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RESEARCH PAPER

We Can Make It Better: "We" Moderates the Relationship Between a Compromising Style in Interpersonal Conflict and Well-Being

Wei-Fang Lin · Yi-Cheng Lin · Chin-Lan Huang · Lung Hung Chen

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Abstract Compromising is considered a useful strategy for solving interpersonal conflicts. However, compromising, which includes accommodating and sacrificing, may also lead to anxiety and depression. Therefore, the current study focused on a moderating mechanism between compromising and psychological health. Based on self-expansion theory, we hypothesized that the more individuals have a relational focus (i.e., a greater use of "we") while narrating their compromising experiences, the better psychological health they will experience. Two hundred sixty-one participants from National Taiwan University (mean age = 20.40, 53.26 % male, 46.74 % female), wrote about an experience of conflict with their parents and completed a package of questionnaires to measure their conflict management style and psychological health. The frequency of the "we" pronoun was considered an index of relational focus. As predicted, the results from a hierarchical multiple regression demonstrated that "we" moderated the effect of compromising style on well-being. Specifically, the relationship between compromising and psychological well-being were strengthened for individuals who had more relational focus. Thus, although a compromising style helps solve interpersonal conflicts, it does not necessarily increase individuals' well-being. How individuals anchor their experiences are more important.

Keywords Compromise · Conflict · Linguistic inquiry and word count (LIWC) · Pronoun "we" · Self-expansion · Well-being

W.-F. Lin · Y.-C. Lin (✉)
Department of Psychology, National Taiwan University, Taipei City, Taiwan
e-mail: i890@ntu.edu.tw

C.-L. Huang
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Taipei City, Taiwan

L. H. Chen (✉)
Department of Recreation and Leisure Industry Management, National Taiwan Sport University, Taoyuan County, Taiwan
e-mail: fjudragon@gmail.com

1 Introduction

There are always conflicts in interpersonal interactions. Experiencing interpersonal conflicts not only influences an individual's work efficiency and performance (De Dreu and Weingart 2003), but it also affects relationship quality (Pistole 1989) and psychological health (De Dreu and Beersma 2005). Thus, how individuals address conflicts is a topic worthy of further investigation. In a compromising conflict management style, both conflicting parties make concessions and identify an acceptable solution for both parties (Rahim 2002; van de Vliert and Hordijk 1989). Particularly in Chinese culture, which emphasizes the value of harmony, it is very common to address conflict using a compromising style to maintain harmony in a group and in relationships (Leung et al. 2011). Previous research has indicated that compromising is a useful strategy for solving interpersonal conflicts. However, compromising includes accommodating and sacrificing, which may also lead to anxiety and depression (Chung-Yan and Moeller 2010). It remains unclear if there is a moderator between compromising style and psychological well-being. Therefore, the current study aimed to identify a moderator of the relationship between compromising and psychological health. We proposed that the perspective that the individual uses to interpret conflict plays a key role. The more an individual maintains a relational focus while using a compromising style to interpret a conflict, the better psychological health he or she will experience.

1.1 Conflict Management Styles

Although individuals may manage conflicts differently, two basic dimensions can be used to understand various styles for handling interpersonal conflicts. One dimension is concern for the self (also called concern for the production of results (Blake 1970) or assertiveness (Thomas 1976), and the other dimension is concern for others [also called concern for people (Blake 1970) or cooperativeness (Thomas 1976)]. Although the labels vary among different theories, there has been a consensus that there are five distinct interpersonal conflict coping styles, integrating (problem solving), obliging (accommodating), dominating (forcing), avoiding, and compromising (Rahim 1983). Integrating indicates that individuals attempt to satisfy both their wants and other individuals' expectations. Dominating indicates that individuals have more concern for their own needs than they have for the needs of other individuals. In contrast, an obliging style emphasizes substantial concern for other individuals compared with one's own needs. Individuals with an avoiding style tend to avoid conflict. Individuals who use an avoiding strategy are not concerned for themselves or other individuals. Finally, a compromising strategy is not highly concerned or neglectful of oneself or other individuals. It is more likely that there is moderate concern for oneself and for other individuals, and a mutually acceptable solution is preferred. Abundant empirical evidence has demonstrated that compromising is a useful strategy for solving interpersonal conflicts (Gross and Guerrero 2000; Leung et al. 2011). More importantly, the compromising style maintains harmony, which is a key value of the Chinese culture (Leung et al. 2011). Thus, we dedicated our attention specifically to the compromising style because of its cultural significance and the questions regarding its theoretical placement.

