The Dynamic Interplay of Interaction Goals, Emotion, and Conflict Styles: Testing a Model of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Effects on Conflict Styles

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This study examines the dynamic interplay of interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Using a three (counterpart conflict styles: competing, integrating, obliging) by two (counterpart emotion: anger, compassion) factorial design, this study seeks to understand the dynamic nature of the conflict process. It also explored a model integrating both intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on conflict styles. Proactive-reactive comparisons reveal both *overall* changes in interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles over the course of conflict and *specific* changes attributable to counterpart emotion and conflict styles. Results also indicate that interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and conflict styles on one's own reactive conflict styles are largely mediated through intrapersonal processes of reactive emotion and interaction goals.

Keywords: interaction goals, emotion, anger, compassion, conflict styles

Conflict is a central and inevitable aspect of social life. Broadly conceptualized as an interactional dynamic among two or more interdependent parties who perceive incompatibilities and strive to achieve goals (Putnam, 2006; Wilson & Putnam, 1990), conflict is an inherently dynamic and emergent process (Berger, 2007). During conflict, individuals may strategically or spontaneously modify and alter proactive goals to reactive ones in response to the emerging behaviors of counterparts (Keck & Samp, 2007).

Importantly, conflict is also an emotion-laden process (Guerrero & La Valley, 2006). Conflict does not exist in the absence of emotion, because conflict is emotionally charged, driven, and valenced (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). However, there had been little understanding of the relationship between emotion and conflict until the decade of the 2000s, which witnessed a surge of interest in this relationship (Guerrero & La Valley, 2006). Such research has shown that emotion plays an important role in conflict

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management and negotiation (Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997; Liu, 2009; Van Kleef, Van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & Van Beest, 2008).

Although existing research highlights the interdependent and dynamic nature of the conflict process, surprisingly, little empirical work has systematically investigated how individuals' goals, emotions, and approaches to conflict might change and evolve as conflict unfolds (Keck & Samp, 2007). The primary purpose of this study is to advance the nascent literature on the dynamic interplay of interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles. This project is important because it seeks to address this lacuna by examining how individuals' reactive orientations toward a conflict situation are affected by their own initial or proactive orientations as well as by the emotional displays and conflict styles of their interaction partners.

This study also examines the processes underlying precisely *how* one's reactive orientations are affected by one's own and counterpart emotion and behavior. The intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of emotion and conflict behavior on negotiation tactics and outcomes have received growing attention recently (Allred et al., 1997; Butt, Choi, & Jaeger, 2005; Liu, 2009). Intrapersonal effects refer to the influence of one's *felt* emotion and behavior on one's own behavior, whereas interpersonal effects focus on the influence of the counterpart's *expressed* emotion and behavior on one's behavior (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Unfortunately, studies on interpersonal effects seem to focus exclusively on the association between one's own or counterpart emotion or behavior and one's negotiation behavior. Research has yet to go beyond to explore *how* interpersonal and intrapersonal effects interact and influence one's conflict styles. Thus, this study is also designed to test a model of these intrapersonal and interpersonal effects that highlights the impact of counterpart conflict behavior and emotional displays on one's emotions, goals, and conflict behavior.

Interaction Goals in Conflict

Conflict interaction can be perceived as a goal-directed strategic process whereby individuals strive to pursue individual and collective goals (Keck & Samp, 2007; Rogan & La France, 2003). Goals are desired end states individuals strive to attain (Berger, 2007). Although alternative typologies have been proposed to characterize these interaction goals, the best known might be the tripartite typology: instrumental, relational, and identity (Wilson & Putnam, 1990). *Instrumental goals* refer to task-oriented goals, such as obtaining information or goods or solving a problem (Wilson & Putnam, 1990). *Relational goals* focus on relationship dynamics, such as gaining power or strengthening affiliation (Rogan & La France, 2003). *Identity goals* involve self-focused or other-focused identity concerns, such as saving face or maintaining pride (Rogan & La France, 2003). Individuals in conflict may pursue multiple goals simultaneously (Wilson & Putnam, 1990). These goals, however, are not perceived as of equal importance, and the relative importance assigned to different goals can fluctuate during conflict (Dillard, Segrin, & Harden, 1989). By and large, instrumental goals are recognized as of ultimate importance in conflict in individualistic cultures, but individuals may also need to manage relational and identity concerns (Keck & Samp, 2007; Liu & Wilson, 2011).

Goals are fluid, malleable, and adaptive to interpersonal influences during conflict (Keck & Samp, 2007). One might enter a conflict situation with a focus on instrumental goals, but interacting with an insulting counterpart may increase concern with one's image and lead to an increased focus on identity goals. Consequently, the relative importance attached to proactive goals might shift over the course of conflict as a result of individuals' sensitivity to aspects of the conflict interaction. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1a: The perceived importance of proactive goals changes during conflict.

Emotion in Conflict

Conflict is emotionally driven and arousing (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). This close association between conflict and emotion is especially noteworthy in light of growing evidence documenting the importance of emotion in affecting conflict processes and outcomes (Allred et al., 1997; Butt et al., 2005). During conflict, one's emotional expression influences both oneself as well as the counterpart (Van Kleef et al., 2004). Thus, emotion produces both intrapersonal and interpersonal effects (Liu, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Prior research primarily concentrates on the intrapersonal effects of emotion and mood, but increasing attention has been paid to the interpersonal effects—especially the social effects of emotion in conflict (Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008). Emotional displays may elicit reciprocal or complementary responses in counterparts (Butt et al., 2005; Friedman et al., 2004).

Anger and Compassion

Anger may be the most pervasive and prominent discrete emotion arising in conflict; not surprisingly, it has attracted the most attention in conflict and negotiation research (Allred et al., 1997; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Despite some subtle differences in orientation, compassion is often conceptualized as being interchangeable with empathy and sympathy (Liu & Wang, 2010); consequently, it is usually examined as a contrast to anger in terms of both valence (i.e., positive vs. negative) and associated behavioral tendencies (i.e., desire to help vs. desire to harm) to illuminate how positive and negative emotions generate distinct effects on conflict and negotiation behaviors (Liu & Wang, 2010). Although little empirical research has examined the dynamic process of emotion, it seems reasonable to assume that one's initial or proactive emotional orientation is likely to change over time in response to elements of the conflict situation such as counterpart emotion and behavior. Hence, we propose:

H1b: The amount of proactive anger and compassion changes during conflict.

Although the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of emotion on negotiation tactics have received considerable attention (Butt et al., 2005; Liu, 2009), more research is necessary to confidently establish the link between emotion and goals. It can be expected that the experience of anger, which entails the readiness to compete with another (Liu & Wang, 2010), is likely to lead to the adoption of competitive and self-identity goals, and thus that anger displayed by a counterpart is likely to energize the adoption of competitive and self-identity goals. Likewise, it can be expected that compassion, which entails a willingness to understand another (Liu & Wang, 2010), is likely to lead to the adoption of other-identity goals, and thus that compassion displayed by a counterpart will energize the adoption of other-

identity goals. Instead of examining the association between counterpart emotion and one's own reactive goals, we want to find out, through the proactive-reactive comparison, the specific changes in one's goals caused by counterpart anger and compassion. Thus, we ask:

RQ1a: How do counterpart anger and compassion change one's interaction goals?

