



## The interpersonal effects of emotions in money versus candy games

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### ABSTRACT

Emotional expressions significantly influence perceivers' behavior in economic games and negotiations. The current research examined the interpersonal effects of emotions when such information cannot be used to guide behavior for increasing personal gain and when monetary rewards are made salient. For this, a one-shot Public Goods Game (Studies 1, 2, and 3) and Dictator Game (Studies 4 and 5) were employed, in which the dominant strategy to maximize personal payoff is independent from the counterplayers' intention signaled through their facial expressions (happiness, sadness, and anger). To elicit a monetary mindset, we used money (vs. candy) as the mode of exchange in the games with (Studies 1 and 2) or without (Studies 3, 4, and 5) additional contextual framing (i.e. Wall Street Game vs. Community Game). Across five studies ( $N = 1211$ ), participants were found to be more generous towards happy and sad targets compared to angry ones. Such behavioral response based on emotional information was accounted for by the trait impressions (i.e. likability, trustworthiness) formed of the counterplayer. This effect was significantly reduced when money acted as the mode of exchange, thereby making participants focus more on their self-gain. Together, the findings extend previous work by highlighting the social functional role of emotions in human exchange and its moderation by money as a transaction medium.

### 1. Introduction

Our decisions are not only guided by personal feelings and emotions, but also by those of other people with whom we interact (Van Kleef, 2009). In recent years, the interpersonal effects of emotion on social behavior (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010) have become increasingly acknowledged. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that behavior in negotiation settings and bargaining (e.g. Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004), as well as in economic games (e.g. de Melo, Carnevale, Read, & Gratch, 2014; Krumhuber et al., 2007; Van der Schalk, Kuppens, Bruder, & Manstead, 2015) can be shaped by the emotional displays of another person (i.e. counterpart).

However, the overwhelming majority of these studies were structured in a way such that participants and their interaction partner(s) are interdependent by having the ability to mutually influence each other's material outcome. In those situations, the emotions expressed by the counterplayers are also often directed at participants or their behavior during interaction (e.g. Adam & Brett, 2015; Côté, Hideg, & Van Kleef, 2013; Lelieveld, Van Dijk, Van Beest, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2011; Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006). Thus, the emotional displays offer crucial information with respect to participants' private payoff chances.

Attending to these signals and adjusting one's behavior accordingly facilitates personal gain. The question then arises whether people are still sensitive to their interaction partners' emotions when those cannot be used to guide behavior for maximizing self-gain. And does such emotional responsiveness vary with the type of exchange between two partners?

Universally, money acts as the medium of exchange. The prevalence of money as an incentive can be observed not only in laboratory settings but also in real life. While people generally assume that money serves as the canonical object of desire for motivating human decision-making (Lea & Webley, 2006), the presence of money naturally activates a market-pricing mode (Fiske, 1992; Mead & Stuppy, 2014). As a result, it facilitates self-serving but impairs other-oriented behaviors (e.g. Kasser, 2016; Zaleskiewicz, Gasiorowska, & Vohs, 2017). The second aim of this research, therefore, was to study whether money as a transaction medium moderates perceivers' responses to an interaction partner's expressed emotion.

#### 1.1. Social functions of emotion and trait perception

People not only have subjective emotional experiences, but also express emotions to communicate how they feel and think (Van Kleef,

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2009). These emotional signals can be observed by one's interaction partner and have the potential to crucially impact their behavior (Van Kleef, 2009). The idea that emotions act as an interpersonal source of information is captured by the interpersonal approach to emotions, which is also in line with the social functions perspective of emotions. Accordingly, people are social by nature and express emotions as a useful means to coordinate social decision-making situations (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). The emotional displays in turn help observers to understand others' social intentions (e.g. affiliate, dominate, or signal the need for help), thereby guiding behavior towards efficient social coordination.

In this vein, a growing body of research on the interpersonal effects of emotions has demonstrated that behavioral responses can be significantly shaped by another person's emotion. This was typically shown to be the case when two or more interaction partners are interdependent, i.e. they rely on each other to achieve mutual gain, and/or the emotion expressed by one party is directed at another person or his/her behavior (e.g. Adam & Brett, 2015; Côté et al., 2013; Lelieveld et al., 2011; Pietroni, Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Pagliaro, 2008; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Dijk et al., 2008). In those situations, understanding a partner's emotion and adjusting one's behavior accordingly allows one to achieve optimal coordination, which in turn facilitates personal gain.

While facial expressions can be used to predict a target's immediate behavior during interaction, such displays may also be seen as informative with respect to long-term behavioral tendencies as in the case of trait perceptions (Knutson, 1996). In this context, inferences from emotional expressions are overgeneralized to judgments of the person's character. This could apply especially to incidental emotions which are not directed at any particular person or event, thereby potentially signaling to others long-term dispositional traits (Knutson, 1996). Consistent with this notion, it has been shown that happiness and sadness elicit higher ratings of trustworthiness than does anger, probably because they communicate the general intention for affiliation and social closeness (e.g. Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000; Sutherland, Young, & Rhodes, 2017). As such, it seems possible that facial emotions impact others' judgement and behavior in the absence of any interdependence between two parties and when information about the interaction partner is limited such as in zero acquaintance situations (Kenny, 1994). Indeed, there is evidence showing that people are more likely to offer help to strangers who appear likable and attractive (e.g. West & Brown, 1975; Wilson, 1978) and punish more severely those who look untrustworthy (e.g. Porter, ten Brinke, & Gustaw, 2010; Wilson & Rule, 2015). For the present research, we therefore tested whether participants would base their decisions on trait information (e.g., trustworthiness, likability) derived from the counterplayer's facial expression, even when there is no need to rely on it for optimizing personal gain.

### 1.2. The moderating role of money

People establish different forms of relationships to meet their varied needs (Fiske, 1992). Market pricing mode is one of the fundamental modes people use to construct their social relations, thereby shaping how they perceive and interact with others (Fiske, 1992). Given that transactions outside one's close social circle, i.e. via economic trade, are beneficial for securing goods and services, market pricing has emerged with the advent of money. As a result, relationships in which money acts as the medium of exchange or salient cue are guided by measurable metrics which allow for direct cost-benefit calculations (Mead & Stuppy, 2014).

In line with this notion, empirical evidence has demonstrated that money affects people's attitudes and responses to emotions. Activating the concept of money, for example by exposing people to monetary cues (i.e. words and images), decreases the tendency to express emotions and leads to more unfavorable reactions to others' emotions (Jiang,

Chen, & Wyer, 2014). Further research showed that money-related incentives or thoughts reduce the accuracy of emotional inferences (Ma-Kellams & Blascovich, 2013), compassion towards unfortunate others (Molinsky, Grant, & Margolis, 2012; Stellar, Manzo, Kraus, & Keltner, 2012), and perspective-taking (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Van Laer, De Ruyter, & Cox, 2013). They also undermine motives to perceive a mind in irrelevant targets (Wang & Krumhuber, 2017) and impair theory of mind ability (Ridinger & McBride, 2015).

These detrimental effects could largely be due to the fact that money makes people prioritize themselves, while in parallel it reduces their intention for interpersonal closeness and bonding. For example, it was found that individuals who are chronically in a monetary mindset (e.g. economics students and people who highly value money) or those situated in a monetary relation (i.e. consumers) tend to behave more selfishly and feel less responsible for their selfish acts (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, & Bodenhausen, 2012; Sheldon & McGregor, 2000; Wang, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2011). Furthermore, basketball and hockey players were shown to engage in more self-serving behaviors during their final year of contract when money is naturally more salient relative to previous years (Beus & Whitman, 2017). Rather than nourishing intimacy (e.g. Kasser & Ryan, 2001; Kushlev, Dunn, & Ashton-James, 2012), people seem to construe personal relations with others in an instrumental manner (Andrighetto, Baldissarri, & Volpato, 2017; Teng, Chen, Poon, Zhang, & Jiang, 2016). In consequence, communal and other-oriented behaviors like caring and helpfulness are impaired by money (DeVoe & Pfeffer, 2007; Gasiorowska, Zaleskiewicz, & Wygrab, 2012; Roberts & Roberts, 2012). If this assumption holds for the present research, the tendency to consider affective responses is likely to be reduced when money is made salient. As a result, people in the monetary mode should be less affected by their partner's emotion when making decisions.

### 1.3. The present research

While there is converging evidence for the impact of emotional displays on decision-making when two parties are mutually dependent, the present research first aimed to examine the interpersonal effects of emotions when a) those are incidental, i.e. they occur in the absence of an emotion-eliciting event; hence, they mainly serve as trait information, and b) the counterparts' emotions cannot guide behavior for maximizing personal payoff, i.e. there is no real interdependency between the players. The second aim of this research was to study whether money as a transaction medium moderates such effects.

To this end, we employed two commonly used economic games: the Public Goods Game (PGG) and Dictator Game (DG). While the dominant strategy to maximize personal payoff is independent from others' intention in the one-shot version of the PGG, participants' reliance on the counterplayer is further reduced in the DG. The counterparts' expressions in the games systematically differed in terms of their emotions and portrayed either happiness, sadness or anger. While happiness conveys an intention for affiliation and cooperation, sadness signals the need for help and elicits compassion, both indicating a potential for social closeness. By contrast, anger communicates threat and hostility (e.g. Hess et al., 2000; Krumhuber & Manstead, 2009; McLellan, Johnston, Dalrymple-Alford, & Porter, 2010). Despite the fact that the emotion portrayals are not relevant for guiding behaviors to maximize personal payoff, we expected them to exert basic social functions in the formation of trait impressions (e.g. Fischer & Manstead, 2008; Knutson, 1996), resulting in higher offers being made in response to happy and sad counterparts compared to angry ones.

To elicit a monetary mindset, we used money as the mode of exchange in the game with (Studies 1 and 2) or without (Studies 3, 4, and 5) additional contextual framing (i.e. Wall Street Game). Situational labels such as the name of the game can shape people's behaviors by evoking different norms of behavior (Ellingsen, Johannesson, Mollerstrom, & Munkhammar, 2012; Liberman, Samuels, & Ross,

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