1.2 The Paradox of the Compromising Style

In the compromising style, both parties make concessions to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. According to the previously described definition, this style does not pursue an all or nothing approach; rather, it is based on a give and take attitude. It may not represent the best solution for resolving interpersonal conflicts because both parties make concessions. However, for several reasons, compromising is regarded as the optimal style in Chinese culture. First, Chinese culture emphasizes the maintenance of harmony in interpersonal interactions. For example, Leung et al. (2011) indicated that a compromising style was positively correlated with two aspects of harmony maintenance (i.e., disintegration avoidance and harmony enhancement) in Chinese individuals. Their research supported the idea that the compromising style aligns with the value of harmony. The compromising style also conforms to the rule of face and favor. In Chinese culture, saving face is an important principle that represents a high amount of respect for other individuals (Hwang 1987). Rather than insisting on their initial personal position, individuals who manage interpersonal conflicts with a compromising style exhibit a strong ability to cooperate. Through the exchange of concessions, the compromising style saves face for both conflicting parties (Leung 1987; Wang et al. 2005). In short, compromising is regarded as an effective and approved strategy for the improvement of interpersonal communication.

Even though there are positive aspects of the compromising style, there are also several negative aspects. Compromising is associated with take-and-give, which indicates individuals must make concessions. It creates a sense of loss and sacrifice while negotiating conflicts, compromising may lead to negative effects. van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) found that the compromising style is closer to the accommodating style, which reflected tolerance and sacrificing behavior. In other words, compromising may share the same negative effects of forbearance and sacrifice. Whitton et al. (2007) found that the frequency of sacrifices was positively associated with depressive symptoms. Chung-Yan and Moeller (2010) further highlighted the psychological costs of the compromising style. They suggested that when levels of work conflict are high, individuals who used a compromising style reported higher depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction. Thus, compromising may also increase vulnerability and decrease psychological well-being.

Therefore, it is important to understand the moderating mechanisms in the relationship between compromising and positive outcomes. McNulty and Russell (2010) have demonstrated that using an accommodative style while dealing with relationship problems only works for individuals who face minor problems. For individuals who face more severe problems, an accommodative style may lead to worse outcomes. In addition, Baker et al. (2013) suggested a contextual perspective that emphasizes situational effects and the utility of relationship-maintaining behaviors. These authors indicated that only individuals whose compromising behavior successfully increased subsequent relationship satisfaction experienced benefits for their individual well-being. If compromising is unsuccessful (i.e., does not promote relationship satisfaction), then the individual may be hurt by compromising. Baker et al. (2013) noted that once compromising promotes a relationship, it would very likely promote well-being. However, the underlying mechanisms that determine whether compromising results in a positive or negative direction remain unclear. Furthermore, Chang (2001) demonstrated that compromising may temporarily release conflict tension in relationships, but it hurt individual well-being in the long run. Thus, we explored the moderator at the individual level that provides a direct effect over and above relationship satisfaction to moderate the relationship between compromising and individual well-being.

As previously reviewed, it appears that a compromising style is an efficient strategy, but it may be accompanied by some potential vulnerability. The risks of compromising exist because the individual must give up something, and even sacrifice for other individuals, to reach the mutually acceptable resolution. The literature suggests that how individuals perceive and interpret life events influences their well-being and health (Karney et al. 1994; Kuiper 1978). Accordingly, we hypothesized that a relational perspective of interpreting conflicts could be an important moderator.

1.3 "We" Can Make It Better

How do two individuals relate to each other to become one? Self-expansion theory provides a promising conceptualization. Self-expansion indicates the individuals in a close relationship are motivated to include their partners into their own self-concept. That is, they view themselves and their partners as a unit instead of separate entities. Thus, the commitment to the relationship includes a willingness to include a partner in one's sense of self and to develop cognitive interdependence and a sense of "we-ness" (Agnew et al. 1998; Aron et al. 1991).

A relational focus, as a consequence of self-expansion, has many beneficial effects on a relationship. It not only promotes positive problem-solving behaviors but also influences how individuals think about giving in and making concessions. Because self-expansion implies a cognitive transformation from a self-focus to a relational focus, individuals begin to become more concerned with what is best for the relationship as a whole and less concerned about self-interest (Aron and Aron 1986). Because giving into self-interest could hinder long-term gains for the relationship, an individual is more likely to yield and, in the meantime, feel less suffering. Whitton et al. (2007) indicated that individuals who are more committed to the relationship perceived less harm from sacrifices and reported fewer depression symptoms. Van Lange et al. (1997) also demonstrated that as relationships became deeper and closer, individuals exhibited more willingness to pay for each other and engaged in more relationship-promoting behaviors. Thus, both theoretical and empirical data indicate that a relational focus influences an individual's perceptions of giving in and sacrifice, which may in turn decrease the perceived cost of a compromising style.

