

# Cross-Cultural Differences in the Transformation of Motivation in Close Relationships

## Background

- The Transformation of Motivation (ToM) means **Inhibiting self-centered impulses** and **choosing to engage pro-relationship behaviors** instead when accommodative dilemmas happen (Rusbult & Arriaga, 2000).
- ToM is epitomized in many forms, including sacrifice, forgiveness, accommodative behaviors, and other pro-relationship behaviors (Schroeder et al., 2015).
- However, research on ToM is still mostly from **individualistic, independent contexts** (Karney & Bradbury, 2020; Williamson et al., 2021). The conclusions from independent contexts might not hold true in a more interdependent context
- Individuals from a more **interdependent background** are closely tied to and influenced by their social partners. Therefore, it is likely that they are **less likely to default to self-centered behaviors** in accommodative dilemmas (Heine, 2016; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
- This study replicates a seminal study of ToM (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994) to examine if there is a cross-cultural difference in the process of the Transformation of Motivation.

## Research Questions

- Does the process of ToM happen across cultures?
  - H1: ToM happens across cultures.
- Is there any cross-cultural difference in ToM?
  - H2: The magnitude of the ToM is larger for European Americans than for Thai.

## Method

### Sample

- Data was collected from 187 participants from two public universities in Thailand and the United States. Specifically, there were 97 Thai participants and 90 White (European background) American participants.
- 80.7% of the participants were female, 17.2% were male, and 2.0% were other/non-binary. The average age of the participants was 24, ranging from 18 to 55.
- All participants were currently in a romantic relationship of >1 month duration.

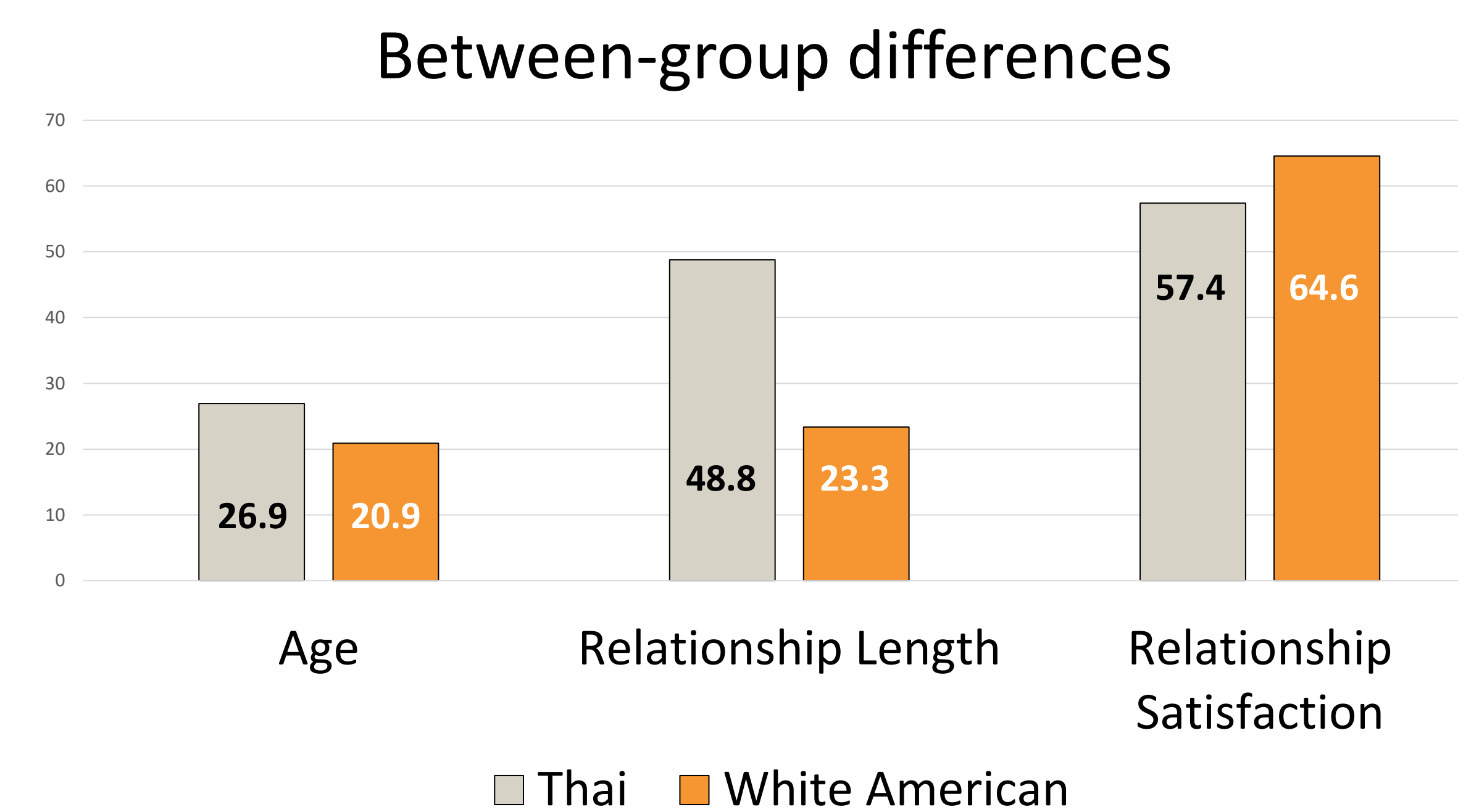
## Method (continued)

### Procedures

We replicated study 1 of Yovetich & Rusbult (1994).

