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One for all: What representing a group may do to us ☆

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ABSTRACT

Collective bargaining, business alliances, diplomacy between nations — interactions between group representatives include topics that may have some of the greatest impact on our lives. Nevertheless, the nature of such interactions is poorly understood. How do representatives approach such interactions? What goals do they pursue, and what expectations do they have of their counterpart? In the present research, we advance a theoretical framework with which to understand the mindset that is activated by the role of representative. In two studies, we measure what goals (Study 1) and expectations (Study 2) become salient in this role, compared with the related roles of individual or group member. Our findings reveal that representatives may display a more competitive mindset, consisting of more competitive goals and expectations of others. As competition can be harmful, rather than beneficial to the group, care should be taken when relying on representatives, so that we may exploit their strengths while curtailing their weaknesses.

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Introduction

Millions of people worldwide are affected by the decisions of representatives of groups. Discussions between political parties, negotiations between unions and employers, diplomacy between nations — in countless situations, representatives make decisions on behalf of people who are not personally involved in the interaction, but who are affected by its consequences. These examples illustrate that the decisions of representatives could lead to changes in legislation, to new collective agreements, and even to armed conflict — consequences which could severely affect the lives of the people on whose behalf the representative is acting.

Acting as representative thus means that people must interact and decide on behalf of others, whose fate may be highly dependent on their actions. In interactions as representative, people therefore face very different demands than in their interactions as individuals (where their decisions have consequences only for themselves), or as members of groups in intergroup interactions (where such responsibility is shared). What then may be the psychological consequences of performing this role? How might people approach interactions with others when they act as representative, and not simply as individuals or group members? This question is not well understood. Research into the interactions of representatives have shown inconsistent results, revealing that representatives may engage in greater competition (De Dreu, Beersma, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2007; Druckman, 1994; Druckman, Solomon, & Zechmeister, 1972; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), or conversely, greater compromising (Ben-Yoav & Pruitt, 1984; Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Haccoun & Klimoski, 1975) or flexibility in approach (Enzle, Harvey, & Wright, 1992). Therefore, in order to understand the psychological impact of acting as representative, research that specifically assesses the mindset that is activated in this role is required.

In the present research, we aim to fill this void. We advance a theoretical framework, based on principles from interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), with which to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how the mindset of representatives may be shaped by processes associated with acting *as* representative, and interacting *with* representatives of other groups. To illustrate this process, we present two studies in which we assess the impact of this role on people's interaction goals (Study 1) and on their expectations of others (Study 2). In these studies, the mindset of representatives is contrasted with the mindsets that are salient in the two roles that representatives intersect: those of individual and group member.

How representatives intersect interpersonal and intergroup interactions

Representatives are individuals who have been appointed by a group to conduct interactions with others on their behalf. In many interactions between groups, it is impossible, impractical, or simply undesirable for groups to interact as a whole. Assigning this task to a representative

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removes this problem: it means that the interactions of the group with others flow through a single individual, who interacts, negotiates, and make decisions on the group's behalf (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992).[1] This set-up makes the process of interacting with others more manageable and fluid than when it involves the group as a whole.

For the representative, however, this role poses a considerable challenge. In this role, they effectively come to operate on the intersection of interactions between individuals and interactions between groups. Interactions between representatives are related to interactions between individuals in that they often are interpersonal. When groups appoint representatives to conduct their interactions, the groups themselves generally are no longer directly involved in the interaction. Instead, their dealings with the other group now are conducted by the representatives of either party, as an interpersonal interaction. But while interactions between representatives may resemble interactions between individuals in this respect, they also differ from such interactions in several ways. As representatives, people must not only consider the demands and intentions of their counterpart; they must also take into account the interest and preferences of their constituency — a dimension that typically is absent in their interactions as individuals. Unlike interpersonal interactions, interactions as representatives therefore confront people with strong responsibilities toward others. Moreover, in this role, representatives may not only *feel* responsible toward others, they also may often be *held* responsible by their constituents – implicitly or explicitly – for the outcomes they attain (De Dreu et al., 2007; Jones & Worchel, 1992; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Therefore, while interactions as representatives may be similar to interactions as individuals, they also differ from such interactions substantially.

In terms of these superordinate interests, interactions between representatives are similar to intergroup interactions, or interactions between different groups. In such interactions, group members also face responsibility toward their group's interest. Moreover, in such interactions, they also face opponents who are outgroup members, as is typically the case in the interactions of representatives. But unlike group members, representatives must conduct such interactions individually, and therefore lack the relative anonymity and shared responsibility that groups provide (Insko & Schopler, 1998; Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, & Schopler, 2003). Therefore, while representatives may be similar to group members in intergroup contexts, they also differ from such interactions substantially.

