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PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF ATTITUDINAL AMBIVALENCE AS A FUNCTION OF
MANIPULATED SOURCE OF CONFLICT AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE IN SELF-CONSTRUAL

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Attitudinal Ambivalence. Attitudes are generally viewed as global evaluations of objects, issues, or persons that are represented in long-term memory (e.g. Ajzen 1987; Cooper and Croyle 1984; Fazio 1986; Petty and Wegener 1998). Recent research has suggested that attitudes are not simply positive or negative evaluations, but instead can be the result of both positive and negative evaluative reactions (see, for example, Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin 1995; Priester and Petty 1996, 2001). The tension in the evaluation that results from these different reactions has been conceptualized as ambivalence. Recent research has suggested two distinct sources of ambivalence. The goal of this research is to explore the relative influence of each source of ambivalence on feelings of evaluative tension as a function of self-construal.

Two Antecedents of Attitudinal Ambivalence. Historically, ambivalence has been conceptualized as a result of the tension between an individual's own positive and negative reactions. We refer to this source of ambivalence as the intrapersonal attitudinal ambivalence. Recent research (Priester & Petter, 2001) has provided evidence of a second source: There is an independent influence on ambivalence to the extent that an individual's attitude differs from that of important others'. We refer to this source of ambivalence as interpersonal attitudinal ambivalence. We hypothesize that these two sources of ambivalence should be differentially influential in causing feelings of ambivalence, depending upon whether individuals are concerned with their own thoughts and feelings or rather are concerned with the thoughts and feelings of others.

Individual Difference in Self-Construal. Self-construal is one of the most important features that distinguish among different cultural orientations. Research suggests that individuals are likely to assume one of two different construals: independent or interdependent (e.g., Aaker and Maheswaran 1997; Fiske et al. 1998; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Triandis 1995). Individuals with independent self-construal see themselves and others as being composed of a set of 'internal', 'personal' attributes such as abilities, thoughts, subjective feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. These attributes mainly come from one's self, largely independent of others and characterize the person regardless of the situation. A human being is considered a coherent, stable,

autonomous and free entity, and, therefore, distinguishable from others on the basis of such internal attributes. Findings have suggested that individuals from Western cultures, such as the United States, are more likely to assume an independent self-construal.

In contrast, those individuals with interdependent self-construal view themselves and others as inherently connected to others, and more broadly to their social context. Empathy, reciprocity, belongingness, respect, and social obligations are important tasks of the self, so people experience themselves as mutually interdependent. A human being is perceived as a connected, fluid, flexible, and committed being who is bound to others. Findings have suggested that individuals from Eastern cultures, such as China, are more likely to assume an interdependent self-construal.

The most significant difference between independent and interdependent self-construals is in the role that is assigned to the other in self-definition (Markus and Kitayama 1991, p. 245). Significant others are included within the self in the interdependent self-construal. Thus, the interdependent self is likely to be more influenced by external factors such as relationships and roles than by internal attributes. Although social contexts are important for both independent and interdependent construals, an interdependent self is likely to be more susceptible to interpersonal influence. In contrast, one's own thoughts and feelings are central to the self in the independent self-construal. Thus, the independent self is likely to be more influenced more by internal reactions and states.

Hypothesis. We draw upon these findings in order to arrive at our hypothesis concerning the role of individual difference in self-construal on attitudinal ambivalence. Recall that prior research suggests that attitudinal ambivalence can be the result of either intrapersonal (i.e., conflict in one's own thoughts and feelings) or interpersonal (i.e., conflict between one's own and other's thoughts and feelings). We hypothesize these influences will be moderated by an individual's self-construal. Specifically, we hypothesize that intrapersonal conflict, such as possessing both positive and negative reactions towards an attitude object, will influence ambivalence more for individuals with independent than interdependent self-construals. In contrast, we hypothesize that interpersonal conflict, such as holding an attitude different from important others, will influence ambivalence more for individuals with interdependent than independent self-construals. Thus, we specifically hypothesize that there should emerge a Source of Conflict X Self-Construal interaction on attitudinal ambivalence.

