." The adjectives used were chosen from the Interpersonal Adjective Scales developed by Wiggins (1979). This procedure has been used successfully to manipulate dominance-submissiveness of a person (Tiedens & Jimenez, 2003).

Measures.

Manipulation check of opponent's stance. Participants answered the question "How aggressively do you think A would argue with you in the conflict?" The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

Independent self-construal. This was measured by the 15 items scale developed by Singelis (1994). Examples included: "I do my own thing, regardless of what others think" and "I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects." Scale anchors were 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Chinese version was translated from the English version with a back-translation procedure. The Cronbach's alpha was .69.

Relational self-construal. This was measured by the 11 items scale developed by Cross, Bacon, and Morris (2000). Example items included "My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am" and "If a person hurts someone close to me, I

feel personally hurt as well.” The same scale anchors were used. The Cronbach’s alpha was .73.

Intended dominance in conflict responses. Participants answered four questions about whether they would behave dominantly in the conflict based on those used by Diekmann, Tenbrunsel, and Galinsky (2003, Study 1). The first item was the same as the manipulation check question with the target person changed from *A* to “you”. The remaining items were: “How likely would you be to make concessions in the conflict?” (reverse coded), “How likely would you be to exert pressure to force *A* to succumb?” and “How firm do you think you would be regarding your standpoint in the conflict?” The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). The Cronbach’s alpha was .70.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Participants rated the conflict opponent as arguing more aggressively in the dominant version ($M = 5.68, SD = 0.86$) than in the submissive version ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.03$), $t(163) = 18.08, p < .001$. The opponent’s stance manipulation was successful. Gender did not produce any significant effect and was excluded from the subsequent analyses.

Main analyses. Independent self-construal ($M = 4.45, SD = 0.57$) was not correlated with relational self-construal ($M = 5.14, SD = 0.60$), $r = .03, p = .66$. This was in line with previous findings about their distinctiveness (Cross et al., 2000). To test the hypothesis of the self-centred and tuning-in patterns of conflict responses, intended dominance was regressed on opponent’s stance (dummy coded: 0 = *submissive*, 1 = *dominant*), independent self-construal, relational self-construal, and all possible interaction terms in a hierarchical manner. Following Aiken and West (1991), the two self-construal measures were first mean-centred. Table 1 shows that opponent’s stance ($B = -.57, p < .001$) was the only significant effect in Step 1 ($\Delta R^2 = .16, p < .001$). This

effect, however, was qualified by two interaction effects in Step 2 ($\Delta R^2 = .06, p = .009$). The interaction between independent self-construal and the opponent's stance was significant ($B = .44, p = .031$) but was the opposite sign to the opponent's stance main effect. The interaction between relational self-construal and the opponent's stance was significant ($B = -.54, p = .008$) and was the same sign as the opponent's stance main effect. The remaining two-way interaction and the three-way interaction were nonsignificant ($ps > .185$). To interpret the two significant two-way interactions, respective values were substituted in the regression equation obtained in Step 3 (i.e., 0 or 1 for opponent's stance; +/-1 SD for self-construal). Mean value was substituted for the self-construal dimension not included in the interaction interpreted. Figure 1 shows the two interaction effects. The points in the figure are the estimated marginal means derived from the regression equation. In the top panel, the opponent's stance effect was significant when independent self-construal was low ($M = 4.66$ vs. 3.83), $F(1, 157) = 26.96, p < .001$. The effect became nonsignificant when independent self-construal was high ($M = 4.68$ vs. 4.38), $F(1, 157) = 3.22, p = .075$. In the bottom panel, the pattern was reversed. The opponent's stance effect was significant when relational self-construal was high ($M = 4.85$ vs. 3.98), $F(1, 157) = 27.26, p < .001$. The effect became nonsignificant when relational self-construal was low ($M = 4.50$ vs. 4.23), $F(1, 157) = 2.45, p = .120$. Summing up, when independent self-construal was high, a self-centred pattern of conflict responses was observed. However, when relational self-construal was high, a tuning-in pattern of conflict responses was observed.

Discussion

The conflict scenario was constructed in such a way that it had relevance to both independent and relational self-construal. Participants thought highly of their proposal, but they realized the work could not be completed without their partner. The results

provide initial support for the hypotheses. Participants with high independent self-construal and average relational self-construal perceived that they would respond dominantly to the stance of their opponents, whereas participants with high relational self-construal and average independent self-construal perceived they would respond to their opponents complementarily. Nevertheless, one could argue that the scenario was not entirely dyadic but embedded in a group setting of a student society. Additionally, the study relied on self-report in measuring conflict responses and its use of trait measures did not allow inference of causality. These limitations were addressed in the next study.

Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate and extend the results of Study 1 in a more rigorous manner. First, the conflict scenario was constructed in an exclusively dyadic setting. Second, actual conflict responses were recorded. Third, self-construal was measured as well as manipulated. The last modification addresses an interesting question of the interplay between trait and manipulated self-construal in moderating the effect of an opponent's stance. To our knowledge, there are few researches examining the interaction between trait and manipulated self-construal. Nevertheless, in an exploratory endeavor, we could base our hypothesis of interaction on two clues. First, with the use of strong manipulation of self-construal (see below), the effect of manipulated self-construal might override that of trait self-construal. Second, the effect of manipulated self-construal might be moderated by trait self-construal. This is based on the discussion that susceptibility to a priming effect might depend on dispositional self-concept (Wheeler, DeMarree, & Petty, 2007).

Method

Participants. One hundred and ten students at a university in Hong Kong received HK\$60 (about US\$8) for participation (65.5% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.99$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.03$).

Procedure. Two participants of the same sex came to the laboratory in each session that lasted for about 60 minutes. Before starting, the experimenter made sure that the participants did not know each other. The participants were told that the study contained two parts. First, they completed the self-construal measures. Next, the experimenter briefed them about the scenario discussion. They were led to separate cubicles for discussion via computer. They first rated themselves on 16 adjectives. Then they were presented with discussion points and asked to exchange comments with the other participant online. The discussion interface was designed to resemble common online chat programs. Participants saw “The other person is entering a message...” before the preset response appeared on the screen. All materials were presented in Chinese. The participants could enter their comments using Chinese, English, or both languages. The participants were probed for suspicion about their opponent before debriefing.

Desert survival problem. The scenario discussion task was adapted from Shechtman and Horowitz (2006). Conflict was induced in the discussion, but all responses given by the other party were generated by a computer program. The scenario described the two participants as co-pilots of an air shipment company. During a mission, their plane crashed in a desert and they were the only survivors. They knew that the crash site would be outside the search zone. They could select 12 potentially useful objects from the crash site to facilitate their rescue. They needed to discuss the priority of the objects that they would select. The participants ranked the importance of the 12 objects and then received the rankings given by the other party. Next, they

exchanged comments and making 12 rounds of comments on each of the objects via an interface (Figure 2). The other participant was assigned to give comments first in Round 1 and the order was alternated in the remaining rounds. After exchanging comments on all 12 objects, the participants ranked the objects again then the discussion ceased.

Manipulation.

Conflict induction. Conflict was induced through disagreement over the ranking of objects. Regardless of how the participants ranked the 12 objects, the program told them that the other party had ranked them very differently according to a preset formula slightly modified from Shechtman and Horowitz (2006). Taking one rank difference value as one step, the total discrepancy was set at 50 steps (as revealed in Figure 2).

Opponent's stance. We used two procedures to cause the participants to believe that the other party in the discussion was either a dominant or a submissive person. First, before the discussion, participants rated themselves on 16 adjectives from Wiggins's (1979) Interpersonal Adjective Scale, with four of them related to dominance and another four to submissiveness. Before the comment exchange began, the participants received descriptions about the other party. In the dominant (submissive) opponent condition, the computer displayed a message saying "The person rated him/herself relatively higher on *domineering* (*unauthoritative*), *self-assured* (*meek*), and *self-confident* (*self-doubting*)."² The second procedure to manipulate the opponent's stance was the tone of the ostensible opponent following Shechtman and Horowitz (2006). In the dominant opponent condition, the comment was expressed firmly (e.g., "Flashlight is rated too low. This is a very useful tool at night time. The reflective surface inside can be used to make fire. You really have to rate flashlight higher.") In the submissive opponent condition, the comment was expressed in self-doubting manner (e.g., "Do you

think...maybe you could rank the flashlight a bit higher? It may be a useful tool at night. The reflective surface inside may be used to make fire.”

