When Refusal-Goals turn into Acquiescence Behavior

Gender Differences following Refusal priming – A Goal Systems Account

by

Amina Özelşel

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Approved, Thesis Committee

Prof. Dr. Jens Förster

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Kühnen

Prof. Dr. Ronald Friedman

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School of Humanities and Social Science
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Summary

The aim of the current experiments was to enhance the understanding of automatic self-regulation processes facilitating the pursuit of high-priority goals acquired through socialization, which in the present proposal refers to goals of interdependence and independence. More specifically, we assume that a) in Western societies of today, due to gender-typed enculturation practices, women are more likely to strive for interdependence, whereas men are more likely to strive for independence (Cross & Madson, 1997); b) refusal-behavior is consistent with an independent self-construal but may threaten an interdependent self-construal (e.g., Adachi, 1997); c) therefore, preconscious activation of a refusal-goal should increase the accessibility of an independent self-construal in men but an interdependent self-construal in women (Fishbach, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2003); and, finally, d) these differences in self-construal are expected to influence judgments and cognitive thinking style (Kühnen, Hannover, & Schubert, 2001) in a manner that facilitates goal attainment. In five studies, we tested the core assumptions of this model. As predicted we found gender differences in self-categorization, self-reported refusal behavior, semantic self-construal assessment, inclusion of others in the self-representation as well as in semantic free procedural tasks, suggesting that women become more interdependent and men more independent following the activation of a refusal-goal (Studies 1 – 4). Furthermore, we find evidence for the context-dependency of these effects (Study 4). Finally, Study 5 suggests that the observed gender differences can be accounted for by chronic differences in the goal systems of individuals. Implications for gender and cross-cultural research, assertiveness trainings in clinical and work settings, and goal-systems theory are discussed.
Prelude

Health through Assertiveness

When women cross their own boundaries time and again, because they can’t or don’t want to say NO, because they love harmony more than anything else, or because they do not want to hurt anyone, it is a serious threat to their own health and quality of life.

If, however, women live in accordance with themselves, their physical limits and values, they attain a protective harmony of soul and body.

In this lecture we will talk about how one can assert one’s own interests in one’s social environment, how to say NO and YES and how to find more self-confidence. A special emphasis will be put on how to deal with guilt feelings and a bad conscience.

Lecturer
Dr. Jürgen Stepien, Psychologist

Excerpt of a leaflet created by Frauen Netzwerk (2002); the leaflet was translated into English by the present author and reprinted with the permission of Frauen Netzwerk.
The Automaticity of People-Pleasing

Laura has been raised to value harmony in her social surroundings, to be sensitive to the feelings of others and considerate of their needs. Today, however, Laura has had a tiring day at work and she doesn’t feel like seeing or speaking to anyone anymore. The one thing she is really looking forward to is her favorite TV show. However, just before the program starts, the phone rings. It’s her friend Julie, who once again has broken up with her boyfriend and, sobbing, declares that she really needs to talk to someone.

“No problem, come over!” Laura immediately replies.

“Are you sure I’m not a bother?” Julie asks.

“Don’t be silly! Come over, I’ll make you some tea”.

After hanging up, Laura turns the TV off and sighs with audible frustration.

“What in the world did I just do again? Why didn’t I simply tell Julie that this hasn’t been a good day for me either?” she asks herself in disbelief. “What is wrong with me?”

Individuals like Laura who experience difficulties in refusing unwanted requests often report that acquiescence seems to occur automatically. Responses such as “sure”, “no problem”, or “I’ll do that” appear to be so ingrained that they commit themselves without even thinking about what they are getting into (Newman, 2005a). This phenomenon is also addressed in the refusal skills self-help literature. For example, Kahle (2005), author of “Learning to say no – the art of setting boundaries in a friendly manner”, alerts readers that refusal behavior begins in one’s head:

“In order to say no, you have to first think no. That sounds trivial but it’s not. You think without being aware of it. And these thoughts produce fears that keep you from thinking and saying no. Therefore you often say yes, even though you would – after contemplation – prefer to say no. Be aware of this mechanism and therefore always take your time before responding to a request” (p. 8; German original was translated into English by the present author).

Does acquiescence and refusal behavior really have an automatic component? What are the underlying processes that facilitate or hinder refusal behavior? What distinguishes so-called people-pleasers from those who can set boundaries in their own best interest without undue anxiety? Are there possible boundary conditions in which even chronic “yes” sayers can assert themselves with ease? The present proposal takes a goal systems perspective to investigate some of the aforementioned issues.
Theoretical Part

Just Say “No” – it's Good for You!

People like Laura in the introductory example habitually report feeling overwhelmed, overscheduled, and overburdened. What is more, a growing body of literature suggests that too many “yeses” can become a serious hazard to one’s health. For example, Newman (2005) contends that a lack of refusal-skills brings on cortisol and other stress-related hormones that may contribute to heart attack, stroke, cancer, anxiety, depression, stomach, skin, and sleep problems. The importance of effective refusal skills is also underscored by the bulk of health prevention research; in numerous studies, the ability to say “no” has been identified as a key factor for preventing health hazards such as adolescent smoking (e.g., Biglan et al., 1987; Charlton, Minagawa, & While, 1999; Gilchrist, Snow, Lodish, & Schinke, 1985), alcoholism (e.g., Hensing, Spak, Thundal, & Oestlund, 2003; Twentymen et al., 1982); needle sharing (e.g., Barnard, 1993; Camacho, Bartholomew, Joe, Cloud, & Simpson, 1996); sexual abuse (e.g., Budin & Johnson, 1989; Conte, Wolfe, & Smith, 1989; Elliot, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995, MacIntyre & Carr, 1999); unwanted pregnancies, and sexual transmission of diseases, such as HIV (e.g., Howard & Blamey McCabe, 1990; Lewin, 1985; Rickert, Sanghvi, & Wiemann, 2002).

When “No” becomes “Yes”

Why do some people then often say “yes” when they actually feel a “no” on the inside? One reason consistently mentioned by counseling clients of the present author (compare also with reports by Alberti & Emmons, 1994; Kahle, 2005; Schneider, 1994; Seifert, 1996; Ullrich & De Muynck, 2004) is that they are afraid of hurting other people’s feelings. Chronic yes-sayers often feel that refusing a request is a selfish, rude, irresponsible and “not o.k.” thing to do; consequently, they feel that turning requests down will make them “bad people”. They also routinely express the fear of not being liked any longer and that once
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they have said “no” they will never get a chance with that person again. These concerns are also echoed in the constructivist theoretical framework for conceptualizing refusal messages of Kline and Hennen Floyd (1990), who conclude that the act of refusal “creates an opposing relationship with the requester and intrinsically threatens the face wants of the refused. Refusals plainly signal that the refuser disapproves of and does not want to be socially included with the refused” (p. 456).

Gender Differences in Refusal Behavior

If you experience the above-mentioned refusal problems, there is a good chance that you are female. At least this is the conclusion one could be tempted to draw given that refusal-skill trainings are disproportionately directed at women (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). In fact, in Western countries, refusal skill trainings have a decades-long history in mental health and personal growth groups, going back to the women's movement of the 1970s, when more women entered into graduate education and high-status professions. Discovering that they were hindered by their inability to assert themselves, many members in the movement called for trainings to encourage women to stand up for themselves appropriately in their social interactions (Thompson, 2005).

Is it really more difficult for women to say “no” than for men? While refusal-skills are regarded as a core element of assertiveness (e.g., Alberti & Emmons, 2001; Dickson, A., Takezawa, & Ono, 2000; Schneider, 1994; Ullrich & De Muynck 2003; 2004), research explicitly examining refusal-behavior is scant (Kline & Hennen Floyd, 1990). And the studies that do offer data sets that permit comparisons between the sexes reveal mixed evidence. For example, Ullrich and Ullrich (1977/1998) found no gender differences for their norm samples on the Refusal Inability scale of the Social Insecurity Questionnaire. Kline and Hennen Floyd (1990) obtained evidence that females have a greater interpersonal construct differentiation and that this, in turn, influences the sensitivity and effectiveness of refusal messages; however
it was not related to the basic choice of refusing or acquiescing. On the other hand, Charlton, Minagawa and While (1999) found that gender differences in refusal behavior might constitute a greater risk factor for smoking for female adolescents. Compared to boys, girls were more likely to be repeatedly offered a cigarette and more likely than boys to accept it after more than two offers. Also, boys generally used more refusal mechanisms than girls did. Moreover, it is common for women to report refusal difficulties regarding unwanted sexual activities (e.g., Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Victims of sexual assault often report feeling that they had not succeeded at making their refusal sufficiently clear (Cairns, 1993). In the following we will briefly review attempts that have been made to explain gender differences in refusal behavior.

**Gender Differences in Communication Patterns**

A somewhat descriptive proposal has been put forward by Schulz von Thun (1981/2005). In what has arguably become the most pervasive communication model in German-speaking countries, Schulz von Thun suggests that every message contains four different aspects, namely, an informational, a relational, an appeal, and a self-revelation component. For example, the message “I can’t do this on my own” could be understood in four different ways, depending which component one focuses on, namely: a) “Speaker believes he/she cannot attain the goal without assistance” (informational aspect), b) “He/She needs me” (relational aspect), c) “He/She feels overburdened and wants help” (self-revelation aspect), or d) “I should help him/her” (appeal aspect). According to Schulz von Thun, men are more likely to focus on the informational aspect of messages, whereas women are more likely to be attuned to the remaining three aspects. Consequently, women are more prone to have an emotional reaction to the messages they receive and to say “yes” when they feel needed. In contrast, men are more prone to focus on the informational components of requests and to make their “yeses” or “nos” dependent on the facts at hand (see also Kahle, 2005).

**Gender Differences in Evolutionary Challenges**
Evolutionary psychology (e.g., Buss, 1995) reasons that women and men are likely to differ for domains in which they have had to master divergent adaptive challenges. More specifically, due to biological factors such as pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding, mothers had higher investments in their offspring than fathers did; conceivably, women who were nurturing and attended to the needs of others may have gained an evolutionary advantage by promoting the survival of their children. According to this perspective, then, women today might be worse at refusing requests because it was evolutionarily adaptive to consider the needs of others more important than one’s own.

**Gender Differences in Role Expectations**

One of the most prominent social psychological theories to explain gender differences is the social role model (Eagly, 1987), which argues that women and men are assigned to different gender roles and met with different expectations by society (e.g., men should be more assertive and women should be more relational). Supporting this line of reasoning, other authors have argued that gender may well be one of the most pervasive factors within a society affecting a child’s development: Even when controlling for other potential influences such as income, ethnicity, or neighborhood, cultural practices tend to be organized differently for females and males (Bem, 1993). According to the social role model, as a consequence of these divergent social roles and expectations men and women develop different skills, attributes, and beliefs and may internalize gender roles in their self-views.

**Gender Differences in Self-Construals**

Closely related to the social role model, Cross and Madson (1997) emphasize the importance of the self to explain intra-individual structures and processes that direct behavior. More specifically, the authors suggest that women and men in the US (and other Western countries, we suspect) live in different subcultures, characterized by interdependence and independence, respectively; these divergent social contexts promote different views of the self for the two sexes, which, in turn, mediate gender differences in refusal- and other social
behaviors. Cross and Madson borrowed the distinction between interdependent and independent social contexts from the intercultural research of Markus and Kitayama (1991), which will now briefly be introduced as it is relevant for the predictions in the present studies.

In independent contexts, individuals are raised to see themselves as self-contained entities that can claim a right to personal choice and self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994). For High-Independents, autonomy and individuality constitute important life goals and they will strive for skills and behaviors that help them be true to their own internal structures of preferences, rights, and convictions. Thus, in refusal situations, one’s own goals and needs serve as points of reference for behavior and moral choices, whereas those of others are secondary to one’s own (see also Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipon, 1985; Miller, 1984; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). This cultural socialization results in the development of an independent self-construal in which the self is represented as fundamentally separate from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In contrast, persons living in interdependent contexts are raised to see themselves as fundamentally connected to others. Their high-priority goals are to develop self-defining relationships and to maintain closeness with significant others. High-Interdependents are more likely to have thoughts and feelings that emphasize their connectedness to others, to experience vicarious participation in the sorrows and successes of self-defining others, and to strive for behaviors or skills that help them fit in or harmonize with others, such as perspective-taking and adapting their own behavior to serve the needs of important others. Thus, for individuals socialized with interdependent values, obligations to others and responsiveness to the needs of others shape moral decisions and social interactions. This cultural socialization results in the development of an interdependent self-construal in which representations of close others and social contexts are embedded in one’s representation of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
Whereas Western societies as a whole are better characterized by an independent culture, Cross and Madson (1997) argue that women and men take part in this culture in different ways. For example, parents are more likely to discuss emotions with their pre-school daughters than they are with their pre-school sons (Fivush, 1992); and girls are more often asked to take over child care than boys, whereas boys are more often assigned tasks that take them out of the house and allow more freedom and independence (Hoffman, 1991). Across a lifetime, gendered social roles, experiences, and occupations in Western countries expose women more frequently to interdependent than independent contexts and the reverse is true for men. In parallel to the intercultural findings outlined above, these gender-typed subcultures are assumed to promote an independent self-construal in men but an interdependent view of the self in women (Cross & Madson, 1997).

**Refusing Unwanted Requests – At the Crossroads of Interdependence and Independence**

Refusal behavior is commonly seen as a way for persons to establish boundaries, separateness, and to define themselves. This notion is also echoed in the refusal self-help guide by Cloud and Townsend (2002), who encourage their readers to say “no” because “boundaries define us. They define what I am and what I am not. A boundary shows me where I end and another person begins, and gives me the notion of ownership over my life and the corresponding entitlements” (p. 30).

Clearly, then, refusal behavior is compatible with the goal of autonomy associated with an independent self-construal. In refusal situations, in which the preferences of another person are pitted against one’s own, the ability to say “no” enables the individual to be true to internal convictions and to stand up for one’s own rights and needs. In contrast, however, refusal behavior might pose a threat to the goal of maintaining interpersonal harmony with others, commonly associated with an interdependent self-construal (Adachi, 1997). Thus, the
two self-construals are expected to yield very different imperatives of what it means to be a socially excepted person when facing an unwanted request, namely, “Don’t say ‘no!’” for interdependent vs. “Say ‘no’!” for independent persons. How do individuals, however, succeed at pursuing these high-priority goals of interdependence or independence? Recall the introductory example of Laura who has been raised to put a premium on maintaining close relationships and being sensitive to the needs of others. How does she succeed at not succumbing to the temptation of being her own best friend and watching television instead of consoling Julie?

From a self-regulative perspective, it would be functional for individuals who value interpersonal harmony to automatically activate social self-knowledge in refusal situations (e.g., activating the long-term priority of maintaining friendships and making instances more accessible in which they have helped others). Moreover, it would be functional for these persons in refusal situations to not only change what they think but also how they think. That is, it would make self-regulatory sense for them to entertain a more context-sensitive thinking style, allowing them to be more attentive to important contextual cues and making it easier to be responsive to the needs of others. Moreover, by including the other in their self-construal they might even experience vicarious joy when satisfying the preferences of others.

In contrast, it would be functional for highly independent individuals to automatically activate autonomous self-knowledge in refusal situations. Moreover, standing up for oneself would be facilitated by switching to a more field-independent thinking style, allowing one to focus on one’s own needs and preferences unaffected by the expectations of others or situational role demands.

Building on this assumption, what would the underlying processes be that cognitively activate high-priority goals in situations in which conflicting short-term objectives jeopardize successful goal pursuit? In his tripartite model of personality, Sigmund Freud (1923/1966) believed that the Über-Ich (superego, literally “that which stands above me”) would be the
agency of the mind to take over this function. In his early work, Freud referred to this personality component as the censor, whose function it was to keep out thoughts and feelings „of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame [and] self-reproach“ (Freud in Breuer & Freud, 1893-1895/1996, p. 269; found in Frank, 1999). According to Freud, children develop the superego by identifying with their parents’ value system, which in turn is influenced by „the past, the tradition of the race and the people” (1933/1966, p. 67). The superego, then, is responsible for self-control and self-denial: it observes and evaluates; it punishes or praises depending on whether or not the person has lived up to his or her ideals. Leaving aside the controversial discussion of the underlying psychodynamic structures of Freud’s theory, the notion of conflicts between overriding norms and short-term desires is echoed in the more recent goal systems research conducted by Kruglanski and his workgroup (Fishbach et al., 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Trope & Fishbach, 2000), which will be reviewed next in greater detail.

**Goal Systems as Intimate Portraits of the Self**

Goal systems theory (GST) is a cognitive approach to motivation that makes predictions about the ways that goals are mentally represented and how these representations ultimately affect motivated action, self-regulation, and self-control. Adopting a connectionist perspective, GST pictures goals, means, and other mental representations as a network of cognitive associations that vary in complexity. Most notably, automatic associations may form between goals and other representations, which are frequently and consistently activated at the same time (see also Bargh & Ferguson, 2000; Kruglanski, 1996). These links may be either facilitative (e.g., between higher-order goals and their respective means of attainment) or inhibitory (e.g., between two competing goals). To illustrate, a study exemplifying the latter was reported by Kruglanski and his colleagues (2002); participants were asked to list three attributes that they wanted to possess. Next, these goals or control constructs were
presented as primes or targets in a sequential priming paradigm. The obtained data revealed that when a goal (versus a control word) served as a prime this increased the lexical decision times to the alternative goals (versus control words), which indicated their inhibition. From a self-regulatory perspective, this automatic inter-goal inhibition, called “goal shielding”, is functional, suggesting that individuals strive to shield their commitment to important goals against the “goal pull” by attractive alternatives.

In this sense, then, goal systems can be understood as intimate portraits of what individuals value highly in life, what attainment means they habitually choose, and what alternative paths of action they have to resist in order to achieve their goals. Extending this line of work, Fishbach and her colleagues (2003) found evidence for automatic goal associations between conflicting low- and high-priority goals. For several self-regulatory domains they could demonstrate that cues of momentarily alluring short-term motives activated the corresponding high-priority goals with which they interfered, whereas the latter tended to inhibit the tempting short-term objectives. For instance, in a sequential priming procedure, Fishbach and her colleagues could show that cues of low-priority enticements (such as premarital sex) automatically activated the corresponding overriding goals with which they interfered (such as having a religious lifestyle). Notably, the association between temptations and goals was found to be asymmetrical; that is, subliminal temptation primes facilitated recognition of the corresponding overriding goal constructs, whereas temptation recognition was inhibited by subliminal goal primes. Also, replications under cognitive load conditions could show that temptation-goal activation did not require mental resources. What is more, in one of their studies regarding the goal of dieting, the authors could demonstrate that fattening food primes (a Chocolatier magazine and a variety of chocolate bars, cookies, chips, and cakes – ostensibly designated for a later meeting in the experimenter room) not only activated the concept of “diet” in restrained eaters, as measured by a lexical decision task but also led to the formation of nutrition-related self-control intentions and even behaviors,
such as the preference for a low-calorie apple over a high-calorie Twix bar as a reward at the end of the experiment.