Because counterpart emotion is likely to trigger reciprocal emotion (Friedman et al., 2004), we expect that counterpart anger will evoke more anger and less compassion, whereas counterpart compassion will reduce anger and increase compassion. Again, rather than examining the correlation between counterpart anger and compassion and one's own reactive anger and compassion, we want to find out the specific changes in one's anger and compassion caused by counterpart anger and compassion. Hence, we offer:

RQ1b: How do counterpart anger and compassion change one's anger and compassion?

Conflict Styles

Conflict styles are patterned responses to conflict across situations (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Derived from Blake and Mouton's (1964) two-dimensional grid of concern for self and concern for others were five conflict styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and obliging (Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). The *competing style* prioritizes one's own interests and goals, whereas the *obliging style* involves making personal sacrifices to satisfy others. The *compromising style* involves a mutual give-and-take concession, whereas the *collaborating style* focuses on a win-win outcome. The *avoiding style* is characterized by nonaction from both parties (Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Our study focuses on integrating (which represents a combination of compromising and collaborating styles), competing, and obliging styles for two reasons. First, scholars suggest that the five conflict styles can be collapsed into four types, because compromising and collaborating styles substantially overlap with one another and can thus be combined (Cai & Fink, 2002). Second, consistent with Butt et al.'s (2005) practice, avoiding is not included, because the nature of the simulation in the study renders the option of avoiding impossible.

Although individuals often display relatively consistent conflict styles across situations, conflict styles are also viewed as a response to situations (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Whereas existing research has supported the idea that, more often than not, individuals strategically modify their proactive conflict styles to respond to the moves and countermoves of their counterpart (Liu & Wilson, 2011), little empirical research has examined the dynamic nature of conflict styles. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered:

H1c: The use of proactive conflict styles changes during conflict.

Conflict styles are subject to intrapersonal and interpersonal effects (Butt et al., 2005). At the intrapersonal level, one's social motives, interaction goals, and emotions consistently have been found to influence negotiation tactics (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000; Liu & Wilson, 2011). Individuals with a

motivation to cooperate often adopt integrative strategies, whereas individuals with a motivation to compete often adopt distributive strategies (De Dreu et al., 2000). Similarly, relational, other-identity, and cooperative goals are found to be associated with integrative tactics, while instrumental, self-identity, and competitive goals are associated with distributive tactics (Keck & Samp, 2007; Liu & Wilson, 2011).

With respect to the influence of emotion on conflict styles, the interpersonal effects of anger have received considerable attention recently (Liu, 2009), with anger having been found to produce both harmful and helpful effects in negotiation (Friedman et al., 2004) and to elicit both reciprocal and complementary responses from counterparts (Liu, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Depending on the specific social context (e.g., interdependence of the parties, anger justifiability), anger can either pay (e.g., by eliciting concessions from counterparts) or backfire (e.g., by initiating retaliatory cycles) (Van Kleef et al., 2008). Whereas the interpersonal effects of anger have thus been well studied, little research has examined the interpersonal effects of compassion on conflict styles. To investigate, through the proactive-reactive comparison, the specific changes in one's conflict styles caused by counterpart anger and compassion, we propose:

RQ1c: How do counterpart anger and compassion change one's conflict styles?

Counterpart conflict styles also can affect one's interaction goals, emotions, and conflict styles (Butt et al., 2005). During conflict one may modify proactive goals in response to the emerging behaviors of the counterpart (Berger, 2007; Keck & Samp, 2007). For example, when the counterpart becomes too insulting, one may attach more importance to self-identity goals to maintain one's dignity (Keck & Samp, 2007). We seek to find out, through the proactive-reactive comparison, the specific changes in one's goals elicited by counterpart conflict styles.

RQ2a: How do counterpart conflict styles change one's interaction goals?

Interestingly, despite the growing interest in delving into the interpersonal effects of emotion in conflict and negotiation (Liu, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2004a), few studies have investigated the interpersonal effects of counterpart conflict styles on emotion. During conflict, emotions might change and evolve in reaction to counterpart behaviors.

RQ2b: How do counterpart conflict styles change one's anger and compassion?

Given that reciprocity is the norm in conflict and negotiation (Butt et al., 2005), tit-for-tat seems to be an expected strategy. However, both reciprocal and complementary responses have been generated in conflict (Butt et al., 2005). Butt et al. found that negotiators tend to reciprocate counterparts' integrating, compromising, and competing styles, but complementary responses are often seen in reaction to counterparts' competing and obliging styles. We seek to find out the specific changes in one's conflict styles caused by counterpart conflict styles.

We propose:

RQ2c: How do counterpart conflict styles change one's conflict styles?

The Model of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Effects on Conflict Styles

Despite the surging interest in the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of emotion on conflict tactics (Allred et al., 1997; Butt et al., 2005), existing studies have focused primarily on the *direct* interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and behavior on one's own behavior. However, according to relevant theorizing pertaining to social cognition, environment, and behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Bandura, 2001), external environments operate mostly through *intrapersonal psychological self-regulatory mechanisms* to produce behavioral effects. Therefore, rather than influencing one's behavior directly, external variables—such as the emotions and conflict styles of conflict counterparts—may influence one's behaviors via their impact on internal psychological constructs such as emotional states.

Consistent with this view is work stemming from appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Frijda, 1987; Lazarus, 1991), which argue that an emotional experience can be characterized as a sequence of reactions occurring over time, comprised of an antecedent or stimulus, a physiological or emotional reaction, an expression or regulation, and a behavioral reaction or outcome (Gibson, Schweitzer, Callister, & Gray, 2009; Lazarus, 1991).

Indeed, appraisal theories of emotion caution against assuming direct and unambiguous interpersonal effects of external stimuli on subsequent behavior, arguing instead that any given stimulus gains meaning for an individual only as it interacts with other aspects of the individual's motivational system. Thus, when individuals make sense of emotion-inducing conflict, they also engage in appraisals, such as the assessment of its impact on personal goals (Lazarus, 1991). Rather than assuming direct interpersonal effects, then, it seems prudent to consider the possibility that interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and behavior on one's conflict behavior may be mediated through one's emotion and interaction goals.

Of course, individuals' final orientation in a conflict situation is not simply a product of their reactions to counterpart emotion and behavior. Although conflict is certainly a process involving the constant interplay of goals, emotion, and conflict styles (Berger, 2007), individuals also approach conflict with preexisting or proactive personal goals and emotions, which likely interact to affect their proactive conflict styles. In addition to the mediated interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and behavior on one's own behavior through reactive emotion and goals, we thus also predict that one's proactive conflict styles might have a direct impact on one's reactive conflict styles, because individuals may display consistent conflict styles during conflict (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; see Figure 1).
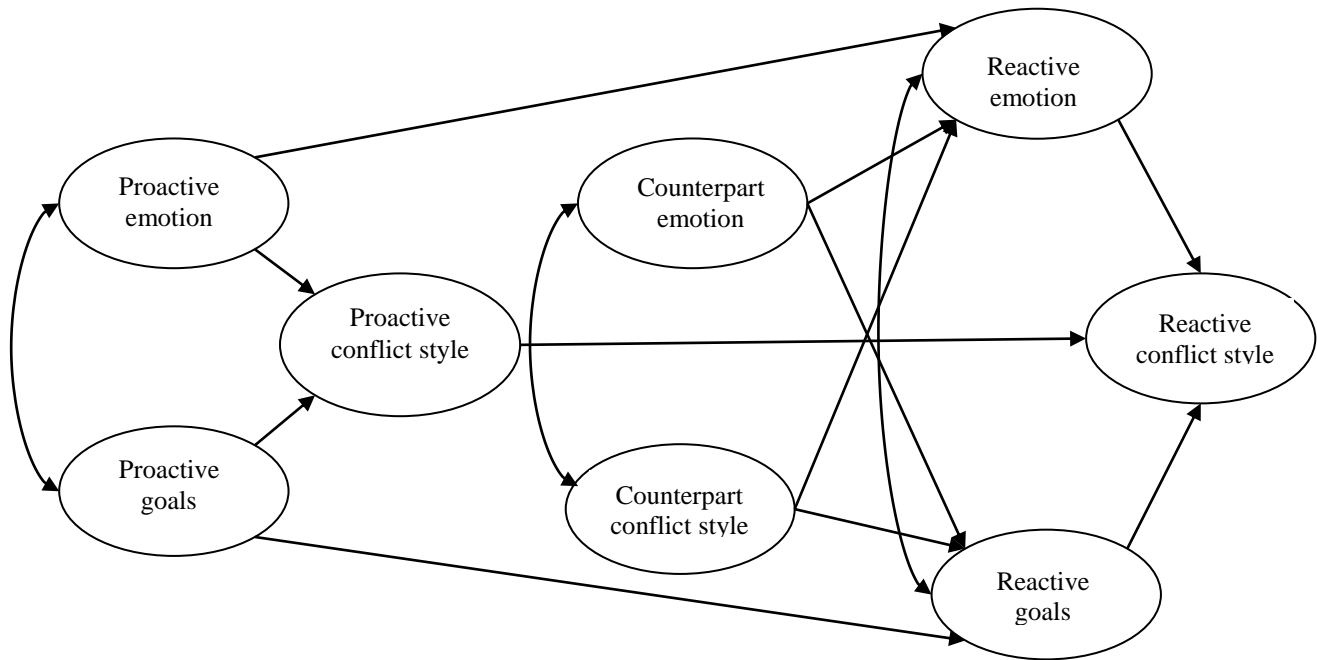
**Figure 1. The hypothesized general model of intrapersonal
and interpersonal effects on conflict styles.**

Three contrastive models for competing, obliging, and integrating styles are proposed based on the fact that anger entails competition while compassion invites understanding (Liu & Wang, 2010), instrumental competitive goals lead to distributive strategies while relational and other-identity cooperative goals result in integrative strategies (De Dreu et al., 2000; Keck & Samp, 2007), and tit-for-tat reciprocity is an expected norm in conflict. For the model of competing style, given its positive associations with anger and instrumental goals (De Dreu et al., 2000; Liu, 2009), we hypothesize (see Figure 2):

H2a: *In addition to the direct effect of a proactive competing style, which itself is a function of proactive anger and proactive instrumental goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart anger and counterpart competing style on reactive competing style mediated through reactive anger and reactive instrumental goals.*

For the model of obliging style, considering the positive associations of compassion with understanding (Liu & Wang, 2010), and of relational goals with integration and accommodation (Keck & Samp, 2007), it seems reasonable to hypothesize (see Figure 3):

H2b: *In addition to the direct effect of a proactive obliging style, which itself is a function of proactive compassion and proactive relational goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart compassion and counterpart obliging style on reactive obliging style mediated through reactive compassion and reactive relational goals.*

For the model of integrating style, in light of its positive relationships with compassion (Liu & Wang, 2010), and relational and other-identity goals (De Dreu et al., 2000; Keck & Samp, 2007), we hypothesize (see Figure 4):

H2c: *In addition to the direct effect of a proactive integrating style, which itself is a function of proactive compassion, proactive identity, and proactive relational goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart compassion and counterpart integrating style on reactive integrating style mediated through reactive compassion, reactive identity, and reactive relational goals.*

Method

Design and Materials

This study utilized a three (counterpart conflict styles: competing, integrating, obliging) by two (counterpart emotion: anger, compassion) factorial design. The manipulation of the independent variables resulted in six possible variations. Consistent with previous studies (Van Kleef et al., 2004), the conflict scenario involved a buyer-seller negotiation task. The buyer-seller negotiation simulation has been found to replicate real-life negotiation and demonstrate validity (Van Kleef et al., 2004). Each participant was told that he or she would buy a used car from John, the seller. John's asking price was $5,000, but the buyer/participant was willing to pay no more than $4,500. Both John and the buyer/participant wanted to reach a deal, so a negotiation over the price was necessary.

Three conflict style scenarios were constructed to describe counterpart competing, integrating, and obliging style. Each scenario consisted of two or three sentences, which were either taken directly from the scale items from Rahim (1983) or Butt et al. (2005) or slightly modified to fit the context. Two emotion scenarios were developed to manipulate counterpart anger and compassion. Each scenario consisted of two sentences, which were based on scale items from existing research measuring anger (Dillard & Shen, 2005) and compassion (Liu &Wang, 2010).

Participants

The participants were 174 college students (45 male, 128 female, and 1 unidentified) recruited from a variety of communication, psychology, and English classes at a small university in the Northeast United States. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 23 ($M = 19.97$, $SD = 1.36$). Eighty-four percent of them self-identified as White, 6% Black, 6% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 1% other or unidentified.

Procedure

Participants were assigned randomly to read one of the six written scenarios manipulating the counterpart conflict styles and counterpart emotion. Participants were urged to imagine that the situation described really happened to them, and to think about the feelings they would have and what they would actually do if they were in such a situation.

Participants were first asked to read a conflict scenario and then complete a questionnaire measuring their initial or proactive interaction goals and emotions with respect to the conflict as well as the conflict style in which they would initially approach the conflict. After providing their initial orientations toward the conflict situation, participants received additional information about their counterpart's emotion and conflict styles. This information constituted the manipulations of counterpart emotion and conflict styles. Participants then responded to five-point Likert-type questions (five = *strongly agree*, one = *strongly disagree*) measuring their own reactive interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles. They were asked to indicate, given the counterpart emotion and behavior they had just observed, how they would feel and respond at that point.

Measures

Interaction goals. Interaction goals were measured with four slightly modified items developed by Keck and Samp (2007), with one item assessing the importance of each of the four types of interaction goals. Participants completed the measure of interaction goals twice, once before receiving information about the counterpart's emotions and conflict styles (proactive) and once after receiving that information (reactive).

Anger. Anger was measured with four slightly modified items developed by Dillard and colleagues (Dillard & Shen, 2005). Participants provided both proactive and reactive reports of anger. The scale had good reliability in this study (α = .91 for proactive anger and .97 for reactive anger).

Compassion. Compassion was assessed with four items developed by Liu and Wang (2010). Participants provided both proactive and reactive reports of compassion. The scale demonstrated good reliability (α = .77 for proactive compassion and .93 for reactive compassion).