Self-construal manipulation. Self-construal was manipulated through task instructions. In the independent self-construal manipulation condition, the research was described as examining the participants’ self-survival ability in extreme situations. The experimenter reminded the participants to focus on individual performance and devise the best solution for themselves. In the relational self-construal manipulation condition, the research was described as examining the participants and their working partner’s survival ability as a pair in extreme situations. The experimenter reminded the participants to focus on the relationship during the task and develop the best solution for them as a pair. We opted for a direct manipulation as compared to subtle priming of self-construal (e.g., the pronoun circling task used by Brewer & Gardner, 1996) because the effect of subtle priming might be weak when the task is highly scenario-based. The task demand might override the priming effect.

Measures.

Trait self-construal. The Study 1 scales were again used. The Cronbach’s alphas were .72 for independent and .62 for relational self-construal.

Manipulation check of the opponent’s stance. Participants answered the same manipulation check question as in Study 1 before exchanging comments.

Conflict assessment. Participants rated the statement “the other party and you have important opinion differences concerning the ranking of the objects for survival” from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) after the discussion.

Behavioral dominance in conflict responses. Participants were asked to rank order the 12 objects again after the comment exchange section. The extent to which they moved their rankings toward the other party reflected whether they insisted on their

views or succumbed to the other person. As mentioned, the initial discrepancy was set at 50 steps. A second ranking that matched the other party's entirely would score zero. A score of 50 would indicate absolute insistence.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Twelve participants (six female) suspected that they were not interacting with the other participant. There were also four extreme values in the behavioral measure of conflict responses. One moved further away from the "opponent" (i.e., behavioral dominance > 50) and three were more than 2.5 *SD* away from the mean. Dropping these cases resulted in a final sample size of 94. Participants rated the other party as more aggressive in the dominant opponent condition ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 0.75$) than in the submissive opponent condition ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(92) = 15.79$, $p < .001$. The scores on the conflict assessment item ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.26$) were significantly above the scale mid-point, $t(93) = 9.54$, $p < .001$. The conflict induction was successful. Similar to Study 1, independent self-construal ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.64$) was not correlated with relational self-construal ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 0.56$), $r = .07$, $p = .49$. Gender was not found to produce any effect and it was excluded from the subsequent analyses.

Main analyses. Hierarchical regression analysis similar to Study 1 was conducted. The complete regression equation included a total of 15 predictors from main effect to four-way interaction. The interaction terms containing the trait of independent and relational self-construal were nonsignificant. For the sake of simplicity in interpretation, four such interaction terms were dropped in the final regression model. Results are shown in Table 2. No significant effect emerged in Steps 1 and 2. However, a significant three-way interaction between the trait of independent self-construal, self-construal manipulation, and opponent's stance was found ($B = -13.52$, $p = .008$) in Step

3 ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p = .025$). The other three-way interaction between the trait of relational self-construal, self-construal manipulation, and opponent's stance was nonsignificant ($B = -1.05, p = .849$). To interpret the significant three-way interaction, specific values of the three variables in the interaction term were substituted while keeping the trait of relational self-construal at the mean value. As shown in Figure 3, when the trait of independent self-construal was low ($-1 SD$, the top panel), self-construal manipulation generated results according to our predictions. There was a self-centred pattern of conflict responses under independent self-construal manipulation. The participants remained dominant regardless of whether their opponent was dominant or submissive ($M = 38.78$ vs. 37.45), $F(1, 82) = 0.24, p = .628$. In contrast, there was a tuning-in pattern of conflict responses under relational self-construal manipulation ($M = 33.08$ for dominant opponent vs. 44.60 for submissive opponent), $F(1, 82) = 11.15, p = .001$. However, when the trait of independent self-construal was high ($+1 SD$, the bottom panel), self-construal manipulation did not produce any effect. The difference was nonsignificant when independent self-construal was manipulated ($M = 36.03$ vs. 38.53 , $p = .466$), $F(1, 82) = 0.54, p = .466$. The same nonsignificant pattern was obtained when relational self-construal was manipulated ($M = 40.81$ vs. 38.88), $F(1, 82) = 0.52, p = .473$. Summing up, self-construal manipulation produced the predicted effect only when the participants' trait of independent self-construal was low.

Discussion

Using a behavioral measure, Study 2 provided additional evidence to support the self-centred and tuning-in patterns of conflict responses. However, the results were qualified by an interaction between trait and manipulated self-construal. Assuming a mean value of trait relational self-construal, participants who were low in trait independent self-construal responded to the self-construal manipulation as predicted,

while participants who were high in trait independent self-construal remained indifferent to the self-construal manipulation. On the other hand, trait relational self-construal did not interact with the self-construal manipulation. It should be noted that the failure to replicate the two-way interaction effects observed in Study 1 shows how manipulated self-construal interacted with the effects of trait self-construal.