In sum, Fishbach et al.’s (2003) research could show that priming participants with low-priority goals automatically activated the corresponding high-priority goals with which they interfered instead of eliciting situationally congruent behavior. This process neither required conscious awareness of the primes nor mental resources. Moreover, this effect was more pronounced for high-priority goals and successful self-regulators in the given domain. For example, fattening food primes facilitated the recognition of diet constructs to a greater degree for people for whom weight-watching was important; in a similar vein, temptation cues such as television and procrastinate led to faster recognition of goal constructs such as study and grades for students who reported being more successful at pursuing academic goals. In this sense, then, automatic temptation-goal associations seem to constitute a low-level form of self-control.

Applied to the present proposal, we suggest that men and women in Western societies differ in their chronic goal structures. In more detail, we believe that women and men have both independent and interdependent self-views but that the number and organization of these may vary between the sexes (Cross & Madson, 1997; see also Trafimow, Triandis and Goto, 1991). Given their different socialization histories, men and women may activate independent and interdependent self-representations with different frequencies, making independent self-construals chronically accessible for men and interdependent self-construals chronically accessible for women (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Shah & Kruglanski, 2002). Put in the terminology of goal systems theory, we suggest that women, on average, are more likely to embrace high-priority interdependence goals, whereas men, on average, are more likely to embrace high-priority independence goals. Thus, in accordance with the research of Fishbach and colleagues (2003), we assume that refusal cues should lead to situationally congruent responses for independent individuals, given that refusal behavior is
consistent with an independent self-construal. That is, we would predict that these individuals automatically activate autonomous self-knowledge and switch to a context-independent processing style in the presence of refusal cues. However, in contrast, we suggest that refusal cues might pose a threat to goals associated with an interdependent self-construal; thus we would expect highly interdependent persons to automatically activate an interdependent self-construal, that is, to activate social self-knowledge and exhibit a context-sensitive processing style instead of exhibiting situationally congruent behavior.

Indeed, self-construals have been shown to mediate individual experience in a broad array of interpersonal situations (see Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Iyengar & Brockner, J., 2001; Kitayama & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1997; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001, for reviews). In this final section of the Theoretical Part, we will now turn to a model that describes two ways in which self-construals influence individual experience, which will prove to be important for the present studies.

**The Semantic Procedural Interface Model of the Self**


First, self-construals make the corresponding semantic self-knowledge highly accessible (see also Bargh, 1997; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Hannover, 1997, for reviews), which in turn assimilates responses in judgmental tasks towards the implications of this self-view. That is, with an independent self-construal, *autonomous* semantic self-contents will guide information processing and incoming information will be assimilated towards them; in contrast, judgments and thinking should be assimilated to *social* semantic
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self-contents for people with an interdependent self-construal. Second, the SPI model suggests that self-construals influence the procedural modes of thinking. Independent self-construals coincide with a context-independent information processing style -- that is, individuals tend to process stimuli as if they were unaffected by the context in which the stimuli appear; whereas interdependent self-construals yield a context-sensitive cognitive style in which stimuli are processed by paying attention to their relations to the field in which they are embedded.

For example, Kühnen and his colleagues (2001a) could show that subtle manipulations of the accessibility of different self-construals influenced participants’ field-independence, as assessed by the EFT (Horn, 1962), a semantic free task in which participants are asked to identify simple target figures that are embedded in – and obscured by – complex geometrical patterns. Kühnen and his colleagues could demonstrate that participants with a highly accessible independent self-construal were more effective at disregarding the context surrounding the simple figures and, thus, better at identifying the targets compared to individuals with a highly accessible interdependent self-construal. Moreover, they could show that interdependent and independent self-construals influenced semantic self-judgments, as demonstrated by the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994); engendering more field-independent self-assessments for individuals with an independent self-construal compared with their interdependent counterparts.

Following our discussion on gendered self-construals and goal systems theory, the SPI model concludes our introduction of the central theoretical building blocks on which the present research is founded. We will now briefly summarize our model and provide an overview of the experimental studies.

**Theoretical Summary and Overview of the Experiments**

The aim of the current experiments was to enhance the understanding of automatic self-regulation processes facilitating the pursuit of high-priority goals acquired through
socialization, which in the present proposal refer to goals of interdependence and independence. As delineated earlier, we assume that a) in Western societies of today, due to gender-typed enculturation practices, women are more likely to strive for interdependence, whereas men are more likely to strive for independence (Cross & Madson, 1997); b) refusal-behavior is consistent with an independent self-construal but may threaten an interdependent self-construal (e.g., Adachi, 1997); c) therefore, preconscious activation of a refusal-goal should increase the accessibility of an independent self-construal in men but an interdependent self-construal in women (Fishbach et al., 2003); and, finally, d) these differences in self-construal are expected to influence judgments and cognitive thinking style (Kühnen et al., 2001a) in a manner that facilitates goal attainment. The following section provides an overview of the five studies, which were conducted to test the core assumptions of our model.

We propose that refusal-goals automatically activate an independent self-construal in men but an interdependent self-construal in women due to differences in socialization. Most cognitive network models (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985; Wyer & Srull 1980, 1981) would predict an associative link between refusal-behavior and independence (seeing oneself as an autonomous entity and therefore standing up for one’s own rights and preferences requires refusal-skills); however, the automatic link between refusal-constructs and interdependence is, on first glance, counter-intuitive (seeing oneself as fundamentally related to other people and therefore being responsive to their needs requires empathy-, not refusal-skills). In accordance with Fishbach and colleagues (2003), we believe that this automatic association is the result of over-learned self-control efforts in refusal situations. If this is truly so, we would also expect women to assign more importance to interdependent goals and to be more successful at attaining them than men (Fishbach et al., 2003). A pre-survey was conducted to examine this assumption.
Next, given our suggestion that the ubiquitous nature of refusal-situations entails overlearning of gender-appropriate responses to the point of automaticity, we used a suboptimal priming procedure for preconscious goal activation in all five studies. Closely following the pioneering work of Bargh and his colleagues (e.g., Bargh & Barndollar, 1996), participants were repeatedly exposed to either refusal- or control-constructs, which they could not consciously recognize. Thus, any facilitative relations between refusal goals and interdependent self-construals (as predicted for highly interdependent participants) or independent self-construals (as predicted for highly independent participants) would have to occur outside awareness, exhibiting one of the properties of automaticity (Bargh, 1996).

Study 1 addressed the first-generation question, “Is there a phenomenon?” More specifically, we asked whether refusal-goal priming had a gender-specific effect on the accessibility of interdependent and independent self-construals, by administering the Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) scale, adapted from Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992). It will be recalled that one of the central findings characterizing the differences between interdependent and independent self-construals is the degree to which people include others in their self-representations. This should presumably also have an effect on refusal behavior, as one should be less likely to say “no” to people one feels fundamentally connected to and one should be more likely to experience vicarious pleasure when satisfying their needs. Another purpose of Study 1 was to examine the gender-specific effects of refusal-goal priming on semantic self-descriptions by administering a self-categorization task for interdependent and independent attributes (adapted from Markus & Kunda, 1986). The underlying logic of influences on semantic scales is that contextual factors (in our case preconscious goal activation) can temporarily activate independent and interdependent self-knowledge, leading to intra-individual differences in the accessibility of autonomous or social semantic self-contents (cf. Hannover, 1997); when processing new information, individuals use the mental categories that can most easily be retrieved from memory, with judgments being assimilated towards the
denotative and connotative aspects of the activated category (e.g., Higgins, Rholes & Jones, 1977). Thus, any differences in the relative accessibility of interdependent and independent self-knowledge caused by the suboptimal refusal priming procedure should be reflected in participants’ semantic self-categorizations.

Study 2 was designed to replicate Study 1 by introducing a different semantic self-assessment, namely the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994), which measures field-independence. More importantly, however, Study 2 explored whether refusal-goal priming had a gender-specific effect on processing styles, by administering the Embedded Figure Test (EFT by Horn, 1962), which is a procedural task requiring a context-independent thinking style. According to the SPI model (e.g., Kühnen et al., 2001a), interdependent self-construals coincide with a context-sensitive processing style, whereas independent self-construals are associated with a field-independent processing style. Thus, any differences in the relative accessibility of interdependent and independent self-knowledge caused by the suboptimal priming procedure should also be reflected by the task performance in the EFT.

The purpose of Study 3 was to replicate the findings of Study 2 by adding a procedural task profiting from a context-sensitive processing style, namely, the Framed Line Task (FLT, adapted from Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, & Larsen, 2003). If performance differences in the EFT can truly be attributed to differences in the relative accessibility of interdependent and independent self-construals, then we should find a pattern reversal for performance in the FLT.

Study 4 examined the impact of refusal-goal priming on behavioral self-reports concerning refusal-situations. We expected that pre-conscious refusal-goal activation would alert highly interdependent participants to their important life goals of maintaining close relationships and interpersonal harmony; and these, in turn, “to banish [refusal intentions] out of persons’ minds” (Kruglanski et al., 2002, p. 355). Thus, we would expect refusal-primed women to describe themselves as less assertive on refusal items of the Social Insecurity
Questionnaire (U-Fragebogen, Ullrich & Ullrich, 1977/1998). However, we would only predict this to happen in contexts in which refusal behavior may jeopardize close relationships. Thus, Study 4 was designed to address an additional issue, namely, context specificity of treatment effects; we did this by investigating self-reported refusal behavior in childrearing, a context in which both independent and interdependent persons are allowed, and even expected, to say no to unreasonable requests. Thus, when the refusal items of the Social Insecurity Questionnaire are adapted to explicitly refer to children, no treatment effects were expected to occur.

Finally, the aim of Study 5 was to go beyond the category of gender as a proxy for chronic differences in goal-structures, by assessing the attributed importance and self-perceived success for interdependence and independence goals in a more direct fashion. Following the suggestions of Fishbach et al. (2003), we asked participants to rate how important interdependence goals were to them and how successful they perceived themselves at attaining these goals, which allowed us to classify participants as high or low in interdependence. Study 5 was designed to replicate previous findings in the FLT and on the IOS scale with High- versus Low-Interdependents, instead of examining female versus male participants.
Empirical Part

**Pre-Survey: Gender Differences in Subjective Goal Importance and Effective Self-Control for Interdependent and Independent Objectives**

In our model we propose that refusal-goals automatically activate an independent self-construal in men but an interdependent self-construal in women, due to differences in socialization. However, if the proposed link between refusal-behavior and interdependent self-construal truly is the result of over-learned self-control efforts, we would also expect women to assign more importance to interdependent goals and to be more successful at attaining them than men (Fishbach et al., 2003). To test this assumption, we conducted a pre-survey with 16 female and 19 male non-psychology students of the University of Bremen. In an 18-item questionnaire (ostensibly a pre-survey for a self-perception inventory), participants were asked to indicate on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very) for a total of nine different goals: a) how important the goals were to them and b) how well they succeeded in attaining them (see Appendix A). Of these nine goals, two were related to interdependence, such as *auf die Bedürfnisse anderer eingehen* (being responsive to the needs of others); two were related to independence, such as *eigene Bedürfnisse gegenüber anderen durchsetzen* (to assert one’s own needs towards others); and the remaining five goals were control items, unrelated to interdependence and independence, such as *sportlich ausdauernd zu sein* (to possess stamina in endurance sports); the latter were solely included to dissimulate the true purpose of the study and were not further analyzed. All participants were reminded that there existed no right or wrong answers and that they should simply choose the answers that best reflected their own experience.

Similar to Fishbach et al. (2003), we combined ratings for self-perceived success and importance for the interdependent and independent attributes, respectively. As we were primarily interested in the subjective value and self-regulatory success of interdependence
goals in relation to independence goals, we computed an index variable of relative interdependence for each participant by subtracting the mean importance/success ratings attributed to independence goals from the mean importance/success ratings attributed to interdependence goals (mean importance/success_{interdependent} − mean importance/success_{independent})\(^1\). This index variable was analyzed with a one-sided t-test for independent samples; the data are summarized in Table 1 and reveal that women do, in fact, attribute more value to and perceive themselves as more successful at interdependent goals compared to independent goals, and this to a stronger degree than men do, \(M_{women} = .54 (SD = .48)\) vs. \(M_{men} = -.13 (SD = .45)\), \(t (33) = 4.26, p = .000\). Further analysis revealed that the relative interdependence scores were significantly different from 0 for women, \(t (15) = 4.52, p = .000\), and just missed marginal significance for men, \(t (18) = -1.27, p < .11\).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative Interdependence Index</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(M_{women})</td>
<td>.54 (.48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(M_{men})</td>
<td>-.13 (.45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Positive values indicate that interdependence goals were rated as more important/successful than independence goals.

In sum, and as predicted, significant gender differences were found for the subjective goal-importance and self-regulatory success for interdependence in relation to independence goals. In more detail, interdependence still appears to be a largely female domain, whereas independence tends to be a predominately male domain in Western societies of today. These results are in accordance with our model and, thus, allowed us to proceed with Study 1.

\(^1\) For absolute means of subjective importance and perceived self-regulatory success for independence and interdependence goals, please see Appendix G.
Study 1: The Effects of Refusal-Goal Priming on Self-Categorizations and Inclusions of Others in the Self

We have argued that refusal-behavior might jeopardize the high-priority goal of interpersonal harmony and, therefore, that highly interdependent persons might be more likely to acquiesce than highly independent persons. From a self-regulatory perspective, then, it would be functional for persons with an interdependent self-construal in refusal-situations to include the representations of others in their self-representations, which might make it more likely for them to experience vicarious satisfaction when satisfying the needs and preferences of others and to be sensitive to their needs. In contrast, it would be functional for individuals with an independent self-construal to exclude the representations of others in their self-representations, as saying “no” is a way for persons to establish boundaries and separateness and to define themselves (Asha, 1999). Thus, in Study 1 we administered the Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS) Scale, adapted from Aron and colleagues (Aron et al., 1992), to examine whether refusal-goal priming had a gender-specific effect on the degree to which participants included others in their self-representations.

Moreover, Study 1 examined whether refusal priming had a gender-specific effect on a semantic self-categorization task for interdependent and independent attributes (adapted from Markus & Kunda, 1986).

Method

Overview

Participants performed a parafoveal priming task in which words related to a refusal-goal or control words (unrelated to any specific goal) were presented outside of awareness. Following this priming procedure they completed a self-categorization task in which independent, interdependent, and control self-statements served as targets. Next, they were asked to complete the Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS). The predictions pertaining to the
IOS and the Self-Categorization Task were addressed with two separate 2 Priming (refusal-goal vs. control) x 2 Gender (male vs. female) designs.

Participants

Thirty-five female and 34 male non-psychology students of the University of Bremen were recruited as participants. They were contacted via phone and asked to take part in several unrelated experiments; one of them a study on vigilance, one of them a pilot study for a reading comprehension test, and yet another one a study on visual perception, among others. As a compensation for the approximately two-hour experimental session, they were offered Euro 20 (about US$ 24 at the time).

Apparatus and Materials

The 2.5 m x 4 m experimental room contained two separate desks, each equipped with an IBM-compatible computer and a chair. The desks faced in opposite directions, enabling two participants to complete the procedure independently and without seeing each other. Marks made on the desks and on the floor of the room enabled the experimenter to observe that chair, screen and keyboard remained positioned at predetermined locations at all times. The “.”-key and the “x”-key were labeled with a yellow and a green sticker, respectively. The characters of the priming task appeared as white letters on a black background.

Priming Task

Participants were primed with either constructs related to a refusal-goal or with control constructs unrelated to any particular goal. Pre-testing was conducted to select these stimulus constructs as follows:

First, 15 female and 8 male psychology students were asked to generate a base list of candidate refusal-words. They did so by first reading the outline of a social skills training session, in which trainees learn how to refuse requests assertively (refusal-session, adapted from Schneider, 1994, see Appendix B). Following the outline, they were asked to generate as many words/propositions associated with the particular session as possible.
Out of this pool of 118 candidate refusal-words/propositions 31 were selected for further pre-testing. A master-list was constructed by intermixing these words with 22 control-words. The control-words were selected by the present author to meet two criteria: first, they were to be neutral in the sense of being unrelated to both independent and interdependent concepts, and second, closely matched with the critical words in terms of length, frequency, degree of abstractness, and form.

This master-list was pre-tested by having a different set of 7 female and 5 male non-psychology students read the session outline and subsequently rate “how strongly associated” each word/proposition was with the refusal-session. All pretest participants received a chocolate bar as compensation for their efforts.

Finally, 13 words/propositions strongly associated with the refusal-session were selected for the present studies. All of them had received a mean refusal-goal rating greater than or equal to 7.0 using 9-point rating scales ranging from 1 (not at all associated) to 9 (strongly associated). These constructs were: Freie Entscheidung (free decision), Nein-Sagen erlaubt (saying no is permitted), Direktheit (being straightforward), Nein-Sagen (saying no), Nein! (no!), Klarheit (clarity), eigene Wünsche äußern (expressing one’s own wishes), Ehrlichkeit (honesty), Aufrichtigkeit (sincerity), Freiheit (liberty), standhaft bleiben (remaining firm), zu sich stehen (standing up for oneself), Grenzen setzen (setting boundaries). Notably, these constructs bear close resemblance with Western definitions of assertiveness. For example, when Wilson and Gallois (1993) asked a large number of Western respondents to define assertiveness, the most frequent definition was “standing up for legitimate personal rights”, followed by “freely expressing opinions and feelings”, “being sure of yourself”, and “being a leader”, which also corresponded to definitions provided in lay and professional psychology articles.
In addition, 11 words that were weakly associated with the refusal-session \( (M < 3) \) were selected as control-words. These words were: Kreuzung (cross-section), verschicke Pakete (send packages), Reinheit (cleanness), Geräusche hören (hearing sounds), Bein (leg), sich schonen (going easy on oneself), Aussicht (view), abreisen (departing), Berühmtheit (celebrity), für Essen sorgen (organizing something to eat), Postkarten zeigen (showing postcards). An independent one-tailed t-test revealed that the refusal- and the control-words differed reliably in terms of association strength with the contents of the refusal session, \( M_{\text{refusal words}} = 8.34, \text{SD} = 1.3 \) vs. \( M_{\text{control words}} = 1.75, \text{SD} = 1.5, t(10) = 32.67, p = .000 \). The priming procedure closely followed the one employed by Chartrand and Bargh (1996), including all suggested precautions for preventing conscious awareness of the priming stimuli such as very brief presentation of the primes, immediate masking, and placement of stimulus content in the parafoveal processing area.

