Bottom-up influences in representative negotiations: How representatives affect intra-inter group relations
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Chapter 5

General Discussion
Representative negotiations play a vital role in regulating intergroup conflict. However, how exactly do representatives contribute to the conflict regulation process? Is it by negotiating a highly satisfying agreement? If so, is negotiating a satisfying agreement sufficient to sustain high quality intergroup relations? Although the former question has been addressed by many researchers who took a top-down approach, an equally important one that has received much less attention is the latter - how does the representative negotiation process influence, over and beyond the ultimate outcome, inter- and intra-group relations? Yet answering this question is important, because in the absence of such information, representatives may focus their effort and energy on negotiating a relatively satisfying agreement without paying much attention to the process. Reaching a satisfying agreement may sometimes involve using tough negotiation strategies or ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics, which have been shown to improve the negotiated outcome. However how do these tough negotiation tactics or ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics influence intergroup relations as well as our perception of the in-group representative? Do we always support a representative who uses tough tactics or does it depend on the social context we are in? Do we respond negatively when such tough tactics are from the opponent group? If so, does our negative perception spill over to the members of the out-group who were not even involved in the negotiation process? Finding an answer to these questions can provide a more complete picture for the role of representatives, and their impact, in intergroup conflict regulation. Thus, to complement research that has mainly focused on top down influences, in this dissertation my first focus was on the role of ingroup representative behavior on constituents’ justification of their representative’s negotiation behavior as well as the likelihood of maintaining this representative for future negotiations. My second focus was on the role of the representative negotiation process in shaping overarching intergroup relations regardless of the negotiated outcome. In the following section, I discuss the core findings from this dissertation.

Overview of Core Findings

Part I: Bottom-up Influences on Ingroup Perceptions

In Chapter 2, I focused on ingroup representative’s negotiation tactics that varied in ethicality and associated potential benefits and costs to the ingroup. It is common for representatives to have private information in negotiations, and they can
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either share this information with the other party to maintain honesty, or omit such information in order to increase their chances of winning the negotiation. In such situations, constituent members may experience a dilemma between belonging to an honest and fair group versus increasing the chances of winning in the negotiations. Given this tension, I decided to investigate the effect of information sharing versus withholding on constituents’ justification and their tendencies to maintain their representative for future negotiations. Furthermore, I tested under what conditions constituents become more tolerant towards (un)ethical negotiation tactics of their representative.

Overall, the studies reported in Chapter 2 showed that, unless ethically ambiguous tactics can be justified by the context, constituents are more likely to maintain a representative who behaves in a clearly moral way (shares information despite the potential cost to their group) compared to a representative who uses ethically ambiguous tactics (withholding information). It was proposed that under threatening situations such as in value conflicts, tactics that reduce the need to compromise, namely withholding information, may become more justifiable. Indeed, under low threat and in resource conflicts, constituents justified withholding information less than sharing information, despite the associated potential losses with information sharing. Under high threat and in value conflicts however, representatives who withheld information were equally likely to be re-elected as representatives who shared information. In sum, these findings show that constituent members can stretch their moral standards to justify ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics when they feel threatened as it occurs when values rather than resources are at stake.

Part II: Bottom-up Influences on Out-group Perceptions

In Chapter 3, we complemented the traditional top-down approach and found evidence for bottom-up influences of representative negotiations on the broader intergroup relations, regardless of the negotiated outcome. First we showed that competitive communication by an outgroup representative, as opposed to cooperative and neutral communication conditions, increased ingroup members’ outgroup derogation. Although we did not find a significant difference between the cooperative and the neutral condition, previous research suggests that repeated positive contact is necessary in order to facilitate better intergroup relations (Pettigrew, 1998). In our
experiment constituents had a one-time contact with the outgroup representative, hence cooperative behavior of the outgroup representative may not have been as effective for improving intergroup relations. Furthermore, we found that competitive communication by an outgroup representative decreased ingroup members’ outcome satisfaction (as opposed to both neutral and cooperative conditions) even though the outcome was exactly the same across conditions. This is in line with research on interpersonal negotiations, which showed that even if the negotiated outcome is the same, negotiators were less satisfied with this outcome when the negotiation process was marked by competitive rather than cooperative communication (e.g., Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006; Schei, Rognes, & De Dreu, 2008; also see Van den Bos, Wilke, Lind, & Vermunt, 1998).