Wheeler, DeMarree, and Petty (2007) posited that the strength of the prime-to-behavior effect depends on a person's self-concept. Research has shown that people with high internal state awareness (more alert to one's feelings and thoughts) are *less* susceptible to a priming effect (Wheeler, Morrison, DeMarree, & Petty, 2008). In the research on self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996), internal state awareness can be seen as positively related to independent self-construal. Combining these findings could explain why self-construal manipulation exerted an effect for individuals with low, but not high, trait of independent self-construal. On the other hand, there was no interaction found between self-construal manipulation and trait relational self-construal. A possible reason is that psychological constructs that have been shown to moderate the effect of priming pertain to the independent self but not the relational self.

General Discussion

Results from the two studies supported the interactive approach in understanding responses in dyadic conflict by combining the effects of self-construal and an opponent's stance. A self-centred pattern of conflict responses is associated with independent self-construal, whereas a tuning-in pattern of conflict responses is associated with relational self-construal. However, an interaction between trait and manipulated self-construal was found in Study 2. The self-construal manipulation produced the two hypothesized patterns of conflict responses when trait independent self-construal was low.

The findings show an intriguing interaction between trait and manipulated self-construal. Though existing literature does not allow us to account for the effect fully, the finding acknowledges the importance of both forms of self-construal that tend to be examined separately. On a broader perspective, the interaction echoes with the recent notion of polyculturalism (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015). It states that influences from different cultures on a person take place through multiple pathways including both dispositional and situational factors.

The present research extends Howard, Gardner, and Thompson (2007) which shows how self-construal influences responses in bargaining between negotiators with different power. We show how self-construal influences conflict responses between two parties of equal power by considering the effect of the opponent's stance. Such an interactive approach combining personal and opponent factors is more comprehensive than the individual difference approach that focuses on just one conflict party. The self-centred and tuning-in response patterns revealed are also distinct from studies that focus on individual orientations toward others on the use of different conflict strategies (De Dreu & Van Lange, 1995).

Our findings have implications for conflict management. The two conflict response patterns can provide explanations for why people stand firm or give in and help people to better predict their opponent's moves. Specific tactics might induce desired responses in conflict opponents. These tactics could include adjusting one's displayed stance to present a certain impression to the opponent. One can also highlight independent or relational considerations in the conflict in order to manipulate self-construal of the opponent, temporarily.

Limitations and Future Directions

Study 1 required participants to imagine themselves in a conflict situation. Conflict responses were measured by self-report. Despite these limitations, the two significant interactions which are in opposite directions cannot be described as merely statistical artifacts. Though using a behavior measure in Study 2, the hypothetical nature of the desert survival scenario might weaken the conflict experience compared to what people would experience in reality. Also, the self-construal manipulation used, though having face validity, was not fully validated. Future studies can measure cognitions about the self and the conflict opponent after the manipulation to establish its validity (e.g., Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). Finally, a caveat is in order for the exploratory nature of the interaction hypothesis between trait and manipulated self-construal in Study 2. The results should be interpreted with caution.

The present research examined conflict responses as either contending or yielding. It did not capture conflict responses that may facilitate integrative outcomes that could not be achieved by either contending or yielding alone. Recent works on relational accommodation shed light on this view. Curhan et al. (2008) found that negotiation dyads with a high relational focus (i.e., more accommodation) obtained higher relational capital but poorer economic outcomes. O'Connor and Arnold (2011) found that negotiators with a higher level of belongingness suffered higher economic losses through more yielding, but their opponents were not able to take advantage of this and also obtained poor outcomes. We suspect that achieving integrative outcomes may involve a complex pattern of contending and yielding. Future research can investigate how combining different conflict responses will generate integrative outcomes.

The role of relational self could be a promising direction for future research on conflict processes. It has already received attention recently (e.g., Gelfand, Major,

Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2006). We suggest that the perspective of relational self can be extended by understanding how the relationship between conflict parties develops and evolves to influence conflict processes.

In the current research, we looked at how factors from a conflict party's side and from the opponent's side can be combined to understand conflict response patterns. The interactive approach can capture the reality of a conflict situation better. After all, it takes two persons to disagree.

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Table 1

Hierarchical Regression Results of Study 1

Predictor	Intended dominance in conflict responses		
	<i>B</i>		ΔR^2
Step 1 (Main effect)			.16***
Independent self-construal (Ind)	.20	.02	.02
Relational self-construal (Rel)	-.03	.26	.29
Opponent's stance (Opp)	-.57***	-.56***	-.57***
Step 2 (Two-way interaction)			.06**
Ind X Opp		.44*	.48*
Rel X Opp		-.54**	-.50*
Ind X Rel		-.16	-.29
Step 3 (Three-way interaction)			.01
Ind X Rel X Opp			.39

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Results of Study 2

Predictor	Behavioral dominance in conflict responses		
		<i>B</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1 (Main effect)			.03
Trait of independent self-construal (Ind)	.81	-.14	-4.47
Trait of relational self-construal (Rel)	.79	.63	.34
Opponent's Stance (Opp)	-1.57	-3.76	-4.79*
Self-construal manipulation (SCManip)	-.82	-2.76	-3.74
Step 2 (Two-way interaction)			.05
Ind X Opp		3.73	10.53**
Rel X Opp		-.19	.87
SCManip X Ind		-2.02	5.32
SCManip X Rel		1.14	.48
SCManip X Opp		4.13	4.21
Step 3 (Three-way interaction)			.08*
Ind X SCManip X Opp			-13.52**
Rel X SCManip X Opp			-1.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

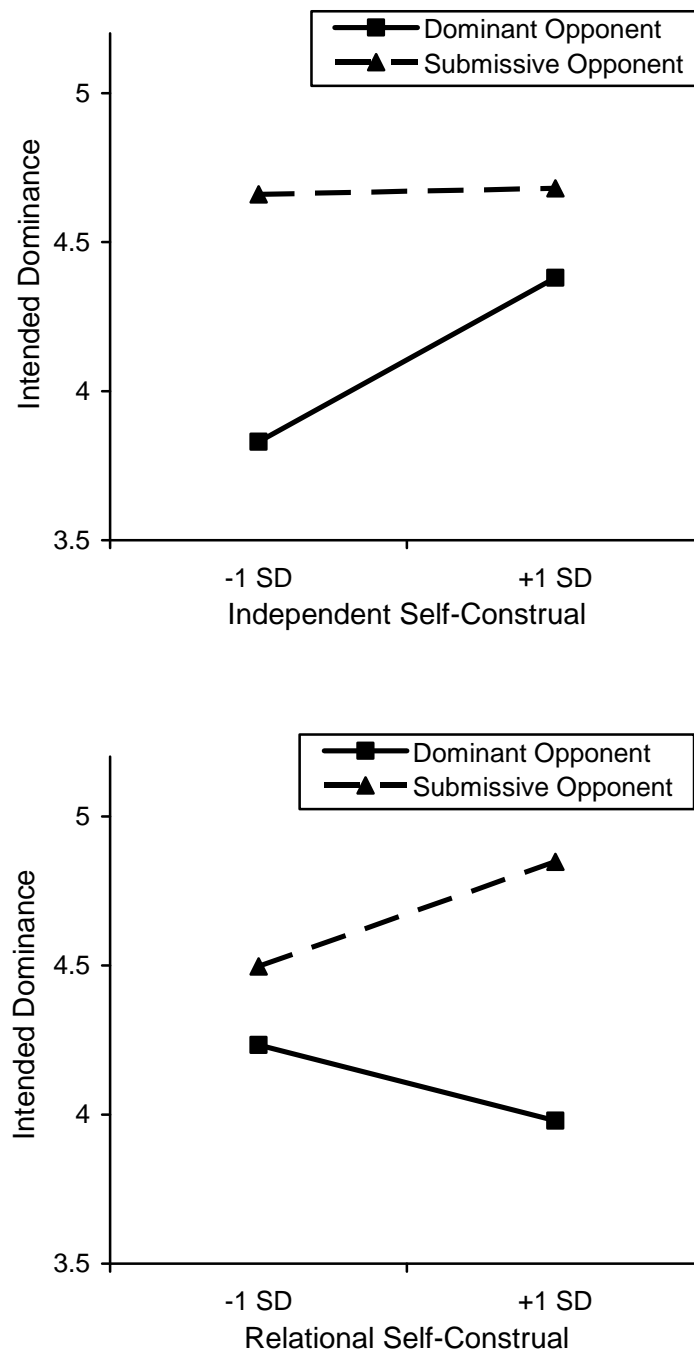


Figure 1. Intended dominance in conflict responses as a function of opponent's stance with independent self-construal and with relational self-construal in Study 1.