Conflict styles. Conflict styles were measured with 12 items adapted from Rahim's (1983) ROCI-I and negotiation behavior (Butt et al., 2005; De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001). Four items assessed each of three conflict styles: competing, integrating, and obliging. Participants provided reports of proactive and reactive conflict styles. The scale was a reliable measure of both proactive (α = .76 for competing, .81 for integrating, and .85 for obliging) and reactive (α = .87 for competing, .92 for integrating, and .90 for obliging) conflict styles.

Results

Manipulation Check

Manipulation checks were included to verify the successful manipulation of both independent variables. For the counterpart conflict styles variable, a series of one-way ANOVAs followed by subsequent post hoc tests showed that participants reported significantly higher levels of competition in the competing condition (M = 4.14, SD = 0.93) than in the other two conditions (integrating, M = 3.23, SD = 1.13; obliging, M = 2.52, SD = 1.25), F (2, 170) = 30.50, p < .001, significantly higher levels of integration in the integrating condition (M = 3.86, SD = 1.08) than the other two conditions (competing, M = 2.14, SD = 1.01; obliging, M = 3.32, SD = 0.97), F (2, 170) = 42.48, p < .001, and significantly higher levels of accommodation in the obliging condition (M = 4.05, SD = 0.90) than the other two conditions (competing, M = 1.89, SD = 0.86; integrating, M = 3.04, SD = 0.98), F (2, 170) = 80.64, p < .001. Thus, the manipulation of counterpart conflict styles was effective.

For counterpart emotion, an independent samples t test showed that participants reported a higher level of anger in the anger condition (M = 4.16, SD = 0.64) than in the compassion condition (M = 1.98, SD = 0.86), t (171) = 19.14, p < .001, and a higher level of compassion in the compassion condition (M = 3.82, SD = 0.97) than the anger condition (M = 2.24, SD = 0.86), t (171) = 11.32, p < .001. Thus, the manipulation of counterpart emotion was successful.

The Dynamic Process of Conflict

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for all the variables, appear in Table 1. H1 predicted overall changes in (a) goals, (b) anger and compassion, and (c) conflict styles during conflict. Proactive-reactive comparisons were made to examine the overall changes in goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Results shown in Table 2 revealed a significant decrease from time 1 (proactive) to time 2 (reactive) in the perceived importance of instrumental goals, t (172) = 8.17, p < .001, but no significant change in the perceived importance of relational (t (172) = .64, p = .52), self-identity (t (172) = 1.17, p = .24), and other-identity goals, t (172) = .49, p = .63. Thus, H1a was partially supported. Results also revealed a significant increase in anger, t (172) = −2.21, p < .05, but no significant change in compassion, t (172) = −.54, p = .59, so H1b was partially supported. Similarly, there was a significant decrease in the use of the competing (t (172) = 2.87, p < .01) and integrating styles (t (172) = 3.92, p < .001), but no significant change in the use of an obliging style, t (172) = .33, p = .74. H1c was thus partially supported.

RQ1 explored specific changes in (a) goals, (b) emotion, and (c) conflict styles as a function of counterpart emotion. General linear model repeated measures were conducted to compare proactive-reactive scores to examine these specific changes (see Table 3) with counterpart conflict styles as covariates. With regard to RQ1a, counterpart anger led one to rate reactive instrumental goals (F (1, 87) = 5.67, p < .01) as less important than proactive ones. Similarly, counterpart compassion also reduced the perceived importance of instrumental goals, F (1, 78) = 9.03, p < .005. In terms of RQ1b, counterpart anger caused an increase in anger, F (1, 87) = 37.84, p < .001, but a decrease in compassion, F (1, 87)

= 5.78, p < .05. Conversely, counterpart compassion increased compassion, F (1, 78) = 5.91, p < .05, but reduced anger, F (1, 78) = 9.38, p < .005. In terms of RQ1c, counterpart anger caused a significant decrease in the use of the integrating style, F (1, 87) = 5.35, p < .05, and the obliging style, F (1, 87) = 5.07, p < .05. Counterpart compassion reduced the use of the competing style, F (1, 78) = 10.89, p < .005.

RQ2 examined specific changes in (a) goals, (b) emotion, and (c) conflict styles as a function of counterpart conflict styles. General linear model repeated measures were conducted to compare proactive-reactive scores to examine these specific changes (see Table 4) with counterpart emotions as covariates. With regard to RQ2a, interacting with a counterpart who exhibited a competing style lowered the perceived importance of relational goals, F (1, 54) = 7.07, p < .05, and other-identity goals, F (1, 54) = 4.45, p < .05. Interacting with an integrating partner reduced the perceived importance of instrumental goals, F (1, 54) = 17.98, p < .001. Finally, interacting with an obliging partner decreased the perceived importance of instrumental goals, F (1, 56) = 4.29, p < .05. With respect to RQ2b, counterpart competing style caused an increase in anger, F (1, 54) = 4.19, p < .05. A counterpart integrating style did not bring about any significant changes to anger or compassion. A counterpart obliging style caused a decrease in anger, F (1, 56) = 22.22, p < .001, but an increase in compassion, F (1, 56) = 15.83, p < .001. In terms of RQ2c, a counterpart competing style decreased the use of integrating, F (1, 54) = 7.95, p < .01, and obliging styles, F (1, 54) = 9.31, p < .005, whereas a counterpart integrating style lowered the use of a competing style, F (1, 54) = 9.62, p < .005. A counterpart obliging style increased the use of an obliging style, F (1, 56) = 10.43, p < .005, but reduced the use of a competing style, F (1, 56) = 6.81, p < .05.

The Model of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Effects on Conflict Styles

