



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

SELF-CONSTRUALS AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIALLY  
DESIRABLE RESPONDING

by

CAMELIA ADRIENNE HARB

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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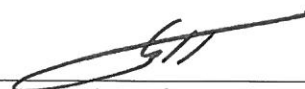
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# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The purpose of the present study was to assess how self-construals predict the use of socially desirable responding (SDR). The predictors studied in this thesis were the personal, relational, and collective self-construals. SDR was conceptualized as a two factor construct including self-deceptive enhancement (SDE) and impression management (IM). It was hypothesized that the personal self-construal would predict the use of SDE. The relational self-construal was expected to predict the use of both SDE and IM. It was also hypothesized that the collective self-construal would predict the use of IM.

The measures used in the study were the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale (Harb & Smith, 2008) and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991). The final sample of the current study consisted of 297 students from the American University of Beirut campus. The findings of the study supported only one out of the three hypotheses. The personal self-construal was found to significantly predict the use of SDE. The relational self-construal was not found to significantly predict the use of either SDE or IM. Finally, the collective self-construal was not found to significantly predict the use of IM.

Limitations of the current study include the weakness of the factor structure of the BIDR thus affecting its appropriateness as a measure of SDR. Response bias may be another limitation as participants may have wished to appear socially desirable. Also, the results reflect the outlooks of a restricted population, thus limiting generalizability to a larger population.

*Keywords:* Self-concept, self-presentation, social behavior, self-construals, socially desirable responding

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Self-Construals as Predictors of Socially Desirable Responding

CHAPTER I

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

**A. Introduction**

The need for social approval is believed to be a universal motivation (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Literature published on this subject has varied from the examination of the psychosocial correlates of social approval (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Kurman, 2003) to various social behaviors used to achieve it (Kim, Chiu, Peng, Cai, & Tov, 2010; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003). Socially desirable responding (SDR), an example of these social behaviors, has been a focus of study since the 1950s (Paulhus, 2002).

Generally, SDR is defined as the tendency to promote an overly positive self-description (Paulhus, 2002). Researchers interested in the response style have often examined SDR's operationalizations (Marlowe and Crowne, 1961; Paulhus, 1991) and correlates (Kurman, 2003; Lalwani, Shrum, & Chiu, 2009). Recent years have also seen an increase in research on cultural differences in the use of SDR. One way these differences have been examined is through the use of self-construals, or, how the process of construing the self differs across cultures.

The purpose of the current study was to examine which self-construals predicted SDR. Specifically, the current study utilized Paulhus' (1991) conceptualization of SDR and the three-dimensional conceptualization of self-construals (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). This thesis will first review the literature on self-construals, SDR, and the link between the

two variables. The aims and hypotheses of the study will then be presented followed by the method and results of the statistical analysis. This thesis will conclude with the discussion of the findings and limitations of the study.

## **B. The Development of the Self-Construal**

The self-concept holds a central position in social psychology. While much research has been published on the subject, the multifaceted nature of the self-concept has kept it an integral point of inquiry in the field of social psychology (Baumeister, 1999; Fiske, 2010; Triandis, 1989). The self-concept is generally defined as a cognitive representation of the self built from self-relevant information, beliefs, and schemas (Fiske, 2010; Markus & Wurf, 1987). The development of the self-concept is influenced by many different factors including context, social interaction, and demands on the individual (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Triandis, 1989). Fiske (2010) further described that people acquire their self-concept from self-perception and introspection (examination of their thoughts, behaviors and feelings), social comparisons with others, and reflection of others' opinions of them. By simultaneously extracting and evaluating information from the environment, the self-concept can then regulate cognition, motivation, and social behavior (Fiske, 2010; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Triandis, 1989).

According to Markus and Wurf (1987), the self-concept both reflects and regulates ongoing behavior. It is therefore capable of change and functions to meet the demands of the immediate social situation. Baumeister (1999) elaborated on this and argued that an individual can possess different self-concepts and that context is responsible for activating the appropriate one. Baumeister (2010) further elaborated that interpersonal processes functioning within the immediate social context can also play a

role in the self-concept activated. The thought was also emphasized by Fiske (2010), who believes that the self-concept depends on social circumstances which, for the most part require a certain role of the individual. Overall, the self-concept that meets the requirements of the immediate circumstances then guides reactions within that given context.

As context undeniably plays a direct role in activating the required self-concept, it has been suggested that individuals from different cultural contexts will express different self-concepts (Fiske, 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Furthermore, it is expected that the process of constructing the self-concept will differ across cultures. The self-construal was therefore introduced as a means of understanding these differences.

Though self-construals describe how the self-concept is construed, they place specific emphasis on how this process differs across cultures. Self-construals refer to how an individual construes the self in relation to others and to the world (Cross, Hardin & Gercek-Swing, 2011; Yamada & Singelis, 1999). They determine and influence an individual's motivations, cognitions, and emotions and facilitate interactions within the social context.

In their seminal article on self-construals, Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that people from different cultures express different self-construals. Though the literature that preceded their research drew on a primarily Western view of the self, Markus and Kitayama (1991) contended that there were explicit cultural differences in how the self was construed. They criticized that this Western self, an independent entity whose behaviors were influenced by internal attributes, was not adequate in describing selfhood in non-Western contexts. This limited definition of the self in turn limited the

understanding of psychological processes expected to differ cross-culturally (Cross et al., 2011). To correct for this, Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed the interdependent self which factored in the role assigned to others in relation to the self.

The independent self describes a self that is construed as autonomous, unique, and separate from the influence of others. The individual self is construed in terms of internal attributes without placing any focus on the considerations of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The independent self is often associated with consistent behavior and is generally stable across social contexts. In contrast, the interdependent self-construal refers to a self that is both connected to, and strongly influenced by, the thoughts and feelings of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The self is viewed as part of various social relationships and is attentive to how behaviors, emotions, and motivations affect others. Consideration of the feelings of others shapes how the individual acts, and motivates them to maintain the social relationships integral to their self-concept. Behavior of individuals expressing the interdependent self is more likely to vary across social contexts.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that individuals from Western cultures are more likely to develop the independent self-construal. Conversely, individuals from non-Western cultures are more likely to develop the interdependent self-construal. However, in any specified culture, the extent to which individuals express the ‘predominant’ self-construal varies.

Later research demonstrating the effect of specific contexts on self-construals built upon Markus and Kitayama’s (1991) two dimensional model. The result was the presentation of a three dimensional differentiation of the self-concept (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Choi, Gelfand, & Yuki, 1995). This conceptualization

accounted for an individual's ability to express more than one type of self-construal. In addition, the role of a larger group context on the development of the self-concept was considered (Kashima et al., 1995).

Proponents of the newer conceptualization proposed that the self is constituted of a personal self, a relational self, and a collective self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Kashima et al., 1995). The personal self was defined as an individuated being described in terms of internal traits and separate from the influence of relationships with others. At this individual level, the self represents a unique and autonomous self-concept that is most similar to the independent self-construal proposed by Markus and Kitayama (1991). The relational and collective levels both construe the self's relation to others. The relational self features more personalized interactions with the other. This relational (or interpersonal) self is built upon personal dyadic relationships of significant importance to the individual (i.e. family and friends) and is most similar to Markus and Kitayama's interdependent self. Conversely, the collective self exists at the group level and features largely impersonal interactions with others (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). At this level, associations depend more on inferred group rules and norms. The collective self is part of a larger in-group such as that of a religious or political faction.

Kashima et al. (1995) examined the distinction between the personal, relational, and collective selves. The researchers translated Japanese measures of individualistic, relational, and collective dimensions of the self into English and Korean. The study sample extended over five cultures including the United States and Australia (individualist), Japan and Korea (collectivist), and Hawaii (meant to represent a culture in-between the other orientations). Though not directly relevant to the current study,

Kashima et al. (1995) explained differences in the expression of self-construals using culture and gender as predictors.