In more detail, three asterisks were constantly displayed at the center of the screen and served as the fixation point. Participants were instructed to focus their gaze on these asterisks at all times during the task. At a randomly determined time (varying from 2 to 7 s) during the trial, a prime word flashed for 60 ms immediately followed by a 60-ms mask in the same location. The central pattern mask employed was a non-word letter string (“XQFBZRMQWGBK”), originally designed by Bargh, Bond, Lombardi, and Tota (1986) to be structurally similar to the preceding word without conveying any additional meaning. The studies were run on flat screens of the model 17 TFF, 1280 x 1024 pixel, at a refresh rate of 60 Hz; previous research in our laboratories showed that the presentation length of 60 ms was adequate to ensure that the stimulus words and masks were always exposed to the participants but were too brief to be consciously recognized; hence they were unlikely to evoke deliberative or controlled processes.

\[ \text{Note that optimal presentation times may be different for different computers and screens.} \]
The stimulus word and mask appeared at one of four locations on the computer screen equidistant from the fixation point at angles of 45°, 135°, 225°, and 315° (one in each of the four quadrants). All participants were given the same sequence of randomized location order. Within a particular location, each word was placed so that the center of the word was 5.5 cm from the fixation point. The distance of the prime from the fixation point and the distance of the participant from the computer screen situated the prime in the participant’s parafoveal field (see Bargh & Chartrand, 2000), which also ensured that participants were highly unlikely to consciously process it.

All participants completed 75 experimental trials, with the stimulus words for their condition presented repeatedly in a randomized order, fixed for all participants of the same condition (see Appendix B). Thus, the participants had 75 suboptimal exposures to either refusal-words or control-words.

**Self-Categorization Task**

One established procedure for demonstrating differences in self-conceptions is the use of a self-categorization paradigm, which involves asking participants to respond to possible self-statements by pressing either a “me” or “not me” button as quickly as possible. It has been shown, for example, that situationally activating the goal of being unique (vs. being similar) engenders a more unique self-construal and leads to self-categorization differences when responding to uniqueness vs. similarity related self-statements (Markus & Kunda, 1986). According to this notion then, we should expect self-categorization differences for refusal-primed men and women when responding to independent and interdependent related self-statements.

The self-categorization task used for the present study closely followed the procedure employed by Markus and Kunda (1986). Participants were shown 37 slides, each containing a possible self-statement. Of these, 7 were related to independence [e.g., *unabhängig* (independent), *individuell* (individual), *setzt eigene Ziele durch* (is assertive about own
When Refusal-Goals turn into Acquiescence Behavior - Study 1

goals)); 7 were related to interdependence [e.g., nachgiebig (acquiescent), Harmonie liebend (loves harmony), achtet auf die Bedürfnisse anderer (considers the needs of others)]; and 23 were unrelated to both independence and interdependence [e.g., ordentlich (tidy), liebt die Natur (loves nature), spricht gerne Dialekt (likes to speak in dialect)]. All self-statements were approximately matched for length, word frequency, and social desirability. In Study 1, refusal-primed women were expected to describe themselves as more interdependent than independent and refusal-primed men were expected to describe themselves as more independent than interdependent, as measured by the number of independent and interdependent self-statements they embraced in the self-categorization task, compared to their respective control groups.

**Inclusion of Others in the Self Scale**

This single-item pictorial measure was adapted from Aron and colleagues (Aron et al., 1992). The IOS scale consisted of seven pairs of circles; the pairs only differed concerning the distance between the circles, with the first pair being rather far apart (3.9 cm), the circles of the following pairs increasingly getting closer, and the final pair of circles all but completely overlapping each other (see Appendix C). For each pair, one of the circles was labeled as Ich (I) and the other one was labeled as Wichtige Andere (important others). Participants were asked to choose the pair of circles that best reflected the distance they perceived between themselves and people who are important to them. For the IOS, refusal-primed women were expected to include important others to a greater degree, whereas refusal-primed men were expected to exclude important others to a greater degree, compared to their respective control groups.

**Procedure**

A maximum of two participants took part in each session. Upon arrival, participants were shown into the experimental room and seated in front of the computer screens. The experimenter randomly assigned them to one of the two priming conditions and informed
them that they would be taking part in several unrelated experiments. Instructions were presented on the computer screen. Here, participants were informed that the current study examined vigilance by measuring reaction times to visual stimuli. Specifically, very brief flashes would appear on the screens at unpredictable places and times; their task was to indicate as quickly and accurately as possible by pressing the designated keys marked with a green or a yellow sticker whether the flash appeared on the right or the left side of the screen. Finally, it was emphasized to participants that, because of the unpredictable timing and location of the flashes, the best response times were achieved by keeping the eyes focused on the fixation point and the index fingers on the two designated keys. The participants were instructed to begin the alleged vigilance task by pressing the space bar marked with a black sticker. The vigilance task consisted of 75 experimental trials taking the participants approximately 3 minutes to complete. None of the participants were able to identify any of the priming targets in this or any of the subsequent studies.

The instructions on the computer screen informed participants that this next experiment was a pilot study for a reading comprehension test that would later be used for children. Specifically, they would be presented a number of possible self-statements for which they had to decide whether or not they matched their self-perceptions by pressing the designated keys, “green” for “me” and “yellow” for “not me.” The first five targets were control self-statements; the order of the remaining independent, interdependent, and control self-statements was determined randomly and fixed for all participants. The yellow and the green keys were the same as in the priming task. The target statements always appeared at exactly the same position (center of the screen) and each target remained on the screen until the participant made a self-categorization response, which automatically led to the presentation of the next slide.
After completion of the self-categorization task, participants were administered the IOS scale. Finally, a verbal funneled debriefing procedure was used to assess whether participants had guessed the true nature of the study, which none of them had.

Results and Discussion

Self-Categorization Task: Embraced Self-Statements

For each participant, we derived a relative interdependence index from his or her self-judgments in the self-categorization task, namely, the degree to which interdependent statements were judged to be self-descriptive in comparison to independent self-statements. This index variable was computed by subtracting the number of embraced independent self-statements from the number of embraced interdependent self-statements (\(\text{number}_{\text{interdependent}} - \text{number}_{\text{independent}}\)). The data were analyzed using an ANOVA, with priming condition and participant gender as between-subjects factors, they are summarized in Table 2.

As predicted, we found a significant interaction between participant gender and priming condition, \(F (1, 64) = 5.73, p < .02\), revealing that refusal priming engendered relatively more interdependent self-categorizations for women, \(M_{\text{refusal}} = 1.11, SD = 2.11\) vs. \(M_{\text{control}} = .44, SD = 2.56\), whereas the reverse was true for men, \(M_{\text{refusal}} = -.40, SD = 1.76\) vs. \(M_{\text{control}} = 1.33, SD = 1.71\), compared to their respective control groups. There was no main effect for either gender or priming condition (both \(p_s > .29\)).

Table 2

Study 1: Mean Index of Relative Interdependence in the Self-Categorization Task as a Function of the Priming Condition and the Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.40 (1.76)</td>
<td>1.33 (1.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.11 (2.11)</td>
<td>.44 (2.56)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate higher degree of relative interdependence.
The data pattern was further analyzed using a simple main effects analysis, revealing that gender differences were reliable in the refusal condition, $F(1, 64) = 4.48, p < .019$, but not in the control condition, $F(1, 64) = 1.6, p < .11$. Moreover, priming condition reliably influenced self-categorizations for men, $F(1, 64) = 5.80, p < .009$, but not for women, $F(1, 64) = .91, p < .18$, all one-tailed.

**Inclusion of Others in the Self Scale**

Recall one of the core propositions in the research on independence and interdependence, namely, that people differ in their self-representations depending on their activated self-construals, with interdependent self-construals promoting the likelihood of including significant others in one’s self-representations compared to independent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Hence, on the IOS scale, we predicted refusal-goal primed men to be less likely to choose overlapping circles to depict the distance they perceived between themselves and significant others compared to the male control participants. In contrast, we believed that refusal-goal primed women would choose circles that overlapped to a greater degree compared to women in the control group. The seven circle pairs, with varying distances between the circles, were coded from 1 to 7 such that higher values indicated a choice of more overlapping circles. To determine whether refusal-goal priming does, indeed, increase the likelihood that females include significant others in their self-representations and make it less likely that male participants do so, we submitted these values to an ANOVA with priming condition and participants’ gender as between participants factors. As shown in Table 3, refusal-primed female participants chose circles that overlapped to a larger degree to depict the closeness they perceived between themselves and important others compared to their control group, $M_{refusal} = 5.28, SD = 1.23$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.60, SD = 1.18$, whereas refusal-goal primed men selected more distant circles compared to their control counterparts, $M_{refusal} = 4.19, SD = 1.38$ vs. $M_{control} = 4.72, SD = 1.27$. However, this interaction was only marginally significant, $F(1, 63) = 3.81, p < .055$. None of the main
effects reached significance (all $ps > .13$). The priming condition by gender interaction was further analyzed with simple main effects analysis. Male and female self-construals differed in the refusal priming condition, $F (1, 63) = 6.27, p < .008$, but not in the control condition, $F < 1$. Priming condition had a marginal effect on women, $F (1, 63) = 2.34, p < .08$, but not on men, $F (1, 63) = 1.51, p < .13$; all one-tailed.

Table 3

Study 1: Mean Degree to which Participants Included Significant Others in their Self-Representations as a Function of the Priming Condition and the Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.19 (1.38)</td>
<td>4.72 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.28 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.60 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher values indicate higher degree of inclusion of significant others.

The data obtained in Study 1 are consistent with the assumption that the employed priming procedure activates an interdependent self-contrual in women but an independent self-construal in men. More specifically, refusal-primed men were more likely to embrace independent self-statements and to reject interdependent self-statements compared to control participants. In contrast, refusal-primed females had the tendency to embrace interdependent and to reject independent self-statements following refusal-goal priming. Moreover, on the IOS scale, refusal-primed men tended to depict the distance they perceived between themselves and people who were important to them by choosing more distant pairs of circles in the visual self-construal scale, whereas refusal-primed women were more likely to choose overlapping circles, compared with their control counterparts.
Study 2: The Effects of Refusal-Goal Priming on Accessibility of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals and their Corresponding Processing Styles

It will be recalled that self-construals have been shown to influence not only the content of activated self-knowledge but also, independently and simultaneously, the procedural mode of thinking (Hannover & Kühnen, 2002, 2004; Hannover, Pöhlmann, Roeder, Springer, & Kühnen, in press; Kühnen & Hannover, 2003; Kühnen et al., 2001a; 2001b). More specifically, individuals with an easily accessible independent self-construal tend to process stimuli unaffected by the context in which they appear (field-independence). In contrast, individuals with an easily accessible interdependent view of the self are more likely to entertain a context-bound mode of thinking; that is, they process stimuli while attending to their relations to the entire field. Applied to the present proposal, we would expect refusal-goal priming to render independent self-construals more accessible for men but interdependent self-construals more accessible for women, and that this would reflect on the EFT and Self-Construal Scale described earlier. To reiterate, we believe that it would be functional for individuals to automatically switch to a processing mode that facilitates the pursuit of their present goals. When pursuing the interdependent goal of maintaining harmony with significant others, it would be functional to activate social self-knowledge and to entertain a more field-sensitive processing mode, allowing one to be more attentive to important contextual cues and making it easier to be responsive to the needs of others. Conceivably, this might also increase the likelihood of experiencing vicarious satisfaction when pleasing one’s social surrounding. In contrast, pursuing the independent goal of autonomy would be facilitated by switching to a more field-independent processing mode, allowing one to focus on one’s own needs and preferences unaffected by the expectations of others or situational role demands and to activate autonomous self-knowledge. Applying this logic to the dependent variables used by Kühnen et al. (2001a), we would expect refusal-
primed men to be more accurate and refusal-primed females to be less accurate in the EFT, compared with their respective control groups. In a similar vein, we would expect refusal-goal priming to yield more field-independent self-reports in men but more field-sensitive self-reports in women, on the self-construal items of Singelis (1994), compared to their respective control groups.

Overview

Participants were suboptimally primed with either a refusal-goal or with no particular goal (control condition). Next, they were presented with Horn’s (1962) self-administered version of the Embedded Figure Test. Finally, they were asked to complete a questionnaire containing three items of Singelis’ (1994) Self-Construal Scale. The predictions pertaining to the EFT and the Self-Construal Scale were addressed with two separate 2 Priming (refusal-goal vs. control) x 2 Gender (male vs. female) designs.

Method

Participants

Fifty-three female and 66 male non-psychology students of the University of Bremen were recruited as participants. As in the previous study, they were contacted via phone and asked to take part in several unrelated experiments; one of them a study on vigilance; one of them on spatial perception; and yet another one a pilot study for a self-perception inventory, among others. As a compensation for the approximately two-hour experimental session, they were offered Euro 20 (about US$ 24 at the time).

Apparatus and Materials

The experimental room was the same as the one used in the previous study, with two desks facing in opposite directions, each equipped with an IBM-compatible computer.

Priming Task
The same suboptimal priming procedure as in the previous study, ostensibly a vigilance task, was used to manipulate the accessibility of refusal- and control-constructs. Thus, all participants again had 75 suboptimal exposures to either refusal-constructs or control-constructs.

**Embedded Figure Test**

The EFT was adapted from Horn’s (1962) self-administered version (as described in Kühnen et al., 2001a). Here, participants were presented with 40 complex geometrical figures, each containing one of five possible embedded targets: a “T”, “U”, “L”, triangle or a diamond shaped figure. The task of the participant was to detect as many of the embedded figures as possible within 2 minutes. The EFT clearly benefits from a field-independent processing mode, as participants need to identify stimuli unaffected by the context in which they appear. Thus, the more accurate a person is in the EFT, the more field-independent his or her cognitive mode is considered to be.

**Self-Construal Scale**

This measure, too, has a close resemblance to the one employed by Kühnen and his colleagues (2001a). Here, participants were presented with three items taken from Singelis’ (1994) Self-Construal Scale namely Meine Zufriedenheit hängt von der Zufriedenheit derer um mich herum ab (My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me), Ich bin zu Hause die gleiche Person wie an der Uni (I am the same person at home that I am at school), and Ich verhalte mich unabhängig davon, mit wem ich gerade zusammen bin (I act the same way no matter who I am with), all of which directly ask the participants to assess the extent to which their self is field-independent, on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree; see Appendix D).

**Procedure**

Again a maximum of two participants took part in each session. Upon arrival, participants were shown into the experimental room and seated in front of the computer
When Refusal-Goals turn into Acquiescence Behavior - Study 2

screens. The experimenter randomly assigned them to one of the two priming conditions, with groups roughly balanced according to sex. Participants were informed that they would be taking part in several unrelated experiments.

After participants had completed the priming procedure, the experimenter told them that they would now begin the second experiment, concerned with spatial perception. They were handed a detailed instruction sheet for the EFT, including two example items (see Appendix D). Furthermore, they were informed that they would have 2 minutes to identify as many embedded figures as possible and that they should work quickly and accurately. Next, they were given the opportunity to clarify any remaining questions and then asked to begin.

After 2 minutes all participants were stopped and asked to complete a final questionnaire, containing the three items of Singelis’ (1994) Self-Construal Scale. Next, a verbal funneled debriefing procedure was used to assess whether participants had guessed the true nature of the study, which none of them did. Finally, participants were paid, thanked, debriefed, and invited to ask any remaining questions about the study.

Results and Discussion

Embedded Figure Test

For each participant, an EFT accuracy score was computed by dividing the number of correctly identified embedded figures by the total number of figures the participant had attempted to solve. To reiterate our hypotheses, we predicted that refusal-goal priming would activate an independent self-construal in men and, hence, yield a more accurate performance in the EFT compared to the male control group. In contrast, we assumed that women, following refusal-goal priming, should have a more accessible interdependent self-construal and should, therefore, be less accurate in detecting the embedded figures. EFT accuracy

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3 This version of the EFT is designed as a speed test with a multiple choice answer format. Participants rarely manage to complete all 40 items in the 2-minute time frame provided; thus, the more quickly they work through the task, the more likely it is for them to achieve hits. In order to control for this speed bias, performance accuracy was assessed by dividing the number of correct solutions by the total number of items participants attempted to solve. For the absolute values of correct, false, and attempted solutions, please see Appendix G.
scores were submitted to an ANOVA with priming condition and the participants’ gender as between-subject factors. As expected, we obtained a significant interaction between gender and priming condition, $F(1, 115) = 4.21, p = .042$. As displayed in Table 4, refusal-goal primed men were more accurate in the EFT than their control counterparts, $M_{\text{refusal}} = .92, SD = .13$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = .88, SD = .12$, whereas the reverse was true for refusal-goal primed women, $M_{\text{refusal}} = .86, SD = .21$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = .91, SD = .13$. None of the main effects were significant (all $F$s < 1). Simple main effects analysis further confirmed that male and female accuracy scores differed reliably in the refusal priming condition, $F(1, 115) = 4.40, p < .019$, but not in the control condition ($F < 1$). Moreover, priming condition had an effect on both women, $F(1, 115) = 2.40, p < .062$, and men, $F(1, 115) = 1.81, p < .09$, all one-tailed; however, they only reached marginal significance.

Table 4

Study 2: Mean Accuracy Scores in the Embedded Figure Test as a Function of the Priming Condition and the Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.92 (.13)</td>
<td>.88 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.86 (.21)</td>
<td>.91 (.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate higher degree of accuracy.

Self-Construal Scale

The three items of the Self-Construal Scale were coded such that higher scores indicated higher degrees of field-independence and then summed up for every participant. To test our hypotheses that refusal-goal priming would engender more context-independent self-reports in men but more context-sensitive self-reports in women, we submitted these field-independence scores to an ANOVA with priming and the participants’ gender as between-subject factors. As shown in Table 5, the data obtained in Study 2 clearly supports our predictions. Compared to their respective control groups, refusal-goal primed men do, indeed,
describe themselves as less affected by the context around them, $M_{\text{refusal}} = 8.55$, $SD = 2.06$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 7.97$, $SD = 2.09$, whereas refusal-goal primed women report being more sensitive for context factors, $M_{\text{refusal}} = 7.69$, $SD = 1.93$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 8.83$, $SD = 3.11$. As predicted, this interaction was significant: $F(1, 115) = 4.11$, $p = .045$. Again, none of the main effects were significant (all $Fs < 1$). Simple main effects analysis further revealed that male and female self-reports differed marginally, both in the refusal priming condition, $F(1, 115) = 2.10$, $p < .075$, and in the control condition, $F(1, 115) = 2.01$, $p < .08$. Priming condition had a reliable effect on women, $F(1, 115) = 3.27$, $p < .037$, but not on men, $F(1, 115) = 1.04$, $p < .155$; all one-tailed. Further analysis revealed that field-independence self-assessments were not mediated by EFT performances (Pearson Correlation, $p > .13$).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8.55 (2.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7.69 (1.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate higher degree of field-independence.