Consequently, representatives represent a special case of negotiators, who share features with both individuals and group members, but also differ from both (Adams, 1976; Enzle et al., 1992). This suggests that the mindset that is activated in this role may differ substantially from that in either of the two situations which it intersects.

The mindset of representatives

How then may interactions between representatives affect people's mindset? What goals and expectations may become salient in this role? This question is not well understood. To date, there is little insight into the impact that specific roles may have on people's cognition in interdependent situations (Weber, Kopelman, & Messick, 2004). Moreover, while a considerable number of studies have examined interactions between representatives – particularly in context of negotiations – findings on the behavior of representatives have been inconsistent. In the following, we provide a brief overview of these results, as well as of findings on intergroup and interpersonal interactions — the two interaction situations that representatives intersect. From these findings, we underline the importance of examining the mindset of representatives directly, rather than from behavior, and derive predictions into the impact that this role may have on people's mindset, compared with interactions as individuals or group members.

The literature on negotiation has devoted considerable attention to negotiations between representatives. Such research is rooted in early work on the nature of group representation by Blake and Mouton (1961), who suggested that implicit obligations, such as loyalty toward their group, as well as explicit pressures, such as accountability, would mean that the interactions of representatives were likely to result in competition. Indeed, most of the early studies on the negotiations of representatives showed that representatives bargain competitively, either in isolation or in comparison with non-representatives. For example, representatives have been found to make tougher demands during negotiations, and to make less and smaller concessions (e.g., see Benton, 1972; Druckman et al., 1972; Vidmar, 1971). While such toughness may result in higher outcomes, interactions between representatives also often result in counterproductive deadlocks (Jones & Worchel, 1992), due to an inability to search alternative solutions (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980). As such, such findings mirror insights on interactions between groups, on whose behalf representatives interact. As an extensive line of studies on the interindividual–intergroup discontinuity effect indicates, interactions between groups tend to be more competitive than interactions between individuals (for a review, see Wildschut et al., 2003). In sum, such findings imply that interactions between representatives are likely to activate a rather competitive mindset.

More recent findings, however, have questioned whether the interactions of representatives indeed are strictly competitive. Such research argues that the competitiveness of representatives in earlier research can be explained by a number of contextual or situational variables that may have favored competitive responses (see Druckman, 1994). For example, research on negotiations between representatives has been conducted in the presence of competitive goals (e.g., Vidmar, 1971), competitive incentives (e.g., Benton & Druckman, 1974), constituency surveillance (see Organ, 1971), and accountability to the constituency (Ben-Yoav & Pruitt, 1984; Carnevale, Pruitt, & Britton, 1979; Gelfand & Realo, 1999), as well as differences in the distance between either side's initial position (Druckman & Rozelle, 1975), the size of the issues at stake (Love, Rozelle, & Druckman, 1983), the presence or absence of time pressure (Smith, Pruitt, & Carnevale, 1982), and the competitiveness of the counterpart's strategy (Gruder, 1971) — all of which have been associated with greater competitiveness (Druckman, 1994). Indeed, the negotiation context in itself has been associated with making salient win/lose orientations and competitive expectations of others (i.e., fixed pie bias; see De Dreu, Koole, & Steinel, 2000). Therefore, such limitations call into question whether the interactions of representatives are indeed likely to be competitive. Indeed, a meta-analysis by Druckman (1994) revealed only a modest effect of representing a group on competition, when taking such obscuring variables out of the equation.

In line with this perspective, more recent research has suggested that representatives may also display considerable cooperation and leniency during their negotiations (see Enzle et al., 1992; Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Gruder & Rosen, 1971; Haccoun & Klimoski, 1975; Steinel, De Dreu, Ouwehand, & Ramirez-Marin, 2009). Such findings reveal that representatives may flexibly adopt cooperative tactics when these afford higher outcomes for their constituency (Enzle et al., 1992), when they believe their constituency to prefer such tactics

[1] Needless to say, there are important conceptual similarities between the construct of "representative" and "leadership". Indeed, leadership is often defined in terms of various task-related and social roles, often with the aim to enhance the group's productivity and well-being by, for example, advancing group goals (mission), outlining the course toward attaining groups goals (strategy), and warding off threats which may undermine group goals (e.g., Hogg, 2001; Messick & Kramer, 2005; Yukl, 1994). While representing the group in contexts beyond the group (such as in meetings with other representatives) may often be considered part of a leader's role (see Pinter et al., 2007), groups do not necessarily send their leaders to negotiate (see Teixeira, Demoulin & Yzerbyt, 2011). Rather, often other group members may be assigned the role of representative, for example on the basis of skills or traits (e.g., experience, logistics, interpersonal and negotiating skills, and contacts). In the present research, we focus on the role of representative as such, and did not in any way link it to leadership, nor did we make any reference to expertise.