In the second study reported in Chapter 3, we used a novel approach where constituents could observe the negotiations on a slowly moving graph. Via this graph, constituents could follow the concession patterns of their and the opposing group’s representative. This dynamic setting allowed us to manipulate the timing of competition by the outgroup representative. This way we could test whether competition preceded by cooperation (late competition, or early concession making) or followed by cooperation (early competition, or late concession making) has differential effects on intergroup relations as well as on outcome satisfaction. In this study, the outcome was the same across conditions, but the way representatives reached that outcome was different, and this in fact changed constituent members’ outcome satisfaction as well as their perception of the outgroup. In the late competition condition participants were less satisfied with the outcome than in the early competition condition, because participants in the former condition increased their initial outcome expectations after observing an early concession by the outgroup representative. However, such early concessions by the outgroup representative did facilitate outgroup trust and decreased social distance to the outgroup as opposed to the early competition (late concession) condition.

In chapter 4 we complemented these findings by examining when and why cooperative (as opposed to competitive) behavior by the outgroup representative does, versus does not, lead ingroup members to show constructive behavioral tendencies towards the outgroup. First underlying mechanism that we discovered in chapter 4 is the generalization process through which the representative’s characteristics may spill over to the perceptions of his entire group. However, such generalization is conditioned
upon the degree to which the representative truly represents the cooperative intentions of the outgroup. Considering this, we identified and found that such generalization of cooperative representative behavior to the entire outgroup is only likely to occur when the outgroup representative is a prototypical member. In fact, when the outgroup representative was a peripheral member, cooperative behavior led to decreased perceptions of outgroup cooperativeness and constructive behavioral tendencies towards the outgroup as opposed to a peripheral competitive representative. This was a stronger effect than what we predicted, as we only expected the effect to be weakened (rather than reversed) by a peripheral representative. Participants who observed a cooperative peripheral representative automatically thought that his group could not be nice and cooperative as the representative was not a typical outgroup member. This suggests that perhaps there is a contrast effect between the perception of a peripheral representative and the perception of the outgroup (e.g., Simpson, & Ostrom, 1976). Hence appointing an external representative to a group to which he does not necessarily belong may create a contrast effect on the perceptions of the outgroup and hence cooperative behavior of the representative may backfire.

The second representative characteristic that we examined was the representative’s competence. Given that the representative negotiation context can be rather competitive (e.g., Fein & Hilton, 1994; Kramer, 1994, 2004; Messick & Mackie, 1989), cooperative behavior is less expected in such contexts (e.g., Benton & Druckman, 1973). Accordingly, if a highly competent representative starts acting cooperatively in such a competitive environment, their unexpected behavior may harm trust (Boon & Holmes, 1991) and undermine the effect of cooperation on intergroup relations. Vice versa, a cooperative behavior by a not-so-competent representative may not come across as unexpected and hence their cooperation may instead improve intergroup relations. In Chapter 4, we tested and found that cooperative behavior of the outgroup representative led to increased outgroup trust and hence constructive behavioral tendencies towards the outgroup only when the outgroup representative signaled low competence. When the outgroup representative signaled high competence, the relationship between cooperative representative behavior and constructive behavioral tendencies was mitigated.
Findings taken together conjoin negotiation theory (e.g., De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; Bazerman & Curhan, 2000; Thompson, 1990; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992) and extant work on intergroup relations (e.g., Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010), literatures that so far developed in relative isolation. Overall, in Chapter 3 and 4, I showed that the way representatives handle negotiations may have a lasting impact on intergroup relations, regardless of the negotiated outcome. Furthermore, it was observed that the behavior of the representative during the negotiations does not always influence constituencies’ outcome satisfaction and outgroup perception in the same way. In fact, our data do not show a significant correlation between outcome satisfaction and outgroup perceptions, which suggests that one cannot simply assume better intergroup relations when parties achieve a relatively satisfying agreement. In the following sections, theoretical and practical implications of our findings will be discussed.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The results discussed in this dissertation provide evidence for the vital role of representative negotiations in regulating intergroup conflict. First, I investigated how constituency members perceive their representative’s strategies and how constituent members’ justification of these behaviors influences their tendency to maintain this representative for future negotiations. Furthermore, it was shown that, regardless of the negotiated outcome, the way representatives handle negotiations can determine whether a negotiation process will lead to conflict escalation or resolution.