The results of Kashima et al. (1995) demonstrated clear differences in the three dimensions as well as possible factors across which they differed. Gender was significantly related to the relational self-construal. This indicated that males and females differed in the types of personal relationships they shared with others. Culture was significantly related to the individuated and collective selves. Specifically, Kashima et al. (1995) found that the extent to which participants endorsed either the individual or collective self differed across culture. For example, individualist cultures rated highest on measures of individualist traits whereas collectivist cultures rated lowest. As individuals base their self-concepts on what is available in their surroundings, this finding demonstrated that culture influenced whether an individual felt independent or connected to the in-group. Overall, regarding the self-construal dimensions, Kashima et al. (1995) demonstrated that the individual, relational, and collective selves were empirically separate supporting the three-dimensional conceptualization.

Harb and Smith (2008) also expanded upon the newer distinction of self-construals in their development of a scale designed to measure the expression of the personal, relational, and collective selves. The items used assessed the level of connectedness of the individual to certain prototypes. The scale also included vertical and horizontal dimensions of the relational and collective selves. The vertical dimension emphasizes hierarchy while the horizontal dimension emphasizes equality. Familial relationships are an example of the vertical dimension while relationships with friends are an example of the horizontal dimension. This distinction allowed for a more specific

examination of types of relationships that exist between the self and the other. However, as these are traits of relationships with others, they only apply to the relational and collective levels of self-construals and not the personal level. The personal self measured is most similar to the independent self presented by Markus and Kitayama (1991). The self is differentiated from others and is described as unique and independent.

With this distinction, Harb and Smith (2008) sought to develop and test the validity of a scale that featured a six-fold differentiation of self-construals<sup>1</sup>. The study was cross-cultural and included 855 participants from Jordan (n = 227), Lebanon (n = 226), Syria (n = 232), and the United Kingdom (n = 170). As British culture places focus on independence and equality and Arab cultures place importance on familial relationships and vertical hierarchies, differences in the expression of specific self-construals were expected.

The structure of the scale was determined it to be valid and reliable. The results generally demonstrated that the UK scored highest on the measure of the personal and horizontal-relational self-construals with Syria scoring the lowest. Syria scored highest on both vertical and horizontal measures of the collective self-construal and the vertical relational construal. Lebanon most often fell in between these extremes. Harb and Smith (2008) believed that self-construals were not exclusive and that it was possible for an individual to endorse multiple self-construals, as seen above. Depending on a combination of personal traits and cultural context, various outcomes on the scale are

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<sup>1</sup>This scale includes the personal, the relational (vertical and horizontal), the collective (vertical and horizontal), and a humanity-bound self-construal. Humanity was included as a “supra structure” level that defined the self as part of the human species without the social traits found at the relational or collective levels. Though humanity is included here, it was not included in the main analysis of the current study.



plausible. The broader differentiation of self-construals presented by Harb and Smith (2008) enhanced the understanding of differences in self-conceptualization within and between cultures.

### **C. Socially Desirable Responding**

As mentioned above, the development of the self-construal from a primarily independent stance to one that incorporated interdependent traits allowed for a better understanding of various processes expected to differ cross-culturally. Cross et al.'s (2011) review of self-construals presented research that demonstrated the effect of the self-construal on motivation, emotion, information processing, and social behaviors. One such social behavior that is affected by the self-construal expressed is socially desirable responding (SDR).

Marlowe and Crowne (1961) defined social desirability as “a need for social approval and acceptance and the belief that this can be attained by means of culturally acceptable and appropriate behaviors” (p. 109). As a prominent response style, SDR reflects a systematic method of answering questionnaire items with the goal of achieving social approval (Jackson & Messick, 1958; Paulhus, 2002). Paulhus (2002) elaborated on this and emphasized that socially desirable responding reflected the tendency to give ‘overly positive self-descriptions’. Individuals using this biased form of responding project a positive self-image to avoid or reduce criticism from others. SDR therefore reflects the need for social approval and the attempts to gain it through socially acceptable behaviors.

SDR is considered a prominent focus of research in light of the effects it can produce in psychological assessment settings (Johnson & van de Vijver, 2002). Response

styles like SDR persist across time and measure regardless of measure content because they convey an individual's style of responding (Paulhus, 2002). For example, an individual who promotes a positively distorted self-image will consistently do so over time and across questionnaires. Subsequently, these individual differences in responding have been found to interfere with measures assessing personality factors and motivational behaviors (Heine et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2010; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991). The importance of detecting social desirability has resulted in the use of commercially known measures such as the L (lie) and K (defensiveness) scales on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2; Paulhus, 1991). These assessment measures demonstrate the importance of testing for the possible influence of SDR in questionnaires.

Measures designed to assess SDR as a construct include the Marlowe and Crowne Social Desirability Scale (1961) and the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaires by Sackeim and Gur (1987). Results on these measures have consistently produced a two-factor structure of SDR. Though the terms used to describe the factors have varied amongst researchers (Damarin & Messick, 1965; Paulhus, 1984; Sackeim & Gur, 1978), social desirability as a response style is generally characterized as either 1) a defensive, unconscious, and evaluative distortion of one's private self image or 2) the deliberate distortion of one's publicized (presented to others) self description (Paulhus, 2002). To elaborate, on the one hand individuals report unrealistic self-descriptions that they believe to be true. On the other hand, individuals consciously distort their self-descriptions with the goal of deceiving others (Paulhus, 2002). Though the conceptualization of SDR has developed over the years, how well measures capture a two-factor structure has remained a point of disagreement among researchers.

Paulhus (1984) conceptualized the two factors of socially desirable responding as self-deceptive enhancement (SDE) and impression management (IM). Self-deceptive enhancement refers to the unconscious inclination to present oneself in an overly favorable light (Paulhus, 1984). When responding, individuals using SDE will exaggerate and confirm self-believed positive descriptions of their thoughts and actions while simultaneously rejecting negative descriptions (Paulhus, 2002). For example, they will firmly believe that statements like “I am a completely rational person” and “I am very confident of my judgments” to be true self-descriptions.

SDE is conceived to be a more unconscious and stable trait as it reflects internally held beliefs and feelings about the self (Gignac, 2013). In one study, participants were asked to use specific self-presentation strategies (for example, to fake bad responses or fake modesty) when responding to measures of personality and SDR (Paulhus, Bruce, & Trapnell, 1995). It was found that the measure of SDE was less susceptible to self-presentation effects as compared to the measure of IM. This demonstrated that responses on the SDE measure were not affected by deliberate attempts at modifying responses. However, Pauls and Crost (2004) have also demonstrated that SDE can be manipulated when participants are provided with specific descriptions of how to respond (for example, “Present yourself as agreeable and conscientiously as possible”).

On the other hand, impression management describes the attempt to purposely distort self-presentations in order to create a positive self-image (Paulhus, 1984; 1991). By creating an image that is dependable and in line with social norms, the individual is aided in gaining social approval. For example, an individual using IM will agree to statements like “I never tell lies” and “I always obey the law” because they believe that

the resulting self-image created is socially acceptable. IM is conceptualized as being a more consciously committed behavior and as a more overt attempt to gain social approval. In addition, as IM often involves observable behaviors, it is easier for others to confirm or disconfirm an individual's claims (Gignac, 2013). Paulhus et al. (1995) found that the measure of IM was more susceptible to self-presentation instructions as compared to the SDE measure. This demonstrated that participants were able to modify their responses on the IM measure to match the presentation strategy required.

These two factors (SDE and IM) are featured in the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991) used in the current study.

#### **D. The Relationship between Socially Desirable Responding and Self-Construals**

A key feature of the Marlowe and Crowne (1961) definition of social desirability is the specific mention of the use of 'culturally acceptable and appropriate behaviors'. While SDR may be a prominent and universal response style, cultural influences can affect the way it is expressed. Though the focus of this study is to examine the relationship between SDR and self-construals, it is first important to briefly address general cultural differences that have been found in the use of SDR. This discussion, continued below, often involves the individualist versus collectivist model of cultural orientation and more often looks at the cultural acceptance of the use of self-enhancing versus self-effacing behaviors (Kim et al., 2010; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006; Ross, Heine, Wilson, & Sugimori, 2005).

Individualism is associated with independence, autonomy and social behaviors that are influenced by personal goals and attitudes. Conversely, collectivism is associated

with interdependence, the maintenance of harmonious relationships, and social behaviors that are motivated by goals and attitudes shared with an ingroup (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Therefore, as individualism is associated with goals of seeing oneself as independent of and competent in relation to others, an individualist orientation should predict the use of SDE. On the other hand, as collectivism is associated with goals of managing social impressions, a collectivist orientation should predict the use of IM.