A relational focus is a key element in the maintenance of a healthy relationship. Previous studies have adopted various methods, including self-report (Aron et al. 1992), observation coding systems (Buehlman et al. 1992), and linguistic analysis (Williams-Baucom et al. 2010), to demonstrate this phenomenon. Because self-report is subject to bias and observational coding is very costly, we utilized a linguistic approach, which provides an indirect but powerful tool to measure relational focus. Previous research has shown that pronoun usage (e.g., we) is a valid marker of how individuals think about themselves, their close partner, and their relationships (Pennebaker et al. 2003). Thus, the use of the first-person plural pronoun represents the degree of relational focus. Buehlman et al. (1992) reported that individuals who emphasized "we" more in their conversations exhibited more positive problem-solving behaviors. Similar results were also obtained by Agnew and his colleagues (Agnew et al. 1998). They found that participants who used more "we" to describe their current romantic relationships included others in the self (IOS) more and reported higher relationship satisfaction. Simmons and his colleagues' also reported findings that supported previous results (Simmons et al. 2005). They determined that in individuals who were diagnosed with obsessive–compulsive disorder or panic disorder with agoraphobia, both their own and their spouses' usage of "we" predicted

positive solutions to problems. Not only does the "we" pronoun predict the indices of relationship dimensions, it is also used to predict better health. Rohrbaugh et al. (2008) home-interviewed 57 heart failure patients and their spouses. They determined that the more the "we" pronoun was used by spouses during the interview, the better the positive change in the patients' heart-failure symptoms. The "we" pronoun use of a patient's spouse even predicted the patient's general health over the next 6 months. According to the related studies previously discussed, the "we" pronoun as an index of relational focus not only predicted the relationship but also general health. Thus, we suggest that individuals who use a compromising style to solve interpersonal conflicts and take a more relational perspective (i.e., use "we" more often) in narrating conflict will tend to view solutions in a more positive light.

Unlike Baker and his colleagues, who suggested that compromise only benefitted individual well-being for individuals whose compromising successfully promoted their relationship, we argue that an individual's interpretations of compromise also directly affect the individual's well-being after controlling for relationship satisfaction. To explore this unique moderating effect of the relational focus in our study, we included relationship satisfaction as a control variable. Because compromising style is a strategy used to resolve interpersonal conflicts, related research has typically indicated that there is a significant correlation between compromising and relationship satisfaction (Zhang 2007). In addition, many studies have also suggested that relationship satisfaction with significant others influenced individual well-being (Greenberg et al. 1983; Whisman and Bruce 1999). For these reasons, the level of relationship satisfaction was controlled for in the examination of the unique effect of the "we" pronoun on individual levels of well-being.

Based on the theory and the empirical evidence previously reviewed, it was hypothesized that relational focus acts as a moderator between compromising and psychological well-being. Specifically, we predicted that the relationship between compromising and well-being would be strengthened in individuals who use the "we" pronoun more often when narrating conflict. Furthermore, the current study examined the moderation effect of relational focus in parent–child conflict. Parent–child conflict is a common experience that almost every adolescent has experienced. Parents are also significant others who influence an individual's relationships and mental health. Especially in Asian cultures, there is a vertical power differential between parents and children (Yeh and Yang 1997). Because of filial responsibility, it becomes more complicated to deal with conflicts with parents (Yeh 1995). Although there are many types of relationships, we choose parent–child conflicts as a starting point to understand the potential moderation between compromising and psychological well-being.

2 Methods

The dataset of the current study and some sample variables have also been included in a paper recently published (Lin et al. 2013, study 2). Lin et al. (2013) viewed compromising as a behavior tendency that searches for the balance between give and take. They argued that a compromising behavior tendency could increase psychological adjustments only when a Zhong Yong thinking style was adopted. Originated from Confucian doctrines, Zhong Yong thinking style refers to a meta-cognitive orientation that emphasizes a dynamic and holistic mindset. Individuals with high Zhong Yong thinking style have global worldview, high tolerance of contradictions, and attuned attention to equilibrium and harmony (Chou et al. 2014; Yang 2010). Although the current study was also

concerned about the moderating effect on the relationships between compromise and adjustment, we used a linguistic approach to index an individual's relational focus as the moderator. We believe the research issues are different, and the data were also reanalyzed using a different approach. The research issue and the results of the text-analysis have not been published in any prior work.

