

Relational accommodation in negotiation: Effects of egalitarianism and gender on economic efficiency and relational capital

Jared R. Curhan^{a,*}, Margaret A. Neale^b, Lee Ross^b, Jesse Rosencranz-Engelmann^b

^a *Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sloan School of Management, 50 Memorial Drive, Room E52-554, Cambridge, MA 02142-1347, USA*

^b *Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305, USA*

Received 2 July 2004; accepted 15 February 2008

Available online 8 April 2008

Accepted by Dave Harrison

Abstract

Highly relational contexts can have costs as well as benefits. Researchers theorize that negotiating dyads in which both parties hold highly relational goals or views of themselves are prone to *relational accommodation*, a dynamic resulting in inefficient economic outcomes yet high levels of relational capital. Previous research has provided only indirect empirical support for this theory. The present study fills this gap by demonstrating the divergent effects of egalitarianism on economic efficiency and relational capital in negotiation. Dyads engaged in a simulated employment negotiation among strangers within a company that was described as either egalitarian or hierarchical. As hypothesized, dyads assigned to the egalitarian condition reached less efficient economic outcomes yet had higher relational capital than dyads assigned to the hierarchical condition. Negotiations occurring between females resulted in lower joint economic outcomes than negotiations occurring between males. Results are consistent with the theory of relational self-construal in negotiation.

© 2008 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Negotiation; Egalitarianism; Hierarchy; Power distance; Gender; Relational self-construal; Relational satisficing; Organizational culture; Relational capital; Economic outcomes; Joint value

O. Henry's (1905) classic Christmas story, *The Gift of the Magi*, recounts the tale of a young couple facing hard times. Although the couple is extremely poor, the husband (Jim) and the wife (Della) each boasts a prized possession: Della prizes her long flowing hair, and Jim prizes the gold watch handed down to him by his father and grandfather. The day before Christmas, upon realizing that she has little money to purchase a present for Jim, Della decides to sell her beautiful long hair to buy a platinum chain for Jim's cherished watch. Meanwhile, the equally impoverished Jim sells his watch to buy Della a set of tortoise shell combs she had long coveted for her (now fully sheared) hair. On Christmas Eve,

Della and Jim exchange their gifts, only to realize the irony of their sacrifices.

From a purely instrumental perspective, the exchange between Della and Jim was "inefficient." Indeed, negotiation theorists Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) described the story's outcome as "tragic." If a similar exchange had occurred between two merchants, an economist might say that each party had forfeited something of great value, only to receive something that had no immediate value at all. Indeed, one of the most frequently cited studies on relationships in negotiation entertains the provocative notion that "lovers lose" when it comes to reaching efficient outcomes in negotiation (Fry, Firestone, & Williams, 1983). Nevertheless, O. Henry (1905) left no doubt that Della and Jim gained more than they lost from this Christmas exchange.

* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 617 253 2660.

E-mail address: curhan@post.harvard.edu (J.R. Curhan).

The author's concluding words to his readers celebrated rather than ridiculed the wisdom of the two young people, with the clear suggestion that the relational outcome was of greater enduring value than anything that might have been achieved by a more efficient exchange involving less extravagant gifts. In this respect, O. Henry's (1905) romantic story emphasizes the importance of relational outcomes and demonstrates their independence from economic efficiency.

This paper explores economic efficiency and relational outcomes, not in the context of a romantic relationship, but in the context of a simulated business negotiation among strangers. Historically, the negotiation field has been dominated by a focus on economic outcomes (Mestdagh & Buelens, 2003), defined as the explicit terms of an agreement (Thompson, 1990), yet a growing body of research argues for the importance of social psychological outcomes, such as relational capital among negotiating parties (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006; Gelfand, Major, Raver, Nishi, & O'Brien, 2006).¹ Relational capital is similar to the construct of social capital, which refers to the accumulation of goodwill among a social network of relational ties (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Granovetter, 1985), except that relational capital typically entails mutual liking, trust, and the quality of a *dyadic* relationship as opposed to a network of relationships among many individuals (De Clercq & Sapienza, 2006; Gelfand et al., 2006).

Our thesis is that highly relational contexts can lead to a phenomenon we call "relational accommodation," whereby negotiators forfeit joint economic outcomes, either consciously or nonconsciously, in deference to the pursuit of relational goals and/or the adherence to relational norms. However, those same highly relational contexts that undermine economic efficiency can also foster greater relational capital.

By relational contexts, we mean contexts in which individuals hold a cognitive representation of themselves as being fundamentally interdependent or interconnected with other individuals, a construct psychologists refer to as *relational self-construal* (RSC; Cross & Madson, 1997; Kashima et al., 1995). Researchers in social psychology have devoted increasing attention to the role of self-schemas or self-construals (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Markus, 1977), which are conscious and/or nonconscious representations of the self that guide the processing of information relevant to the self and exert a dynamic impact on behavior. Many studies suggest that individuals typically hold multiple self-construals

(Markus & Wurf, 1987) that affect various domains of personal concern. Brewer and Gardner (1996) argued that there are three different kinds of self-construal—(1) the individual (or personal) self-construal refers to a sense of oneself as having a unique identity that is individuated from others; (2) the RSC (mentioned above) refers to a sense of oneself as being inherently connected to significant others; and (3) the collective self-construal refers to a sense of oneself as having a social identity with a group. The construct of RSC is similar to the notion of interdependent self-construal in that both focus on the importance of interpersonal relationships, yet RSC (also known as "relational interdependence" or the "Western version" of interdependence) refers primarily to the importance of close dyadic relationships whereas interdependence refers to both dyadic relationships and relationships with larger groups (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003).

Like other kinds of self-construal, RSC may vary in its accessibility over time and across individuals. *Accessibility* refers to the level of readiness with which a particular construct can be applied to a stimulus or social situation (Bruner, 1957; Higgins & King, 1981). When constructs are more accessible, they can have a greater influence on information processing. Thus, RSC accessibility refers to the degree to which individuals are cued or prone to focus on the importance of dyadic relationships.

Although there are many factors that might increase RSC accessibility, situational contexts (temporary accessibility) and individual differences (chronic accessibility) are two broad classes of variables implicated in previous research (Bargh, Bond, Lomabardi, & Tota, 1986; Higgins, 1989; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984). In this investigation, we explore egalitarianism (a situational context) and gender (an individual difference) because of the importance of these factors in modern day organizational life. Previous research (summarized below) suggests that egalitarianism and gender each should be associated with greater RSC accessibility.

Egalitarianism as a relational context

According to Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) theory of organizational socialization, one of the functions of an organizational culture (defined as a set of shared artifacts, values, and assumptions held by a given group; Schein, 1990) is to enhance or replace aspects of the self-identity. This socialization process begins for new organizational members at the point of entry into the firm, and stems from anxiety coupled with the functional requirements and social context of new roles and tasks. Our investigation begins with the assertion that the organizational culture of egalitarianism can trigger a relational self-identity.

¹ For a more detailed taxonomy of economic and social psychological outcomes in negotiation, see Curhan et al. (2006). In the language of Foa's (1971) classification system for interpersonal and economic resources, social psychological outcomes tend to be higher than economic outcomes on the dimension of particularism but lower than economic outcomes on the dimension of concreteness.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات