



*Bottom-Up Influences in Representative Negotiations: How Representatives
Affect Intra-Inter Group Relations*

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SUMMARY

Having done my dissertation during the era of the Arab springs, Turkey uprisings, and the Syrian civil war, I got to witness the social change inducing function of intergroup conflicts and once more realized how inevitable conflicts are. While conflicts between groups can potentially lead to innovation and societal progresses through constructive problem solving, in all of the cases above it led to combat and preventable casualties. One common aspect of the conflicts mentioned above is that they either failed to start a dialogue between each other, or did not handle the negotiation process well enough to prevent conflict escalation. To better understand when negotiation processes result in conflict escalation or resolution, the role of representatives in intergroup negotiation needs to be systematically studied. To do this, researchers can either take a bottom-up approach or a top-down approach.

Research following a top-down approach tested how broader societal context influences representative negotiation processes and outcomes (e.g., Benton & Druckman, 1974; Ben-Yoav & Pruitt, 1984). However, we see many times that a satisfying negotiated agreement alone does not automatically transfer into better intergroup relations and as such the deteriorated intergroup relations may lead to poor implementation of agreements and renewed conflict. To have a fuller picture of the role of representatives, we complemented earlier work on top-down influences by taking a bottom-up approach, which has taken very limited attention so far. A bottom-up approach examines how the negotiation process influences the broader intra-inter group relations regardless of the negotiated outcome (De Dreu, Aaldering, Saygi, 2014). First, we examined how threatening situations influence constituents' justification of ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics as well as their likelihood to re-elect the representative. Second, we examined how the representative negotiation process influences broader intergroup relations regardless of the negotiated outcome. Figure 1.1 shows the overall conceptual framework of this dissertation.

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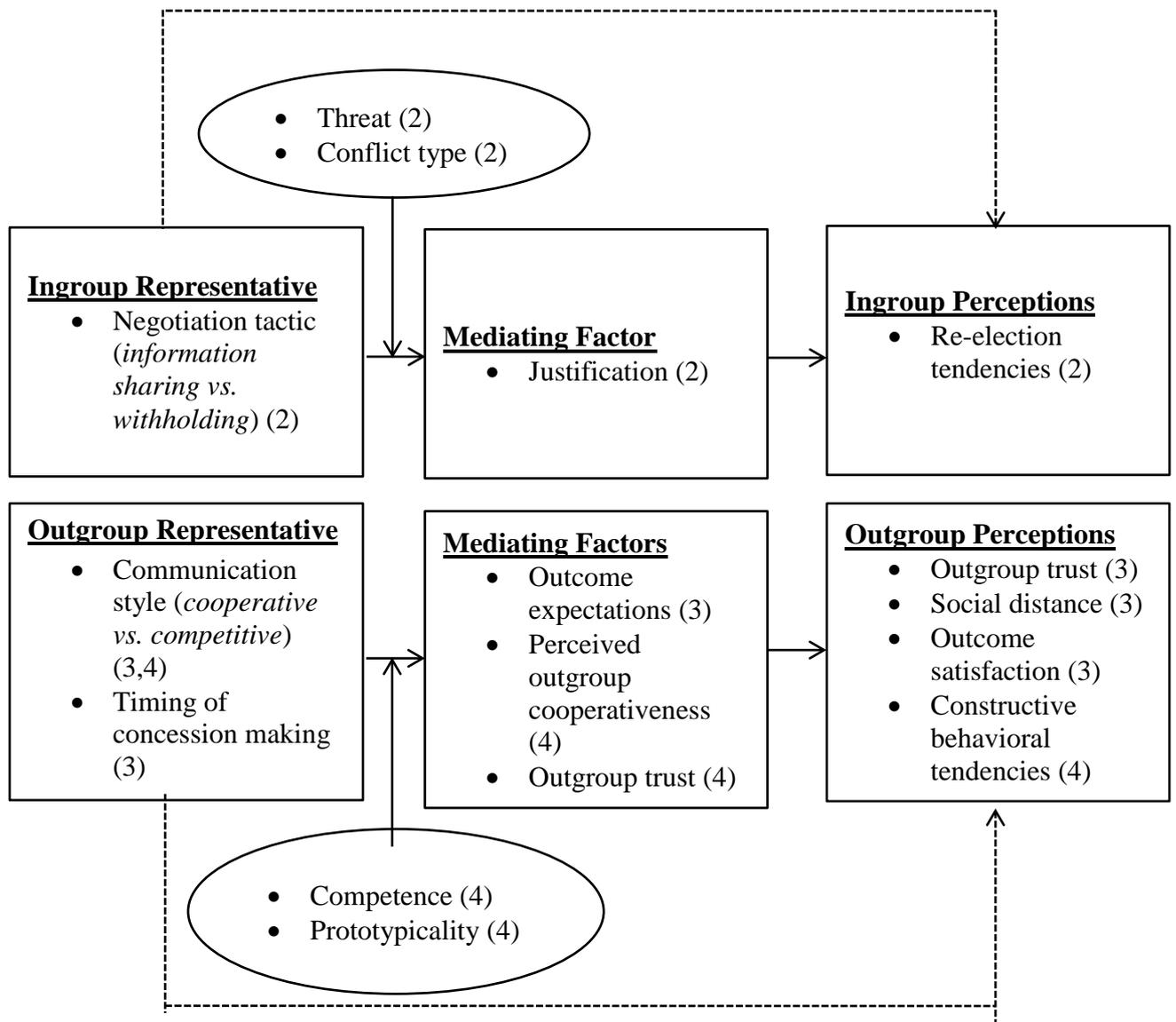


Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework of the dissertation. Numbers in parentheses refer to the chapter in which those hypotheses were tested.