2.1 Participants

Two hundred sixty-one undergraduates who took a course in general psychology at National Taiwan University were invited to participate in the current study. The participants were awarded course credit for their participation. The participants included 122 females [*M* age = 20.25, Standard deviation (*SD*) = .98, six females did not provide their age] and 139 males (*M* age = 20.54, *SD* = 1.04; nine males did not provide their age).

2.2 Procedure

The participants who joined the research project of individual language style, mental resources, and well-being were invited to complete a package of questionnaires eight times. To increase response accuracy and decrease the study load, the measurements were separated into different parts and collected in eight different phases. The intervals between each phase were approximately 1–3 weeks. In each phase, the participants took approximately 10 min to complete the questionnaire.

Between the sixth and seventh phases, we added a writing task assignment regarding a parent–child conflict experience. The participants were asked to write about a personal conflict experience with their parents using no fewer than 300 words. The introduction of the writing task was as follows:

> There are always interpersonal conflicts, especially when what you really want to do is different from others' expectations. In the following writing task, I would like you to recall a most impressive and intense conflict with your parents. Please focus on the conflict experience that is due to your violation of your parents' expectations. In your writing, please try to really let go and explore your very deepest emotions and thoughts.

The measurements of the current study were collected in phases 1, 2, 5, and 6. Because the measurements were collected in different phases, the number of participants in each phase was slightly different. We then selected the participants who completed the related measurements and the writing task for our analysis (*N* = 261).

2.3 Measurements

2.3.1 Compromising Style

The compromising style was measured with a subscale of the Rahim Organization Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), which was used to measure how individuals address interpersonal conflict (Rahim 1983). The compromising style subscale contains four items that reflect the extent to which individuals tend to use a compromising strategy. For example, "I use 'give and take' so that a compromise can be made." In the current study, we modified the wording to be more specific to parent–child conflicts and added an introduction to

emphasize that the items were related to a parent–child conflict situation. This measure of the compromising style has shown good reliability and validity (Rahim 1986). The Cronbach's alpha was .77 for the current sample.

2.3.2 The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The RAS (Hendrick 1988) is a commonly used scale used to measure an individual's relationship satisfaction. It contains seven items with a five-point Likert response scale. The RAS has been applied to different types of relationships (Renshaw et al. 2011), and it has demonstrated good convergent validity and internal consistency (Hendrick 1988; Hendrick et al. 1998; Vaughn and Baier 1999). In this study, we used the RAS to measure parent–child relationship satisfaction. Higher scores represent better relationship satisfaction.

2.3.3 The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS, which was developed by Diener et al. (1985), is one of the most robust indices of individual general life satisfaction. There are five items in the SWLS. For example, "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal." The participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale. Higher values reflect greater life satisfaction. Wu and Yao (2006) examined the Chinese version and confirmed the single-factor structure. The Cronbach's alpha was .93 for the current sample.

2.3.4 Psychological Well-Being (PWB)

PWB (Ryff and Keyes 1995) contained multiple facets, including self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations, purpose in life, personal growth, and autonomy, which were used to assess an individual's psychological well-being. We used the medium form (54 items) in the current study. The participants rated each statement on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). A higher score indicates a better mastery in his or her life. The Cronbach's Alpha was .94 in the current sample.

2.3.5 The Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI)

Lu and Shih (1997) developed the CHI to measure general subjective well-being in Chinese culture. The CHI contains two different components. One component contains the "Western" dimensions originally obtained from the Oxford happiness inventory (Argyle et al. 1989). The other component includes "Chinese" items used to reflect Chinese aspects of happiness. Higher scores indicate a greater level of happiness and life satisfaction. We used the short version (20 items) in the current study. The Cronbach's alpha was .94 for the current sample.

2.3.6 The Manifest Anxiety Scale (MAS)

The MAS was developed by Taylor (1953) and was used to measure individual anxiety. In the current study, we used the short form of the MAS revised by Bendig (1956), which consisted of 20 items. The participants used a six-point Likert scale to rate their anxiety.

Higher scores correspond to greater anxiety. The Cronbach's alpha was .83 for the current sample.

2.3.7 The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

The CES-D (Radloff 1977) is a widely used measure of depressive symptoms for both clinical and nonclinical populations. Chien and Cheng (1985) have translated the CES-D into Chinese, and it has been used in Chinese studies. The participants were asked to indicate how often they had experienced sadness, loneliness, sleeplessness, and other symptoms on a scale from 0 ("hardly at all") to 4 ("most of time"). Individuals who report higher scores on the CES-D are more depressed. The Cronbach's alpha was .92 for the current sample.