These relationships were demonstrated in a study by Lalwani et al. (2006). The study compared students' responses on the BIDR (Paulhus, 1991) from American (individualist) and Singaporean (collectivist) universities. Lalwani et al. (2006) demonstrated that individualism significantly predicted SDE whereas collectivism did not. Furthermore, only collectivism was found to marginally predict IM.

Besides the study of Lalwani et al. (2006), much research has examined the use of self-enhancing behaviors among members of individualist societies and the use of other means of self-enhancing among members of collectivist societies (Kim et al., 2010; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Ross et al., 2005). Self-enhancement is a response style used to present the self in positive terms. As individuals using this style seek to create and bolster a competent and unique self-image, it is expected that individualists will be more likely to self-enhance than collectivists (Kim et al., 2010; Johnson & van de Vijver, 2002). In contrast, self-effacement is a response style used to convey modesty in which positive traits and achievements are inconspicuously referred to. Collectivists are more likely to use self-effacement as compared to individualists as a collectivist orientation is more likely to encourage maintaining social harmony.

The results of these studies demonstrated that the use of self-enhancement was

more common among individualists as compared to collectivists (Kim et al., 2010; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002; Ross et al., 2005). Moreover, the studies of Kim et al. (2010), Kudo and Numazaki (2003), and Kurman and Sriram (2002) demonstrated that collectivists would be more likely to use self-effacing behaviors that were culturally acceptable. Examples included creating a positive self-image by denying negative personality traits instead of acknowledging positive traits (Kim et al. 2010) and self-enhancing only when confidentiality was assured (Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Kurman & Sriram, 2002). These findings support the notion that social desirability is a universal motivation and that culture can influence the means by which it is attained.

While the findings of these studies do contribute to understanding cultural differences in the use of SDR, the purpose of the current study was to examine how self-construals predicted SDR. However, the examination of the relationship between self-construals and SDR is both difficult and lacking (PsycInfo, 2014). To date, no research has used the three dimensional conceptualization of self-construals to examine SDR (PsycInfo, 2014). Furthermore, the available research more often focuses on other social behaviors that can be linked to SDR such as the study of social obligation tasks (Gardner, Gabriel, & Lee, 1999) and self-enhancement (Kim, Kim, Kam, & Shin, 2003; Kurman, 2001). Regardless, the following discussions of these studies are vital building blocks that can be used to predict, reflect, and conceptualize the relationships between self-construals and SDR.

Gardner et al. (1999) hypothesized that European-American participants primed for the interdependent self-construal would be more sensitive to social obligation tasks than those primed for the independent self-construal. Priming was accomplished through

the use of texts featuring either singular or plural pronouns which were believed to prime for the independent or interdependent self-construals, respectively. Participants were then required to indicate their reactions to short vignettes involving social dilemmas. Gardner et al. (1999) found that participants with an interdependent self-construal felt more obligated to respond to the needs of others as compared to those with an independent self-construal. As the sample was assumed to originally present with the independent self-construal (and therefore be less sensitive to social obligations), the results showed that temporarily changing the self-construal expressed resulted in an increased perception of social obligation.

Though social obligation tasks are not of direct relevance to the current study, they highlight a category of social behaviors (like SDR) that can affect social approval. In this case, failure to appropriately respond to social obligation tasks can cost the approval of others. In light of the current study, the findings of Gardner et al. (1999) demonstrate that the self-construal expressed can play a role in how social behaviors like SDR are used. For example, as individuals with an independent self-construal are less concerned with responding to the needs of others and instead are more concerned with personal goals and self-promotion, the use of SDE can be predicted. On the other hand, behaviors like IM are more useful for individuals with an interdependent self-construal as they promote maintaining social relationships.

As previously discussed, self-enhancement is used to present the self in positive terms. Kim et al. (2003) examined how self-construals would influence participants' perception of others' use of self-enhancement and self-effacement in communication. The researchers predicted that individuals with an independent self would prefer scenarios

where positive self-presentation of an accomplishment was used (e.g. “Person A is the most qualified student”). Conversely, participants with an interdependent self would prefer scenarios where self-effacing self-presentation was used (e.g. “Person B is shocked to have been accepted”). The results revealed that people with an independent self-construal evaluated positive presentations more favorably whereas those with an interdependent self evaluated effacing presentations more favorably. According to Kim et al. (2003), the results implied that self-construals influence both the form of self-presentation likely to be used and the evaluation of such presentations. Overall, the way self-presentation is used to promote a positive self-image differs with culture.

Kurman (2001) also investigated how self-enhancement and self-construals were related in a sample comparing interdependent and independent individuals. Participants reported whether they considered themselves above or below average on traits of intelligence, health, sociability, cooperation, honesty, and generosity. Construals were assessed by the Singelis (1994) self-construal scales. Kurman (2001) found that enhancement on agentic traits (intelligence, health, and sociability) were predicted by the independent self-construal whereas enhancement on communal traits (cooperation, honesty, and generosity) were predicted by the interdependent self-construal. Kurman (2001) concluded that individuals with an interdependent construal will use self-enhancement when it reflects their desire to contribute to the group. By enhancing on communal traits, the individual demonstrates their commitment to group values. Conversely, enhancement on agentic traits is a form of self-promotion and is viewed as the desire to move away from the group. Therefore, individuals with an independent construal will enhance on agentic traits to appear capable and competent to others.



Furthermore, Kurman (2001) also included a modesty measure to determine if an inclination towards modesty played a role in the use of self-enhancement on agentic traits. It was found that self-enhancement of agentic traits was predicted not only by the independent self-construal but by modesty (negatively) as well. In other words, the more modest an individual, the less likely they would be to enhance on agentic traits. Kurman (2001) interpreted this finding as demonstrating the effects of internalized beliefs about modest self-presentation or of impression management. On the one hand, participants may believe in the need to present themselves modestly, thus discouraging self-enhancement on agentic traits. On the other hand, participants may have been affected by the demands of impression management requiring them to follow norms of appropriate social behaviors in order to satisfy external observers (Kurman, 2001).

While these results are important, Lalwani et al.'s (2009) study is the only one to examine the relationship between self-construals and Paulhus' (1991) conceptualization of SDR. The researchers sought to evaluate the hypothesis that an activated independent or interdependent self-construal would be capable of activating distinct motives for self-presentation. It was hypothesized that if the independent self-construal was made salient, a higher score would be attained on the SDE measure. This was expected as it is the form of SDR that presents an inflated view of self-ability. Conversely, as IM is a form of SDR used to appear socially appropriate, making the interdependent self-construal salient would result in a higher IM score.

American (U.S.) university student participants were primed subliminally through text (using either singular or plural pronouns) to express either the independent or interdependent self-construal. Participants were then given the Balanced Inventory of

Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991) to complete. However, no manipulation check of construal priming was completed. This is a limitation of the study as there was no guarantee that the construal primed was actually expressed.

Lalwani and Shavitt (2009) found that the form of SDR used varied with self-construal primed. Participants primed for the independent self-construal were more likely to use SDE than those primed for the interdependent construal. Conversely, the use of IM was more likely when the interdependent construal was made salient as opposed to the independent construal (Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). The results of this study demonstrate that self-presentations can be reconciled with the goals of the self-construal made salient. The use of SDE is more likely in participants primed with the independent construal as they provide self-descriptions in which they appear unique, self-reliant, and intelligent. In contrast, IM is more likely amongst participants primed for the interdependent self-construal as their self-descriptions will feature socially accepted and appropriate traits and values.

The findings presented above support the notion that the form of SDR used can vary across self-construals. It can be said that SDE is likely to be predicted by the independent construal whereas IM is likely to be predicted by the interdependent self-construal. However, literature that compares the use of SDR across the three dimensional conceptualization is completely absent. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to evaluate the role of the personal, relational, and collective construals in predicting SDE and IM.