In Chapter 2, differently from previous studies (e.g., Valdesolo & De Steno, 2007; Leidner & Castano, 2012; Miron, Branscombe, & Biernat, 2010), the two information management tactics (sharing vs. withholding information) were examined in the same paradigm, which allowed us to see how constituents would judge an ethically ambiguous negotiation tactic as opposed to an ethical but costly negotiation tactic. As a result I provided first time evidence that constituent members in fact prefer a representative who shares information to a representative who withholds information, despite the potential losses associated with sharing information but only under low threat and in resource conflicts. Under high threat and value conflict, constituents became less tolerant for costly information sharing and more tolerant for information withholding. This suggests that constituents’ morality perceptions can be stretched out
under particular contexts in order to justify their representative’s ethically ambiguous negotiation tactic.

Given this, under high threat and in value conflicts, constituents may turn a blind eye when an outgroup receives an unfair treatment. Constituents may thus continue to support such a representative, which may escalate the conflict rather than resolve it. Perhaps under such situations, a third party intervention can be worthwhile to make constituents more aware of their justifications for ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics. On the other hand, negotiators can use our findings to assure their position as a negotiator in future negotiations. We know from previous research that, in the absence of any information from the constituency, representatives assume that their constituency expects them to take a competitive approach to the negotiations (Benton & Druckman, 1973; Steinel, Van Kleef, Van Knippenberg, Hogg, Homan, & Moffitt, 2010). However, our results suggest that constituent members do prefer a leader who acts honestly even if honesty is costly to their group (under low threat and resource conflict), which can be considered as a very cooperative approach. Hence, representatives should not automatically act competitively and use ethically ambiguous tactics with the idea that this is the only way they can secure their constituents’ approval and support. However, under high threat situations and when negotiations involve issues related to values, representatives who wish to be reelected may want to be a little less forthcoming when it comes to sharing information with the outgroup, because under such conditions being honest does not guarantee a position for representatives in the future.

In Chapter 3, our studies showed that a representative’s competitive communication as opposed to cooperative and neutral communication can increase derogative behavior towards the outgroup regardless of the negotiated outcome. As previous research mostly focused on how constituencies influence the negotiation process (e.g., Aaldering & De Dreu, 2012; Aaldering et al., 2013; Steinel et al., 2009; Steinel et al., 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2007), our studies were the first to evidence the reverse possibility that the negotiation behavior of the representative can influence how constituents perceive outgroup members who were not involved in the negotiations and did not contribute to the process. Furthermore, it was shown that when competition was preceded by cooperation (i.e., late competition), ingroup members showed increased
trust towards the outgroup but decreased outcome satisfaction as opposed to when competition was followed by cooperation (i.e., early competition). This showed that the timing of competition or cooperation in negotiations can have differential effects on constituency outcome satisfaction and intergroup relations. Additionally, the lack of a significant correlation between outcome satisfaction and intergroup relation measures in both studies suggests that representatives cannot merely assume better intergroup relations if they achieve a satisfying outcome. Instead they should be more cautious with the way they communicate with the outgroup in order to maintain high quality intergroup relations.

In chapter 4, our findings provided first time evidence that cooperative communication by the outgroup representative can deteriorate outgroup perceptions. Clearly these findings are at odds with the widely accepted fact that cooperation facilitates better intergroup relations (e.g., Pettigrew, & Tropp, 2006), and they suggest that cooperative communication by the outgroup representative may backfire when the outgroup representative is a peripheral member of his group and may be less effective when the outgroup representative comes across as highly competent. Given this, our findings also have implications for representative selection. We know from previous research that constituent members prefer competent leaders and representatives (Sears & Kinder, 1985); however, our findings suggest that communicating competence and simultaneously acting cooperatively may diminish the positive effects of cooperative communication on intergroup relations. In the following section, I will discuss some limitations of our studies and provide directions for future research.

**Strengths and Limitations**

Two main limitations apply to several of the experiments reported in this dissertation. The first limitation concerns the limited ecological validity due to the contrived laboratory settings; the second concerns the potentially limited external validity, which confines our ability to confidently generalize our findings to other situations and other people.