H2a proposed that, in addition to the direct effect of proactive competing style, which itself is a function of proactive anger and proactive instrumental goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart anger and a counterpart competing style on a reactive competing style mediated through reactive anger and reactive instrumental goals. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted to test the hypothesis. The SEM analysis used the participants' perceptions of counterpart emotion and conflict styles rather than categorical scenario conditions, because the perceptions of counterpart conflict behavior may be more important than the actual behavior itself (Gross & Guerrero, 2000), and during conflict individuals act or modify their behavior in response to perceived counterpart behavior (Berger, 2007). All participants, regardless of the particular emotion and conflict style condition they were assigned to, completed the measure on counterpart emotion and conflict styles. SEM results indicated that the hypothesized model was an excellent fit to the data: χ^2 (14, N = 174) = 8.65, χ^2/df = .67, p = .80, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.02, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .00. Proactive anger exerted mediated effects on reactive competing style through the proactive competing style (ß = .34, p < .001) and reactive anger (ß = .42, p < .001).Proactive instrumental goals also exerted mediated effects on the reactive competing style through the proactive competing style (ß = .34, p < .001) and reactive instrumental goals (ß = .23, p < .001). Counterpart anger and a competing style had mediated paths via reactive anger (ß = .42, p < .001) and reactive instrumental goals (ß = .23, p < .001) to reactive competing style. H2a was thus supported. Figure 2 displays the model for competing style.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	M	SD
1. Proactive instrumental goal																		4.49	0.66
2. Proactive relational goal	−.26**																	3.45	1.38
3. Proactive self identity	.33**	−.07																3.67	0.89
4. Proactive other identity	−.05	.53**	.31**															2.93	0.98
5. Proactive anger	.03	.03	.13	.01														2.69	0.91
6. Proactive compassion	−.12	.29**	−.01	.31**	−.07													2.98	0.70
7. Proactive competing style	.40**	−.26**	.16*	−.14	.17*	−.08												3.75	0.63
8. Proactive integrating style	−.17*	.39**	−.09	.16*	−.14	.24**	−.27**											4.24	0.64
9. Proactive obliging style	−.22**	.37**	−.11	.31**	−.06	.34**	−.27**	.34**										2.54	0.71
10. Reactive instrumental goal	.44**	−.09	.17*	−.03	−.04	−.03	.46**	−.10	−.10									4.01	0.80
11. Reactive relational goal	−.21**	.74**	−.15*	.36**	.03	.19*	−.27**	.34**	.33**	−.21**								3.42	1.25
12. Reactive self identity	.23**	−.07	.62**	.29**	−.03	.10	.24**	−.08	−.15	.29**	−.19*							3.60	0.89
13. Reactive other identity	−.07	.42**	.16*	.53**	.08	.26**	−.04	.26**	.34**	−.17*	.48**	.20**						2.90	0.95
14. Reactive anger	−.02	−.03	.12	−.03	.21**	−.01	.02	−.08	−.08	.17**	−.26**	.19*	−.29**					2.92	1.26
15. Reactive compassion	−.08	.16**	−.06	.17*	.05	.31**	−.10	.21**	.27**	−.28**	.31**	−.19*	.44**	−.62**				3.02	0.98
16. Reactive competing style	.23**	−.18*	.25**	−.14	.11	−.04	.46**	−.20*	−.18*	.46**	−.38**	.33**	−.22**	.46**	−.46**			3.58	0.82
17. Reactive integrating style	−.19*	.27**	−.04	.19*	.01	.21**	−.17*	.41**	.19*	−.22**	.38**	−.07	.35**	−.15	.24**	−.18*		3.99	0.86
18. Reactive obliging style	−.16*	.21**	−.06	.19*	.05	.27**	−.18*	.23**	.49**	−.26**	.37**	−.16*	.41**	−.37**	.59**	−.41**	.38**	2.52	0.85

***Table 2. Comparisons of Proactive and Reactive Interaction
Goals, Emotion, and Conflict Styles.***

Variables	Proactive		Reactive		Comparison	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Instrumental goal	4.49	0.66	4.01	0.80	8.17	.000
Relational goal	3.46	1.38	3.42	1.25	.64	.52
Self-identity goal	3.68	0.90	3.61	0.89	1.17	.24
Other-identity goal	2.93	0.98	2.90	0.95	.49	.63
Anger	2.68	0.91	2.92	1.26	−2.21	.028
Compassion	2.98	0.70	3.02	0.98	−.54	.59
Competing style	3.75	0.63	3.58	0.82	2.87	.005
Integrating style	4.24	0.64	3.99	0.88	3.92	.000
Obliging style	2.54	0.72	2.53	0.85	.33	.74

***Table 3. Effects of Counterpart Emotion on the Changes of
One's Interaction Goals, Emotion, and Conflict Styles.***

Variables	Counterpart anger						Counterpart compassion					
	Proactive		Reactive		Comparison		Proactive		Reactive		Comparison	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Instrumental goal	4.43	0.75	4.00	0.83	5.67	.01	4.56	0.55	4.01	0.76	9.03	.01
Relational goal	3.45	1.46	3.33	1.32	.16	.69	3.48	0.30	3.51	1.17	.02	.89
Self-identity goal	3.76	0.92	3.73	0.88	2.56	.11	3.59	0.86	3.48	0.89	1.20	.28
Other-identity goal	3.00	1.00	2.78	0.89	3.17	.07	2.85	0.96	3.02	1.01	1.45	.23
Anger	2.63	0.91	3.58	0.90	37.84	.00	2.74	0.92	2.19	1.21	5.91	.02
Compassion	2.96	0.73	2.67	0.84	5.78	.02	3.00	0.66	3.41	0.98	9.38	.01
Competing style	3.76	0.60	3.70	0.74	.58	.44	3.74	0.66	3.45	0.88	10.89	.01
Integrating style	4.39	0.62	3.97	0.90	5.35	.02	4.19	0.66	4.02	0.85	.14	.71
Obliging style	2.53	0.72	2.39	0.75	5.07	.03	2.56	0.72	2.67	0.93	1.31	.26

Table 4. Effects of Counterpart Conflict Styles on the Changes of One's Interaction Goals, Emotion, and Conflict Styles.

Variables	Counterpart competing style						Counterpart integrating style						Counterpart obliging style					
	Proactive		Reactive		Comparison		Proactive		Reactive		Comparison		Proactive		Reactive		Comparison	
	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	M	SD	M	SD	F	p
Instrumental goal	4.54	0.60	4.28	0.65	1.76	.19	4.49	0.63	3.91	0.79	17.98	.00	4.44	0.75	3.83	0.87	4.29	.04
Relational goal	3.51	1.32	3.11	1.22	7.07	.01	3.44	1.48	3.53	1.35	1.14	.30	3.44	1.37	3.61	1.13	2.33	.13
Self-identity goal	3.68	0.91	3.72	0.96	.26	.62	3.65	0.86	3.63	0.90	3.35	.07	3.69	0.93	3.47	0.82	1.23	.27
Other-identity goal	2.91	0.99	2.56	0.87	4.45	.04	2.89	0.96	2.95	0.95	2.41	.13	2.98	1.01	3.17	0.95	3.55	.07
Anger	2.69	1.01	3.79	0.92	4.19	.04	2.67	0.90	2.66	1.20	1.78	.18	2.69	0.84	2.32	1.15	22.22	.00
Compassion	2.92	0.85	2.35	0.76	1.79	.19	3.05	0.50	3.21	0.97	.23	.63	2.97	0.70	3.48	0.82	15.83	.00
Competing style	3.76	0.66	3.94	0.67	.18	.68	3.75	0.63	3.53	0.80	9.62	.01	3.73	0.63	3.28	0.82	6.81	.12
Integrating style	4.07	0.72	3.65	0.92	7.95	.01	4.32	0.60	4.37	0.68	.03	.87	4.34	0.56	3.96	0.87	2.18	.15
Obliging style	2.47	0.72	2.07	0.79	9.31	.01	2.57	0.69	2.58	0.74	.28	.60	2.58	0.74	2.91	0.82	10.43	.01

H2b predicted that, in addition to the direct effect of proactive obliging style, which itself is a function of proactive compassion and proactive relational goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart compassion and the counterpart obliging style on the reactive obliging style mediated through reactive compassion and reactive relational goals. SEM results indicated that the hypothesized model had an adequate fit to the data: χ^2 (14, N = 174) = 30.46, χ^2/df = 2.03, p = .010, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .07. Proactive compassion had mediated effects on the reactive obliging style through the proactive obliging style (β = .34, p < .001) and reactive compassion (β = .48, p < .001).Proactive relational goals also exerted mediated effects through the proactive obliging style (β = .34, p < .001) and reactive relational goals (β = .13, p < .05). Counterpart compassion and the obliging style had mediated paths via reactive compassion (β = .48, p < .001) and reactive relational goals (β = .13, p < .05) to the reactive obliging style. H2b was thus supported. Figure 3 displays the model for obliging style.