## CHAPTER II

### AIM OF THE STUDY

#### **A. Research Question and Aims**

The present study examined the relationship between socially desirable responding and self-construals in a sample of students from the American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon. This study examined socially desirable responding as conceptualized by Paulhus (1984; 1991) and used the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991) to assess self-deceptive enhancement (SDE) and impression management (IM). In addition, this study examined the three dimensional (personal, relational, and collective) conceptualization of self-construals as assessed by the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale (Harb & Smith, 2008). It was expected that the use of self-deceptive enhancement and impression management would differ across the levels of self-construals.

Specifically, individuals with an independent self-construal are more likely to exaggerate their self-perceived positive qualities above the qualities of others. Therefore, they will be more likely to use self-deceptive enhancement. On the other hand, individuals expressing a relational self-construal place value on significant interpersonal relationships. As examples of these dyadic interactions include friends and family, individuals with a relational construal can be expected to enhance to appear competent and likeable to their significant others. However, individuals with a relational construal are also concerned with maintaining their significant relationships. The use of both self-deceptive enhancement and impression management is therefore expected. Finally,

individuals with a collective self-construal value group norms and social harmony. These individuals will likely use impression management to promote a self-image that fits the image of their desired ingroup.

The findings of this study add to the general literature on the topics of social desirability and self-construals. In addition, the study assessed the validity of the BIDR in Lebanon, a previously unstudied population.

## **B. Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are proposed:

*Hypothesis 1:* The higher the scores on the personal self-construal, the higher the scores on the measure of self-deceptive enhancement.

*Hypothesis 2:* The higher the scores on the relational self-construal, the higher the scores on both the measure of self-deceptive enhancement and on the measure impression management.

*Hypothesis 3:* The higher the scores on the collective self-construal, the higher the scores on the measure of impression management.

# CHAPTER III

## METHOD

### **A. Procedure**

This study used a non-experimental survey research design to examine the above listed hypotheses.

The co-investigator approached random students on campus over two weeks of

the Summer 2014 semester. These students were asked about their interest in participating in the study and were told in brief that the purpose of the study was to examine differences in response styles in a student sample. If they agreed to participate they were presented with the questionnaire packet. They were asked to first read and agree to the terms and conditions of the Informed Consent Form. The consent form included information about the purpose of the experiment, procedure, and any foreseeable risks and benefits of the research (see Appendix A for details). Participants were then asked to complete the questionnaire packet (Appendix B) containing the demographics form, the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (see Instruments section below). A sealable envelope was also provided alongside the questionnaire packet to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of responses. Participants were also assured of their right to stop answering the questionnaire at any time.

A pilot study consisting of 10 AUB students was conducted prior to the actual study. The pilot study was conducted to test the length of the survey as well as to check for appropriate understanding of scale items and instructions. The results of this pilot demonstrated that the questionnaire took roughly 10-15 minutes to complete and that all scale items and instructions were understood.

All procedures in this study were carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the American University of Beirut. Data collection took place only after the research proposal was awarded IRB approval.

## **B. Instruments**

The instruments<sup>2</sup> used in this study assessed demographic variables, self-construals, and socially desirable responding.

*Demographic variables.* Gender, age, and years lived in Lebanon (yearsLeb) were measured using one item each.

*Self-construals.* The Sixfold Self-Construal Scale (SSCS; Harb & Smith, 2008) is a 30 item questionnaire designed to measure the personal, relational, and collective dimensions of self-construals. The scale also assesses the self's relation to humanity<sup>3</sup>. Vertical and collective dimensions are also included on the relational and collective construals. The group 'friends' was used to assess the horizontal-relational (H-R) construal while 'family' was used to assess the vertical-relational (V-R) construal. For the collective construal, 'students in my department/faculty' was used for the horizontal (H-C) dimension and 'social grouping'<sup>4</sup> was used for the vertical (V-C) dimension. Items assessing the personal self-construal and humanity were phrased in terms of 'myself' and 'humanity', respectively.

The final scale is used to demonstrate the participant's level of connectedness to each of the six groups mentioned above on five different items. These items include:

I think of myself as connected (linked) to \_\_\_\_\_  
 I control my behavior to accommodate the wishes (interests) of \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am affected by events that concern (relate) to \_\_\_\_\_  
 I am aware of the needs, desires, and goals of \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire given to and completed by participants included the Indigenous Social Desirability Scale by Domínguez-Espinosa and van de Vijver (2014). In addition, participants' level of biculturalism was measured by the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale and questions of music and TV preferences. The results of these scales were not included in analysis but the scales are presented at the end of the questionnaire in Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> Humanity was included in the questionnaire but was not included in the main analysis of the study as it is a self-construal category unrelated to the purpose of the current study.

<sup>4</sup> Social grouping was defined for participants as "any of the following: political group/party, governmental institution, or religious affiliation."

I feel I have a strong relationship with \_\_\_\_\_

Responses to the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale are measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (1-to a very small extent; 5-to a very large extent). When validated in the current sample, reliabilities of the five different scales ranged from Cronbach's alpha of .77 to .87.

For the purpose of the current study, the personal, relational, and collective self-construals are used as predictors, requiring combination of the abovementioned scales (discussed below in 'Results' section). Cronbach's alphas of the personal, relational, and collective self-construal scales were .76, .85, and .88, respectively.

*Socially desirable responding.* The 40-item Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding, Version 6 (BIDR, Paulhus, 1991) was used to determine the level of social desirability. The inventory is used to measure the two facets of social desirability responding in individuals: 1) 'impression management' and 2) 'self-deceptive enhancement'.

The 40 item inventory is measured on a 7-point Likert type scale (1-not true; 7-very true). The first twenty items measure self-deceptive enhancement while the second set of twenty items measure impression management. Items measuring SDE detail exaggerated claims of positive qualities individuals believe they have (e.g. 'My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.'). Items measuring IM include overt desirable and undesirable behaviors (e.g. 'When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.').

In the current sample, the Cronbach's alphas for self-deceptive enhancement and impression management were .69 and .76, respectively.

Two versions of the questionnaire were used to counterbalance scales to control for sequence and order effects. One hundred and fifty-one participants received a questionnaire packet presenting the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale before the BIDR whereas the remaining 154 received the BIDR before the Sixfold Self-Construal Scale. In both versions, the demographics form was presented first.

### **C. Participants**

Three hundred and five students from the American University of Beirut campus participated in this study. The sample consisted of an almost equal number of female (51.66%) and male participants (47.35%). The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 38 ( $M = 20.41$ ,  $SD = 2.23$ ). The average number of years lived in Lebanon was approximately 13 years ( $M = 13.47$ ,  $SD = 7.83$ ).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The following sections present the results of data cleaning and preparation, psychometric properties of the scales, general descriptives, and the outcomes of the regression analyses assessing the predictors of socially desirable responding.

#### **A. Preliminary Analysis:**

**1. Missing Value Analysis.** An analysis of missing values indicated that all except two items on the Impression Management measure of the BIDR had missing values below 5%. Results of Little's MCAR test were significant,  $\chi^2(3852) = 4109.68$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating that the missing values were not missing at random.



The percentage of missing data for items IM\_30 and IM\_33 were 9.2% and 7.2%, respectively. Missing data on item IM\_30, “I always declare everything at customs,” is believed to have resulted from participant’s unfamiliarity with the term ‘customs’. Item IM\_33 was inapplicable to participants that did not drive (“I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit”); therefore, missing data is assumed to have resulted for this reason and no items were removed from the data set.

## **2. Principal Components Analysis and Reliabilities**

*a. Sixfold Self-Construal Scale.* A principal components analysis with three factors and an equimax rotation applied was used to assess the SSCS. Coefficients below the .30 mark were suppressed<sup>5</sup>.

The determinant for the SSCS was found to be smaller than the recommended .00001. However the assumptions of multicollinearity and singularity were still met for the SSCS as a check of the correlation matrix revealed that there are no correlations between scale items above  $r = 0.8$ . Bartlett’s test for sphericity was also met for all items,  $\chi^2(300) = 3885.13$ ,  $p < .001$ . The assumption of sampling adequacy was also met for all items with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic of .79.