2.4 Linguistic Analysis

The text data were analyzed using linguistic inquiry and word count (LIWC; Pennebaker et al. 2007). The LIWC is a computer program used to count word usage and output the percentages of the full text sample that fall into different categories. The LIWC is a widely used program that has been used in hundreds of studies (for a review, see Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). The LIWC has previously been translated into several different languages, including Spanish, German, Dutch, Norwegian, Italian, Portuguese, and Chinese. In the current study, we used the Chinese revised dictionary developed by Huang et al. (2012). We specifically focused on the percentage of the "we" category, which we used to measure the relational-focus of the participants in their writing about their conflict experiences with their parents.

3 Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations between all key variables.[1] The indices of positive psychological health, including the SWLS, the PWB, and the CHI, were significantly correlated with each other and negatively correlated with the MAS and the CES-D. The MAS and the CES-D also exhibited a highly positive correlation with each other. In sum, our results indicated that both positive and negative indices of psychological health were valid. In addition, as expected, the RAS was strongly correlated with a compromising style but only slightly correlated with individual psychological health (i.e., with the SWLS, the PWB, the CHI, and the CES-D). To examine the moderating effect between compromising and individual psychological well-being, we controlled for the

[1] The skewness of all variables was in the range of −1 to 1 except for "we," which was 2.55. We have also used square root transformation to adjust the skewness of "we" and reanalysis regression models with adjusted "we." All results maintained similar patterns. Despite the fact that skewness could be adjusted using statistical methods, it doesn't completely answer why individuals used so differently frequency on "we" pronoun. Regarding the theoretical perspective, word use as a natural phenomenon to reflect one's social and psychological worlds was rarely normally distributed (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). The skewness of "we" has its own meaning to demonstrate individual difference.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlation

	Possible range	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
"We"	–	.34	.47	–						
Compromising style	1–5	3.46	.61	−.04	–					
SWLS	1–7	4.23	1.24	.10	.12	–				
PWB	1–6	4.02	.51	.07	.16**	.55**	–			
CHI	1–4	2.27	.45	.08	.14*	.62**	.58**	–		
MAS	1–6	3.33	.73	−.07	−.07	−.46**	−.53**	−.53**	–	
CES-D	0–3	.80	.49	−.08	−.08	−.54**	−.49**	−.53**	.76**	–
RAS	1–5	3.88	.66	.07	.45**	.26**	.20**	.18**	−.08	−.16*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

RAS in our regression model to examine whether a relational focus demonstrated an effect over and above the RAS.[2]

To examine whether the usage of "we" moderated the relationship between a compromising style and psychological health, we used a hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Baron and Kenny 1986). We standardized all predicted variables in the regression models. A hierarchical regression was run separately to predict each of the psychological health indices (the SWLS, the PWB, the CHI, the MAS, and the CES-D). Because our main interest was the moderating effect of a relational focus, in each regression model, we first controlled for the RAS. Second, we entered compromising style and the moderator "we" into the equation. Finally, the two-way interaction term of "compromising" and "we" was entered in the last step. Compromising style and "we" were standardized prior to the calculation of the interaction variable to prevent the problem of multicollinearity (Aiken et al. 1991).

After we controlled for the RAS, a compromising style or "we" did not exhibit a main effect in the prediction of individual psychological health. However, we were more concerned with the interaction effect, which was significant. We determined that "we" significantly moderated the relationship between a compromising style and psychological health, which was measured by the SWLS ($b = .17$, $p < .05$), the PWB ($b = .06$, $p < .05$) and the CHI ($b = .06$, $p < .05$). However, it had no significant moderation effect on the MAS ($b = -.02$, *ns*) or the CES-D ($b = -.01$, *ns*). As shown in Fig. 1, the positive relationship between a compromising style and the SWLS was stronger when the participants used "we" more often while recalling an experience with parent–child conflict. A simple slope analysis (Dawson and Richter 2006) revealed that the relationship between a compromising style and the SWLS was significantly correlated with a high usage of "we" (one standard deviation above the mean) ($b = .22$, $p < .05$). At a low usage of "we" (one standard deviation below the mean), compromising was unrelated to the SWLS ($b = .06$, *ns*). Similarly, this pattern was also identified for the PWB (Fig. 2) and the CHI (Fig. 3). A simple slope also demonstrated that at a high usage of "we" compromising was related with higher PWB ($b = .13$, $p < .01$) and CHI ($b = .13$, $p < .01$). At a low usage of "we",

[2] We have also run the regression models without controlling for RAS. All interaction effects remain significant. We suggested that including RAS as a control variable makes the regression models become more statistically powerful.