Again, the results of Study 2 suggest that suboptimally activating a refusal-goal appears to affect participants differentially depending on their gender, yielding a more independent self-construal tendency in men but a more interdependent self-construal tendency in women. More specifically, on items of the Self-Construal Scale by Singelis (1994), refusal-goal primed men tended to describe themselves as more field-independent, whereas refusal-goal primed women tended to describe themselves as more field-sensitive. In a similar vein, we were also able to demonstrate an interaction between refusal-goal priming and gender on a semantic-free procedural measure, namely, the EFT (Horn, 1962). As predicted, refusal-goal
priming appears to have facilitated a field-independent processing mode for men, as reflected in more accurate performance in the EFT. In contrast, refusal-primed women were less accurate at isolating figures from the respective context they were embedded in, which suggests a more field-sensitive processing mode.

Note that the data of Study 2 are consistent with the findings of Kühnen and his workgroup (Hannover & Kühnen, 2002, 2004; Hannover, Pöhlmann, Roeder, Springer, & Kühnen, in press; Kühnen & Hannover, 2003; Kühnen et al., 2001a; 2001b) namely that independent self-construals promote a context-independent thinking style, whereas interdependent self-construals yield a context-bound thinking style. However, one may also suggest that the more accurate EFT performance of refusal-primed men and the less accurate performance of refusal-primed women could also be explained by independence being more closely linked with achievement motivation and, therefore, that people with an easily accessible independent self-construal will simply put more effort into tasks. Thus, their success in the EFT would result not so much from a fit between thinking style and task characteristics but, instead, from their increased desire to do well. Kühnen and his colleagues were able to rule out this alternative account by introducing an additional procedural task that, unlike the EFT, benefited from a context-sensitive processing mode, and they could demonstrate that, on this measure, participants with an easily accessible interdependent self-construal outperformed the other groups (2001a).

The data pattern obtained in Study 2 does not lend strong support to the independence-increases-effort hypothesis, as we find neither a significant interaction between gender and priming condition for the number of attempted items nor for the absolute number of correct solutions (see Appendix G). However, in order to exclude this alternative account we decided to replicate the findings of Study 2, while adding a procedural measure requiring context sensitivity.
Study 3: The Effects of Refusal-Goal Priming on Tasks Requiring Interdependent and Independent Processing Styles

Study 3 was very similar to Study 2 with one important modification: Instead of the Self-Construal Scale by Singelis (1994) we administered the Framed Line Task (FLT, adapted from Kitayama et al., 2003), which benefits from a context-sensitive processing mode. Just like the EFT, the FLT is arguably nonsocial but requires the ability to incorporate contextual information. More specifically, it involves presenting participants with a square frame that contains a vertical line; participants are asked to draw a line that is identical in proportion to the height of the frame into a second square of a different size. While task performance in these tasks obviously depends on sensory input, Kitayama et al. (2003) could show that it is also influenced by factors that are endogenous to the perceiver, such as processing style.

Thus, for Study 3 we predicted refusal-goal primed men to be more accurate in the EFT but less accurate in the FLT, and the opposite to be true for refusal-goal primed women compared with their respective control groups.

Method

Overview

Participants were again primed either with a refusal-goal or with no particular goal (control condition) and then administered the EFT and the FLT. In sum, the design for Study 3 was a 2 Priming (refusal-goal vs. no particular goal) by 2 Gender (male vs. female) by 2 Task Type (EFT, requiring context independence vs. FLT, requiring context sensitivity) mixed model design, with the first two factors as between participants factors and the third factor as within participants factor.

Participants
Twenty-one female and 20 male non-psychology students of the University of Bremen were recruited as participants. As in the previous studies, they were contacted via phone and asked to take part in several unrelated experiments, one of them investigating vigilance and two others examining spatial perception, among others. Again, they were compensated for the approximately two-hour experimental session with Euro 20 (about US$ 24 at the time).

**Apparatus and Materials**

The experimental room was the same as the one used in Studies 1 and 2, with two desks facing in opposite directions, each equipped with an IBM-compatible computer.

**Priming Task**

The same suboptimal priming procedure was used as in the previous studies to manipulate the accessibility of a refusal-goal or no particular goal.

**Embedded Figure Test**

The EFT was the same as used in Study 2. Again all participants were presented with a detailed instruction sheet, including two sample items, and then given 2 minutes to identify as many embedded figures as possible. As previously delineated, accuracy in the EFT is expected to be facilitated by a field-independent processing style.

**Framed Line Task**

This task was adapted from a procedure developed by Kitayama and his colleagues (2003). In the version employed for the present proposal, participants were presented with a 4-page booklet, each page displaying two separate squares, A and B, which differed in size (see Appendix E). Square A always contained a vertical line, whereas square B was empty. As delineated earlier, the participant’s task was to draw a line into square B that was identical to the line in square A in its proportion to the height of the surrounding frame. Thus, participants were asked to create a line that, as much as possible, resembled the first one, not in absolute length but in its proportions to the context around it. Please note that for the FLT a context-sensitive processing mode is expected to be advantageous.
Procedure

In most relevant respects, the procedure resembled that of the previous study. Again, a maximum of two participants took part in each session. Upon arrival, participants were shown into the experimental room and seated in front of the computer screens. The experimenter randomly assigned them to one of the two priming conditions, with groups roughly balanced according to sex. Participants were informed that they would be taking part in several unrelated experiments. After participants had completed the priming procedure, the experimenter told them they would now begin the second experiment, concerned with spatial perception. Just as in Study 2, they were presented with a detailed instruction sheet and given the opportunity to ask any remaining questions. After 2 minutes of working on the EFT, they were stopped and administered the FLT, a self-paced task, which again was explained with a detailed instruction sheet, including an example.

Results and Discussion

Processing Modes

The EFT accuracy scores were computed in the same fashion as in Study 2: Again, the number of correctly identified figures was divided by the total number of embedded figures the participant had attempted to solve\(^4\).

For the Framed Line Task, the error in mm (absolute length) between the lines drawn by the participant and the lines that would have correctly portrayed the required proportions was measured and added up for each participant (see Kitayama et al., 2003). Thus, higher scores reflected a higher degree of inaccuracy in the FLT. However, for ease of comparison with the accuracy scores of the EFT, we also transformed the FLT inaccuracy scores into accuracy scores by subtracting them from 150 mm (in other words, an inaccuracy score of 110 mm became an accuracy score of 40 mm).

\(^4\) Again, for the absolute values of correct, false, and attempted solutions, please see Appendix G.
It will be recalled that, in parallel to the predictions of Study 2, refusal-goal primed men were expected to be more accurate at the EFT but less accurate at the FLT and the reverse to be true for refusal-primed women compared with the respective control groups. To test these assumptions, EFT and FLT accuracy scores were standardized with a z-transformation and submitted to an ANOVA for mixed designs. For ease of interpretation, however, the non-z-standardized values are reported in Table 6. The data of Study 3 confirm our predictions: Refusal-goal primed men perform more accurately in the EFT and less accurately in the FLT compared to their control group, EFT: $M_{\text{refusal}} = .94, SD = .06$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = .87, SD = .18$; FLT: $M_{\text{refusal}} = 131, SD = 8$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 135, SD = 10$. Moreover, we find the reverse pattern for female participants: Refusal-goal primed females are less accurate at isolating the embedded figures in the EFT but more accurate at drawing the exact proportions in the FLT, EFT: $M_{\text{refusal}} = .80, SD = .19$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = .94, SD = .11$; FLT: $M_{\text{refusal}} = 136, SD = 7$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 129, SD = 12$. As predicted, the priming by gender by task type interaction was significant, $F(1, 37) = 8.68, p = .006$; no other main effects or interactions were significant (all Fs $< 1$). We further analyzed the data set with planned separate ANOVAS for each task type. We found a significant interaction between gender and priming condition in the EFT, $F(1, 37) = 5.02, p < .031$. Simple main effects analysis further confirmed that male and female inaccuracy scores differed reliably in the refusal priming condition, $F(1, 37) = 5.02, p < .016$, but not in the control condition ($F < 1$). Priming condition had a reliable effect on women, $F(1, 37) = 4.41, p < .022$, but not on men, $F(1, 37) = 1.16, p < .15$; all one-tailed. We found a marginal interaction between gender and priming condition in the FLT, $F(1, 38) = 3.40, p < .073$. However, simple main effects analysis further revealed that male and female inaccuracy scores did not differ reliably in the refusal priming condition, $F(1, 38) = 1.43, p < .12$, or in the control condition, $F(1, 38) = 1.98, p < .085$. Priming condition had a nearly significant effect on women, $F(1, 38) = 2.41, p < .065$, but not on men, $F(1, 38) = 1.13, p < .15$; all one-tailed.
When Refusal-Goals turn into Acquiescence Behavior - Study 3

Table 6

Study 3: Mean Accuracy Rates for the Embedded Figure Test and the Framed Line Task as a Function of the Priming Condition and Participant Gender (SD in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inaccuracy Score</th>
<th>Male Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Male Control (no goal)</th>
<th>Female Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Female Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EFT</td>
<td>.94 (.06)</td>
<td>.87 (.18)</td>
<td>.80 (.19)</td>
<td>.94 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLT</td>
<td>131 (8)</td>
<td>135 (10)</td>
<td>136 (7)</td>
<td>129 (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate higher degree of accuracy.

To summarize: refusal-goal primed men tended to be more accurate in a task requiring a field-independent processing mode (EFT) and tended to be less accurate in a task requiring a context-sensitive processing mode (FLT), which according to the SPI Model (Kühnen et al., 2001a) coincides with an easily accessible independent self-construal. The reverse pattern was obtained for refusal-goal primed women, suggesting an easily accessible interdependent self-construal: they were less able to identify stimuli unaffected by their surrounding context in the EFT but were more accurate at taking the context into account when estimating the proportions in the FLT. Thus, even though the effects were not strong on every single comparison -- the significant three-way interaction pattern permits us to exclude the alternative account for the EFT results obtained in Study 2 -- namely that independence is more closely linked with achievement motivation and that, therefore, people with an easily accessible independent self-construal will simply put more effort into tasks. Instead, the fact that we find a pattern reversal for the FLT, a task benefiting from a context-sensitive processing style, allows us to assume that the obtained data patterns result instead from a fit between thinking style and task characteristics.

In sum, the first three studies converge to demonstrate that refusal priming affects participants differentially depending on their gender, yielding a more independent self-construal in men but a more interdependent self-construal in women. As delineated earlier, we
attribute this effect to chronic differences in the goal structures of women and men, with women more likely to embrace interdependent and men more likely to embrace independent goals as a high priority in their lives (Cross & Madson, 1997). Subliminally activating a refusal-objective should be in line with a high-priority goal of independence but may threaten a high-priority goal of interdependence and should, therefore, automatically render women more interdependent and men more independent (Fishbach et al., 2003).

In the next study we wanted to investigate whether the findings of the previous studies would generalize to self-reported refusal behavior. More importantly, however, the objective of Study 4 was to demonstrate that the postulated automatic link between refusal-cues and interdependent self-reports in women is specific to contexts in which refusal behavior might jeopardize harmony with significant others.
Study 4: Refusal-Goal Priming and Self-Reported Assertiveness – Context Dependency of Effects

Clearly, we all have at times refused unwanted requests in a fairly assertive manner and at other times acquiesced to things that we actually didn’t feel like doing. In other words, our self-knowledge concerning our behavior is variable in nature and can be conceptualized as a versatile and flexible memory structure (Kühnen et al., 2001a). Moreover, these self-representations can vary according to the self-construal that is primed in a given context (see also Markus & Kunda, 1986). Thus, as a result of the use of different semantic knowledge, it can be expected that judgments and behaviors will be assimilated toward the implications of the self-construals that are accessible at the time the judgment is to be made (Kühnen et al., 2001a).

As delineated earlier, we would expect preconscious refusal-goal activation to alert highly interdependent participants to their important life goals of maintaining close relationships and interpersonal harmony; and these, in turn, “to banish [refusal intentions] out of persons’ minds” (Kruglanski et al., 2002, p. 355); in contrast, refusal priming should activate an independent self-construal for persons who value autonomy, and, in turn, make semantic self-knowledge for refusal intentions more accessible. Importantly, however, we would not expect to find any priming effects in contexts in which refusal-behavior does not threaten interdependence goals, such as in childrearing. In more detail, even today, raising children is largely a female domain (e.g., Kimmel, 1996) and women are expected, in the best interest of the child, to refuse unwanted requests and set boundaries when appropriate (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Thus, in this specific context, refusal-cues do not threaten close relationships and should therefore not influence self-reports.

To test this assumption, in Study 4 we asked participants to complete refusal-related self-report items, adapted from the Ullrich and Ullrich Social Insecurity Questionnaire (U-
When Refusal-Goals turn into Acquiescence Behavior - Study 4

Fragebogen, 1977/1998), a measure assessing self-judgments on habitual behavior and behavioral intentions. The items were presented either in their original form (not referring to children) or modified to explicitly refer to refusal-behavior towards children. For the original items of the Social Insecurity Questionnaire, refusal-goal primed men were expected to report greater refusal-behavior skills, whereas refusal-goal primed women were expected to report being less assertive in their refusal-behavior, compared to their respective control counterparts. In contrast, however, we did not expect any differential priming effects on the modified items, as refusal-behavior towards children does not violate the goal of interdependence.

Method

Overview

Participants performed the same priming task as in the previous studies in which words related to a refusal-goal or to no particular goal were presented outside of awareness. Following this priming procedure they completed an assertion questionnaire containing refusal-behavior items, either in their original wording or modified to explicitly refer to refusal-behavior towards children. Thus, Study 4 was based on a 2 Priming (refusal-goal vs. no particular goal) by 2 Gender (male vs. female) by 2 Questionnaire Version (refusal-behavior targeted towards grownups vs. refusal behavior targeted towards children) factorial design with all three factors realized as between participants factors.

Participants

Participants were 76 female and 63 male non-psychology students recruited from the University of Bremen. As in the previous studies, they were contacted via phone and asked to take part in several unrelated experiments, one of them investigating vigilance and another one validating a newly developed questionnaire for social competence, among others. As
compensation for the approximately two-hour experimental session, they were offered Euro 20 (about US$ 24 at the time).

**Apparatus and Materials**

The experimental room was similar to the one used in the previous studies, with two desks facing in opposite directions, each equipped with IBM-compatible computers.

**Priming Task**

The same suboptimal priming procedure as in the previous studies, ostensibly a vigilance task, was used to manipulate the accessibility of refusal- and control-constructs. Again all participants had 75 suboptimal exposures to either refusal-constructs or control-constructs.

**Questionnaire Measure**

The self-report, paper-and-pencil measures employed in Study 4 were adapted from the Ullrich and Ullrich Social Insecurity Questionnaire (U-Fragebogen, 1977/1998), the most established German instrument for both assessing specific habitual assertiveness deficits in clients as well as for evaluating pre-post differences in clinical research paradigms. The items of this inventory are strongly behavior related and consist of statements pertaining to situations calling for social competence, for example, *Wenn mir der Besuch eines Freundes ungelegen kommt, kann ich ihm das ohne weiteres sagen* (When a friend’s visit is inconvenient, I have no problems telling him so). Participants are asked to report the relative degree to which each self-statement describes their own behavior, on a 5-point scale (1 indicating *not true at all*; 5 indicating *absolutely true*).

Of the 65 original items of the Social Insecurity Questionnaire (1977/1998), the first author selected those that were most closely related to refusal behavior and could easily be transferred to the interaction with children (36 items). From these, two parallel versions of a Refusal Inability questionnaire were created, one version consisting of the 36 items in their original form, and the second version consisting of the same items modified to explicitly refer
to refusal-behavior towards children. To exemplify, *When somebody interrupts me, I ask him or her to let me finish my sentence*” was modified to *When a child interrupts me, I ask him or her to let me finish my sentence*; likewise, *I’m much more likely to acquiesce than to start an argument* became *Towards a child, I’m much more likely to acquiesce than to start an argument*. Both questionnaire versions can be found in Appendix F.

**Procedure**

The procedure was essentially the same as in the previous studies, with a maximum of two participants taking part in each session. Upon arrival, participants were shown into the experimental room, seated in front of the computer screens, and informed that they would be taking part in several unrelated experiments. The experimenter randomly assigned them to one of the four experimental conditions, with groups roughly balanced according to gender. Next, the instructions for the priming procedure were presented on the computer screen and participants could begin the task by pressing the space-bar. After participants had completed the priming procedure, the experimenter told them they would now begin the second experiment, concerned with validating a newly developed questionnaire on assertion behavior. Each participant was handed a questionnaire and asked to read the instructions on the cover sheet. Here, they were informed that on the following pages they would be presented statements about behavior in social situations. They were asked to imagine each situation as vividly as possible and judge how they would habitually feel or respond to it. Next, they were instructed in the use of the 5-point scales, and finally, they were reminded that there existed neither “right” nor “wrong” answers. They were asked to respond as quickly and as spontaneously as possible, without trying to make a good impression.

All participants were allowed as much time for completing the questionnaire as was necessary, and finally, the same verbal funneled debriefing procedure as in the previous studies was used to assess whether participants were cognizant of the true nature of the study. Again, none indicated any conscious knowledge of the primed concepts or any suspicion
concerning the interconnectedness of the two studies. Following debriefing, participants were invited to ask any remaining questions about the study, and finally, were paid and thanked.

Results and Discussion

One participant failed to complete several of the questionnaire items and, thus, was excluded from analysis. In addition, one other participant consistently endorsed statements in a socially desirable direction. We decided to exclude his data from analysis because his total assertiveness score was more than 2.5 standard deviations above the average total assertiveness score, leaving 75 female and 62 male participants for the analysis.

Recall that the study asked three fundamental questions: a) Does refusal-goal priming affect self-appraisals regarding refusal-behaviors?, b) Does refusal-goal priming produce different effects for men and women?, and c) Are these differential priming effects specific to situations in which refusal-behavior might jeopardize a high-priority interdependence goal?