Experiment

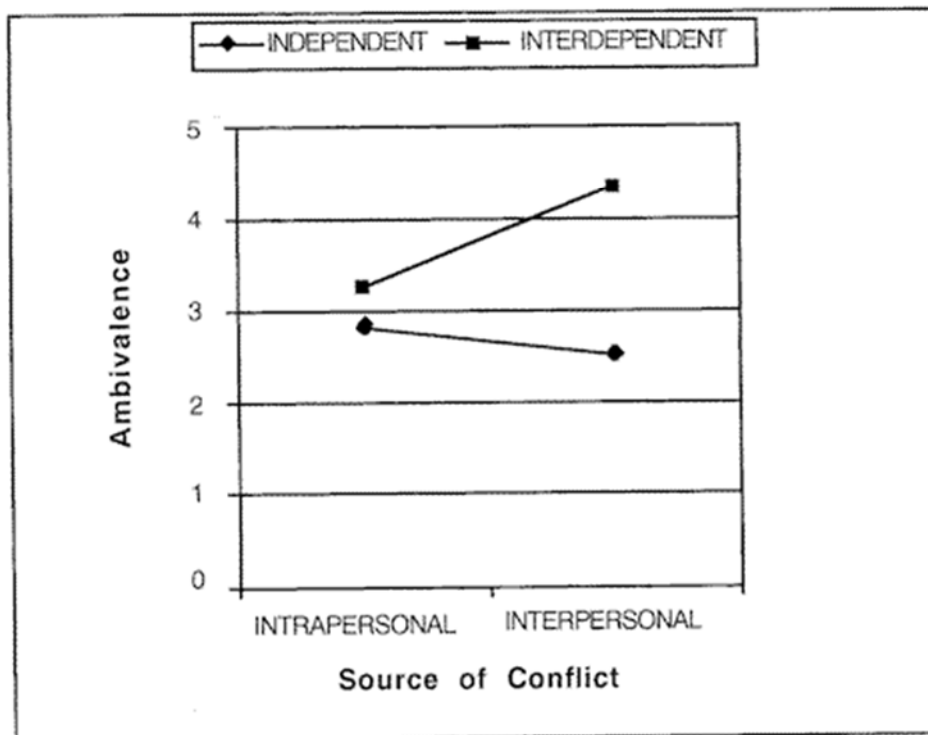
A total of 172 participants were given a set of scenarios to read and evaluate. Source of conflict was manipulated in these scenarios. All scenarios asked the participants to imagine that they were considering job offers. In the intrapersonal conflict scenario, participants read that the person held both positive and negative reactions towards a job offered. In the interpersonal conflict scenario, participants read that the person's family and close friends did not like the job offer. All participants read both scenarios and provided indicators of their feelings of attitudinal ambivalence towards both job offers. At the end of the experiment, all participants completed an individual difference measure of self-construal (Singelis, 1994). Participants were categorized as either high or low in both independence and interdependence. Those participants who scored high on independence and low on interdependence were classified as independent. Those participants who scored low on independence and high on interdependence were classified as interdependent. Thus, the design of the experiment is a 2 (source of conflict; intrapersonal versus interpersonal) X 2 (self-construal; independent versus interdependent) mixed factorial in which the first factor is within-participant and the second factor is between-participant.

TABLE 1
Mean Scores of Change in Attitudinal Ambivalence Across Cells

	Independent Self-Constructual Is Dominant (n=34)	Interdependent Self-Constructual Is Dominant (n=42)
Intrapersonal Conflict	2.84 (2.30)*	3.25 (2.12)
Interpersonal Conflict	2.52 (2.10)	4.35 (2.29)

* Standard deviations are in parentheses.

FIGURE 1
Attitudinal Ambivalence as a Function of Manipulated Sources of Conflict and Self-Constructual



Results. The ambivalence measures were subjected to a mixed ANOVA analysis. The results for the attitudinal ambivalence measure revealed the predicted two-way interaction, $F(1, 74)=4.86, p<.05$ (See Figure 1). This interaction revealed that the attitudinal ambivalence of individuals with more interdependent self-constructuals possessed greater evaluative tension when the source of the conflict was interpersonal ($M=4.35$) than intrapersonal ($M=3.25$), whereas the attitudinal ambivalence of individuals with more independent self-constructuals revealed greater evaluative tension when the source of the conflict was intrapersonal ($M=2.84$) than interpersonal ($M=2.52$) (See Table 1).

Summary. The present research provides support for the notion that individual difference in self-constructual is important in understanding the psychological mechanism that underlies attitudinal ambivalence. Interestingly, this research suggests that how the sources of conflict influence attitudinal ambivalence is moderated by self-constructual: individuals with independent self-constructual reveal the influence of intrapersonal conflict, whereas individuals with interdependent self-constructual reveal the influence of interpersonal conflict.

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