The first factor of the solution included all items pertaining to ‘family’ and ‘friends’ suggesting the relational construal. A second factor included all items pertaining to ‘social grouping’ and ‘students’ suggesting the collective construal. The third factor included all items pertaining to ‘myself’ suggesting the personal construal. This structure accounted for 49.28% of the total variance explained. The Cronbach’s alphas for each of

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<sup>5</sup> The results of the PCA and Reliability Analyses are available in Appendix C.

these factors were as follows: Relational, .85; Collective, .88; and Personal, .76<sup>6</sup>. These results demonstrate a good factor solution and reliability values for the SSCS.

*b. Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding.* In the current study, the BIDR as presented by Paulhus (1991) did not yield the two-factor solution expected. Therefore, an exploratory factor analysis set at an eigen value of 1 with a varimax rotation applied was used to assess the BIDR. Coefficients below the .30 mark were suppressed.

Assumptions of multicollinearity and singularity were met for all items on the BIDR as determinants obtained were greater than .00001. Bartlett's test for sphericity was also met for all items,  $\chi^2(780) = 1992.53, p < .001$ . The assumption of sampling adequacy was also met for all items with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic of 0.7.

A series of factor analyses were used to explore the underlying structure of the BIDR. The results of these analyses did not suggest a two factor structure as is presented in the literature. Instead, the results suggest subscales of groups of particular items measuring SDE and IM. An exploratory factor analysis set at an eigen value of 1 suggested a 13 factor structure for the BIDR. The total variance explained by this EFA was 38.91%.

A top-down approach was adopted as the final scales reflected the two factor solution suggested by the literature. The two factor solution was also adopted as the reliabilities of the scales were acceptable. The final scale used for SDE included 18 items. The final scale used for IM included all 20 items. The two items dropped were from the SDE scale as they improved the reliability of the scale from .65 to .69. The Cronbach's

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<sup>6</sup> The Cronbach alphas for each of the five subscales were as follows: Family, .81; friends, .78; social grouping, .87; students, .87; and myself, .77.

alpha of the IM scale was .76.

**3. Outliers.** The variables of ‘family’ and ‘friends’ were combined and averaged to form the ‘relational’ self-construal variable while the variables ‘social grouping’ and ‘students’ were combined and averaged to form the ‘collective’ self-construal variable<sup>7</sup>. These new variables, along with the averaged scores on SDE and IM were assessed for univariate and multivariate outliers.

Standardized z-scores were computed for all variables and any z-score with a value above |3.29| was considered a univariate outlier. Multivariate outliers were assessed through the Mahalanobis distance SPSS syntax. Any value greater than  $\chi^2(3) = 16.27$  was considered a multivariate outlier. Eight univariate outliers were found on the variables ‘personal’, ‘relational’, and ‘SDE’. Three multivariate outliers were found, all of which were also univariate outliers. All outliers were deleted from the data<sup>8</sup> to avoid data distortion. The resulting sample size was equal to  $N = 297$ .

**4. Normality.** Normality was examined for each variable through z-scores of skewness. Variables with skewness of above |3.29| were considered non-normal. The variables of Personal and Relational were negatively skewed (values above |3.29|). All other variables were normally distributed (see Table 1). While these violations may affect the analysis, transformations were not performed<sup>9</sup> as the dependent variables (SDE and IM) were not skewed and the assumptions for regression analyses were met.

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<sup>7</sup> Combination of these groups of items was supported by the high correlations between them. A significant correlation of large effect size was found between the ‘family’ and ‘friends’ subcategories,  $r = .50, p < .01$ . A significant correlation of medium to large effect size was also found between the ‘social grouping’ and ‘students’ subcategories,  $r = .46, p < .01$ .

<sup>8</sup> The cases removed were: 112, 142, 155, 171, 183, 246, 252, and 283.

<sup>9</sup> For the results of the regression analysis with transformed variables, refer to Appendix D.

*Table 1*  
*Normality*

Variable	Z-Skewness
Personal	-5.50
Relational	-4.13
Collective	-0.81
Self-Deceptive Enhancement	1.23
Impression Management	-0.36

## **B. Order Effects**

To test for order effects, the two counterbalanced versions of the survey were assessed for differences on SDE and IM using two independent samples t-tests. No significant order effects were found on SDE,  $t(295) = .09, p > .05$ , or IM,  $t(292) = -.42, p > .05$  when equal variances were assumed<sup>10</sup>. As such, the counterbalanced variable was excluded from further analysis.

## **C. Descriptives**

**1. Sample Size.** The final sample size of the study included 297 participants. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) recommend that when testing for a medium effect sized relationship between individual predictors and the outcome, the sample size be larger than  $(104+m)$ , where ‘m’ corresponds to the number of predictors. As each planned regression analysis includes 3 independent predictors, a sample size of 107 is recommended. The current sample size satisfies this recommendation.

**2. Means and Standard Deviations.** Means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) were calculated for all variables (see Table 2). Participants were most likely to agree with statements concerning the relational self-construal ( $M = 4.22, SD = .66$ ) followed by

<sup>10</sup> Levene’s test was used to assess homogeneity of variance. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for both SDE,  $F(1, 292) = .90, p > .05$ , and IM,  $F(1, 292) = .01, p > .05$ .

statements concerning the personal self-construal ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = .56$ ). Participants were least likely to agree with statements concerning the collective self-construal ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). This shows that participants were more likely to construe themselves in terms of their personal dyadic relationships and independent traits. On the other hand, participants were less likely to construe themselves in terms of shared characteristics with larger in-groups.

On average, participants scores were above the midpoint of 4 ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .65$ ) on SDE and close to the midpoint of 4 on IM ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). This suggests that they were slightly more likely to agree with statements encouraging the use of self-deceptive enhancement. Participants were also somewhat likely to agree with statements encouraging the use of impression management.

*Table 2*  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Mean	SD
Personal	295	4.22	.66
Relational	295	4.12	.56
Collective	294	2.73	.77
SDE	297	4.24	.65
IM	294	4.04	.79
Valid N (listwise)	291		

**3. Correlations.** A zero-order correlation matrix was produced (see Table 3) assessing the relationships between SDE and IM and the three types of self-construals (personal, relational, collective).

SDE and IM were positively correlated,  $r = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ , with a medium effect size. This finding demonstrates that the more likely a participant is to agree with

statements of SDE, the more likely they are to agree with statements of IM. SDE was also positively correlated with the personal self-construal,  $r = .15, p < .05$ , with a small effect size, providing support for our first hypothesis. This demonstrates that endorsing the personal self-construal increases the likelihood of agreeing with statements of SDE. SDE was not related to the relational or collective self-construals. In addition, besides the relationship with SDE, IM was not related to any of the self-construals.

A positive relationship was found between the personal and relational self-construals,  $r = .18, p < .01$ , with a small effect size. This demonstrates that a participant endorsing the personal self-construal is likely to also endorse the relational self-construal. A positive relationship was also found between the relational and collective self-construals,  $r = .30, p < .01$ , with a medium effect size. This finding shows that participants endorsing the relational self-construal are more likely to endorse the collective self-construal as well. No relationship was found between the personal and collective self-construals.

Table 3  
Correlations

		Personal	Relational	Collective	SDE	IM
Personal	Pearson	1.00	.18**	.01	.15*	-.10
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00	.84	.01	.08
	N		295.00	294.00	295.00	292.00
Relational	Pearson		1.00	.30**	-.02	.06
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.00	.75	.27
	N			294.00	295.00	292.00
Collective	Pearson			1.00	.01	-.06
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.88	.33
	N				294.00	291.00
SDE	Pearson				1.00	.33**
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.00
	N					294.00
IM	Pearson					1.00
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N					

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### D. Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses of the study, two forward multiple regressions<sup>11</sup> were run. The first regression tested hypotheses concerning the role of the personal and relational self-construals in predicting SDE (H1 and H2). The second regression tested hypotheses concerning the role of the relational and collective self-construals in predicting IM (H2 and H3). In both regressions, the three types of self-construals (Personal, Relational, and Collective) were entered under a forward entry method to explore their role as predictors

<sup>11</sup> This study's hypotheses featured expected relationships between self-construals and SDR. However, a forward method was used as the nature of the analysis was exploratory given that these expected relationships have not been previously demonstrated especially in the current context.

of SDE and IM.

**1. Assumptions.** The assumptions for both regression analyses are reported below. These assumptions follow recommendations provided by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013).