In Chapter 2, value conflict was manipulated by using a negotiation topic that is related to the educational values of the students, namely increasing or maintaining the current passing grade in the Netherlands. While choosing an educational value and testing students’ perceptions of their representative’s negotiation strategies in the
context of the university gave us a high ecological validity, our study is still affected by rather low external validity. Although educational values are integral to a university students’ life, we should be cautious to conclude that under value conflicts people always become more tolerant towards unethical behavior of their representatives. Would our findings hold when more sacred issues center the negotiations, for example, in a value conflict wherein two groups are negotiating about making abortion legal for teenagers or not? On the one hand, the morality aspect of the topic may increase group members’ morality salience and hence make them more reluctant towards accepting ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics of their representatives (e.g., Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011), which would be in contrast to our findings. On the other hand, sacred issues may decrease constituents’ willingness to compromise even more and increase group members’ justification and hence tolerance towards ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics of their representatives, which would be consistent with our findings. Hence, although we are confident that our results can be generalized to value conflicts that do not particularly increase the salience of morality, future research is needed to draw a conclusion about the acceptability of ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics in value conflicts related to moral issues.

In chapter 3, limited external validity was due to the fact that the final outcome in our studies was always a 50-50 split. However given that we did not find any relation between outcome satisfaction and intergroup relations, we are confident that the effect of cooperative behavior of the outgroup representative would generalize to situations where the final outcome was different from 50-50 split. Finally, limited ecological validity was due to the fact that there were no real groups in the laboratory and all the negotiations were simulated based on the condition. In some real life contexts, ingroup members would be able to see their representative and be in contact with their fellow group members, which may potentially influence their perception of the outgroup (e.g., Castelli, Arcuri, & Zogmaister, 2003; Cialdini, & Goldstein, 2004).

Despite the rather low ecological validity, we opted for laboratory experiments as they allow us to control for extraneous variables and draw cause and effect relationships. Due to the high sensitivity involved in conflict situations as well as ethical reasons, it would not be possible for us to manipulate our independent variables in a natural setting. Hence, to be able to draw causal relationships, we are meant to conduct
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contrived laboratory settings, which I believe is essential to develop high quality negotiation trainings as well as problem solving workshops. Finally yet importantly, laboratory setting allows researchers to replicate our research.

Research Agenda for the Future

My findings in this dissertation provide ample opportunities for exciting lines of new research. The bottom-up influences on outgroup perceptions uncovered here suggest that the representative negotiation context serves as a great platform to explore factors that could help explain the origins of intergroup perceptions, a question that has been core to social psychology. Furthermore, bottom-up influences on ingroup perceptions suggest that some of the negotiation tactics that representatives use to increase their chances of winning in the negotiations may backfire under particular circumstances, leading to a decreased likelihood of being re-elected in the future.

In Chapter 2, we found that under high threat as it occurs in value conflicts, constituency members become more tolerant towards their representatives’ ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics. We already discussed that this may indirectly create intergroup discord as constituencies may turn a blind eye when the outgroup is treated unfairly. One of the issues related to value conflicts is that groups do not have as much perceived common ground as in resource conflicts (e.g., De Dreu, Harinck & Van Vianen, 1999; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Kouzakova et al., 2012), which deteriorates the negotiation process and potentially open doors for unethical tactics (e.g., Thompson & Kim, 2000). Future research could explore ways to create common ground in value related negotiations. One suggestion could be to stimulate constituents’ perspective taking (Chambers & De Dreu, 2014; Davis, 1983). Previous research has already shown that perspective taking can lead to better agreements through understanding the interests and motives of the other party (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008), and by leading to more accurate perceptions of issue priorities and preferences (Chambers & De Dreu, 2014). One way of achieving this is to do role-reversal. Role-reversal is a procedure in which person A presents person B’s viewpoint while person B reciprocates by presenting A’s viewpoint (Muney & Deutsch, 1968). This procedure has been shown to reduce conflict (e.g., Johnson, 1967; Muney & Deutsch, 1968). For example, imagine that representatives from two differing opinions on the abortion issue (pro-life and pro-choice) have to negotiate about the legal age for abortion. And before they start the actual negotiations they will first be asked to defend each other’s position for a certain
amount of time. This would possibly stimulate their perspective taking and with the help of the role-reversal procedure, representatives will increase perceived similarity between each other, and awareness for the positive features in each other’s point of view. This may eventually increase their likelihood to make compromises as well as decrease their tolerance towards unethicality. Such research would be a vital contribution to value conflicts literature as tactics that facilitate value conflicts are still not well-understood (Harinck & Ellemers, 2014).

