

INTRODUCTION: NEGOTIATIONS AND ACHIEVING THE SOCIAL COGNITION DREAM

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Social cognition researchers have a dream. Their dream is developing broad, rich theories that explain how individuals process and think about social information which in turn produces meaningful social behavior. Since its rise nearly three decades ago, the field of social cognition has focused on the first part of the dream, studying how every manner of context drives the ways in which humans perceive and interpret their social world. Wonderful technologies—from reaction time measures to event response potentials—have allowed greater precision in identifying the processes and boundaries of social perception and have helped to produce theories that explain wide swaths of psychological inferences.

Despite numerous advances—theoretical, methodological, empirical—social cognition theorists have repeatedly exhorted researchers to avoid the siren call of technology that leaves them trapped on an island far away from the second part of the dream: that human cognition evolved to deal effectively with social relationships and networks, that all thinking is in the service of social interaction, that the cold efficiency of cognition is never fully divorced from motivational forces (Fiske, 1992; Sorrentino & Higgins, 1986). To fully understand human nature, they point out, one needs to demonstrate that the processing of social information affects important behavior in social contexts that produce tangible, impactful outcomes. The call is always the same: The social in social cognition is an essential ingredient.

In the last decade, negotiations research has emerged as a means to realize the dream of having social-cognitive theories explain how the processes of social cognition predict consequential behavior. Negotiations are inherently social, involving real interactions. Negotiations capture the true essence of human nature: the ever present tension between cooperation and competition. Negotiations produce tangible outcomes that have direct material and subjective consequences. Although social cognition has been accused of being the prime culprit in banishing negotiations from social psychology during the 1980s (Bazerman, Curhan, & Moore, 2000), social cognition researchers have recently embraced negotiations as one of the best contexts to fully test their theories.

This special issue was conceived as a way to highlight how social cognition researchers are using the paradigm of negotiations to ask and answer a range of

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important questions central to their core concerns: how do communication media affect social information processing; how do different roles affect preferred processing styles; how does the act of choosing and justifying different offers drive preferences; how do goals and expectancies shape interactions and outcomes? It brings together classic and contemporary theories (from dissonance to expectancies, from regulatory focus to construal level) to understand how the wonderful complexities of negotiations shed insight into how the processes of social cognition play out in mixed-motive settings. The issue also collectively investigates how social cognitive processes affect important outcomes: how value is created at the bargaining table; how that value is distributed; what leads people to walk away from a negotiation; and how people subjectively feel about their outcomes.

The first article of the special issue by Larrick, Heath, and Wu explores how goal setting systematically increases risk-taking in negotiations. They find that specific, challenging goals, compared to "do your best" exhortations, create a range of perceived losses below the goal that leads negotiators to make riskier decisions to overcome these "perceived" losses. As a result, goal-driven negotiators make greater demands and drive their counterparts away from the table. The work demonstrates how motivational states can alter perceptions and demands in negotiations.

Appelt, Zou, Arora, and Higgins also use the lens of gains and losses by introducing the idea of regulatory fit, which refers to situations where the strategies of a person's goal pursuit is consistent with their current psychological state, into the negotiations arena. They demonstrate that the roles in any price-based negotiation, those of buyers and sellers, fundamentally alter the baseline regulatory foci of negotiators. Because buyers want to minimize their payments, the role of buyer fits with a prevention focus. In contrast, sellers want to secure as high a price as possible and therefore fit better with a promotion focus. Similar to the Larrick et al. article, negotiators experiencing regulatory fit made greater demands that produced higher impasse rates.

Failure to reach or be part of an agreement is also a foundational outcome in the article by Swaab, Kern, Diermeier, and Medvec. They explore how communication media affect coalition agreements in multi-party negotiations. Those media that allow for greater social perception—offering the opportunity to detect and understand others' emotions, words, and behavior—produce more cooperative behavior which reduces the tendency to exclude negotiators from a coalition agreement. They also show that communication media affect the very language people use, which is a direct expression of differences in cooperative intent. Without the opportunity to truly perceive others, economic efficiency suffers.

Henderson and Trope continue the theme of cooperation by exploring how different ways of construing a negotiation affect the type of offers that are made and the overall size of the pie that is achieved. They found that by generating broad, abstract, and general descriptions of the issues under consideration leads negotiators to make more multi-issue offers, which in turn increase joint gain. Importantly, these effects of construal level were independent of changes in motivation. Whereas challenging goals and regulatory fit appear to drive agreements through motivational mechanisms, construal level processes alter outcomes through how issues are perceived and structured.

Kray and Gelfand integrate work on counterfactual thinking and gender in negotiations to explain how men and women react differently to having their first

offer immediately accepted. Whereas men experience regret when their first offer is accepted, thinking if only they had asked for more, women tend to experience relief at avoiding the social costs of negotiations. They also demonstrate that social norms are a critical moderator of whether women experience regret or relief: when norms shift the focus from relational to distributional concerns, women are no longer relieved at having their first offer accepted.

Ten Velden, Beersma, and De Dreu explore how expectations affect concession rate in negotiations. They find that negotiators who are concerned with falling behind their opponents are very sensitive to whether their opponent has a reputation for being competitive or cooperative. Their study also finds that individual differences in motivated cognition—Need for Closure—moderates these tendencies and that anxiety mediates the effect of expectancies on concession rate.

The final article by Bendersky and Curhan brings together classic work in cognitive dissonance to understand how the processes of choice and justification affect reactions to offers in negotiations. The very acts of choosing an offer and then justifying that choice have independent effects on negotiator preferences, with each of these processes leading the negotiator to inflate their preferences in the direction of their choices.

As editor of this special issue, I hope that the current issue reminds social cognition researchers that social interactions involving meaningful outcomes are the best avenues for both developing and testing their theories on how humans process social information and create inferences that motivate and animate their social behavior.

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