**a. *Linearity, Homoscedasticity.*** The assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed by plotting scatterplots of z-predicted over z-residuals. The assumptions were met for both analyses as indicated by the oval shape of the scatterplots and lack of funneling or directionality of data points.

**b. *Independent Errors.*** The assumption of independence of errors was assessed by checking the Durbin Watson statistic. It was met for both analyses with statistics of 1.93 for SDE and 2.06 for IM.

**c. *Multicollinearity.*** The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed by checking the zero-order correlations between all variables entered in the regression models and statistics for VIF and tolerance. No two variables had a significant zero-order correlation above  $r = .80$ . The values of all VIF statistics were below 10 and all tolerance statistics were greater than .10.

**d. *Influential Cases.*** The assumption of influential cases was assessed through a check of standardized DFBetas. For both analyses, standardized DFBeta scores were below |1| indicating no influential cases were present in the data set.

**e. *Normally Distributed Errors and Normality of the Dependent Variable.*** The assumption of normally distributed errors was assessed by visual inspection of histograms of standardized residuals. The histograms in both analyses revealed normal distributions of residuals.



The assumption of normality was assessed for SDE and IM by calculating z-scores of skewness. Both dependent variables were considered normally distributed as z-scores were below |3.29| (refer to Table 1 above).

**2. Predictors of Self-Deceptive Enhancement.** A forward multiple regression was run with SDE entered as the dependent variable. The predictor variables of personal, relational, and collective self-construal were entered using a forward entry method.

The model of the regression analysis was significant  $F(1, 292) = 6.19, p < .01$ . This indicates that the entered variables do a significantly better job of predicting the dependent variable (SDE) than the mean. The predictor variable entered in this model was the personal self-construal. This model accounted for 2% of the explained variance ( $R^2 = .02$ ). While this small  $R^2$  indicates that much of the variance in the DV is not explained, it is a significant finding. This demonstrates that the model created better predicts variance in the dependent variable than the constant alone. This model's adjusted  $R^2 = .02$ , indicated shrinkage of 0% of the predictive power of the model when applied to the population (see Table 5).

The standardized Beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficients of the model indicated that only the personal construal was a significant predictor of SDE,  $\beta = .14, p < .01$ . The positive relationship between the Personal construal and SDE indicated that participants with a personal self-construal were more likely to use SDE. This result supported Hypothesis 1 as the personal self-construal served as a predictor of SDE. As the Relational construal was not found to be a significant predictor of SDE, Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Table 4  
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.14 <sup>a</sup>	.02	.02	.65	.02	6.19	1.00	292.00	.01

a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal

Table 5  
Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	3.64	.25			14.80	.00
	Personal	.14	.06	.14		2.49	.01

a. Dependent Variable: SDE

**3. Predictors of Impression Management.** A forward multiple regression was run with IM entered as the dependent variable. The predictor variables of personal, relational, and collective self-construal were entered into the model using a forward entry method.

The regression model was not significant ( $p > .05$ ). No predictor variables were found to significantly predict the use of IM. Hypothesis 2 was rejected as it was demonstrated that the relational self-construal did not predict the use of IM. Hypothesis 3 was also rejected as it was demonstrated that the collective self-construal did not predict IM.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to expand upon the existing literature concerning social desirability by examining the relationship between self-construals and socially desirable responding. To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine this relationship using the three-dimensional conceptualization of self-construals (personal, relational, and collective). It is also the first study to assess the factor structure of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding in an Arab context. The aim of this study was to determine the role of these construals in predicting the socially desirable response styles of Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management.

The study showed that on average, participants endorsed the personal and relational self-construals more than the collective self-construal. This demonstrated that participants in this study were more likely to construe themselves either in terms of their internal attributes and independence or in terms of their close personal relationships with friends and family. On the other hand, participants' much lower endorsement of the collective self-construal indicates that they do not strongly identify with their respective social groups, be they religious or political. Harb and Smith's (2008) study used a similar sample of Lebanese students from the American University of Beirut. It was believed that these participants were more exposed to Western influences and had greater political, ethnic, and religious diversity than the other Arab samples included. Therefore, living in Lebanon and attending AUB places the individual within a multi-ethnic, political, and religious context. The construals reflected by both the current sample (and that of Harb

and Smith, 2008) fall between what would be expected in a Western context (the personal construal would be most endorsed) and what would be expected in an Arab context (the relational and collective construals would be more endorsed).

The results of the first regression analysis demonstrated that the personal self-construal significantly predicted the use of SDE, confirming the first hypothesis of this study. Individuals with a personal self-construal are concerned with appearing self-reliant and capable and wish to promote a self-image that is skillful and independent (Kim et al., 2003; Kurman, 2001; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). For these reasons, these individuals are more likely to present themselves in ways that achieve these goals. Behaviors like SDE entail the exaggeration of positive qualities the individual believes they possess. This relationship was demonstrated in the current study. The more the participant endorsed the personal self-construal, the more likely they were to endorse statements of SDE.

However, the results of the first regression analysis also rejected the second hypothesis which stated that the relational self-construal would predict self-deceptive enhancement. The relationship was expected as individuals with a relational self-construal would wish to appear competent to others in their personal relationships. In addition, the results of the second regression analysis revealed that neither the relational nor collective self-construals were significant predictors of IM, rejecting the second and third hypotheses. The relational self-construal was expected to predict the use of impression management as participants with a relational self-construal would wish to maintain their social relationships (while simultaneously appearing competent). The collective self-construal was also expected to predict the use of IM as individuals with a collective construal are expected to be concerned with fitting in with their in-groups.

The rejections of the second and third hypotheses require comment concerning the original premise of this study: that the personal, relational, and collective self-construals predict the use of SDE and IM. If the premise of the study is correct, the lack of findings may be attributable to some weaknesses in the research design. If, however, this premise is not correct, the lack of findings may reveal that the expectation of a predictive relationship is unfounded. Whether this is due to the relevance of this research question in the current context or the specific variables included in the current study is unknown. The next section will focus on these concerns followed by a presentation of the possible limitations of the study as a whole.

As was seen above in the literature review, researchers contend that there is a direct relationship between the expression of specific self-construals and response styles used. Generally, individuals with an independent self-construal are more likely to use self-enhancement whereas those with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to use self-effacing or indirect self-enhancing behaviors (Kim et al., 2003; Kurman, 2001; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). If the relational self-construal is considered similar to the interdependent self-construal (Harb & Smith, 2008), then the rejection of the second hypothesis is acceptable. In the current study, it is therefore possible that participants with a relational self-construal did not deem SDE an appropriate behavior to use in interpersonal relationships. Although it was expected that these participants would wish to appear competent in those relationships, it is possible that only participants with a personal self-construal viewed SDE as a means of self-promotion.

Logically, it would then be expected that participants with the relational self-construal would be more likely to use behaviors like IM to maintain social relationships.

This is also true of individuals with a collective self-construal, who are concerned with saving face in the group. Interdependent individuals use other culturally acceptable behaviors to appear socially desirable (Kim et al., 2003; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009). As impression management is used to create a self-image that fits social demands, it can therefore be viewed as a culturally acceptable alternative to SDE.

However, these expectations were not met. It is thus possible to consider that SDR as a whole was not relevant to participants in the current study, regardless of the expressed self-construal. The results revealed no correlation between the relational and collective self-construals and SDR. This indicates that the likelihood of expressing SDE or IM was not made significantly more or less likely by the expression of either construal. Furthermore, although it was found to be significant in the regression analysis, the relationship between the personal construal and SDE was weak, accounting for only 2% of the explained variance in the dependent variable. This indicated that only a minimal fraction of the differences found in SDE were due to the personal self-construal. Despite earlier researchers' findings, the current study shows that the relationships between self-construals and SDR did not apply in the current sample and context.