(Haccoun & Klimoski, 1975; Steinel et al., 2009, 2010), or when such tactics are in line with their disposition (Gelfand & Realo, 1999) — perhaps even more so than individuals (Enzle et al., 1992). As such, these studies show that representatives may employ different strategies than competition, some of which – like cooperation – seem inconsistent with the idea of a competitive mindset. Moreover, this perspective suggests that earlier research indicating competition between representatives could in fact reflect different motives than competition, such as flexible pursuit of the group's interest.

In sum, findings on negotiation between representatives reveal inconsistent perspectives on the impact that representing a group may have, with some studies suggesting this role to evoke competition, while others imply it to evoke more cooperative or flexible behavior. The nature of this impact is difficult to judge from previous research, due to the presence of situational and contextual factors that may obscure this relationship (see De Dreu et al., 2000; Druckman, 1994). Moreover, it is unclear how the impact of this role may differ from that of individuals or group members, because most research either focuses solely on representatives (e.g., see Jones & Worchel, 1992; Steinel et al., 2009), or contrasts representatives with individuals (but not with groups; e.g., Druckman et al., 1972; Enzle et al., 1992), or individuals with groups (but not with representatives; e.g., Insko & Schopler, 1998). Therefore, in order to truly understand the psychological impact of representing a group, it is important to *directly* assess the impact that this role may have on people's mindset, in the absence of confounding contextual and situational factors, and in comparison with the roles of individual and group member. We now will provide a theoretical framework, rooted in interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003), with which to understand this impact in terms of the interaction goals and expectations of others that become salient in this role.

Transformational analysis of the psychology of group representatives

Interdependence theory is a theory on how people's motives are shaped by the interests of others and the demands of the situation. In particular, the theory explains how certain features of interactions, like with whom people are interacting, and under what circumstances, may affect what goals become salient. As such, interdependence theory provides a framework for understanding how interactions between representatives may affect people's goals and expectations.

Interdependence theory illuminates the impact of interdependent others and social situations on people's goals by distinguishing between people's *given preferences* and their *effective preferences*. People's given preferences reflect their "gut-level" preferences for immediate self-interest, without regard for anyone's interest but their own. Yet humans are social animals, and thus are well prepared to construe the world in terms of interdependence (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992; Kelley, 1997). As such, when interacting with others, people often reconceptualize their given preferences into broader *effective preferences*, which include considerations beyond their immediate self-interest: for example, the consequences of their decisions for others, strategic considerations, or long-term goals (see Joireman, Kuhlman, Van Lange, Doi, & Shelley, 2003; Van Lange, 1999). Kelley and Thibaut (1978) call this process *transformation of motivation*: a shift from the self-regarding goal of MaxOwn (i.e., maximizing outcomes for self) toward broader goals that incorporate the interests of others — other-regarding goals like MaxJoint (maximizing joint outcomes), MinDiff (minimizing differences between outcomes), and MaxOther (maximizing the outcomes of others), or self-regarding goals like MaxRel (maximizing one's relative advantage over others). This shift in motives can have an important impact on how people approach these interactions: after this transformation, they may interpret the interaction situation differently (not in terms of its implications for their immediate self-interest, but in terms of its implications for their effective preferences — e.g., for wanting to maximize joint outcomes), may prefer different outcomes (ones that satisfy their effective preferences — e.g., by maximizing joint outcomes), and consequently may make different decisions (see Van Lange, 2000).

