



## Emotions as strategic information: Effects of other's emotional expressions on fixed-pie perception, demands, and integrative behavior in negotiation <sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Negotiators often fail to reach integrative ("win-win") agreements because they think that their own and other's preferences are diametrically opposed—the so-called fixed-pie perception. We examined how verbal (Experiment 1) and nonverbal (Experiment 2) emotional expressions may reduce fixed-pie perception and promote integrative behavior. In a two-issue computer-simulated negotiation, participants negotiated with a counterpart emitting one of the following emotional response patterns: (1) anger on both issues, (2) anger on participant's high priority issue and happiness on participant's low-priority issue, (3) happiness on high priority issue and anger on low-priority issue, or (4) happiness on both issues. In both studies, the third pattern reduced fixed-pie perception and increased integrative behavior, whereas the second pattern amplified bias and reduced integrative behavior. Implications for how emotions shape social exchange are discussed.

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Negotiation is one of the most common and constructive ways of dealing with conflict. It can be defined as the joint decision making between interdependent individuals aimed at resolving a perceived divergence of interests (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Successful negotiation is associated with many positive consequences, including satisfaction with outcomes, stable relations between individuals and groups, and social and economic growth. Even though most negotiations allow for integrative ("win-win") agreements that satisfy all parties' needs, negotiators often reach suboptimal outcomes that fail to satisfy parties' goals and thereby undermine stability, satisfaction, and peaceful relations.

One of the main reasons why negotiators often fail to make use of integrative potential in negotiations lies in their inaccurate perceptions of their counterpart's preferences and priorities—the so-called *fixed-pie perception* (Bazerman & Neale, 1983; Thompson & Hastie, 1990). When negotiators lack information about other's preferences and priorities, as they often do, they tend to assume that the other wants the same, and values the same things in the same way as they do. The size of the pie thus is perceived to be fixed, and own and other's preferences are perceived as diametrically opposed (Schelling, 1960). Fixed-pie perceptions lead negoti-

ators to engage in distributive bargaining and to forego possibilities for integrative agreement, typically resulting in sub-optimal agreements (De Dreu, 2003; De Dreu, Koole, & Steinel, 2000; Gelfand & Christakopoulou, 1999; Harinck, De Dreu, & Van Vianen, 2000; Pinkley, Griffith, & Northcraft, 1995; Thompson, 1991; Thompson & Hastie, 1990).

It is important to acknowledge that the fixed-pie perception is not necessarily inaccurate. There are situations in which parties' preferences are indeed diametrically opposed and the issues on the table are equally important to both parties. For instance, when parties negotiate a single issue that is of equal value to both, their interests are perfectly opposed. However, when more than one issue is involved there are often possibilities for an integrative agreement, as the parties often attach differential value to the different issues. For example, a car salesman may attach greater subjective value to the delivery time of a car than to its price, whereas the reverse may be true for the buyer. When we talk about "overcoming the fixed-pie perception" in this paper, we therefore assume that many multi-issue negotiations offer some degree of integrative potential (while realizing that some negotiations do not).

In many cases the fixed-pie perception could be overcome simply by exchanging factual information regarding mutual preferences and priorities. However, because of the multitude of competitive incentives present in negotiation, parties may be reluctant to explicitly exchange information about preferences and priorities, and readily suspect ulterior motives behind their partner's communications (De Dreu & Steinel, 2006). Thus, a car

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salesman is unlikely to disclose to a potential buyer that to him price is only a secondary issue compared to delivery time, even though providing such information may increase the chances of both parties successfully working out a mutually beneficial integrative agreement.

Although negotiators may be reluctant to engage in explicit information exchange, and to trust explicitly given information, we argue that they often deduce relevant insights from a variety of other sources, including nonverbal cues, facial expressions, and hearsay. Building on the idea that emotions provide social information (e.g., Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004b), we argue and show that, even in the absence of explicit information exchange, counterparts' emotional expressions may lead negotiators to revise their fixed-pie perceptions and to discover the negotiation's integrative potential.

### Emotions as strategic information

There is increasing consensus that emotions play an essential role in regulating social interactions (Barry, Fulmer, & Van Kleef, 2004; Frijda, 1986; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Morris & Keltner, 2000; Oatley & Jenkins, 1992; Parkinson, 1996; Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b). The basic premise is that emotions have important social functions and consequences. Most notably, emotions function as communications to both oneself (Schwarz & Clore, 1983) and other people, conveying information about one's social intentions, one's orientation toward others, and one's goals and desires (Fridlund, 1994; Knutson, 1996). In line with this notion it has been suggested that, in the context of a negotiation, emotions may signal what value negotiators attach to the different issues at hand (Putnam, 1994). Such information could be of great importance, for an accurate understanding of a counterpart's preferences and priorities is a necessary precondition for the type of integrative negotiation behavior that produces superior outcomes.