To test these assumptions, we computed a mean refusal inability score for each participant and submitted these data to an ANOVA with priming condition, refusal target-group and participants’ gender as between participants factors. To little surprise, the analysis revealed a highly significant target-group main effect, $F(1, 129) = 14.42, p = .000$, indicating that participants reported having less difficulty asserting themselves towards children than towards fellow grownups, $M_{children} = 1.6, SD = .6$ vs. $M_{grownups} = 2.0, SD = .6$. Moreover, we obtained a marginal interaction between participant gender and refusal target-group, $F(1, 129) = 2.95, p = .088$, revealing that women reported greater refusal-skills towards children than men did, $M_{women} = 1.4, SD = .4$ vs. $M_{men} = 1.8, SD = .7$, whereas there were no overall gender differences when it came to refusing unwanted requests of fellow grownups, $M_{women} = 2.0, SD = .6$ vs. $M_{men} = 2.0, SD = .6$. The three-way interaction of gender by target group by priming condition missed marginal significance, $F(1, 129) = 2.29, p < .13$. This was to be expected given that we predicted a disordinal interaction pattern (no priming effects for self-
reported refusal behavior towards children; however, a crossover interaction between gender and priming condition for self-reported refusal behavior towards grownups). Rosenthal, Rosnow, and Rubin (2000) argued that an ANOVA is particularly suited to test crossover interactions and falls short of testing more asymmetric predictions; thus, we conducted further analyses that better tested our specific hypotheses. In more detail, we conducted planned separate ANOVAS for each target group, which confirmed the predicted data pattern: In social contexts in which refusal-behavior can be seen as a potential threat to closeness with important others (grownup targets), refusal-goal priming resulted in less assertive self-reports for females and more assertive self-reports for males, compared to their respective control groups (women: $M_{\text{refusal}} = 2.2$, $SD = .6$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 1.9$, $SD = .6$; men: $M_{\text{refusal}} = 1.9$, $SD = .7$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 2.2$, $SD = .6$). This predicted interaction was significant, $F (1, 91) = 5.56, p < .021$.

Simple main effects analysis further confirmed that male and female self-reports differed reliably in the refusal priming condition, $F (1, 91) = 3.32, p < .036$, and marginally in the control condition, $F (1, 91) = 2.27, p < .068$. Priming condition had a reliable effect on women, $F (1, 91) = 3.35, p < .035$, as well as a marginal effect on men, $F (1, 91) = 2.33, p < .065$; all one-tailed.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refusal target-group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refusal-goal</td>
<td>Control (no goal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grownups</td>
<td>1.9 (.7)</td>
<td>2.2 (.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>1.9 (.7)</td>
<td>1.7 (.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher values indicate greater reported refusal-inability.

However, in social contexts in which refusal-behavior is not seen as a threat to social relationships but, instead, even as an often necessary response, such as in childrearing, we do
not find a similar interaction pattern \((F < 1)\); the only significant difference is a gender main effect, reiterating the finding described above, that females are more assertive in refusing unwanted requests by children compared to men, \(F (1, 91) = 4.10, p < .05\).

To summarize, Study 4 both replicates and extends the previous studies. Once again, evidence was found that our priming procedure influenced men and women differentially, yielding more assertive self-reports for men but less assertive self-reports for women on the original items of the Social Insecurity Questionnaire (Ullrich & Ullrich, 1977/1998). This is particularly impressive given the relatively high six-month re-test reliability of these items \((r_{tt} = .79 - .85)\). According to our model, these effects can be attributed to differences in activated self-construals, as refusal-goal priming makes interdependent self-construals more accessible to women but independent self-construals more accessible to men. What is more, the results illustrate the specificity of the treatment effects: priming effects were obtained for social domains in which refusal-behavior is assumed to jeopardize social relationships with significant others; however, the priming condition apparently had no impact on self-reports for social situations in which refusing unwanted requests does not endanger closeness with others, such as the domain of childrearing.

In combination, Studies 1 - 4 offer strong support for the assumption that priming a refusal-goal activates different self-construals in women and men, yielding differences in semantic self-reports as well as in processing styles. What is more, the present data qualify the on-going discussion on gender differences. In our studies, women were not less assertive or independent than men (see control groups and self-reported refusal-behavior towards children); however, they did tend to be more interdependent and portray themselves as less assertive in contexts in which situational cues (refusal-goal priming) may have threatened their overriding goal of interdependence.
Meta-analyses on Studies 1 to 4

The data patterns obtained on the total of seven dependent measures employed in Studies 1 - 4 converge to confirm our model. However, we could not show strong effects for all measures. In two cases, the predicted interaction effect was only marginally significant. Moreover, for four dependent measures no clear evidence for priming differences was obtained for male participants. Therefore, a separate meta-analysis was conducted for the effects of refusal- and control priming on women and men, respectively, mainly to provide a further test of the hypothesis that the activation of a refusal-goal also had a reliable influence on men.

Method

The outcome measures in all studies were recoded such that higher values reflected greater interdependence. Unbiased effect sizes $d$ (Hedges & Olkin, 1985) were calculated for each of these comparisons and adjusted for small sample size (Hedges’$g$). The obtained effect sizes\(^5\) were then subjected to two separate meta-analyses using the random effects model (Dersimonian-Laird’s method). This procedure decomposes the observed effect size variance into one part due to the variability in the underlying population parameters and one part due to the sampling error of the estimator for the parameter value. It could thus be used to determine the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the data set. Additionally, a test of homogeneity (Hedges and Olkin) was conducted that served as an additional indicator for a judgment on the heterogeneity status.

Results

Table 8 depicts the mean effect size (Hedges’$g$) for all comparisons, as well as the Chi-square statistics for each of the two meta-analyses.

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\(^5\) All outcome measures were submitted to the meta-analyses, the only exception being the self-reports concerning refusal-behavior towards children in Study 4, given that we had explicitly predicted no treatment effects for this measure.
Table 8

*Effect Sizes (Hedges unbiased estimator d) in Studies 1 to 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>-.394 (.347)</td>
<td>.548 (.357)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Categorization</td>
<td>-.973 (.372)</td>
<td>.278 (.355)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFT</td>
<td>-.339 (.249)</td>
<td>406 (.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singelis</td>
<td>-.274 (.248)</td>
<td>.445 (.280)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFT</td>
<td>-.513 (.456)</td>
<td>.818 (4.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLT</td>
<td>-.473 (.455)</td>
<td>.620 (.440)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nein-Sagen</td>
<td>-.461 (.313)</td>
<td>.497 (.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLT</td>
<td>-.444 (.361)</td>
<td>.817 (.411)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOS</td>
<td>-2.025 (.632)</td>
<td>.500 (.496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean δ</td>
<td>-.422 (.115)</td>
<td>.481 (.125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\text{Chi}^2 (1)$</td>
<td>13.45</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>&lt;.0002</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combined effect sizes of the priming condition on both women $\text{Chi}^2 (1) = 14.80, p = .0001$, and men, $\text{Chi}^2 (1) = 13.45, p = .0002$, were significant. Moreover, in both meta-analyses, 100 % of the observed variance could be explained by sampling error. Furthermore,
none of the heterogeneity tests reached significance, both \( ps > .83 \), both \( \tau^2 \) = 0. It can thus be concluded that the effects were homogeneous.

Discussion

From the results of the meta-analysis it can be concluded that refusal priming had the expected effects on both sexes, with both groups differing nearly half a standard deviation, on average, due to treatment effects. Additionally, all the variance in the individual effect sizes could be explained by sampling error.

Notably, until this point we have used gender as a proxy for chronic differences in goal structures, an assumption that has been supported by our pretest, demonstrating that women of our sample attribute higher value to -- and report more self-regulatory success for -- interdependent goals compared to independent goals, and this to a greater extent than men do. However, if our model really holds true, then we should be able to replicate our results with individuals who chronically differ in their goal structures regarding interdependence and independence, even beyond the boundaries of biological gender. Thus, Study 5 was designed to test this final assumption.
Study 5: Beyond Gender – Subjective Goal Value and Self-Regulatory Success

As described in the Introduction, Fishbach and her colleagues (2003) could demonstrate that short-term objectives may automatically activate the long-term interests, with which they interfere, thereby counteracting their own influence. Moreover, they could show that this low-level form of self-control is a function of how important the goal is to the individual and how successful the person is at self-regulation in the given domain. Thus, in Study 5, following the suggestions of Fishbach and colleagues, we assessed subjective goal importance and self-regulatory success for interdependent objectives. We predicted that individuals who attributed high importance to interdependent objectives and who reported being very successful at attaining them (High-Interdependents) would automatically activate an interdependent self-construal in the presence of refusal-goal cues, whereas individuals who don’t value interdependence as a high-priority goal and who are not that successful at attaining interdependent objectives (Low-Interdependents) would automatically activate a situationally congruent self-construal in the presence of refusal-goal cues, namely, one of independence. In sum, the aim of Study 5 was to go beyond gender as a proxy for chronic differences in goal structures and, instead, assess and classify participants in a more direct fashion.

Method

Overview

At the beginning of the experimental session, participants completed a questionnaire assessing subjective goal importance and self-regulatory success for interdependence. Later in the experimental session, participants were primed either with refusal-constructs or with no particular goal (control condition) as in the prior studies. Next, they were administered the Framed Line Task and the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale (previously used in Study 3 and Study 1, respectively). In sum, the design for Study 5 was a 2 Priming (refusal-goal vs.
no particular goal) by Interdependence (high vs. low) design, with both factors as between participants factors.

**Participants**

Thirty-nine female and 40 male students of the University of Bremen majoring in disciplines other than psychology were recruited as participants. As in the previous studies, they were contacted via phone and asked to take part in an experimental session consisting of a number of unrelated studies. Again, they were compensated for the approximately two-hour experimental session with Euro 20 (about US$ 24 at the time).

**Apparatus and Materials**

The experimental room was the same as the one used in Studies 1 - 3, with two IBM-compatible computers facing in opposite directions.

**Subjective Goal Importance and Self-Regulatory Success for Interdependence**

This paper-and-pencil questionnaire was adapted from the one used in the pretest and was designed to assess participants’ subjective value attributed to, and perceived self-regulatory success for, interdependent objectives. More specifically, they were presented two interdependent objectives (*being responsive to the needs of others* and *maintaining close, harmonic relationships with others*) and asked to indicate a) how important these objectives were to them, and b) how well they succeeded at attaining them, on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*). In order to disguise the true nature of this measure, these items were embedded in a questionnaire with seven additional objectives, which were not further analyzed.

**Priming Task**

The same suboptimal priming procedure was used as in the previous studies to manipulate the accessibility of a refusal-goal or no particular goal.

**Framed Line Task**
The FLT was the same as that used in Study 3. Thus, all participants were presented with a detailed instruction sheet, including a sample item, and then given as much time as necessary to draw lines in squares B that, as much as possible, resembled the original lines in squares A, not in absolute length but in their proportions to the context around them. It will be recalled that a context-sensitive processing style is expected to facilitate accuracy in the FLT. Thus, High-Interdependents primed with a refusal-goal were expected to perform better at the FLT, whereas refusal-primed Low-Interdependents were expected to perform worse, in comparison with their respective control groups.

**Inclusion of Others in the Self Scale**

The IOS was the same as in Study 1. Again, participants were asked to choose the pair of circles that best reflected the distance they perceived between themselves and people who were important to them. We expected refusal-primed Low-Interdependents to choose more distant circles whereas refusal-primed High-Interdependents were expected to choose more overlapping circles, compared to participants who were primed with control concepts.

**Procedure**

In most relevant respects, the procedure of Study 5 resembled that of the previous studies. However, at the beginning of the experimental session, participants were asked to complete a number of various self-assessments, among them the questionnaire assessing subjective goal importance and effective self-regulation for interdependent objectives. Following this self-assessment block, participants took part in three studies unrelated to the present research, with a total duration of approximately 45 minutes. Then, participants completed the priming procedure as in Studies 1 - 4. Next, and again in two ostensibly unrelated studies, participants were administered the FLT and the IOS. Finally, they were probed for suspicion, debriefed, thanked, and invited to ask any remaining questions about the study.
Results and Discussion

Subjective Goal Importance and Self-Regulatory Success of Interdependent Objectives

The mean ratings for subjective importance and self-regulatory success for interdependent objectives were correlated ($r = .52, p = .000$), and were therefore collapsed into a single compound variable of importance and perceived success. As expected, female and male participants differed significantly for this compound variable, $M_{women} = 4.32$ ($SD = .48$) vs. $M_{men} = 3.95$ ($SD = .59$), $t(78) = 3.06$, $p < .002$, one-tailed. Next, we classified participants as high versus low on interdependence, by calculating cut points for the 33rd and 66th percentiles. Participants with a mean importance/perceived success rating of equal to or less than 4.0 were among the bottom 33 percentiles and will from now on be referred to as Low-Interdependents ($N = 34$); participants who had an average rating of 4.5 or higher made up the top 33 percentiles and will from now on be referred to as High-Interdependents ($N = 31$). The data of all other participants were omitted from further analysis. The gender distribution for Low-Interdependents was 12 female and 22 male participants, whereas for High-Interdependents it was 22 female and 10 male participants.

Framed Line Task

Just as in Study 3, for the Framed Line Task the error in mm (absolute length) between the lines drawn by the participant and the lines that would have correctly portrayed the required proportions was measured and added up for each participant and subtracted from 150 mm. Thus, higher scores reflected a higher degree of accuracy in the FLT.

It will be recalled that, in parallel to the predictions of Study 3, refusal-goal primed Low-Interdependents were expected to be less accurate on the FLT, whereas refusal-goal primed High-Interdependents were expected to be more accurate compared with the respective control groups. To test these assumptions, FLT accuracy scores were submitted to an ANOVA with priming condition and self-reported interdependence as between participants factors. The data displayed in Table 9 confirm our predictions: Refusal-goal primed Low-
Interdependents performed less accurately in the FLT compared to their control group, $M_{\text{refusal}} = 129$, $SD = 12$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 133$, $SD = 7$. Moreover, we find the reverse pattern for High-Interdependents: Refusal-goal primed High-Interdependents are more accurate at drawing the exact proportions in the FLT: $M_{\text{refusal}} = 133$, $SD = 10$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 125$, $SD = 9$. As predicted, this priming by interdependence interaction was significant; $F(1, 59) = 7.72$, $p = .007$, none of the main effects were significant (all $p$s > .3).

Table 9

*Study 5: Mean Accuracy Rates for the Framed Line Task as a Function of the Priming Condition and Self-Reported Interdependence (SD in Parentheses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-Interdependent</td>
<td>129 (12)</td>
<td>133 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Interdependent</td>
<td>133 (10)</td>
<td>125 (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher values indicate higher degree of accuracy.

Simple main effects analysis further revealed that Low-Interdependents and High-Interdependents differed in the control condition, $F(1, 59) = 6.49$, $p < .007$, and marginally in the refusal priming condition, $F(1, 59) = 1.96$, $p < .084$. Moreover, priming condition had a reliable effect on High-Interdependents, $F(1, 59) = 6.98$, $p < .006$, but only a marginal effect on Low-Interdependents, $F(1, 59) = 1.60$, $p < .10$; all one-tailed.

**Inclusion of Others in the Self Scale**

Unfortunately, due to a mistake in copying the experimental materials, only 43 of the 79 participants completed this measure, of which 17 were among the participants classified as High-Interdependents and 17 among those classified as Low-Interdependents. The gender distribution was 7 female and 11 male participants for the remaining Low-Interdependents and 10 female and 6 male participants for the remaining High-Interdependents.

It will be recalled that, in parallel to Study 1 we predicted that refusal-goal primed Low-Interdependents would be less likely to choose overlapping circles to depict the distance
they perceived between themselves and significant others, compared with Low-Interdependents in the control group. In sharp contrast, we believed that refusal-goal primed High-Interdependents would choose circles that overlapped to a greater degree compared to High-Interdependents in the control group. Again, the circle pairs were coded from 1 to 7 such that higher values indicated a choice of more overlapping circles. These data were submitted to an ANOVA with priming condition and interdependence as between participants factors and revealed a main effect for both priming condition, $F(1, 33) = 4.99, p < .030$, and interdependence, $F(1, 33) = 23.25, p = .000$. More importantly, however, these main effects were qualified by a significant priming by interdependence interaction, $F(1, 33) = 14.37, p < .001$, indicating that, following refusal-goal priming, High-Interdependents chose circles that overlapped to a larger degree to depict the closeness they perceived between themselves and important others compared to their control group, $M_{\text{refusal}} = 5.78, SD = .97$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 5.25, SD = 1.04$, whereas refusal-goal primed Low-Interdependents selected more distant circles compared to their control counterparts, $M_{\text{refusal}} = 2.86, SD = .69$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 4.90, SD = 1.10$.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Refusal-goal</th>
<th>Control (no goal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-Interdependent</td>
<td>2.86 (.69)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Interdependent</td>
<td>5.78 (.97)</td>
<td>5.25 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate higher degree of inclusion of significant others.

The priming condition by interdependence interaction was further analyzed using a simple main effects analysis. As predicted, Low- and High-Interdependents differed reliably in the refusal-goal priming condition, $F(1, 33) = 34.97, p = .000$, but not in the control
condition, $F < 1$. Priming condition had a reliable effect on Low-Interdependents, $F (1, 33) = 17.89, p = .000$ but not on High-Interdependents, $F (1, 33) = 1.23, p < .14$; all one-tailed.

The results of Study 5 replicate and extend the findings of the previous studies. To summarize, when a refusal-goal was primed High-Interdependents chose more overlapping circles to depict their closeness with important others and performed better at a task requiring a context-sensitive processing mode (FLT) compared to their respective control group and the opposite pattern was found for Low-Interdependents. These results are consistent with the assumption that refusal priming increases the accessibility of an interdependent self-construal for individuals who value interdependence highly and who are successful at attaining interdependent goals, whereas it yields a situationally congruent self-construal, namely, one of independence, for individuals who do not possess a chronic interdependent goal-structure.