You	Ranking Table	Other
** 1	Flashlight	7 **
2	Jack knife	6
3	Airmap	2
4	Raincoat	1
5	Compass	8
6	Bandage kit	11
7	Salt tablets	10
8	Water	12
9	Survival booklet	3
10	Vodka	5
11	Overcoat	4
12	Mirror	9

Message Input Box

Dialogue Box

Figure 2. Computer interface used during the comment exchange section of the scenario discussion in Study 2.

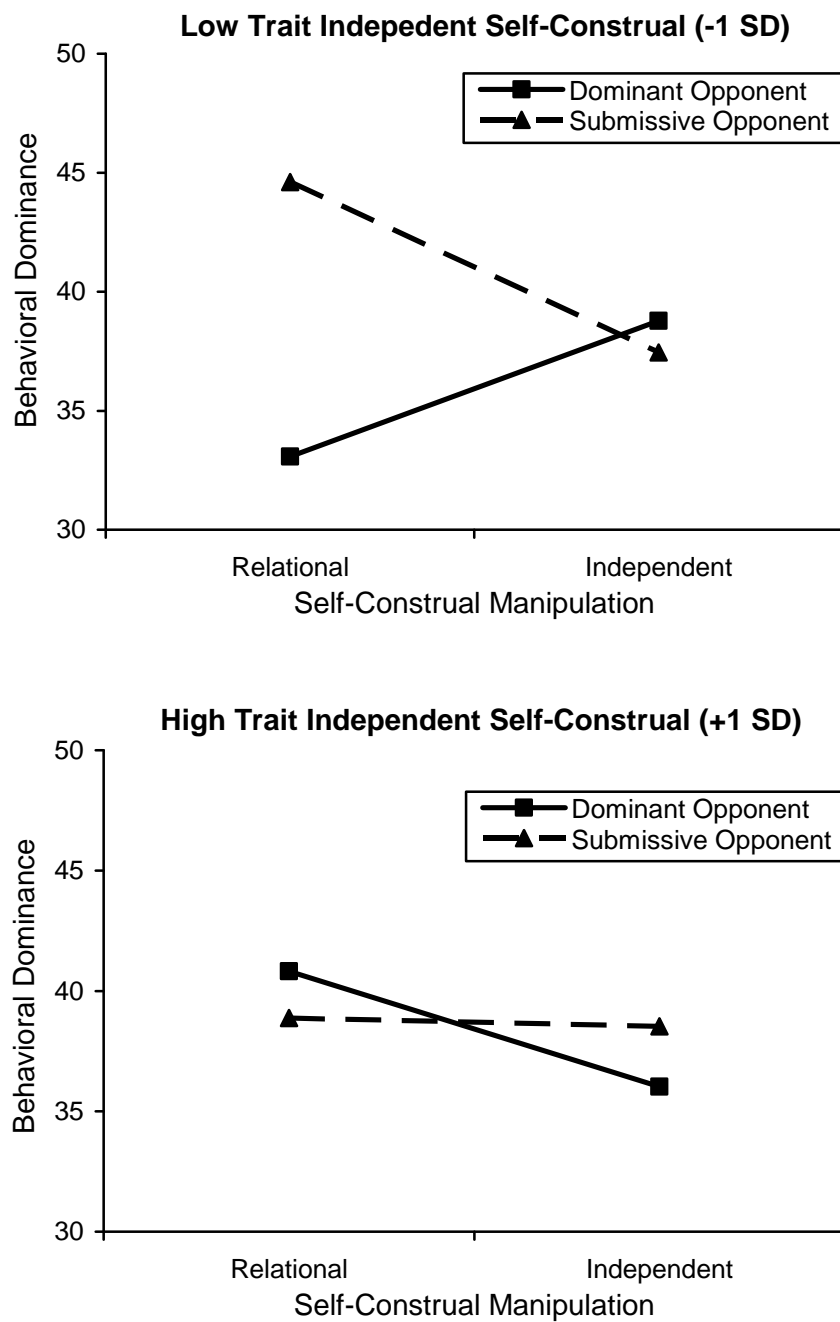


Figure 3. Behavioral dominance in conflict responses as a function of trait independent self-construal, self-construal manipulation, and opponent's stance in Study 2.