In thinking about the informational value of emotions in negotiation, it is important to consider the distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal effects of emotions (cf. Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Morris & Keltner, 2000). Intrapersonal effects refer to the influence of a negotiator's mood state on his or her own judgments and behavior. Influential models that have guided research on such intrapersonal effects include the affect-as-information model (Schwarz & Clore, 1983), affect-priming models (e.g., Bower, 1981; Isen, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978), and the affect infusion model (Forgas, 1995). The interpersonal approach that is currently gaining momentum, in contrast, addresses the question of how one individual's emotional expressions affect one or more other individuals in the social context (e.g., Morris & Keltner, 2000; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). A crucial difference between the approaches, besides the level of analysis, is that intrapersonal models focus predominantly on incidental affect (mood states that are unrelated to the judgment at hand), whereas interpersonal models focus primarily on emotions that arise from the social interaction and are therefore pertinent to the situation. The focus of the present study is on these interpersonal effects of emotions.

A number of negotiation studies support the idea that emotions provide strategic information at the interpersonal level. For instance, Van Kleef et al. (2004a, 2004b) showed, in a computer-mediated negotiation setting, that participants who negotiated with an angry opponent judged their counterpart's limits as more ambitious than did those with a happy opponent. As a result, participants made larger concessions to an angry opponent than to a happy one, especially when they were motivated

to process the information conveyed by the other's emotions. Likewise, Sinaceur and Tiedens (2006) showed, in a face-to-face context, that angry negotiators were perceived as tougher than non-emotional negotiators, which led participants to concede more to angry counterparts than to non-emotional ones. These patterns could be explained in terms of *mismatching*, the tendency of negotiators to make large concessions to a relatively tough counterpart and small concessions to a relatively lenient counterpart (Pruitt, 1981; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Van Kleef et al., 2004a).

So far the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiation have mostly been examined in distributive bargaining settings, where one party's gain equals the other's loss (for a rare exception, see Butt, Choi, & Jaeger, 2005). We contend that emotions can potentially be of even greater consequence in negotiations with integrative potential, where an opponent's emotional expressions may inform negotiators about the other's preferences and priorities. Our central argument is that emotional expressions play an important role in confirming or disconfirming negotiators' (often erroneous) beliefs about their counterpart's priorities, thus determining negotiators' success in developing integrative strategies and finding stable, mutually satisfying agreements.

### Present study and hypotheses

In previous studies on the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiation, participants were confronted with an opponent expressing one particular emotion targeted at the participant's general negotiation behavior. In the present study we focus on the effects of a counterpart's expressions of anger and happiness in a two-issue negotiation, where one issue is of high importance to the focal negotiator and the other issue is of low importance. In the context of a computer-mediated negotiation, participants are confronted with a counterpart who expresses either anger or happiness in response to the participant's proposal regarding his or her high priority issue, and expresses anger or happiness in response to the participant's proposal regarding his or her low priority issue. Thus, in contrast to previous studies, the counterpart's emotions arise in response to the individual offers participants make on each issue, and participants may therefore also receive a combination of angry and happy reactions. Compared to previous research this situation more closely mirrors real-life emotional expression, which often entails a mixed-bag of emotions rather than unambiguous emotion statements (Scherer & Tannenbaum, 1986).

Perhaps more important, at least for present purposes, combinations of emotions may provide especially useful strategic information in negotiation. We know from the emotion literature that emotions arise in response to situations that frustrate (negative emotion) or facilitate (positive emotion) the attainment of valued goals (Frijda, 1986; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Therefore, if a counterpart expresses anger in response to a focal negotiator's proposal on a particular issue, the focal negotiator may infer that the other attaches great value to that issue. Conversely, if a counterpart expresses happiness regarding a focal negotiator's proposal, the focal negotiator may infer that the other's wishes have been satisfied and/or that the issue is of low importance to the other (Putnam, 1994; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Inferences such as these may inspire the mismatching tendency that we alluded to earlier, which involves placing high demands when one's counterpart appears conciliatory, and low demands when the counterpart appears tough (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Pruitt, 1981).

Following this reasoning, negotiators who are confronted with an angry reaction in response to their offer on their high priority

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