Empirical findings

In representative negotiations, constituents' judgment about the ethicality of ambiguous negotiation tactics can highly depend on the degree to which the behavior can be justified by the context. As these judgments can potentially influence constituents' tendency to re-elect the representative, understanding the contexts under which ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics become justifiable is essential (e.g., Olekalns, 2013). In Chapter 2, I report two studies that examined the possibility that constituents become more tolerant towards their representative's ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics under threat as it can occur in value conflicts. Previous research

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shows that a situation can become threatening if the situation at hand is relevant to our goals and our ability to cope with the consequences is low (e.g., Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996). As such, I proposed that under negative threat, constituents may become more tolerant towards advantageous unethical negotiation tactics as opposed to costly ethical tactics.

Results showed that under low threat, constituents justified information sharing more than information withholding despite the associated costs with information sharing. Furthermore, constituents were more likely to re-elect the representative who shared the private information rather than the representative who withheld information. However, under high threat, this relationship disappeared. Constituents justified information sharing and information withholding equally and, as such, their likelihood to re-elect the representative who used ethical versus ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics did not differ. In Study 2, because value conflicts are perceived to be more threatening than resource conflicts (Kouzakova et al., 2013), I proposed and found that constituents justified information sharing more than withholding information but only under resource conflicts. Under value conflicts, information sharing and information withholding were equally justified, and constituents' likelihood to change the representative did not differ.

The findings in Chapter 2 thus show that representatives should not automatically assume that their constituents expect them to do whatever it takes (e.g., using unethical negotiation tactics) to win at negotiations, unless the behavior can be justified by the context. In our case, we examined threat as a context, which can also occur in value conflicts and showed that constituents can stretch their moral standards to justify their representative's ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics under negative threat. Although value conflicts are mostly associated with people fighting for what they think is right, I found that they justify ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics just as much as clearly ethical negotiation tactics under value conflicts. As such, we witness an interesting phenomenon that when people are trying to protect their values, they may ignore the wrongdoings of their representative in order not to compromise their values in the negotiations. Hence, the elasticity of moral justification needs to be better understood in order to prevent conflicts from escalating.

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In Chapter 3, I examined the bottom up influences of representative cooperativeness/competitiveness on intergroup relations regardless of the negotiated outcome. First it was shown that outgroup derogation increased when the outgroup representative communicated competitively as opposed cooperatively or in a neutral way. Furthermore, under cooperative communication, constituents were more satisfied with the negotiated outcome, as opposed to competitive and neutral communication even though the negotiated outcome was exactly the same across all conditions. In a follow up study, I examined whether the negative effect of competition can be lessened if it is preceded by cooperation. To test this, I manipulated the timing of competition. Results showed that in late competition condition, constituents were less satisfied with the outcome but felt more trust towards the outgroup, as opposed to early competition. The reason for decreased outcome satisfaction in late competition was that participants increased their outcome expectations after observing an early concession by the outgroup representative.

In Chapter 4 I complemented these findings by examining the bounded benefits of cooperative outgroup representative on intergroup relations. So far we have seen in Chapter 3 that cooperative outgroup representative can improve intergroup relations as well as outcome satisfaction when compared to a competitive and neutral outgroup representative. However, in Chapter 4 I argued that some representative characteristics may block the positive effects of cooperative outgroup representatives on intergroup relations. First, I showed that constituents generalized the cooperativeness of the outgroup representative to the entire outgroup, but only when the outgroup representative was a prototypical member of the outgroup. When the outgroup representative was a peripheral member, cooperative behavior of the outgroup representative in fact led to *decreased* perceived outgroup cooperativeness, and hence decreased constructive behavioral tendencies. This contrast effect should be taken into account when groups appoint an external representative since a peripheral member's cooperation may backfire. The second representative characteristic that I examined was representative competence. Here I argued that because negotiation context is rather competitive (e.g., Fein & Hilton, 1994; Kramer, 1994; 2004; Messick & Mackie, 1989), cooperative behavior is less expected (e.g., Benton & Druckman, 1973) and if a skilled or competent representative acts cooperatively it may lead to suspicion and distrust (Boon & Holmes, 1991). As

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predicted, I found that cooperativeness of the outgroup representative increased outgroup trust and constructive behavioral tendencies only when the outgroup representative had low competence. When the outgroup representative was highly competent, the relationship between cooperative outgroup representative and constructive behavioral tendencies disappeared. Together, findings in Chapter 3 and 4 showed that a dignified negotiation process can improve intergroup relations regardless of the negotiated outcome. However, certain representative characteristics such as peripherality and high competence may block and even harm the positive effects of cooperative behavior on intergroup relations. Finally, I did not find any correlation between intergroup relations and outcome satisfaction, suggesting that one cannot simply assume better intergroup relations when representatives achieve a satisfying agreement.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I systematically studied bottom up influences of representative negotiation processes on intra-intergroup relations and made three main conclusions. The first is that contrary to what representatives expect (Benton & Druckman, 1973), constituents do not justify ethically ambiguous negotiation tactics (even if it brings benefits) more than information sharing (even if it is costly) unless it is a threatening context such as in value conflicts. The second conclusion is that representatives cannot simply assume that they can sustain good intergroup relations by settling a satisfying agreement. In fact, what matters more for the intergroup relations is the negotiation process. A dignified negotiation process (cooperative communication) can improve intergroup relations regardless of the negotiation outcome. The third and last conclusion is that the positive effects of the outgroup representative's cooperation is bounded as his or her cooperativeness may backfire if the outgroup representative is a peripheral or highly competent member of his or her group.

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