These results can also be considered within the limitations of this study. The largest and most important of these limitations pertains to the measure of SDR. It is likely that the construct validity of the BIDR affected results. Though the reliabilities of the scales of SDE and IM were acceptable, the structure of the scale accounted for only 39% of the explained variance of the results on IM and SDE. It is therefore possible that the scales used in the current context may have not been measuring the constructs of SDE and IM as intended by Paulhus (1991). As the BIDR was developed in the West, the

generalizability of the items to the current sample may have been limited. Such a possibility could result from the fact that participants did not overly identify with all items on the scale. In some cases participants outwardly commented that some items were not clear and/or not applicable to them personally. For example, as was seen in the missing values analysis above, many participants skipped the item inquiring about driving habits. In the United States, the legal driving age is between 16 and 18 years whereas the legal in Lebanon is 18. As the mean age in the current sample was 20 years, it is likely that many participants were not yet driving thus rendering this item inapplicable.

Furthermore, it is also possible to assume that some of the behaviors assessed by BIDR items are socially sanctioned in the current context. For example, communication is a major part of social interaction in Arab society. Therefore, in the current study, items such as “I never swear” and “I don’t gossip about others people’s business” may be denied as they are not necessarily considered socially stigmatizing. As a result, the measure of IM suffers as these behaviors are not considered to affect social image and social approval. Disagreeing with these statements does not indicate the absence of IM but rather may indicate that these behaviors are irrelevant measures of IM. If this were true of multiple items, it would then mean that the respective measures of not appropriate assessors of SDR. As a result, the expected relationships between self-construals and SDR would not be found as SDR was not assessed as intended.

A second limitation is a possible effect of social desirability. Although the aim of the study was to examine socially desirable responding, there is no guarantee that participants were immune to the effects of their own desire to respond in a socially desirable manner. As a response style, SDR is characterized as a systematic method of

responding to create an overly positive self-image that is used to gain social approval.

Upon learning that the study was assessing differences in response style, participants may have felt the need to respond in a biased manner. Furthermore, as some items in the BIDR are of a sensitive and personal nature (e.g. “I never read sexy books or magazines.”), participants may have been unwilling to answer honestly. Though participants were assured of confidentiality and were given privacy to complete the survey and questionnaire, the collected responses may be unrepresentative of participants’ actual attitudes toward SDE and IM.

Finally, in terms of sample characteristics, the results of this study reflect the outlooks of university students. While the study did not control for age, most participants involved were between the ages of 18 and 22. In addition, these students attend a university that caters to a largely higher socio-economic status bracket of the population. The generalizability of the results of the analysis may therefore be limited and restricted to similar populations.

Overall, the results of this study revealed that only the personal self-construal was a significant predictor of the increased use of SDE, while IM was not significantly predicted by any construal. With regard to these results, future research may best address the unexamined relationships and limitations discussed above. To better understand SDR cross-culturally, culturally sensitive and context independent scales should be developed and/or adapted to better serve the intended sample. Also, as it was found that the three-factor solution of self-construals suggested did not predict SDE and IM as expected, an alternative could be to examine other possible predictors of the response styles. For example, the role of modesty in determining the use of IM and SDE is a possibility.



Finally, as the self-construal scale had excellent reliability in this sample, the newer conceptualization of self-construals should be used in the examination of other forms of response styles and social behaviors.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form



Investigator: Dr. Charles Harb  
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**CONSENT FORM FOR PERSONS PARTICIPATING  
IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

Dear participants, we would like to invite you to participate in a research conducted at the American University of Beirut that seeks to explore response styles in an AUB student sample. In order to take part in this study, you must be a student at AUB and 18 years of age or older.

Before beginning, we would like to take a few minutes to explain why we are inviting you to participate and what will be done with the information you provide. You will be asked to read this consent form, and then respond to a questionnaire. Please read and consider each question carefully, but do not agonize over your answers. There are no right or wrong answers and first impressions are usually fine. Just think about what best reflects your own opinions or feelings.

We will be asking 300 participants registered as students at AUB to complete a survey and this collected information will be used in published research as well as in academic presentations. Your individual privacy and confidentiality of the information you provide will be maintained in all published and written data analysis resulting from the study. There are no threats for the confidentiality of your results since no direct identifiers will be recorded (no names nor signatures). Moreover, the data will be reported in total.

The primary investigator and the co-investigator will be the only ones who have the data. No confidentiality issues will possibly arise since the data is completely anonymous. All data from this study will be maintained on a password protected computer. All paper surveys will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of the research collaborator for a period of three years after which it will be shredded and destroyed.



Participation should take less than thirty minutes. Please understand your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without justification or penalty. Some questions may ask about your personal behaviors, however, you do not need to worry since it is an anonymous survey. There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this study but the results of the study will help researchers to better understand response styles in an AUB student population.

If at any time and for any reason you would prefer not to answer any questions, please feel free to skip those questions. If at any time you would like to stop participating, you can simply terminate without justification. You will not be penalized for deciding to stop participation at any time. If you chose not to participate in this study or chose to terminate your participation at any time, this will in no way affect your relationship with AUB.

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about this research study later, you may contact Dr. Charles Harb at 01/350000 ext 4371 or [charles.harb@aub.edu.lb](mailto:charles.harb@aub.edu.lb), or contact Camelia Harb at [cah14@aub.edu.lb](mailto:cah14@aub.edu.lb).

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about research or your rights as a participant, please contact the AUB Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional review Board (SBSIRB) at AUB: 01- 350 000 ext. 5445 or 5454 or [irb@aub.edu.lb](mailto:irb@aub.edu.lb).

If you accept the above statements and you are willing to participate, please start answering the questionnaire. By continuing you indicate your consent to participate in the study and authorize the researchers to use your data.

Should you be interested, a copy of this consent form will be made available to you by the co-investigator.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION**

**Debriefing Form**

**If you are interested** in learning about the outcomes of the study (note that individual results cannot be provided) please contact Dr. Charles Harb (telephone: 01350000 Ext. 4371).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or to report a complaint, you may call:

IRB, AUB: 01-350000 Ext. 5543 or 5540

## Appendix B

## Questionnaire Packet

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:   ☐ Male   ☐ Female

How many years have you lived in Lebanon? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you prefer Western or Arabic music?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exclusively Western	Mostly Western and some Arab	Both Western and Arab	Mostly Arab and some Western	Exclusively Arab	No preference	Other

Do you prefer Western or Arabic TV programs?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exclusively Western	Mostly Western and some Arab	Both Western and Arab	Mostly Arab and some Western	Exclusively Arab	No preference	Other

## Bicultural Identity Integration Scale – Version 1 – Modified

*Instructions: Please rate the extent to which you agree with the statements below using the following scale:*

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am simply a Westerner who lives in the Arab world.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I keep Western and Arab cultures separate.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel Western-Arab.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel part of a combined culture.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am conflicted between Arab and Western ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel like someone moving between two cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel caught between Western and Arab cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I do not feel trapped between Western and Arab cultures.	1	2	3	4	5

## Sixfold Self-Construal Scale

**Instructions:** Below, you will find a series of questions that revolve around your perception of yourself. Each question is followed by a set of **6** possible categories: family, friends, social groupings, school/department peers, humanity in general, and personal self.

Social groupings could be any of the following: *political group/party, Governmental institution, or religious affiliation.*

**Make sure to read each question carefully. Thank you.**

Scale use

You are asked to mark, from a low of 1 to a high of 5 the **frequency/magnitude** that most reflects your response to each question. Please respond to each question **AND** to each item within that question.

1	2	3	4	5
To a very small extent	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	To a very large extent

Example:

**I enjoy eating the following fruit:**

Cherries

Watermelons

Strawberries

Mango

Pears

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

**1)- I think of myself as connected (linked) to :**

My family

My friends

Students in my department/faculty

My social grouping

Humanity in general

Myself (I am a unique person separate from others)

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

**2)- I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes (interests) of :**

My family  
 My friends  
 Students in my department/faculty  
 My social grouping  
 Humanity in general  
 Myself (I act as an independent person)

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

**3)- I am affected by events that concern(relate) to :**

My family  
 My friends  
 Students in my department/faculty  
 My social grouping  
 Humanity in general  
 Myself

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

**4)- I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of :**

My family  
 My friends  
 Students in my department/faculty  
 My social grouping  
 Humanity in general  
 Myself

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

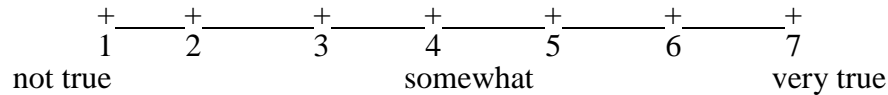
**5)- I feel I have a strong relationship with :**

My family  
 My friends  
 Students in my department/faculty  
 My social grouping  
 Humanity in general  
 Myself (I am an independent person)

1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

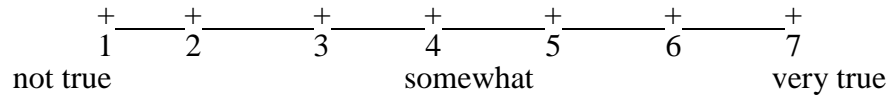
## Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding – Version 6

*Directions:* Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how true it is.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I don't care to know what other people really think of me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I have not always been honest with myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I always know why I like things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Once I've made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am fully in control of my own fate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I never regret my decisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My parents were not always fair when they punished me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I am a completely rational person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I rarely appreciate criticism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I am very confident of my judgments
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do.