H2c predicted that, in addition to the direct effect of proactive integrating style, which itself is a function of proactive compassion, proactive identity goals, and proactive relational goals, there are also indirect effects of counterpart compassion and the counterpart integrating style on the reactive integrating style mediated through reactive compassion, reactive identity goals, and reactive relational goals. SEM results indicated that the hypothesized model had an acceptable fit to the data: χ^2 (43, N = 174) = 85.93, χ^2/df = 2.00, p < .05, CFI = .94, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .07. The proactive integrating style had a direct path to the reactive integrating style (β = .30, p < .001). Counterpart compassion had mediated paths via reactive relational goals (β = .19, p < .05) and reactive other-identity goals (β = .39, p < .001) to the reactive integrating style (β = .17, p < .05). But reactive compassion did not mediate the effects of counterpart compassion or the counterpart integrating style. Self-identity goals did not have significant effects on integrating style. H2c was thus partially supported. Figure 4 displays the model for the integrating style.

Discussion

The Dynamic Nature of Interaction Goals, Emotion, and Conflict Styles

This study provides substantial empirical support for the dynamic nature of interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Proactive-reactive comparisons reveal both *overall* changes in goals, emotion, and conflict styles over the course of conflict, and *specific* changes attributable to counterpart emotion and conflict styles. Overall changes include an increase in anger and a decrease in the perceived importance of instrumental goals and in the use of competing and integrating styles. Relative to their proactive goals, emotion, and conflict styles, individuals become angrier, attach less importance to instrumental goals, and become less competing and integrating as conflict unfolds.

One explanation for the overall increase in anger has to do with the simple fact that, for many people, when goal pursuit is hampered, negative emotions result (Allred et al., 1997). In terms of the observed decreases in instrumental goals and competitive styles, such decreases may reflect the fact that, in individualistic U.S. culture, individuals may initially place great importance on achieving personal aims, and they anticipate having to compete with similarly self-interested counterparts to achieve those aims

(Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 2005). Such assumptions are likely to change once the realities of the conflict situation—which will rarely live up to these very expectations—become apparent.

While interesting, the overall changes alone do not fully explain the complex dynamic nature of goals, emotion, and conflict styles, because they necessarily cloak specific changes attributable to counterpart emotion and conflict styles. For instance, despite its significant overall increase, anger is also alleviated by counterpart compassion and obliging style. Thus, to fully understand the dynamic conflict process, it is important to examine the specific context-elicited intricacies also taking place. The lack of significant overall changes in compassion, perceived importance of relational and identity goals, and use of the obliging style cannot be simply interpreted as evidence that those variables are static, because substantial specific changes have been uncovered. Although no significant overall changes have been observed, compassion is increased by counterpart compassion and obliging styles but is decreased by counterpart anger and a competing style. Clearly, the counteracting effects might account for the apparent (but deceptive) overall stability of compassion. Similarly, despite nonsignificant overall changes, the use of an obliging style is decreased by counterpart anger but is increased by a counterpart obliging style. Again, these counteracting effects might explain the apparent overall stability in the use of the obliging style.

Results show that, relative to interaction goals and conflict styles, emotion seems to be more malleable, fluid, and adaptable to the interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and conflict styles. Counterpart anger and a competing style make one become angrier, but less compassionate. Conversely, counterpart compassion and an obliging style make one become less angry, but more compassionate. This relative volatility of emotion makes sense, because emotion is, by nature, socially constructed (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001), relatively short-lived, and occurs in response to specific triggering events (Frijda, 1986, 1987; Lazarus, 1991). To date, few studies have examined the dynamic process of emotion during conflict. The present findings shed light on this dynamic nature of emotion.