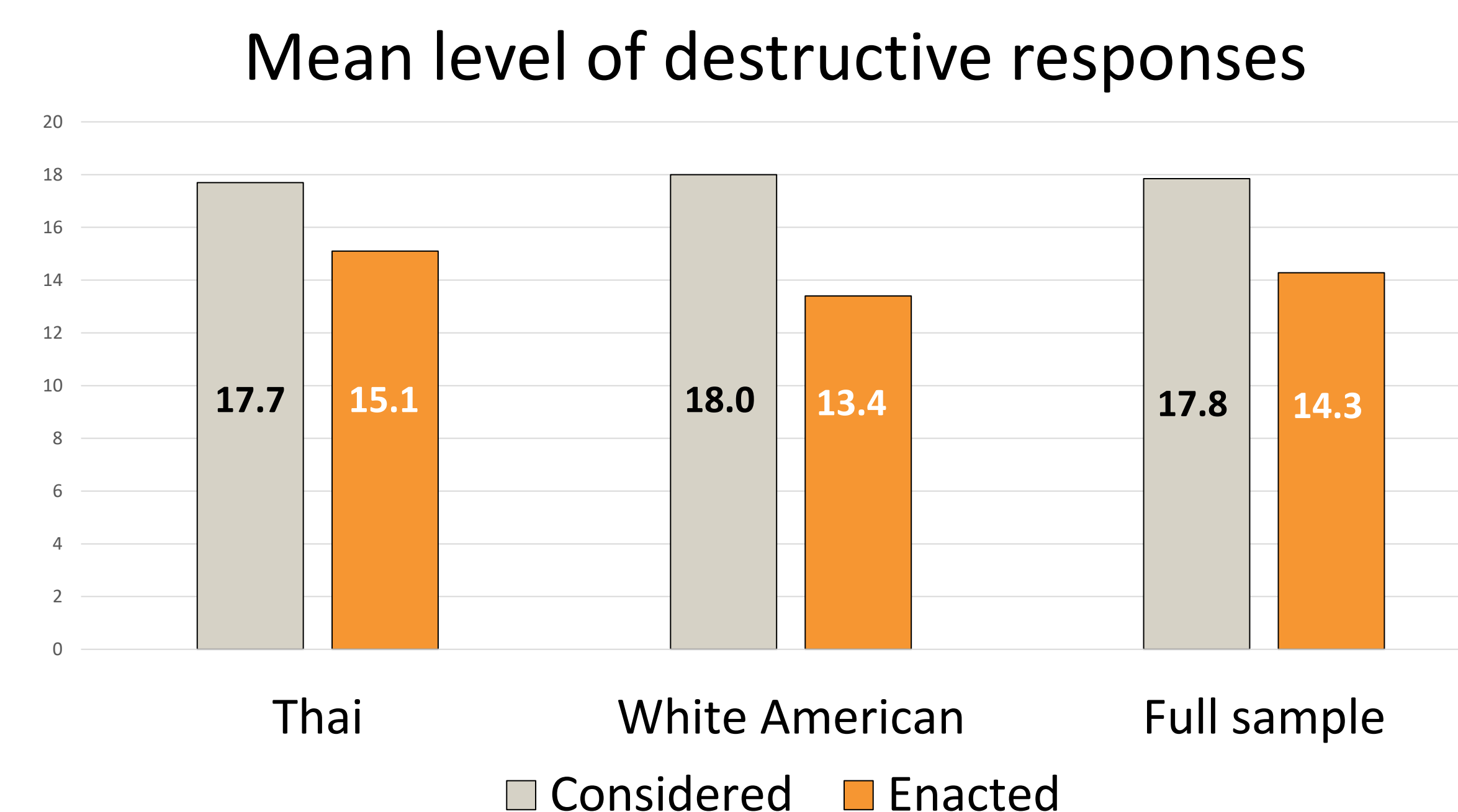
- Participants described **“the most memorable incident when your partner said or did something that made you feel upset or angry.”**
- Participants were asked to rate (1-5) their **considered** and **enacted** responses from a list of Exit-Voice-Loyal-Neglect (Rusbult et al., 1991).
- We calculated Exit and Neglect because they are regarded as destructive responses.

## Results



### Results for Research Question 1

The average destructive responses by culture is shown below. The results of *t*-test show that the ToM did happen across cultures, such that **considered destructive responses were higher than enacted destructive responses** for all sample and both subsamples ( $p < .001$ ).