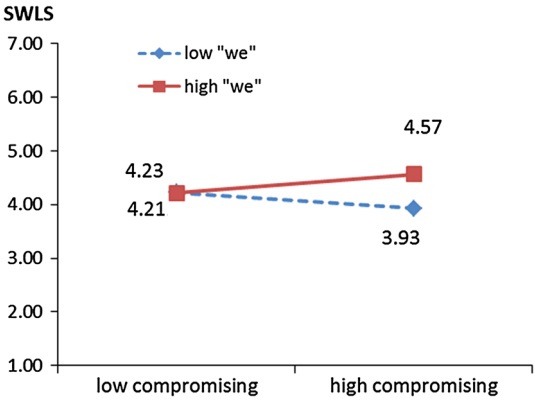

Fig. 1 "We" as a moderator between compromising style and SWLS score

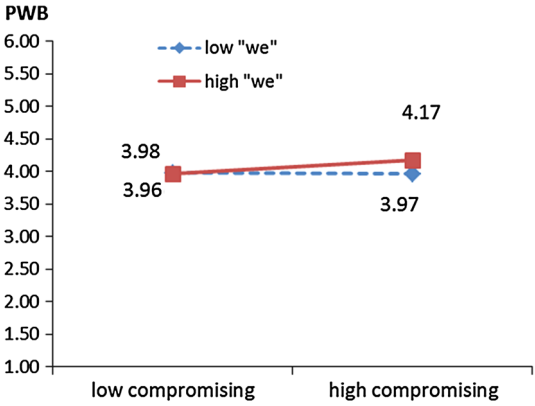

Fig. 2 "We" as a moderator between compromising style and PWB score

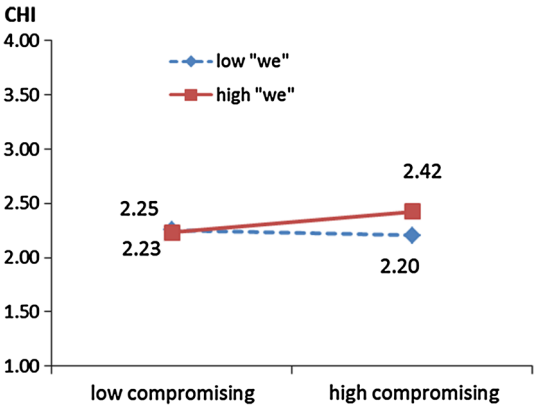

Fig. 3 "We" as a moderator between compromising style and CHI score

PWB ($b = .03$, *ns*) and CHI ($b = .01$, *ns*) did not exhibit a significant relationship with compromising. In short, our hypothesis was supported by the moderation effect on positive outcomes, which indicted the relationship between compromising and positive

Table 2 Results of hierarchical regression analysis on positive psychological health

Predictors	SWLS			PWB			CHI		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Intercept	4.23	4.23	4.23	4.02	4.02	4.02	2.28	2.28	2.28
RAS	.33**	.32**	.31**	.10**	.08*	.07*	.08**	.06*	.06*
Compromising style		.01	.01		.05	.05		.03	.04
"We"		.11	.16*		.03	.05		.03	.05
Compromising style × "we"			.16*			.06*			.06*
R^2 change	.07	.01	.02	.04	.01	.01	.03	.01	.02
F test for R^2 change	19.43**	.99	5.97*	10.24**	1.38	4.08*	.03**	.01	.02*

Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3 Results of hierarchical regression analysis on negative psychological health

Predictors	MAS			CES-D		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Intercept	3.33	3.33	3.33	.80	.80	.80
RAS	−.06	−.04	−.04	−.08**	−.07*	−.07*
Compromising style		−.03	−.03		−.00	−.01
We-focus		−.05	−.06		−.02	−.02
Compromising style × we-focus			−.02			−.01*
R^2 change	.01	.01	.00	.03	.00	.00
F test for R^2 change	1.71	.78	.17	6.79**	.24	.17

Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

psychological well-being was only significantly correlated for individuals who used more "we" while narrating a conflict experience (Tables 2, 3).

4 Discussion

Interpersonal conflicts occur every day, and different management styles lead to divergent consequences. A compromising style might be viewed as an appropriate and efficient strategy to help resolve interpersonal conflicts. However, a compromising style includes giving in and sacrificing, which may lead to negative outcomes. Therefore, the aim of the current study was to identify a potential moderator between compromising and psychological well-being. The results partially supported our hypothesis and indicated that a relational focus moderated the relationship between a compromising style and positive outcomes. Specifically, the relationships between compromising and psychological adjustment measures, including life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and Chinese happiness, were stronger for individuals who adopted a more relational perspective.