Although people may employ particular transformations quite habitually and consistently across many interactions, the transformation process also can be influenced by features specific to an interaction situation (see Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). The characteristics of interaction partners, those of the situation, and the salience of norms are but a few of the features that may influence what goals become salient during a particular interaction, and what expectations of others (e.g., Smeesters, Warlop, Van Avermaet, Corneille, & Yzerbyt, 2003; Van Lange, De Cremer, Van Dijk, & Van Vugt, 2007). Therefore, findings on interdependence theory suggest that interactions as representatives – which confront people with demands (i.e., responsibility toward others) and partners (i.e., opponents from outside their groups) that differ substantially from those in their interpersonal interactions – may indeed have substantial impact on people's transformations. Moreover, interdependence theory provides a framework for understanding *how* this role may affect people's transformations. Through the broad range of motives that are distinguished, the theory makes it possible to separate motives that cannot be separated in actual decisions (e.g., competitive decisions could result from both MaxOwn, MaxRel and MinDiff goals; cooperative decisions from MaxOwn, MaxJoint, MinDiff and MaxOther). Thus, interdependence theory enables a detailed perspective of the motivational changes that are associated with the role of representative.

How may interactions between representatives affect people's own transformations and the transformations they expect of others? In order to answer this question, it is important to understand the psychological impact of the features that constitute this role and set it apart from the related roles of individual and group member.

Effects on own transformations

In the role of representative, people become solely responsible for the outcomes of their constituency. This notion means that representatives may experience a strong obligation to benefit their ingroup. Moreover, the notion that the group is reliant on the representative alone also implies that representatives will often be closely scrutinized by the constituency, and therefore may often face strong – explicit or implicit – accountability. As such, representatives also are likely to experience a strong need to positively impress the constituency, and to avoid making a negative impression (Gruder & Rosen, 1971; Wall, 1975).

Several studies suggest that loyalty to the ingroup may promote competitiveness (Benton & Druckman, 1974; Blake & Mouton, 1961; Vidmar, 1971). In many situations involving different groups, people feel obliged to benefit their group over others (i.e., an ingroup favoring norm, see Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and regard it as appropriate to defend its interests by striving for good outcomes and derogating outgroups (Druckman, 1994; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Van Kleef, Steinel, Van Knippenberg, Hogg, & Svensson, 2007). Indeed, in such situations, cooperative and friendly behavior toward outgroups may be regarded as disloyal and hazardous to the ingroup's interests (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995). Such research therefore suggests that representing a group may activate self-regarding goals, such as maximizing the outcomes of one's group (MaxOwn) or differences with the outgroup (MaxRel).

With regard to impressing constituencies, research suggests that under such scrutiny, people seek to avoid cutting a bad figure (see e.g. Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). In order to do so, negotiators generally believe that their constituents will be impressed by a tough and

aggressive approach, (Benton & Druckman, 1974; Van Kleef et al., 2007), and by outcomes that are better, and certainly not worse, than interdependent others (appetitive and aversive competition, see Messick & Thorngate, 1967; also see Carnevale et al., 1979). This perspective therefore suggests that the desire to impress others may evoke goals that maximize relative difference between either group's outcomes (i.e., MaxRel), rather than maximizing the outcomes of the ingroup (i.e., MaxOwn).

In contrast, the notion that representatives interact interpersonally, rather than in the presence of their group, also raises the possibility that their interactions may evoke goals that are less self-regarding. One reason why interpersonal interactions are generally more cooperative than intergroup interactions is that they lack certain intragroup processes that promote competition in groups. For example, members of groups enjoy a sense of anonymity within the group, so that they cannot be held accountable individually for their suggestions; likewise, they give each other support for more competitive suggestions, thereby spurring each other on toward greater competition (see Insko & Schopler, 1998; Wildschut et al., 2003). Representatives, in contrast, interact individually, and thus are highly identifiable to outgroups. Likewise, their constituents typically are not directly present during the negotiation. While this does not preclude that intragroup processes and demands may have considerable influence on their decisions (see Steinel et al., 2009, 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2007), the absence of these intragroup processes during their interactions could mean that representatives adopt less self-regarding, and more other-regarding goals. This notion is supported by the idea that representatives may often have good relations and considerable rapport with their negotiation counterpart (Drolet & Morris, 2000), and may display more cooperation than individuals (Enzle et al., 1992).

In sum, the features associated with the role of representative suggest that interactions in this role could activate self-regarding goals, in terms of either MaxOwn or MaxRel, and more so than interactions in the role of group member (in which responsibility for the group's outcomes is shared) or in the role of individual (in which people are only responsible for their own outcomes). However, some features of the role of representative suggest that such interactions could activate less self-regarding, and perhaps more other-regarding goals.

Effects on Expectations of partner's transformations

How may interactions between representatives affect people's expectations of others? In their interactions, representatives must often interact with individuals who themselves are representatives of a different group. While the question into how a counterpart's role may shape people's expectations has not received much attention, some insight may be gained by understanding the psychological impact of interacting with an outgroup representative.

