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Emotion in social conflict : the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiations

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Conflict is an omnipresent feature of social life, pervading social interactions and influencing people's behavior throughout all levels of society. Negotiation is one of the most common and constructive ways of dealing with conflict. In many cases, the divergent interests that lie at the heart of negotiation and conflict give rise to intense emotions, which may strongly influence negotiation processes and outcomes.

Unfortunately, the role of emotions in negotiations is poorly understood, and scientific knowledge regarding the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiations is lacking altogether. How do people react to anger or happiness? Which of these emotions is more effective when it comes to increasing one's share of the pie? Does it pay to show disappointment or worry concerning the other's offer? What happens when a negotiator shows signs of guilt or regret?

In this dissertation I adopt a social functions perspective to emotions in order to address these and other questions. The central assumption is that emotions signal important information to observers, which may strongly influence their behavior. I report nine empirical studies that build on this general idea, and propose an integrative model to account for the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiations.



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