Relatedly, perspective taking may also play a role in alleviating the negative effect of competitive communication on intergroup relations. In Chapter 3, we provided evidence that competitive communication of the outgroup representative can lead to worsened intergroup relations through increased outgroup derogation. Given that perspective taking allows people to get into the shoes of the other party (e.g., Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008), in a mixed-motive negotiation context, taking the perspective of the outgroup may make constituents realize that a competitive approach is very likely from both sides and hence constituents may perceive it as more acceptable. On the other hand, in cases of prior hostility or violent clashes, perspective taking may be shadowed by suspicion and hence even cooperative communication by the outgroup representative may lead to worsened rather than improved intergroup relations. Future research should further examine the moderating role of prior hostility on the relationship between cooperative/competitive communication and intergroup relations.

In Chapter 3, I provided evidence that the effect of representative behavior on intergroup relations is not only affected by the magnitude but also by the timing of concessions. It was shown that late concession making led to poorer intergroup relations compared to early concession making, even though the magnitude of concessions was exactly the same across conditions. However, there may also be circumstances under which early cooperative moves from an opponent spark suspicion. Kramer (2004) proposed that groups who suffered violent conflicts in the past are likely to exhibit intergroup paranoia, which is defined as “beliefs - either false or exaggerated - that are held by members of one group that cluster around ideas of being harassed, threatened, harmed, subjugated, persecuted, accused, mistreated, wronged, tormented, disparaged, or vilified by a malevolent outgroup” (Kramer, 2004). Considering this, perhaps in the
cases of prior hostility or violent clashes between groups, contrary to our findings in Chapter 3, an early rather than late concession by the outgroup representative may trigger intergroup paranoia and raise sinister attributions which can potentially lead to worse intergroup relations. Future research should examine how prior hostility or distrust could influence the effect of timing of concession making on intergroup relations.

In Chapter 3 and 4, I provided evidence for the bottom-up influences of representative cooperativeness on outgroup perceptions. More specifically, it was shown that cooperative communication by the outgroup representative can improve as well as deteriorate outgroup perceptions, depending on some representative characteristics (prototypicality and competence), and the timing of cooperation. I believe that representative negotiations provide a unique opportunity for extended contact because it can even occur in contexts where extended contact via friends, family, or work colleagues is not possible, but via leaders or representatives is possible. However as we can see in our findings, the nature of the contact highly determines whether the extended contact via representatives will escalate or resolve conflict. Even though conditions identified for extended contact via friends and work colleagues could be a good starting point, future research should systematically examine under what conditions extended contact via representatives can improve outgroup perceptions.

Concluding Remarks

Opposing parties go through negotiations in order to resolve intergroup conflict. However, what does resolving a conflict mean? So far, the primary focus of both researchers and practitioners has been on the negotiated agreement. How can negotiators come to a better agreement? What strategies should they follow? However, resolving intergroup conflict also requires having high-quality intergroup relations following the conflict. Can we sustain good quality intergroup relations following a satisfying agreement? In fact, our findings show no correlation between constituents’ outcome satisfaction and the quality of the intergroup relations. Hence, representatives cannot simply assume better intergroup relations if they manage to settle a relatively satisfying agreement. What seems to matter also, perhaps even more, for the quality of intergroup relations, is the negotiation process. Should they communicate with each other competitively or cooperatively? Should they yield early or late in the negotiation process? Should they come across as competent? And as typical for their group? Indeed,
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these factors alone and in combination influence the quality of intergroup relations irrespective of the favorability of the negotiated outcome. Last but not least, and contrary to representatives’ widely held beliefs that their constituency wants them to be competitive and get the best outcome possible, our findings indicate that unless ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics can be justified by the context (i.e., under high threat and in value conflicts), constituents prefer a representative who negotiates honestly and fairly, even if being honest decreases their chances of winning in the negotiations. To conclude, conflict is inevitable, but combat is not necessary. A dignified negotiation process is essential to facilitate better intergroup relations that help sustain peace and prevent conflict from arising in the future.