Moreover, the results of Study 5 suggest that the gender differences obtained in our previous studies are influenced by factors that go beyond the biological sex of our participants. Instead, the present data lend support to the hypothesis that women, due to sex-typed socialization practices in Western societies, are on average more likely to value interdependent goals as high priorities in their lives. Moreover, the present data suggest that due to over-learned self-control efforts, individuals who value interdependence highly and who are successful at attaining interdependence goals might automatically activate an interdependent self-construal in situations in which their overriding goals seem threatened.
General Discussion

Summary of the Results Obtained in Studies 1 - 5

The objective of the present proposal was to enhance the understanding of automatic self-regulation processes facilitating the pursuit of high-priority goals acquired through socialization, in this case goals of independence and interdependence. We have argued that in Western societies, even today, women are more likely to be socialized with interdependent values (e.g., *Be responsive to the needs of others!*), whereas men are more likely to be reinforced for independent behaviors and attitudes (e.g., *Be a man about it! Stand up for your rights and preferences!*). In refusal-situations, in which one’s own preferences are pitted against those of others, these differences in socialization are expected to yield very different imperatives of what it means to be a socially accepted person, namely, “Don’t say ‘no’!” for women vs. “Say ‘no’!” for men. Due to over-rehearsed socialization experiences, we predict that priming a refusal-goal should automatically activate an interdependent self-construal in women but an independent self-construal in men (Fishbach et al., 2003), influencing what they think about themselves and the world around them and, also, how they think. The data we have obtained in 5 studies support these assumptions. In more detail, we could show that in the presence of refusal-cues, women tended to be more likely to include important others in their self-concept and to describe themselves with more interdependent than independent attributes in a self-categorization task (both Study 1), to describe themselves as more field-dependent (Study 2), and to report being less assertive in refusal-situations (Study 4, original items), whereas we found the opposite pattern for men, compared to their respective control participants. Moreover, Studies 2 and 3 converged to demonstrate that refusal priming also influences the processing styles of the two gender groups differentially, rendering women more context-sensitive whereas men tended to be more context-independent. Notably, we could show this effect on two very different semantic free tasks, benefiting from a context-
free and context-sensitive thinking style, respectively, and thus could rule out an alternative explanation that individuals with an independent self-construal will try harder and therefore perform better on any given task. The meta-analyses conducted provided further evidence that priming condition had the predicted effects on both sexes, rendering refusal-primed women more interdependent and refusal-primed men more independent. Moreover, Study 4 also showed that gender-related behavior is highly context-dependent. The gender differences obtained in Study 4 were specific to contexts in which refusal-behavior may threaten harmony with significant others. In contrast, in contexts in which refusing unwanted requests is compatible with the goal of interdependence (in our case for childrearing practices), no treatment effects were observed. This data pattern suggests that gender differences observed in refusal-behavior may be attributable not so much to a general inability to refuse in women but rather that refusal behavior is multiply determined and highly context-dependent (to be discussed in more detail in the following section on implications for gender research). Further evidence for this notion was obtained in Study 5, in which the study design went beyond gender as a proxy for chronic differences in interdependence and independence by classifying participants as high or low on interdependence, according to self-reported goal-importance and perceived success in this domain. Here, too, the data pattern of the previous studies was replicated, demonstrating that refusal-goal priming activated an interdependent self-construal in High-Interdependents but an independent self-construal in Low-Interdependents, suggesting that the gender differences obtained in our previous studies are influenced by factors that go beyond the biological sex of our participants.

**When Refusal priming Leads to Acquiescence - Contrast or Assimilation Effect?**

In the present research, priming men and Low-Interdependents with independence related constructs (such as *setting boundaries, expressing own wishes, being straightforward*)
yielded situationally congruent judgments and behaviors; that is these groups demonstrated a more independent processing style and assimilated their judgments towards the denotative and connotative aspects of an independence goal. This is consistent with what cognitive network models (e.g., Higgins, 1996; Higgins, Bargh, & Lombardi, 1985; Wyer & Srull, 1980; 1981) would predict. Priming women and High-Interdependents with the very same primes, however, resulted in the opposite data pattern, yielding behaviors and judgments consistent with an interdependent goal. Thus, on an effect level, we have obtained an assimilation effect for men and a contrast effect for women, following refusal priming. However, on a process level, we believe that both patterns are attributable to assimilation effects. The underlying logic of this assumption will be explained after the following brief review on the literature on priming concerning boundary conditions of assimilation and contrast.

In the past four decades, numerous boundary conditions have been identified to predict whether to expect assimilation or contrast effects. For example, contrast effects occur when participants judge the primed information to be inappropriate or undesirable for the task at hand and consciously or unconsciously avoid using the prime or correct their responses for its assumed influence (e.g., Petty & Wegener, 1993). If individuals overestimate the influence of a potential bias, contrast effects occur because individuals overcorrect (Strack, 1992). Given that participants were unaware of the presence of the primes in the current studies, we can exclude the possibility of a correction effect. However, more recent findings show that participants may also use the primed information as a standard and unconsciously contrast away from the prime (anchoring effect; Decoster & Claypool, 2004; see Förster & Liberman, in press). Research on the latter suggests that contrast is more likely to occur when participants are primed with an exemplar rather than with a trait (Stapel & Blanton, 2004; Stapel, Koomen, & Van der Pligt, 1997); when responses are assessed with subjective rather than objective scales (Mussweiler & Strack, 2000); when participants are primed with close (Stapel & Koomen, 2000; 2001; Stapel & Suls, 2004) or similar comparison standards
(Mussweiler & Bodenhausen, 2002); when participants are in a comparison rather than in an interpretation mind set (Stapel and Koomen; 2001); and when participants engage in dissimilarity rather than similarity search (Strack & Mussweiler, 1997; Mussweiler & Strack, 1999; 2000; Mussweiler & Bodenhausen, 2002; Mussweiler, 2003; see Förster, Kuschel, & Liberman, in preparation, for a more detailed discussion). Conceivably, the above-mentioned conditions should apply equally for all groups in our studies and, thus, can be ruled out as potential mediators for the obtained interaction effects. However, another factor influencing assimilation and contrast is the extremity of primes, with extreme primes leading to contrast and moderate primes yielding assimilation effects (Herr, 1986; Herr, Scherman; & Fazio; 1983; Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2004; Stapel & Blanton, 2004). Thus, one might argue that the refusal primes employed in our present studies constitute a standard of comparison for the trait of independence, which might be moderate for most men (therefore engendering assimilation) but extreme for most women (therefore engendering contrast). While we cannot entirely rule out this possibility with the present data, we believe it to be an unlikely explanation for the obtained findings for the following reasons: a) All primes were presented outside of participants’ awareness and did not constitute exemplars. In more detail, to the best of our knowledge, there have only been two papers to date explicitly investigating subliminal priming of standards of comparison (Mussweiler et al., 2004; Stapel and Blanton; 2004). The findings of Mussweiler and colleagues suggest that subliminal standards of comparison are only effective when participants are asked to actively engage in self-reflection during standard exposure, which was not the case for the present studies. In Stapel and Blanton’s research, contrast effects were only obtained for extreme standards when the information was primed as an exemplar but assimilation occurred when standards were primed as trait information. Given that our primes did not constitute exemplars, we would not expect contrast effects for women in the refusal condition; b) refusal priming yielded gendered interaction effects not only for subjective scales but also for task performance in the EFT and FLT. To the best of our
knowledge, to date contrast effects on procedural task has never been shown for subliminal priming; and c) we did not obtain treatment effects for domains in which refusal-behavior does not jeopardize close relationships (childrearing in Study 4), which suggests that the effects obtained include a motivational component rather than being exclusively due to accessible refusal behavior knowledge made available through an extreme standard.

Instead, we argue that refusal-primed women/High-Interdependents, too, demonstrate an assimilation effect on the process level. More specifically, we believe that our priming procedure unconsciously activates a refusal-goal, which may be experienced as threatening to highly interdependent persons. Due to over-rehearsed self-control efforts in refusal situations, we assume that women and High-Interdependents automatically activate an interdependent self-construal and responses are assimilated to the implications of this self-view. The data obtained is consistent with this assumption.

Possible Implications for Gender Research

Are the two sexes really different? And if so, why? Despite the fact that researchers have been fascinated with sex differences and similarities since the very beginnings of formalized psychology around 1879 (Hollingworth, 1918; Shields, 1975; Thorndike, 1914; Wooley, 1914; all found in Hyde, 2005), satisfactory answers have yet to be found (e.g., Deaux & Major, 1987). Many investigators have argued that women and men are essentially similar and that gender differences are small relative to individual variation within gender groups (e.g., Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Hyde, 2005). Others have proposed sizeable and stable differences (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Gray, 1992; Summers, 2005).

Recent research on the phenomenon of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) has demonstrated that gender differences can be influenced by subtle contextual cues (Brown & Josephs, 1999; Quinn & Spencer, 2001; Seibt & Foerster, 2004; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Walsh, Hickey, & Duffy, 1999). In a similar vein, several gender meta-analyses
(Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Eagly & Crowley, 1986; LaFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003) found that the magnitude and even the direction of gender differences depends on the context.

In sum, research on gender differences has presented a formidable challenge for theorists:

“Those who predict stable sex differences have had trouble accounting for the often limited ability of sex to predict behavior and for a variability that sometimes appears random. Those who argue that there are no stable sex differences, on the other hand, have had difficulty explaining widespread male-female differences in the culture at large. In short, researchers attempting to document and replicate sex differences have often found them elusive, a case of “now you see them, now you don’t.” (Deaux & Major, 1987, p. 369).

Beyond the Differences vs. Similarity Model

The present research, too, demonstrates that gender-linked behaviors are multiply determined and highly context-dependent. To reiterate, control participants either did not evidence reliable gender differences and, in some cases, women in the control group even demonstrated more independent behavior than their male counterparts. However, this data pattern for the most part reversed dramatically when refusal cues were present, increasing interdependence for women and independence for men. Moreover, these effects seem to be specific to contexts in which refusal-behavior may threaten harmony with significant others. In contrast, in contexts in which refusing unwanted requests is compatible with the goal of interdependence (in our case for childrearing practices), no treatment effects were observed. Thus, instead of reflecting overall differences in refusal ability, the observed gender differences are more likely to be a function of situational features and of how central and well-differentiated interdependence goals are for the individual. This notion was further supported by Study 5, in which refusal-goal priming activated an interdependent self-construal in High-Interdependents but a situationally congruent independent self-construal in
Low-Interdependents, suggesting that the gender differences obtained in our previous studies are influenced by factors that go beyond the biological sex of our participants.

In sum, our research may contribute a puzzle piece in the ongoing debate on gender differences. Rather than regarding gender differences as largely non-existent or considering the two sexes as fundamentally different we assume that the two genders have a similar potential for most social behaviors but that these behaviors may differ widely as a function of personal choice, socialization history, and the situational context (compare with the interactive model of gender-related behavior, Deaux & Major, 1987). In order to better predict when to expect gender differences and when not, it might be useful to investigate in more detail which contextual cues automatically activate gendered self-construals (for a related discussion, see Kühnen et al., 2001a). The present data offers initial evidence and pointers for future research in this matter. This may also permit the design of more adequate interventions for assertiveness trainings, as discussed in the following section.

**Possible Implications for Assertiveness Trainings**

For the sake of ruling out possible demand effects and to demonstrate the automatic nature of the links between refusal-goals and gendered self-construals, we used a suboptimal priming procedure in the present research. Therefore, the present results should be generalized to real life settings only with caution. However, we believe that the present data could have important implications for assertiveness trainings in clinical settings as well as in interdependent societies.

**Traditional Assertiveness Interventions Might be Less Effective For Highly Interdependent Individuals**

In the majority of assertiveness trainings currently conducted in Western countries (see training manuals of Alberti & Emmons, 1994; Schneider, 1994; Seifert, 1996; Ullrich & De Muynck, 2004) trainees are introduced to an independent view on assertiveness, in which they
are encouraged to see themselves as autonomous beings who are entitled to consider their own needs first and are trained to make and implement their choices according to their own preferences and convictions. To illustrate, in role-plays participants usually learn how to assert themselves in socially difficult situations, such as speaking up to an overbearing boss; setting limits to intrusive friends; or gaining a better sense of healthy boundaries with demanding family members. They are encouraged to use "I" statements as a way of expressing feelings and reactions. When saying “no”, they are instructed to state their refusal directly, without the need of apologizing or finding excuses. Moreover, they are asked to underscore their refusal choice with the corresponding nonverbal behavior, such as an upright posture, steady eye-contact, and a firm voice (see training manuals of Alberti & Emmons, 1994; Schneider, 1994; Seifert, 1996; Ullrich & De Muynck, 2004).

For individuals who attend assertiveness sessions because they lack knowledge of or practice with these skills, such trainings are likely to be very effective. However, for individuals who do not assert themselves primarily due to an interdependent enculturation, results might be quite different. To illustrate, the Assertiveness Training Program (ATP) of Ullrich & De Muynck suggests initial exercises such as dealing with a gossipy neighbor who interrupts during dinner. The ATP authors encourage participants to curtly say: “Ms. X., I am just having dinner and do not want to be disturbed. Good-bye”. If the neighbor still wants to keep on chatting, participants are instructed to say: “I’m not interested in what you have to say about others or about me. Please understand that once and for all” and to then simply shut the door (1978, p. 49). While the manual does explain that this somewhat abrupt interaction style is not recommended for later stages, it does contest that emotional distancing from friends, acquaintances, and relatives is a necessary intermediate step for breaking unassertive patterns and social dependency. The present research, however, suggests that for highly interdependent individuals, these measures may (initially) threaten high-priority goals and, therefore, lead to ironic effects. That is, by framing refusal-interventions in terms of independent self-views and
suggesting exercises that are likely to threaten harmony with significant others, such assertiveness trainings might increase the accessibility of interdependent self-construals in their trainees even further, and, thereby, possibly engender increased context sensitivity and behavior that is congruent with interdependent self-knowledge. It is quite possible, then, that extremely interdependent persons may profit less from these trainings, they might perceive themselves as less competent during assertiveness exercises, and perhaps even drop out of these courses prematurely. Often this behavior is interpreted as a lack of motivation. However, in the light of the present findings, this “resistance” to the therapeutic interventions might occur on a non-conscious level in order to shield high priority goals.

In the following, we will review some findings pointing to the need for adapting assertiveness trainings to persons with chronically interdependent self-views. First, we will discuss the need to address women’s interdependence concerns, with a special focus on designing interventions to prevent STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and coercive sexual behaviors. Second, we will discuss foreseeable challenges when introducing Western assertiveness trainings to interdependent cultures.

Possible Health Risks Associated with Women’s Interdependence Orientation

In female college student survey samples (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Lewin, 1979; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Neal & Mangis, 1995), 30 % - 50% reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact, which is defined as one partner being induced to acquiesce against her (his) will by psychological pressures from the would-be lover but without the use of physical force. Lewin (1985) attempted to investigate determinants of this phenomenon by providing female participants with a video-cued date scenario in which a handsome young man wants to initiate sexual contact. Participants were asked to imagine that they were this man’s date and that they did not feel ready to accept a sexual relationship with him. In the video cue, the man says:
“It’s really nice to be alone with you. You seem to care about all the things I want to talk to you about. (…) But why is it we never express our physical feelings for one another? That really gets to me. That’s the one problem we have. Jesus! Don’t you realize that I do love you? (…) Well, OK, if you want to sit over there, I’m coming over there too, and we’re going to carry on. That’s all there is to it” (p. 186).

At this point, the videotape stops and participants are asked to imagine that they either agree or refuse to have intercourse and to rate how they and the man would probably feel in those scenarios. For both scenarios, female respondents predicted that the woman would experience predominantly negative emotions. Remarkably, the item that received the highest percentage of agreement was that “the woman would be concerned that she hurt the man’s feelings” if she didn’t acquiesce to have sex with him. Moreover, Lewin conducted a hedonic cost-benefit analysis, as proposed by exchange theorists, revealing

“that the lowest ratio of negative to positive feelings results if the woman accepts. If the woman includes the man’s feelings in her hedonic calculus, the cost-benefit superiority of accepting becomes enormous in spite of the fact that the woman’s own feelings about accepting are predominantly negative. The cost-benefit analysis gives us an important insight into the genesis of unwanted intercourse” (p. 187).

This finding is also in line with more recent research by Rickert and colleagues (2002) who came to the conclusion that many sexually active women perceive that they do not have the right to communicate or control aspects of their sexual behavior. This is even more troubling given that male-to-female intercourse is a significant and growing route of HIV transmission among women (CDC, 2004). Disturbingly, STD prevention programs traditionally do not take gender differences into account. To illustrate, sexual risk behavior, such as not using a condom, is often regarded as the same behavior for women and men. However, condom use requires distinctly different behaviors for the two sexes. For males, the behavior is putting a condom on; for females, the behavior is convincing the partner to wear a condom, or, otherwise, refusing to have sex with this partner.

In addition to sexual intercourse, interdependent self-views might also put females at risk for other channels of HIV transmission, such as needle sharing. Notably, needle sharing is a social behavior and usually implies or reflects social ties between drug users and is therefore
usually attributed with social meaning (Mauss, 1967; Cheal, 1988). Barnard (1993) reported that some injectors found it difficult to refuse requests for lending injecting equipment without causing offence (McKeganey, 1990). Moreover, participant interviews revealed that refusing offers from others to make use of their non-sterile needle and syringe could be taken to imply a wide array of negative feelings about the relationship in question. Among friends it could imply that the other person was dirty or even HIV-infected. Among sexual partners it could imply a lack of trust and the “unwelcome assertion of separateness”. Barnard (1993) concluded that needle sharing patterns are influenced by gender, which might put women injectors at increased risk of HIV transmission relative to their male counterparts.

In sum, the behaviors involved in HIV transmission discussed above are interpersonal and occur within social interactions. As such, they depend on the ability to withstand peer pressure, to refuse unwanted proposals, to resist coercions, or to negotiate safety (St. Lawrence et al., 1995). Notably, most approaches of the past have neglected gender dynamics and sex differences in the various components of risky behavior. Consequently many researchers have called for the development of more effective programs considering gender and cultural appropriate models (e.g., Amaro, 1995; Jones, Mills, Francis, and Sterk, 2002; St. Lawrence et al., 1995, 1997; Pequegnat & Stover, 1999; Rickert et al., 2002). Amaro (1995) in particular, emphasizes the need for tailoring interventions to suit women’s interdependence concerns:

“A new model of HIV sexual risk reduction that recognizes connection as a central feature in women’s lives suggests that to better understand risk behavior and risk reduction, psychologists must examine factors such as the following: (a) the centrality of connection to others as a core aspect of self, (b) the degree to which conflict in relationships (especially conflict related to safer sex negotiation) and fear of disconnection is threatening to women, (c) the degree of mutuality in the relationship with the male partner, (d) skills and comfort in dealing with conflict, and (e) the degree to which pregnancy and childbearing are perceived as avenues for further connecting with male partners.” (p. 445)
Challenges when Introducing Western Assertiveness Trainings to Interdependent Societies

Assertiveness training programs suit Western individualistic societies where the individual is seen as an independent and legitimate entity that can claim a right to personal choice and self-expression (Gambrill, 2002). In most interdependent societies, however, assertiveness is considered as a rude, selfish, or even aggressive behavior (Brislin, 1990; Dwairy & Van Sickle, 1996; Sue & Sue, 1990), given that it negates core norms and values that put the needs of the collective over those of the individual. Interdependent societies are founded on the duties rather than on the rights of the individual. Or as Cheng (1990) put it:

“In such social order, there is no need for the individual to claim, defend, or justify his rights, as the concept of rights simply does not exist. Consequently, the value of assertion as an indispensable means of securing one’s rights correspondingly diminishes” (p. 513).