In terms of goals, instrumental goals appear to be more pliable to interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and conflict styles than relational and identity goals. Proactively and reactively, instrumental goals assume more importance than relational and identity goals, and they are also the most changeable. This finding provides some support to the argument that goals are dynamic and shifting (Keck & Samp, 2007). Surprisingly, counterpart anger, compassion, and the integrating and obliging styles all decrease the perceived importance of instrumental goals. One explanation is that, before conflict encounters, individuals tend to focus more on personal gains, such as winning and getting the best deal, but actual negotiations can make them consider other issues, such as the interests of the counterpart and their relationship, which may diminish the perceived importance of instrumental goals.
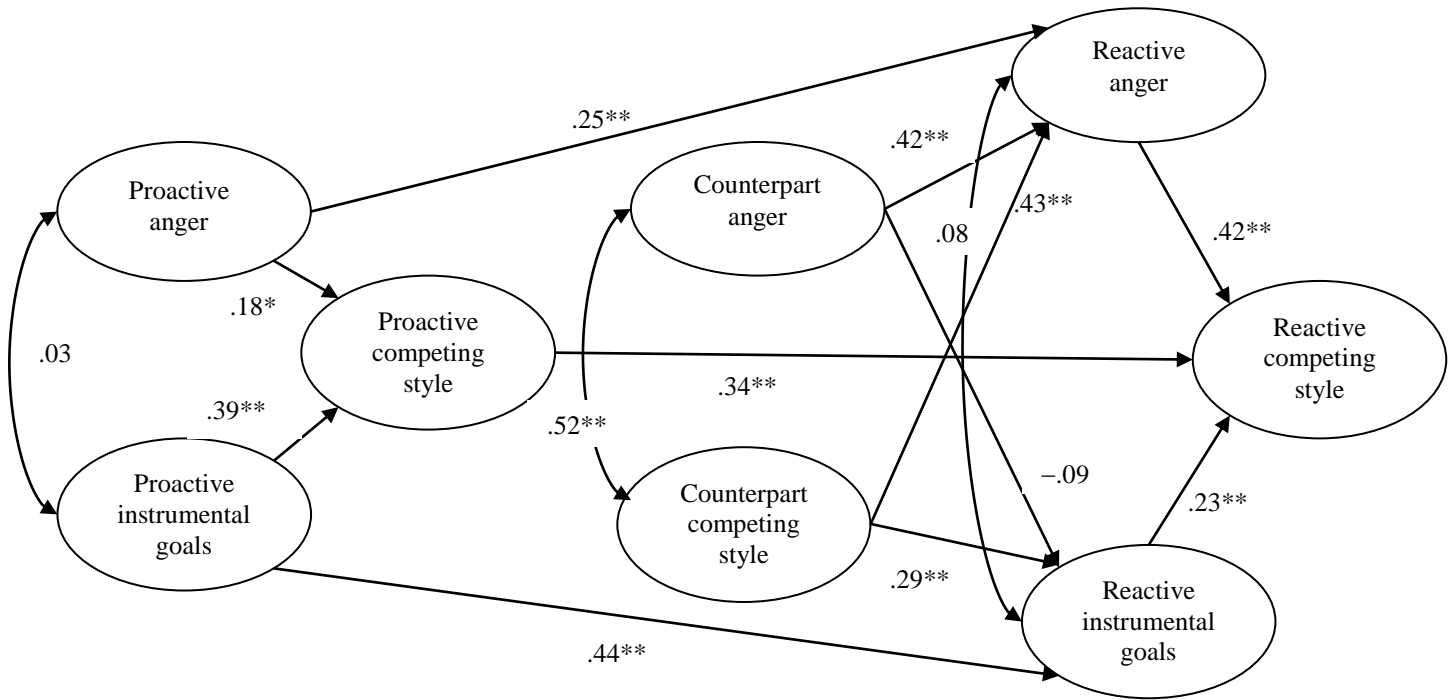
Figure 2. The model of intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on the competing style.
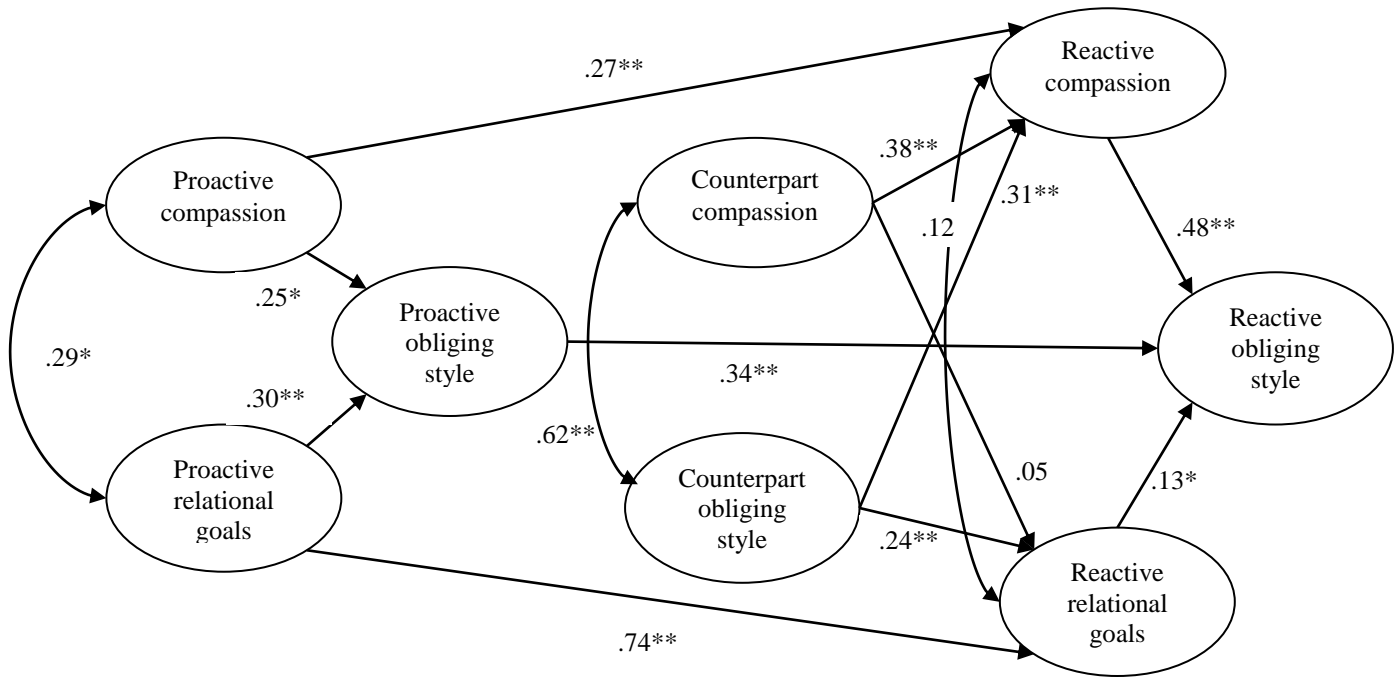*p* < .05. **p* < .001.

Figure 3. The model of intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on the obliging style.
p < .05. **p* < .001.

Results also indicate that counterpart conflict styles do not exert the same influence on goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Relative to the competing and obliging styles, the counterpart integrating style brings about negligible changes to one's goals, emotion, and conflict styles. The only significant change ascribed to the counterpart integrating style is a decrease in instrumental goals and competing style. A counterpart integrating style has no effect on emotion at all. The minimal influences of the integrating style may be attributable to the fact that integrating involves compromise, which is generally expected in negotiation. Integrating is not as anger-eliciting as competing and not as compassion-arousing as obliging. Taken together, the findings provide insights into the complex, delicate, and dynamic process of goals, emotion, and conflict styles—particularly in response to emergent counterpart emotion and conflict maneuvers.
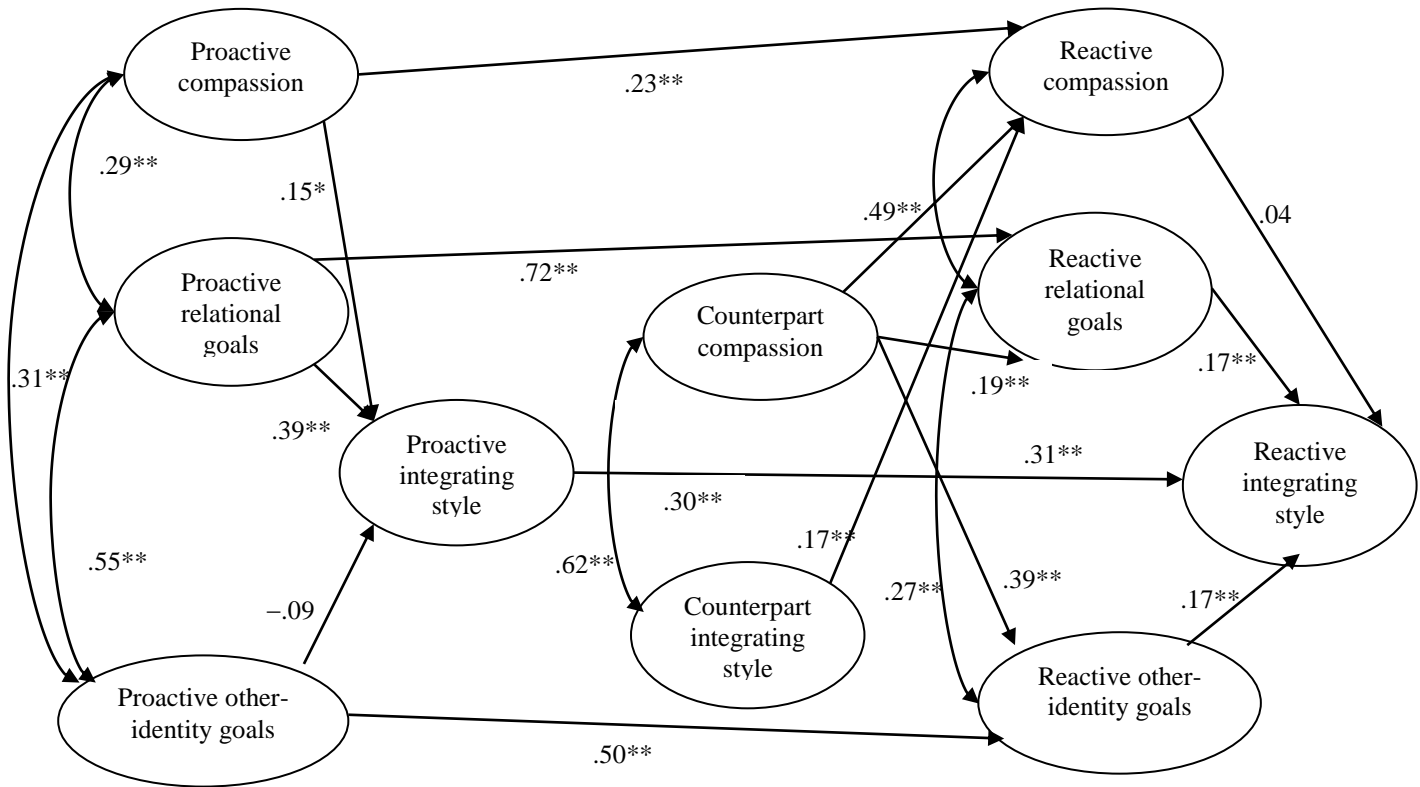
Figure 4. The model of intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on the integrating style.
p < .05. **p* < .001.