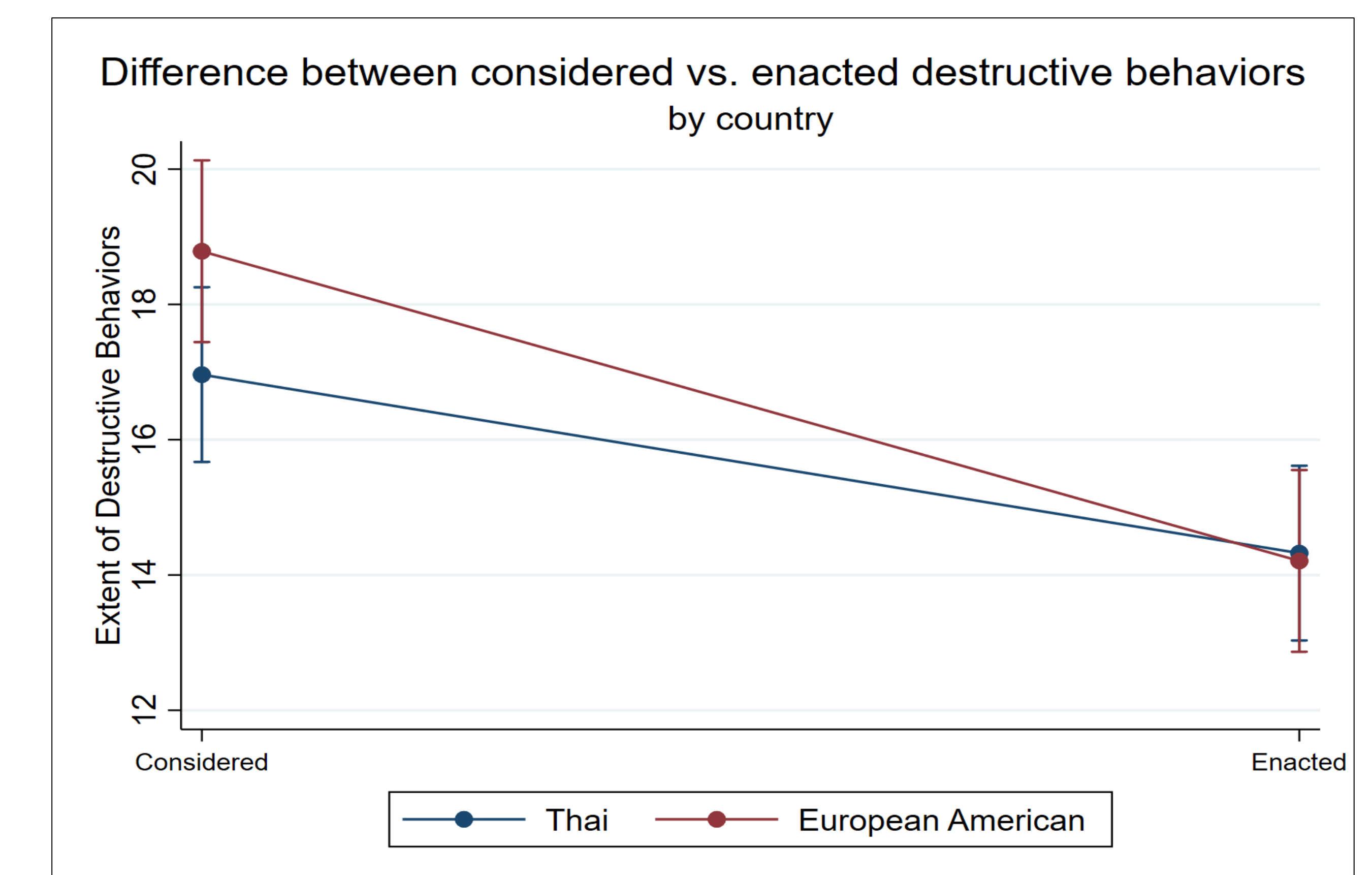


## Results (continued)

### Results for Research Question 2

Due to the between-group differences, we did a mixed model with Restricted Maximum Likelihood (REML) controlling for relationship length and satisfaction. The results indicate that the **magnitude of the ToM process did differ between countries** ( $F = -1.93, p = .007$ ), indicating cross-cultural differences in the ToM process.

Post hoc contrasts show that there was no difference in enacted destructive responses ( $\chi^2 = .01, p = .906$ ), but American participants considered more destructive behaviors than Thai participants, at a marginally significant level ( $\chi^2 = 3.48, p = .062$ ).



## Discussion & Future Directions

- The Transformation of Motivation happens across cultures, but is attenuated in individuals from an interdependent background, whose initial responses to a partner's transgression are less destructive.
- Further investigation of cross-cultural differences in the Transformation of Motivation is warranted to determine the implications of this difference for relationship functioning.