However, the moderation effect of "we" was not demonstrated with regard to negative outcomes. We suggested that there may be several reasons for these results. First, according to Baumeister et al. (2001), it is easier to change an individual's positive feelings and states than negative feelings and states. Thus, helping individuals feel released from depression or anxiety is harder than increasing their feelings of happiness and well-being. Second, all participants were university students. The CES-D mean was .80 and the SD was .49. Therefore, only a few participants may have really experienced deep depression in which there may be no room to improve. Third, the CES-D and anxiety may be not sensitive indices to reflect the struggle and pressure of compromising. We argued that the indices related to interpersonal interactions are more sensitive to the side effects of compromising. For example, in conceding, participants may feel ambivalence over emotional expressions or not truly authentic while using a compromising strategy. Thus, future studies could explore more apt indices that are better at reflecting the negative effects of compromising.

To summarize, our findings highlighted the fact that although a compromising style is a useful strategy for resolving interpersonal conflicts, it does not necessarily exhibit a positive correlation with individuals' well-being. The perspective an individual takes when interpreting the conflict and compromising strategy is more important. We further discuss the implications of our finding in the subsequent section.

The evidence in the literature to support our hypothesis originates from self-expansion theory. Self-expansion theory suggests that individuals who incorporate other individuals into themselves become more committed to their relationship and tend to be more willing to engage in relationship-promoting behavior. Whitton et al. (2007) demonstrated that cognitive fusion reflected individuals' commitment levels, which influenced their perceptions of sacrifice. The more committed the individuals were to the relationship, the less harmful they perceived the sacrifices made for their partners. Interestingly, the cognitive representation of distance between oneself and other individuals can be shown in language usage (i.e., in the usage of "we"). Thus, a greater use of the word "we" implies that an individual feels closer to a partner and utilizes a relational perspective. Self-expansion theory provided a framework to help us understand the moderating role of a relational focus between a compromising style and individual well-being. Our results aligned with the perspective of self-expansion theory. We determined that for individuals with higher relational focus, i.e., the use of "we" more often while describing a conflict experience, the more the individuals applied a compromising style, the better well-being they experienced.

Regarding the potential risks of compromising, previous research has also suggested different moderators in the relationship between compromising and well-being. Baker et al. (2013) demonstrated that compromising was positively associated with individual well-being only in individuals whose compromising increased their subsequent relationship satisfaction; thus, compromising benefited an individual's well-being only when compromising could successfully promote relationship satisfaction. However, we argue that their research has two major theoretical and practical inadequacies. First, their research was unclear regarding the mechanism that turns compromising into a positive force that promotes relationship satisfaction. Second, relationship satisfaction after compromising could be influenced by other factors, such as the partner's responsiveness, the problem severity, and the partner's reaction. External factors make the outcome of compromising more uncertain and less controllable by individuals. In this study, our findings identified another moderator that the individual has a much greater ability to control. We expanded previous research by taking a psychological perspective and noted that a relational focus in compromising can moderate the effect of compromising on well-being. What is more

important is that the moderating effect of "we" remained significant even after we controlled for relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction has repeatedly been shown to be significantly correlated with well-being. Relationships with significant others are particularly important factors for individual well-being. In our study, parents were important others to our participants, i.e., university students, and previous studies have suggested that parent–child relationship satisfaction influences children's health. Nevertheless, "we" still had a significant moderate effect over and above relationship satisfaction. This result suggests that "we", the relational focus, plays a unique role in strengthening the relationship between compromising and psychological well-being. Accordingly, the current results point out a cognitive maneuver for individuals to psychologically control how they interpret compromising while dealing with conflict and promoting their well-being.

An attempt to change the perceptions of the personal experience and interpret it from a different perspective could be more easily controlled by oneself. For example, Chang et al. (2013) demonstrated that a psychological displacement paradigm in diary-writing (PDPD) help individuals increase the psychological distance between themselves and experiences that lead to psychological benefits. By writing a life event in a fixed sequence form with different personal pronouns (I to you, then to he/she), PDPD made participants change their perspectives regarding the event. Similarly, Fitzsimons and Kay (2004) suggested that describing a relationship with the "we" pronoun makes an individual feel closer and more connected with their friends. Taken together, how an individual interpreted a personal experience could be manipulated by narrating with a different pronoun. Thus, individuals could attempt to change their own perceptions and take a different perspective through professional help and practice.

To summarize, a compromising style does not necessarily correlate with positive outcomes. Outcomes depend on many factors, including the importance of the problem, the subsequent satisfaction, and the interpretation of compromising. There could be many potential moderators between compromising and psychological well-being. For example, Baker and his colleagues emphasized the utility of compromising. In contrast, we emphasized how an individual interpreted the conflict experience and suggested that the correlation between compromising and psychological well-being were stronger for individuals who have a more relational focus.