The Model of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Effects on Conflict Styles

This study also explores a general model integrating the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on conflict styles and empirically testing three contrastive models for competing, obliging, and integrating styles, respectively. The findings indicate that one's use of a particular conflict style is a function of both intrapersonal and interpersonal effects, but the interpersonal effects are largely indirect, mediated through one's own emotions and goals. In terms of the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on one's reactive competing style, the intrapersonal effects include the mediated proactive effects of one's proactive anger and instrumental goals as well as direct reactive effects. Specifically, one's proactive anger and instrumental goals are mediated through two paths: a proactive competing style and reactive anger and instrumental goals, respectively. The interpersonal effects of counterpart anger and competing style are mediated through reactive anger and instrumental goals. With regard to the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on one's reactive obliging style, the intrapersonal effects include the mediated proactive effects of proactive compassion and relational goals as well as direct reactive effects. Specifically, one's proactive compassion and relational goals are mediated through two paths: a proactive

obliging style, and reactive compassion and relational goals, respectively. The interpersonal effects of counterpart compassion and obliging style are mediated through reactive compassion and obliging styles.

The results reinforce the research regarding the intrapersonal effects of self-goals and self-emotion on conflict styles. The findings suggest that, both proactively and reactively, instrumental goals and anger have a positive effect on competing style, and relational goals and compassion predict obliging style. The findings are consistent with the consensus regarding the association of cooperative motivation with integrative negotiation strategies and competitive motivation with distributive strategies (De Dreu et al., 2000; Wilson & Putnam, 1990), the correlation of instrumental, self-identity, and competitive goals with distributive tactics (Keck & Samp, 2007; Liu & Wilson, 2011), and the relationship of anger with competitive and dominating style (Butt et al., 2005; Liu, 2009).

The results also provide insights into the interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and conflict styles on one's conflict styles. The findings demonstrate that the interpersonal effects on conflict styles are mediated through emotion and goals. Directly or indirectly, counterpart anger and a competing style make one become angrier and more competing, whereas counterpart compassion and an obliging style make one become more compassionate and obliging. Earlier studies suggest that counterpart anger and the competing and obliging styles elicit both reciprocal and complementary responses (Butt et al., 2005; Liu, 2009). However, our findings lend strong support to tit-for-tat reciprocity in anger, compassion, and conflict styles (Butt et al., 2005). Anger begets anger, and compassion begets compassion. The use of conflict behavior is also largely reciprocal (Keck & Samp, 2007).

The most intriguing finding involves the intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on one's reactive integrating style. As predicted, proactive compassion and relational goals have mediated effects through the proactive integrating style and reactive relational goals, and counterpart compassion has mediated effects through reactive relational and other-identity goals. But unexpectedly reactive compassion does not mediate the effects of proactive compassion, counterpart compassion, or a counterpart integrating style. The reactive integrating style seems to be more affected by the proactive integrating style and proactive relational and other-identity goals than by reactive compassion. Also intriguing, self-identity goals do not have significant effects on integrating style proactively or reactively, and proactive other-identity goals do not affect proactive integrating goals. The findings suggest that identity goals do not have as much impact on conflict styles as instrumental and relational goals. One explanation may be that, in price negotiation–related conflict, individuals are more concerned with getting a good deal (i.e., instrumental goals) than protecting each other's face or pride (i.e., identity goals). The finding is also partly in line with Keck and Samp's (2007) argument that self-identity goals alone do not necessarily lead to the use of distributive tactics.

The findings offer important implications for conflict research. First, this study contributes to the conflict literature by examining the dynamic interplay of interaction goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Although it is widely recognized that goals, emotion, and conflict styles change and adapt to interpersonal influences (Berger, 2007), few empirical studies have examined the dynamic process. The findings reveal both *overall* and *specific* changes in goals, emotion, and conflict styles over the course of conflict, which demonstrate the dynamic nature of the conflict process, but more empirical research is needed to

understand the complicated intricacies of the dynamics. Second, this study contributes to the conflict literature by proposing a general model integrating intrapersonal and interpersonal effects on conflict styles. Contrary to the existing research assuming direct interpersonal effects, interpersonal effects of counterpart emotion and conflict styles on one's own conflict styles are found to be mediated through one's emotion and interaction goals. The findings of the mediated interpersonal effects on conflict behavior are theoretically aligned with the relevant theories pertaining to cognition, environment, and behavior, which assert that external environments exert their influence on behavior indirectly via their impact on one's affective states and attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Bandura, 2001).

Three limitations of this study need to be addressed. The first limitation involves the experimental design of this study, which asked participants to negotiate over price with a hypothetical counterpart in an imaginary buyer-seller negotiation rather than engaging in a real negotiation interaction with an actual person. Although the use of buyer-seller negotiation simulations has been found to demonstrate validity (Van Kleef et al., 2004), and the manipulation of emotion and conflict styles was found to be effective, the use of standard hypothetical responses may not always reflect real-life conflict interactions. The second limitation pertains to the use of the two-time proactive and reactive self-reports, which asked participants to respond to hypothetical scenarios at two points. Although the proactive-reactive comparisons provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of goals, emotion, and conflict styles, they may not fully capture the complex dynamic intricacies of the conflict process. The third limitation concerns the use of a convenience sample of college students with more male than female participants. College students, due to their lack of lived experiences, may not represent the overall population. Thus, the findings should be interpreted with some caution.

This study provides some interesting directions for future research. First, most of existing research on goals and emotion in conflict has been conducted with hypothetical scenarios. However, simulations may not truly reflect the communication process in a naturalistic environment. Thus, more research in real settings is recommended to better capture the complex, embedded, and dynamic nature of interactions in conflict. Second, this study measures goals, emotion, and conflict styles at only two points. The proactive and reactive comparisons cannot fully capture the dynamics of goals, emotion, and conflict styles. Future research could consider using alternative methods, such as sequential analysis, to examine the moment-by-moment changes of goals, emotions, and conflict styles (Liu & Wilson, 2011).

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