*Directions:* Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how true it is.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I sometimes tell lies if I have to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I never cover up my mistakes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I never swear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his/her back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I always declare everything at customs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. When I was young I sometimes stole things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I have never dropped litter on the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I never read sexy books or magazines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I have done things that I don't tell other people about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I never take things that don't belong to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I have taken sick-leave from work or school even though I wasn't really sick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I have some pretty awful habits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. I don't gossip about other people's business.



## Indigenous Social Desirability Scale

**Directions:** You are asked to mark below the response that is most true of your level of agreement for each question. The scale features the following choices:

1	2	3	4	5

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree, Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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1. I easily forgive those who offend me	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have received excessive change in a store and said nothing about it	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would accept a bribe if the benefit I received were considerable	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would steal if no one caught me at it	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would omit the truth if it were going to damage me	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am kind to all people, regardless of their way of being	1	2	3	4	5
7. I easily forget the offenses committed against me	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have spoken ill of my friends without them knowing about it	1	2	3	4	5
9. I constantly try to make up with my enemies	1	2	3	4	5
10. I tell lies if I know that I will not be discovered	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am willing to aid people in any situation	1	2	3	4	5
12. When facing certain problems, the most comfortable solution is to bribe whoever is necessary	1	2	3	4	5
13. I forget other people's faults, even if they hurt me very much	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have avoided returning something which did not belong to me by faking forgetfulness	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix C

## Factor Loadings – Factor Analyses of SSCS

The following 10 items loaded onto the Relational Self-Construal Subscale of the SSCS: SCS\_1\_1, SCS\_1\_2, SCS\_2\_1, SCS\_2\_2, SCS\_3\_1, SCS\_3\_2, SCS\_4\_1, SCS\_4\_2, SCS\_5\_1, and SCS\_5\_2. The Cronbach's alpha for the Relational subscale was .85.

The following 10 items loaded onto the Collective Self-Construal Subscale of the SSCS: SCS\_1\_3, SCS\_1\_4, SCS\_2\_3, SCS\_2\_4, SCS\_3\_3, SCS\_3\_4, SCS\_4\_3, SCS\_4\_4, SCS\_5\_3, and SCS\_5\_4. The Cronbach's alpha for the Collective subscale was .88.

The following 10 items loaded onto the Personal Self-Construal Subscale of the SSCS: SCS\_1\_6, SCS\_2\_6, SCS\_3\_6, SCS\_4\_6, and SCS\_5\_6. The Cronbach's alpha for the Personal subscale was .76.

*Table 6*  
*Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>*

	Component		
	1	2	3
I feel I have a strong relationship with students in my department/faculty	.75		
I feel I have a strong relationship with my social grouping	.72		
I am affected by events that concern my social grouping	.71		
I am affected by events that concern students in my department/faculty	.71		
I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of students in my department/faculty	.70		
I think of myself as connected to students in my department/faculty	.68		

I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes of students in my department/faculty	.67	
I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of my social grouping	.65	
I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes of my social grouping	.64	
I think of myself as connected to my social grouping	.60	
I am affected by events that concern my family	.74	
I am affected by events that concern my friends	.72	
I feel I have a strong relationship with my friends	.68	
I think of myself as connected to my family	.66	
I feel I have a strong relationship with my family	.64	
I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of my family	.59	
I think of myself as connected to my friends	.59	
I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of my friends	.56	
I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes of my family	.53	
I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes of my friends	.38	-.37
I feel I have a strong relationship with myself		.76
I control my behaviour to accommodate the wishes of myself		.68
I am aware of the needs, desires and goals of myself		.68
I think of myself as connected to myself		.59
I am affected by events that concern myself		.58

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

*Table 7*  
*Reliability Statistics for the 'personal', relational', and 'collective' self-construals*

Construal	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Personal	.76	5
Relational	.85	10
Collective	.88	10

## Factor Loadings – Factor Analyses of BIDR

The factor structure below is the result of an exploratory factor analysis set at an eigen value of 1. A varimax rotation was applied as the original literature suggests that the factors of SDE and IM are independent of each other (Paulhus, 1991). The resulting structure suggests a 13 factor solution.

All items were included in the Self-Enhancement Subscale of the BIDR except for items SDE\_7 and SDE\_13. These items were removed as they improved the Cronbach's alpha from .65 to .69. All even numbered items between 1 and 20 on the SDE scale were reverse coded for analysis.

All items were included on the Impression Management Subscale of the BIDR. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .76. This alpha did not improve by removing any of the included items. All odd numbered items between 21 and 40 on the IM scale were reverse coded for analysis.

Factor loadings with coefficients below .30 were excluded from the scale. RC refers to items that were re-coded before analysis

Table 8  
 Rotated Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Factor												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
I have never dropped litter on the street.	.59												
I never take things that don't belong to me.	.57							.30					
I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught.	.52												
When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.	.51												
I sometimes tell lies if I have to.	.39		.32										
I don't gossip about other people's business.		.56											
When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking.		.54											
It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought.		.52											
I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough.		.50								-.32			
I have some pretty awful habits.		.47											
I have not always been honest with myself.		.46											
I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do.	.31	.34											
My parents were not always fair when they punished me.													
There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.			.69										
I have said something bad about a friend behind his/her back.			.58										

# SELF-CONSTRUALS AND SDR

I don't gossip about other people's business.	.38	.40		
When I was young I sometimes stole things.		.39		
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.		.37		
I am very confident of my judgments			.67	
I never regret my decisions.			.63	
My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.			.45	
I am fully in control of my own fate.			.39	
I am a completely rational person.			.34	
It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.			.71	
I don't care to know what other people really think of me.			.51	
I have done things that I don't tell other people about.			.51	
I have taken sick-leave from work or school even though I wasn't really sick.			.38	
I never cover up my mistakes.			.36	
I rarely appreciate criticism.				.54
I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit.				-.45
I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit.				.33
I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.				.48
I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it.	.32			.36
I never read sexy books or magazines.				.44

# SELF-CONSTRUALS AND SDR

Once I've made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion.	.42			
I never swear.	.38			
The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference.		.47		
I always know why I like things			.50	
I always declare everything at customs.				.66
I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover.				.47

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Extraction Method: Alpha Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 15 iterations.

*Table 9*

*Reliability Statistics for the SDE and IM subscales*

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
SDE	.69	18
IM	.76	20

## Appendix D

## Regression with Transformed Variables

## Predictors of SDE

The tables below display the results of the regression analysis run to determine the predictors of self-deceptive enhancement. The variables Personal\_Transformed, Relational\_Transformed, and Collective were entered into the first block under the forward method.

As in the untransformed regression, the model accounts for 2% of the variation in the dependent variable ( $R^2 = .02$ ). The only significant predictor of SDE is the personal construal (now transformed),  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ , however, this beta is now negative as compared to the untransformed regression ( $\beta = .14$ ).

*Table 10*  
*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.14 <sup>a</sup>	.02	.02	.65	.02	5.90	1.00	292.00	.02

a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal\_TR

*Table 11*  
*Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	4.38	.07			67.08	.00
	Personal_TR	-.59	.24	-.14		-2.43	.02

a. Dependent Variable: SDE\_avg



Predictors of IM

As was the case with non-transformed analysis, there were no significant predictors found for IM when the transformed variables were used.