When people in predominantly interdependent cultures do communicate refusal intentions, they will strive for ways that do not threaten the face wants of the refused and that maintain the relationship, as described, for example, by Adachi (1997) for the Japanese:

“Fundamental social structures make the Japanese language an other controlled and other-controlling language (McCraery). Japanese is often cited as an ‘indirect language,’” unlike English, which is a self-controlled language. Indirectness is not only important but in fact critical for Japanese people in order to maintain harmony and/or save face. Even though the Japanese have strong opinions, views, and issues on a topic, they usually avoid stating them directly, preferring to use roundabout phrases and softened statements” (Adachi, 1997, p. 21; for similar observations see Aoki, 1990 and Ishii, 1987, both found in Niikura, 1999).

Some of these indirect ways are described by Keiko Ueda (1974) in “Sixteen ways the Japanese Avoid Saying No”, including the use of silence, counter questions, tangential responses, “Yes but …” responses, delaying answers (e.g., “We will write you a letter.”), or making excuses. Individuals with an independent self-construal often experience difficulty understanding signals that indicate interdependent “nos”, a phenomenon also described by Whittington (1998): In his contingent valuation survey conducted in Semarang, Indonesia (Whittington, Davis, Miarsono, & Pollard, 1995), Whittington was surprised to find that
respondents invariably were answering “yes” to all his valuation questions - until his Indonesian interviewers informed him that respondents were in fact answering “yes but…” and then giving many different qualifications for their answers, such as “I need others’ opinion about the program”, or “I agree but the current situation is satisfactory”, or “I can pay but I want to avoid rumors about my wealth” – all of which are polite ways of saying “no” in Indonesia. Adachi (1997) concludes that many interdependent “no” nuances are very difficult to show and to explain sentence by sentence without an entire discourse and a context. In fact, many examples may not make any sense when they are translated into English or may even appear funny in a Western context, such as the following rejection letter sent to a British author who had submitted a paper to a Chinese journal:

“We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper it would be impossible for us to publish any work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that, in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity.” (Sociologists for Women in Society Network, 1982, found in Izraeli & Jick, 1986, p.171)

In sum, interdependent persons put a stronger emphasis on fulfilling obligations than on asserting personal rights. When they do express refusal intentions, they are more likely to do so in indirect terms or to soften the content of their messages. Nevertheless, there have been a number of attempts at introducing assertiveness trainings, originally developed to serve the needs of individualistic societies, to more interdependent societies (e.g., Ministry of Education, Israel, 1996; Shimizu, Mizoue, Kubota, Mishima, & Nagata, 2003). Dwairy (2004), for example, reported Israeli initiatives of simply translating assertiveness programs developed in the West into Arabic and implementing them in Palestinian schools. Dwairy raised his concern that teaching Palestinian students assertiveness as it is practiced in the West contradicts core values they have been raised with, such as obedience and respect towards their elders. This will inevitably confuse students and ultimately lead to confrontation with the
familial and cultural system and expose students to rejection and even corporal punishment (Daa’bool, 2002, found in Dwairy, 2004).

Another example of the perhaps limited use of Western assertiveness programs for highly interdependent individuals can be found in the pilot study of Shimizu and colleagues (2003). The authors introduced the AsT, an assertiveness training developed in the UK by Anne Dickson, to Japanese nurses in order to reduce burnout. On the majority of employed dependent measures, the authors didn’t find evidence for the predicted treatment effects; on some dimensions, such as emotional exhaustion, participants in the experimental group even tended to report more symptoms. Moreover, overall response rates of the self-administered dependent variables were low, which some participants later explained with feeling uncomfortable answering these questions. While there also exist a number of assertiveness trainings conducted in Western contexts that have not proven to be effective (e.g., Kim, McLeod, Shantzis, 1989), one reason for the limited effects may be due to a basic mismatch of training contents and core Japanese values, as the authors note:

“[Assertiveness trainings] promote equality in human relationships, enabling us to act in own bet interests, to stand up for ourselves without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, and to exercise personal rights without abusing human rights, although some Japanese people tend to misconstrue assertiveness as being merely selfish or aggressive behavior” (p. 187).

Framing Assertiveness Interventions to Address Interdependence Concerns

In sum, our present findings are consistent with observations reported in the assertiveness literature for women and interdependent societies, calling for interventions that take core values of highly interdependent persons into account. How might such interventions look like? Again, goal systems theory offers promising pointers for future assertiveness research and will be discussed next.

Studies on goal shielding revealed that the degree of automatic inhibition of alternative goals depends, in part, on the relation between the various goals (Shah et al., 2002). That is,
inter-goal inhibition is greater when the various goals apply to the same situation but imply different behavioral strategies; in a refusal-situation, an individual may simultaneously wish to pursue two different goals: being respondent to the wishes of others, and being true to his or her own preferences. It will be recalled that this was the case for Laura, the protagonist in the introduction of this proposal, who wanted to relax with her favorite TV show but also felt obliged to be available for her friend in distress; thus goal systems theory would predict that inter-goal inhibition is likely to occur. In contrast, goal shielding is lessened when the alternative goals facilitate each other (Shah et al., 2002). Applied to intervention programs, trainers could employ the therapeutic technique of *reframing* to increase the impact of their intervention by encouraging interdependent trainees to see assertive behavior and their desire for close, meaningful relationships as facilitating each other in the pursuit of the same overarching goal.

To date, only few initiatives of this sort have been reported in the assertiveness literature. For example, Kahle (2005) reminds participants that every “yes” they give also implies a “no” to other things that could be important to them, such as having time to improve the relations in their life that really matter. Deering (1996) reframes refusal behavior as a gift when encouraging nurses to be more assertive with patients, colleagues, and family members:

“Many people believe that saying no is selfish. But actually, saying no may be the best gift we can give other people if we want to maintain good relationships with them. This is because the consequence of not saying no may be anger and resentment toward the person making the request” (p. 63).

For the interdependent societies such as Palestinian-Arab citizens living in Israel, Dwairy (2004) recommends including what is highly important in these cultures, namely the social surrounding. By involving teachers, parents, and community leaders when implementing assertiveness trainings the threat to the sociocultural system could be reduced. Also, one might refer to socially accepted role models such as Prophet Muhammad, whose sayings (suni) at times demonstrate assertiveness “a’utloboo tagidoo, I’qra’oo yuftah lakum”
When teaching assertiveness to Puerto Rican women, Comas-Diaz and Duncan (1985) were concerned that participants would be reluctant to adopt assertive behaviors or would discount assertive response strategies because they were in conflict with the cultural norms and values of their clientele. Thus, the authors encouraged participants to explicitly acknowledge cultural norms when addressing senior persons (e.g., “With all the respect that you deserve, I feel/believe…”); to frame their assertive responses in interdependent terms (e.g., “It is important for me to express my feelings and opinions. This will make me less nervous and better able to help out my children. If I am nervous, I will not be useful to my family”); to acknowledge duties towards the family network (e.g., “I want to help you and I understand that I have a duty as your relative to help you. I want to help you de buena gana (in good faith) but right now I can’t. I will be glad to help you out in the future if you ask me again.”)

To summarize, our present findings suggest that referring people like Laura to traditional “Just say ‘no’” type assertiveness trainings could be counter productive. Instead, it might be more effective when working with her to frame the need of putting her own needs first with interdependent values. For example, the facilitator could explore with Laura that sincere refusals are important for close relationships for the following reasons: a) Julie might feel more comfortable asking for help if she can trust on Laura expressing her boundaries; knowing that Laura would tell her if her visit is inconvenient, she could full-heartedly accept her friend’s kind offer without undue anxiety about being a burden; b) if Laura constantly puts her own needs on the back-burner, chances are that she will build up resentment, which in the end might even damage her friendship with Julie more than an honest refusal; c) to be an effective helper, one has to take care of ones own needs first. Using an airplane emergency analogy, one first has to put an oxygen mask on oneself and then help other passengers
needing assistance -- a burnt out helper is of no good to anyone, so the best thing Laura can do for others is to take good care of herself first. Moreover, the present research suggests that it might be more effective to instruct Laura to express her refusal in ways that aim at maintaining the relationship, instead of the rather abrupt communication style suggested by assertiveness trainers such as Ullrich & Ullrich (1978).

**Implications for the Business Context**

With increasing globalization, the workforce in many companies is becoming more and more diverse. Clearly, then, it is paramount for organizational success that employees understand the behavior patterns of customers, colleagues, superiors, or subordinates who have been socialized in other cultural contexts. A failure to do so can become costly. For example, according to Tung (1981, 1984), 25% to 40% of all expatriate managers from the United States sent to a foreign assignment have failed, due to a lack of cultural adjustment. Besides lost productivity, the cost to a company for each failure runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars (O'Boyle 1989). Consequently, organizations are increasingly devoting significant resources to diversity initiatives. According to Hansen (2003), organizations in the US spend $ 8 Billion annually on diversity training to help employees understand both the origin of their own behavior and the congruence of their behavior with that of individuals who are from a different (sub-)culture (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou 1991, Internationalization 1989).

Arguably, one vital skill at the workplace is refusal behavior. Frequently one will face requests by customers, colleagues, staff, or by one’s boss that one does not want to or cannot fulfill (Baum, 2003). As Izraeli & Jick (1986) observe, this might even be more relevant in times of relative economic scarcity requiring organizational retrenchment and when growth of participative management increases perceived entitlement.
“Both conditions lead to a negative shift in the ratio of those to whom the organization says 'yes' to those to whom it says 'no'. Unless organizations can legitimize such 'deprivations' and help members accept failure, they run the risk of resentment and disengagement among their labour force (Kanter 1977)” (p. 172).

When attempting to influence interaction partners at the workplace to want less, to delay gratification or, in any case, to view the refusal as rational and equitable, organizations would be well advised to take cultural differences into account. For example, our findings in Study 4 suggest that it might be helpful for highly interdependent members in Western organizations to assert themselves by receiving a very clear definition of their role at the workplace; i.e., one might discuss with employees socialized in an interdependent context that direct refusal messages are necessary and desired and may help them achieve greater role fulfillment and role-maintenance in Western work contexts. Moreover, they could be instructed that in many work related situations in Western countries, it is advantageous to display independent behaviors. Research on hiring and promotion decisions has shown, for example that typically independent behaviors such as being proud of one’s accomplishments, pointing out one's strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements correlates with professional advancement (e.g., Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992; Stevens & Kristof, 1995).

However, other lines of research suggest that adopting independent behaviors at the workplace might be more effective for males coming from interdependent cultures than for Western women. Several studies suggest that especially in the work context women are likely to be penalized when displaying the same behavior as their male colleagues: “General stereotypes about women appear to be deeply rooted, widely shared, and remarkably resistant to change” (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989, p. 339) and women who behave confidently and assertively are rated less favorably than men who demonstrate the same behaviors (e.g. Butler & Geis, 1990; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975; Heilman & Martell, 1986). For example, female managers who adopt a direct, task-oriented
leadership style are perceived more negatively and extremely than their male colleagues (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Likewise, Powers and Zuroff (1988) could demonstrate that assertive women received the highest performance evaluations but were perceived as less likable. And even more related to refusal-behavior, Carli (1990) could show that men are perceived as just as likable whether they agree or disagree with an interaction partner, whereas women are liked less when they disagree. One reason for this might be that women are judged according to a higher standard of interdependence than men and, thus, they may be penalized more severely for not adhering to these standards. This view has also been expressed by Rudman and Glick (1999) who argued that the prescriptiveness of gender stereotypes is asymmetrical, with women being penalized more for showing independent qualities than men are for showing interdependent ones.

In sum, displaying independent qualities, including refusal behavior, may present a double-edged sword for women. In the words of Rudman (1998, p. 639):

“This situation represents a Catch-22 in which women may be discriminated against for failing to counteract gender stereotypes (i.e., for acting “as a woman”) and discriminated against for counteracting gender stereotypes (i.e., for not acting “as a woman should”).

Thus, females may be best advised to be high on both independence and interdependence at the workplace. However, this might require quite a juggling act:

“The prescription to “be feminine” while simultaneously fulfilling independent requisites may be a difficult and demanding balancing act akin to driving over a rough terrain while keeping one hand on the wheel and the other reassuringly on passengers’ backs.” (Rudman & Glick, 1999, p.1008)

Concluding Remarks

We began this proposal by asking ourselves whether acquiescence and refusal behavior have an automatic component. The present data suggest that they do. Our results are in line with previous findings of Fishbach and her colleagues (Fishbach et al., 2003), in which temptation cues automatically activated overriding goals with which they interfered, thereby
canceling out their own influence. The temptation research of Fishbach and her workgroup have focused on hedonic behaviors such as premarital sex, enjoying high calorie chocolate bars, or partying with friends instead of studying. The present research suggests that this low level form of self-control might not be limited to “lead us not into temptation” scenarios; instead we believe this mechanism is valid for any conflict between momentary objectives and high-priority goals.

An intriguing question concerns the malleability of high-priority socialization goals. For example, would successful assertiveness trainings change the automatic activation of interdependent self-construals for women in refusal situations? Future research can hopefully address these and other practical implications of the present proposal.
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## Appendix A: Pre-Survey Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frage</th>
<th>Antwortskala</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen Kreativität?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen kreativ zu sein?</td>
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<td>3. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen handwerkliches Geschick?</td>
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<td>4. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen handwerklich geschickt zu sein?</td>
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<td>5. Wie wichtig sind Ihnen enge, harmonische Beziehungen mit anderen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen enge, harmonische Beziehungen zu anderen aufrecht zu halten?</td>
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<td>7. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen sportlich ausdauernd zu sein?</td>
<td>1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen sportlich ausdauernd zu sein</td>
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<td>9. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen Ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse gegenüber anderen durchzusetzen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen Ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse gegenüber anderen durchzusetzen?</td>
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<td>11. Wie wichtig ist es Ihnen gut in Allgemeinwissen Fragen abzuschneiden?</td>
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<td>12. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen in Allgemeinwissen Fragen gut abzuschneiden?</td>
<td>1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
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<td>13. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen auf die Bedürfnisse von anderen einzugehen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen auf die Bedürfnisse von anderen einzugehen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen sich im Umweltschutz zu engagieren?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen sich im Umweltschutz zu engagieren?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Wie wichtig ist Ihnen von anderen autonom und unabhängig zu sein?</td>
<td>1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Wie gut gelingt es Ihnen von anderen autonom und unabhängig zu sein?</td>
<td>1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
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Appendix B: Priming Procedure Materials

B.1 Refusal-session outline, adapted from Schneider (1994)

Selbstunsichere Personen stellen häufig nicht einmal die selbstverständlichesten Forderungen an andere. Und wenn sie es tun, so entschuldigen sie sich dafür und glauben nicht an deren Erfüllung. Werden sie um etwas gebeten, so sind sie nicht in der Lage, einfach „Nein“ zu sagen, sondern entschuldigen sich, daß es ihnen nicht möglich sei, die Wünsche des anderen zu erfüllen, auch wenn sie es in Wirklichkeit nur nicht tun wollen. Im Gegensatz dazu sind aggressive Personen beim Äußern von Wünschen und Bitten schroff und hart und beim Zurückweisen ärgerlich oder gar feindselig.

Regeln beim „Nein“ sagen:

• klare Botschaft (Nein mit kurzer Begründung)
• keine Ausreden!!!
• Betonung auf Ihre eigene Entscheidung
• keine oder kurze Diskussion, bei Bedarf das Thema selbst beenden.
• Schallplatte mit Sprung (bei hartnäckigen Leuten)
• bei Nichtakzeptieren Ihres „Neins“, Ihren eigenen Arger äußern
• nonverbal
  aufrechte Körperhaltung
  Blickkontakt halten
  feste Stimme

Hilfen beim „Nein“ sagen

!Vorsicht Falle!

• Wenn an Ihr Mitgefühl apelliert wird
• Wenn vom Thema abgelenkt wird
• Wenn Ihnen „objektiv“ nachgewiesen wird, daß Ihr Wunsch nicht richtig ist.
Strength of association was measured with 9-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (“not at all associated”) to 9 (“strongly associated”).

Table B1
*Stimulus Constructs Associated with the Refusal-Session*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulus word</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly associated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freie Entscheidung</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nein-Sagen erlaubt</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direktheit</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nein-Sagen</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nein!</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klarheit</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigene Wünsche äußern</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehrlichkeit</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aufrichtigkeit</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiheit</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standhaft bleiben</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zu sich stehen</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenzen setzen</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weakly associated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreuzung</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verschicke Pakete</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinheit</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geräusche hören</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bein</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sich schonen</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussicht</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abreisen</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berühmtheit</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B.2 Instructions for the Priming Procedure

Liebe TeilnehmerIn,

vielen Dank für Ihr Interesse an unserer Studie! Im Folgenden möchten wir mit Hilfe eines Reaktionstests untersuchen, inwieweit ablenkende Faktoren Ihr Reaktionsvermögen beeinflussen können.

Ihre Aufgabe wird es sein, per Tastendruck zu entscheiden, ob ein präsentierter Lichtblitz auf der linken oder rechten Seite des Bildschirms auftaucht.

Um Ihnen die Aufgabe zu erschweren, werden die Lichtblitze stets an unterschiedlichen Positionen am Bildschirm auftauchen. Da Sie nie wissen werden, auf welcher Seite des Bildschirms der nächste Lichtblitz auftauchen wird, fixieren Sie Ihre Augen bitte über den ganzen Versuch hinweg auf die drei Sternchen in der Mitte des Bildschirms.

Drücken Sie bitte

   die **grüne Taste**, wenn ein Lichtblitz **rechts** von den drei Sternchen auftaucht,
   die **gelbe Taste**, wenn ein Lichtblitz **links** von den drei Sternchen auftaucht.

Reagieren Sie schnell, auch wenn Sie mal einen Fehler machen.
Lassen Sie hierfür bitte während der ganzen Zeit Ihre Finger auf der grünen und roten Taste liegen!

   < weiter mit der schwarzen Taste >
B.3 Priming Stimulus Constructs, Refusal Condition

Note: The number in front of the slash and the stimulus word indicates the order of presentation; the number after the stimulus word and the slash indicates the screen quadrant it was presented in.