The usage of the "we" pronoun implied that the movement from a self-focused perspective to a relational-focused perspective on compromise contributed to individual well-being. Thus, the best way to interpret conflict is not based on concern for self or other individuals, but from a larger perspective, such as viewing one's partner and oneself as a single unit. Recent theoretical advances from Crocker and colleagues have also supported our claim. They discuss compassionate and self-image goals for the individual in relationships with other individuals (Crocker and Canevello 2008). Compassionate goals are based on an ecosystem motivation, which suggests the individual and other individuals are not in a zero-sum situation and views the individual as part of a larger whole. Crocker (2008) emphasized that the ecosystem framework contains "individuals whose actions have consequences for others, with repercussions for the entire system" (p. 64). Thus, in the ecosystem, the self and other individuals are no longer isolated but interconnected. In contrast, self-image goals based on ecosystem motivations fostered feelings of competition and increased loneliness and anxiety (Crocker 2008). Experimental research has also suggested that compassionate goals enhance social bonding and increase closeness and feelings of connectedness (Crocker and Canevello 2008). More importantly, these authors determined that individuals with compassionate goals tended to be supportive, which in turn made them more likely to receive support (Canevello and Crocker 2010). This finding

indicated that for individuals who have compassionate goals, the way that they act toward other individuals will influence how other individuals act toward them. To summarize, our finding aligned with Crocker's research on compassionate goals. Both studies indicated that if an individual is less attached to self-interest or sacrifice and focuses more on relationships, he or she will experience less suffering and more positive feelings. Viewing oneself and one's partners as interconnected may encourage an individual to give into satisfy other individuals, but this will, in turn, lead to positive outcomes.

From a methodological perspective, our study supported previous studies that used pronoun usage as a marker of individual thought processes. As many studies have suggested, the first-person plural pronoun "we" measures how individuals perceive their relationships, and it is typically correlated with individual relationships and health. It has even affected their partners. Our work further demonstrated that "we" can also reflect an individual's focus during a conflict experience, which is related to the individual's well-being. It is noteworthy that we used automatic text analysis, LIWC, to count the frequency of the first-person plural pronoun. Compared with self-report or judge ratings, LIWC is an implicit measurement that may avoid social-desirability bias and low scorer reliability.

4.1 Limitations and Future Work

Our findings contributed to theory, but there are still some limitations that must be considered. First, each R^2 value for our two regression models was quite small. Our data were collected in eight different phases, and while this data collection method reduces common method variance, it may also decrease the explained variance. In addition, we argued that a compromising style is a domain-specific variable related to interpersonal conflict, whereas the dependent variables that measured well-being were general indices that may be only partially correlated with interpersonal factors. Using a domain specific variable to predict a general variable may limit its effect. Nonetheless, the explained variance in our two regression models was still between 2 and 5 %. Chaplin (1991) suggested that because they are difficult to detect, interactive effects seldom contribute more than 3 % of the explained variance. Accordingly, our explained variance appears acceptable. Second, individuals have different types of relationships, such as romantic relationships and friendships. Our study focused on parent–child relationships. Further research may attempt to explore whether our findings generalize to other types of relationships, such as relationships between friends, colleagues, and romantic partners. On the other hand, compromising is not the only way to deal with interpersonal conflict. While facing interpersonal conflict, forbearance, obliging, or avoidant strategies are also very common strategies that may result in several side effects. More studies are needed to examine if a relational focus could buffer the potential vulnerability of different types of interpersonal conflict strategies. Furthermore, the current study used a cross-section design, and the data were collected using a self-report method. Because interpersonal interaction is a dynamic and longitudinal process in which each event may affect the feelings and behaviors of both parties, we suggest future research that uses experimental paradigms or longitudinal designs. It will help to deeply understand the mechanism and directional relationships among compromising, relational focus, and psychological well-being. Finally, our participants were all from Taiwan. Taiwan is a country of Eastern culture where individuals emphasize the value of harmony and tend to avoid the expression of negative feelings and direct conflict with other individuals. Because substantial research has suggested that cultural differences influence how individuals think and their behaviors, the generalization of our findings to all cultures requires support from additional empirical studies.

5 Conclusion

Although compromising is a common and useful strategy for solving interpersonal conflict, it includes accommodating and sacrificing, which may also contribute to negative outcomes. According to self-expansion theory, we suggest that a relational focus moderated the effects of compromising on well-being. Consistent with our hypotheses, we determined that the more individuals have a relational focus (i.e., a greater use of "we") while narrating their compromising experiences, the better psychological health they will experience. Our findings highlight that the process by which individuals anchor their experiences was differentially correlated with their well-being.

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