1\ Freie Entscheidung \3
2\ Nein-Sagen \2
3\ Klarheit \4
4\ standhaft bleiben \1
5\ Eigene Wünsche äußern \1
6\ Aufrichtigkeit \2
7\ Direktheit \4
8\ Nein-Sagen erlaubt \3
9\ Freie Entscheidung \1
10\ Ehrlichkeit \2
11\ Nein-Sagen \4
12\ Grenzen setzen \2
13\ Klarheit \3
14\ Nein-Sagen \1
15\ standhaft bleiben \2
16\ Eigene Wünsche äußern \4
17\ Nein-Sagen erlaubt \3
18\ Direktheit \1
19\ Nein-Sagen \2
20\ Freie Entscheidung \3
21\ Grenzen setzen \2
22\ Eigene Wünsche äußern \4
23\ Ehrlichkeit \1
24\ Klarheit \1
25\ Freie Entscheidung \4
26\ Aufrichtigkeit \2
27\ Direktheit \3
28\ Grenzen setzen \1
29\ Eigene Wünsche äußern \4
30\ Ehrlichkeit \2
31\ Grenzen setzen \3
32\ Nein-Sagen \1
33\ Freie Entscheidung \4
34\ Nein-Sagen \4
35\ Nein-Sagen erlaubt \1
36\ Direktheit \2
37\ Klarheit \4
38\ Ehrlichkeit \3
39\ standhaft bleiben \1
40\ Aufrichtigkeit \4
41\ Freie Entscheidung \2
42\ Eigene Wünsche äußern \3
43\ Direktheit \1
44 Nein-Sagen
45 Klarheit
46 Nein-Sagen
47 Freiheit
48 standhaft bleiben
49 zu sich stehen
50 Aufrichtigkeit
51 Klarheit
52 Nein-Sagen
53 Freiheit
54 standhaft bleiben
55 zu sich stehen
56 Aufrichtigkeit
57 Freie Entscheidung
58 Nein-Sagen
59 Direktheit
60 Nein-Sagen erlaubt
61 Eigene Wünsche äußern
62 Ehrlichkeit
63 Grenzen setzen
64 Direktheit
65 Nein-Sagen
66 Freiheit
67 standhaft bleiben
68 zu sich stehen
69 Aufrichtigkeit
70 Klarheit
71 Nein-Sagen
72 Freiheit
73 standhaft bleiben
74 zu sich stehen
75 Freie Entscheidung
B.4 Priming Stimulus Constructs, Control Condition

Note: The number in front of the slash and the stimulus word indicates the order of presentation; the number after the stimulus word and the slash indicates the screen quadrant it was presented in.

1\Kreuzung \4
2\Verschicke Pakete \3
3\Reinheit \2
4\Geräusche hören \3
5\Verschicke Pakete \2
6\Bein \1
7\Kreuzung \4
8\Geräusche hören \2
9\Aussicht \4
10\Sich schonen \1
11\Reinheit \1
12\Aussicht \2
13\Bein \3
14\Abreisen \3
15\Kreuzung \4
16\Geräusche hören \3
17\Verschicke Pakete \2
18\Reinheit \3
19\Sich schonen \1
20\Abreisen \4
21\Aussicht \1
22\Kreuzung \3
23\Bein \2
24\Aussicht \4
25\Sich schonen \3
26\Verschicke Pakete \2
27\Reinheit \1
28\Geräusche hören \4
29\Kreuzung \2
30\Bein \4
31\Abreisen \1
32\Aussicht \3
33\Sich schonen \1
34\Verschicke Pakete \2
35\Abreisen \4
36\Aussicht \2
37\Geräusche hören \3
38\Aussicht \1
39\Sich schonen \2
40\Geräusche hören \1
41\Kreuzung \2
42\Bein \3
43\Verschicke Pakete \4
44\Aussicht \1
Abreisen
Reinheit
Abreisen
Sich schonen
Geräusche hören
Kreuzung
Bein
Abreisen
Reinheit
Aussicht
Berühmtheit
Sich schonen
Reinheit
Geräusche hören
Aussicht
Kreuzung
Verschicke Pakete
Abreisen
Geräusche hören
Berühmtheit
Bein
Sich schonen
Reinheit
Kreuzung
Abreisen
Aussicht
Verschicke Pakete
Bein
Kreuzung
Sich schonen
Reinheit
Kreuzung
Abreisen
Geräusche hören
Bein
Kreuzung
Aussicht
Verschicke Pakete
Bein
Kreuzung
Sich schonen
Appendix C: Materials used in Study 1

C.1 Stimulus Constructs used in the Self-Categorization Task

ungeduldig
ordentlich
mag Spaghetti
kreativ
schaut anderen gerne auf der Straße nach
geht gerne auf die Bedürfnisse anderer ein
mag gerne die Farbe grün
nachgiebig
hungrig nach Leben
unabhängig
selbstauopfernd
setzt sich Ziele im Leben
Natur liebend
durchsetzungsfähig
intelligent
sagt eigene Meinung
weichherzig
nimmt Fussball wichtig
verreist gerne in fremde Länder
kann sich abgrenzen
fleißig
Harmonie liebend
wohnt in Bremen
bereit vieles für die Karriere zu opfern
war schon mal in Amerika
sensibel für die Wünsche anderer
spricht Dialekt
nimmt eigene Wünsche wichtig
tierlieb
ist gerne sehr aktiv
individuell
ißt gerne exotische Sachen
mag gerne andere glücklich machen
putzt regelmäßig Zähne
geht ausdauernd joggen
großer Kinofan
setzt eigene Ziele durch
C.2 Inclusion of Others in the Self Scale, adapted from Aron et al. (1992)

Kreuzen Sie die Darstellung an, die Ihrer Meinung nach am besten die Nähe zwischen Ihnen und Menschen die Ihnen wichtig sind beschreibt!

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere

Ich  Wichtige Andere
Appendix D: Materials used in Study 2

D.1: Instruction for Embedded Figure Test, adapted from Horn, 1962

Vp-nr.:______  Internationale Universität Bremen

Forschungsprojekt Räumliches Vorstellungsvermögen

Lieber Teilnehmer, liebe Teilnehmerin,

Diese Studie dient dazu, Normwerte für einen Test zum räumlichen Vorstellungsvermögen zu erhalten. Lesen Sie nun bitte die folgende Instruktion:


Wichtig: Die im Muster versteckte Figur muss die gleiche Größe und Lage wie eine der oben in der Leiste abgebildeten fünf Figuren haben. Sie darf also nicht verdreht sein. Es dürfen überflüssige Striche da sein, aber es darf kein Strich an der versteckten Figur fehlen. In jedem Muster ist nur eine von den fünf oberen Figuren versteckt. Es sind vier Reihen von Mustern nebeneinander abgebildet. Wer mit der linken Reihe fertig ist, beginnt mit der Nachbarreihe!

Bitte machen Sie sich mit der Beispielaufgabe unten vertraut. In der oberen Reihe sehen Sie die Leiste mit den fünf Figuren. Im ersten Muster ist das „L“ versteckt, im zweiten Muster das „U“. Die jeweils gefundenen Lösungen sind rechts daneben auf den fünf kleinen Schaubildchen durch gestrichen. Wenn Sie Fragen zu dieser Aufgabe haben, so wenden Sie sich bitte an Ihren Versuchsleiter.

Bitte blättern Sie NICHT um!!!! Geben Sie Ihrem Versuchsleiter ein Zeichen wenn sie bereit sind anzufangen. Sie haben 2 Minuten Zeit.
### D.2: Items of the Self-Construal Scale, adapted from Singelis (1994)

**Meine Zufriedenheit hängt von der Zufriedenheit derer um mich herum ab.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trifft überhaupt nicht zu</td>
<td>trifft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trifft vollkommen zu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ich bin zu Hause die gleiche Person wie an der Uni.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trifft überhaupt nicht zu</td>
<td>trifft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trifft vollkommen zu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ich verhalte mich unabhängig davon, mit wem ich gerade zusammen bin.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trifft überhaupt nicht zu</td>
<td>trifft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trifft vollkommen zu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Materials used in Study 3

E.1: Framed Line Task, adapted from Kitayama et al. (2003)

Im Folgenden wird Ihnen jeweils eine Rechteck Vorlage (Rechteck A) präsentiert, die einen Strich enthält (Strich A) und ein „leeres“ Rechteck (Rechteck B), das eine andere Größe hat und noch keinen Strich enthält.

Ihre Aufgabe ist es, in das Rechteck B einen Strich einzutragen, dass im Verhältnis zum Rechteck B genauso lang ist wie Strich A zu Rechteck A ist. Es geht also nicht um die absolute Länge der Striche, sondern darum, dass sie proportional gleich lang sind wie in der Vorlage.

Hier ein Beispiel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rechteck A</th>
<th>Rechteck B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Rechteck B: Falsche Lösung

Rechteck B: Richtige Lösung

Bitte benutzen Sie bei der Bearbeitung dieser Aufgabe keinerlei Hilfsmittel (z.B. Strichlänge mit Fingern oder Kugelschreiber abmessen). Wenn Sie noch Fragen zu dieser Aufgabe haben, wenden Sie sich bitte an Ihren Versuchsleiter. Blättern Sie um, wenn Sie bereit sind mit dieser Aufgabe anzufangen.
Appendix F: Materials used in Study 4

F.1: Refusal Inability Questionnaire, adapted from Ullrich and Ullrich (1977/1998), original items pertaining to refusal behavior, selected by the present author


Diese reichen von:

- 0: “Stimmt gar nicht” (trifft nie zu)
- 5: “Stimmt vollkommen (trifft fast immer zu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stimmt gar nicht</th>
<th>Stimmt vollkommen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber treffe ich Entscheidungen schnell und sicher.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir das Verhalten von anderen nicht gefällt, kann ich ihnen das leicht und offen sagen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber schlucke ich meinen Ärger immer runter.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Diskussionen mit anderen fallen mir immer erst nachher die richtigen Argumente ein.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber unterlasse ich alles was Widerspruch herausfordern könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir jemand ins Wort fällt, fordere ich ihn/sie auf, mich ausreden zu lassen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es ist mir bei anderen gleichgültig, was sie über mich denken.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide es möglichst anderen gegenüber, Verantwortung zu übernehmen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich neige bei anderen dazu, mich für alles zu entschuldigen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn eine Gesprächspause eintritt, verunsichert es mich stark.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satschreibung</td>
<td>Stimmt gar nicht</td>
<td>Stimmt vollkommen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir der Besuch von jemand wirklich ungelegen kommt, kann ich es ihm/ihr ohne weiteres sagen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es stört mich, wenn andere mir bei der Arbeit zu sehen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn ich mit anderen eine Meinungsverschiedenheit habe, bin ich der erste, der nachgibt.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich habe anderen gegenüber leicht Schuldgefühle.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich neige anderen gegenüber dazu, eher nachzugeben, als einen Streit anzufangen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich bin anderen gegenüber sehr selbstsicher.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn ich von anderen lärchlich gemacht werde, kann ich überhaupt nichts erwidern.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich wage es nie, offen zu sagen, was mir an dem Verhalten von anderen nicht gefällt.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich bin sehr verlegen, wenn ich bei anderen im Mittelpunkt des Interesses stehe.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von anderen etwas einzufordern ist mir fast unmöglich</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide möglichst unangenehme Auseinandersetzungen mit anderen, auch wenn sie notwendig wären.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir andere etwas zu Unrecht vorwerfen, kann ich mich immer erfolgreich verteidigen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich lasse meine Entscheidungen von anderen leicht wieder umwerfen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber fehlt es mir sicherlich an Selbstvertrauen.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich äußere meinen Ärger sofort, wenn jemand mich zu unrecht kritisiert.</td>
<td>0...1...2...3...4...5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stimmt gar nicht</td>
<td>Stimmt vollkommen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es fällt mir leicht, angemessene Dinge von anderen zu fordern.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber bin ich gewöhnlich still “um des lieben Friedens willen”.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber habe ich oft Angst, lächerlich zu wirken.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn jemand mich kritisiert, bringe ich gar nichts mehr zu stande.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich würde mich anderen gegenüber nie beschweren.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich fühle mich aderen gegenüber schnell hilflos.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber habe ich ständig Angst, dass ich etwas falsches sagen oder tun könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderen gegenüber kann ich leicht Forderungen durchsetzen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich verwahre mich dagegen, daß andere sich in Dinge einmischen, die allein mich etwas angehen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide fast immer, anderen etwas zu sagen, was gegen ihre Ansichten gehen könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es ist mir unmöglich, mit anderen zu streiten.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F.1: Refusal Inability Questionnaire, adapted from Ullrich and Ullrich (1977/1998), items modified by the present author to explicitly target children

Ziel der nächsten Untersuchung ist es, zu erfassen, wie leicht oder schwer es Menschen im Allgemeinen fällt, in der Kindererziehung „Nein“ zu sagen oder Forderungen zu stellen. Im folgenden finden Sie Feststellungen über das Verhalten in zwischenmenschlichen Situationen mit Kindern. Versuchen Sie, sich die betreffende Situation so anschaulich als möglich vorzustellen. Beurteilen Sie, wie Sie sich selbst in dieser konkreten Situation üblicherweise fühlen oder wie Sie reagieren würden.

Versuchen Sie nicht erst, einen guten Eindruck zu machen, sondern beantworten Sie die Fragen so zügig und spontan, wie es Ihnen möglich ist. Neben jeder Feststellung sind sechs Antwortmöglichkeiten angegeben.

Diese reichen von:  
0: “Stimmt gar nicht” (trifft nie zu)  
5: “Stimmt vollkommen (trifft fast immer zu).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stimmt gar nicht</th>
<th>Stimmt vollkommen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber treffe ich Entscheidungen schnell und sicher.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir das Verhalten von Kindern nicht gefällt, kann ich ihnen das leicht und offen sagen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber schlucke ich meinen Ärger immer runter.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Diskussionen mit Kindern fallen mir immer erst nachher die richtigen Argumente ein.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber unterlasse ich alles was Widerspruch herausfordern könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir ein Kind ins Wort fällt, fordere ich es auf, mich ausreden zu lassen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es ist mir bei Kinder gleichgültig, was sie über mich denken.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide es möglichst Kindern gegenüber, Verantwortung zu übernehmen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich neige bei Kindern dazu, mich für alles zu entschuldigen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn bei Kindern eine Gesprächspause eintritt, verunsichert es mich stark.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Stimmt gar nicht</td>
<td>Stimmt vollkommen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir der Besuch eines Kindes wirklich ungelegen kommt, kann ich es ihm ohne weiteres sagen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es stört mich, wenn Kinder mir bei der Arbeit zu sehen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn ich mit Kindern eine Meinungsverschiedenheit habe, bin ich der erste, der nachgibt.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich habe Kindern gegenüber leicht Schuldgefühle.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich neige Kindern gegenüber dazu, eher nachzugeben, als einen Streit anzufangen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich bin Kindern gegenüber sehr selbstsicher.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn ich von Kindern lächerlich gemacht werde, kann ich überhaupt nichts erwidern.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich wage es nie, offen zu sagen, was mir an dem Verhalten von Kindern nicht gefällt.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich bin sehr verlegen, wenn ich bei Kindern im Mittelpunkt des Interesses stehe.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Von Kindern etwas einzufordern ist mir fast unmöglich</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide möglichst unangenehme Auseinandersetzungen mit Kindern, auch wenn sie notwendig wären.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn mir Kinder etwas zu Unrecht vorwerfen, kann ich mich immer erfolgreich verteidigen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich lasse meine Entscheidungen von Kindern leicht wieder umwerfen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber fehlt es mir sicherlich an Selbstvertrauen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich äußere meinen Ärger sofort, wenn ein Kind mich zu unrecht kritisiert.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimmt gar nicht</td>
<td>Stimmt vollkommen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es fällt mir leicht, angemessene Dinge von Kindern zu fordern.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber bin ich gewöhnlich still “um des lieben Friedens willen”.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber habe ich oft Angst, lächerlich zu wirken.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenn ein Kind mich kritisiert, bringe ich gar nichts mehr zu stande.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich würde mich Kindern gegenüber nie beschweren.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich fühle mich Kindern gegenüber schnell hilflos.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber habe ich ständing Angst, dass ich etwas falsches sagen oder tun könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindern gegenüber kann ich leicht Forderungen durchsetzen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich verwahre mich dagegen, daß Kinder sich in Dinge einmischen, die allein mich etwas angehen.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ich vermeide fast immer, Kindern etwas zu sagen, was gegen ihre Ansichten gehen könnte.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es ist mir unmöglich, mit Kindern zu streiten.</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wie viel Erfahrung haben Sie mit Kindererziehung (z.B. durch eigene Kinder, jüngere Geschwister, Babysitting, etc.)?</th>
<th>Sehr wenig Erfahrung</th>
<th>Sehr viel Erfahrung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sehr wenig Erfahrung</td>
<td>0 . . 1 . . 2 . . 3 . . 4 . . 5</td>
<td>Sehr viel Erfahrung</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Additional Results

G.1: Pre-Survey

Table G1

Pre-Survey: Absolute means of subjective importance and perceived self-regulatory success for independence and interdependence goals as a Function of Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence Goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Importance</td>
<td>4.53 (.50)</td>
<td>3.92 (.58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Success</td>
<td>3.77 (.60)</td>
<td>3.37 (.70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence Goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Importance</td>
<td>4.13 (.43)</td>
<td>4.08 (.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Success</td>
<td>3.09 (.58)</td>
<td>3.47 (.46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Higher values indicate greater subjective importance/ success ratings.
### G.2: Study 2

Table G2

*Study 2: Absolute number of correct, false, and attempted solutions in the Embedded Figure Test as a Function of the Priming Condition and the Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refusal-goal</td>
<td>Control (no goal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>21.78 (8.20)</td>
<td>21.34 (8.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>1.90 (3.26)</td>
<td>2.37 (2.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted</td>
<td>23.68 (8.78)</td>
<td>23.71 (8.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### G.3: Study 3

Table G3

*Study 3: Absolute number of correct, false, and attempted solutions in the Embedded Figure Test as a Function of the Priming Condition and the Gender of the Participant (SD in Parentheses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refusal-goal</td>
<td>Control (no goal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>24.60 (7.38)</td>
<td>21.30 (7.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False</td>
<td>1.60 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.10 (3.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted</td>
<td>27.20 (7.91)</td>
<td>26.58 (8.72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Declaration by Word of Honor

I hereby certify on my honor that this thesis is my own work and that I have completed it without undue help from third parties and without the use of any material other than permitted. Any thoughts and ideas taken directly or indirectly from others are highlighted as such. Neither this work in its present form nor any other work of its contents has been submitted to another German or foreign board of examiners so far.

Bremen, 17.03.2006

Amina Özelsel