Considerable evidence suggests that negotiating with others in itself tends to evoke fairly strong expectations that others will be competitive (e.g., see De Dreu et al., 2000). If the counterpart is an outgroup member, such expectations may be enhanced. Research suggests that in intergroup contexts, people consider extreme members as more typical of outgroups (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, & Turner, 1995), implying more competitive expectations of outgroup members. This idea is in line with the notion of schema-based distrust, one of the processes that underlies the competitiveness of intergroup interactions. Research on the discontinuity effect suggests that one major reason that explains intergroup competition is that groups are fearful of the intentions of outgroups, expecting them be untrustworthy and competitive (i.e., schema-based distrust, see Insko & Schopler, 1998; Wildschut et al., 2003). Consequently, findings on outgroup beliefs suggest that representatives are likely to have competitive expectations of their counterparts — perhaps more so than group members, as outgroup representatives could seem particularly competitive due to the need to impress their own constituency.

In sum, findings on outgroup beliefs suggest that representatives are likely to expect self-regarding goals from their counterpart, like MaxOwn or MaxRel, and more so than group members and individuals, because outgroup representatives may seem particularly competitive due to the need to impress their constituency. However, in light of findings that representatives may often have good relations with their negotiation counterpart (Drolet & Morris, 2000), it is also possible that the expectations of representatives may be less one-dimensional than those of group members, and may be less competitive. Thus, representatives could also be expected to have less self-regarding, and perhaps more other-regarding expectations than group members.

Research overview

In the above, we have advanced a conceptual framework rooted in interdependence theory and insights from research on negotiation and intergroup interactions, with which we seek to understand the mindset of group representatives. Form this framework, we have identified a range of interaction goals and expectations that could be activated in the role of representative, including self-regarding transformations like MaxOwn and MaxRel, but also other-regarding transformations, like MaxJoint, MinDiff, and MaxOther. In the following, we present two studies in which we use this framework to assess the mindset of representatives. In Study 1, we focus on the goals that are activated in interactions between representatives, compared with in interactions between individuals and interactions between group members. In Study 2, we focus on the goals that are expected from interdependent *others* in interactions between representatives, compared with in interactions between individuals and interactions between group members.

Study 1

The major purpose of Study 1 was to examine whether people may have different interaction goals in interactions between representatives than in interactions between individuals or group members. To this end, we measured the tendencies of representatives, group members, and individuals toward five interaction goals: the other-regarding goals MaxOther, MinDiff, MaxJoint, and the self-regarding goals MaxOwn and MaxRel. We measured the importance participants attached to each of these goals using the Ring Measure of Social Values (Liebrand, Jansen, Rijken, & Suhre, 1986; Van Lange, 1999). In this paradigm, participants choose among various distributions of valuable points between themselves and another person. From participants' choices on this task, the relative weight or importance they attach to these five interaction goals can be derived (see Van Lange, 1999). We then examined how the weights attached to these goals differed between interactions in the role of representative, and interactions in the role of group member or individual.

Method

Participants and experimental design

Participants were 82 students at VU University Amsterdam, 28 men and 54 women (Mage = 19.79, SD = 2.29). The participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a three-level (interaction type: representatives vs group members vs individuals) between-participants design.

Procedure

Up to 15 participants attended each experimental session. Participants were welcomed and escorted to individual cubicles, each of which contained a computer, on which the entire experiment was conducted.

Manipulation of interaction type

In order to examine the goals of representatives, we needed to distinguish two groups on whose behalf people in this condition would

interact. We opted for our own VU University and the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the two universities that are situated in Amsterdam. Although there is no explicit rivalry between students of the two universities, they do represent salient outgroups to each other. In the representative condition, we therefore introduced the experiment as collaborative project of the VU and the UvA on decision making. We informed participants that other participants were also attending this experimental session, both at the VU and at a laboratory at the UvA. The same distinction was used in the group member condition; in the individual condition, no groups were distinguished.

We then administered our manipulation of interaction type. All participants learned that they would perform a decision task with another person. By earning points in this task, they and their counterpart could each earn additional payment of an extra €1, above their €3.50 show-up fee.

In the representative condition, we told participants that they would perform this task with a member of the UvA-group. In this interaction, they would act as the representative of their VU-group, and their partner would represent the UvA-group. We explained that the outcomes of their interaction would determine not just whether they earned the extra €1, but also whether the members of their group would receive this additional payment (and the same applied for their counterpart). The group member condition was identical, but here participants learned that *all* group members interacted with a UvA-group counterpart, and that the additional payment would be determined by the outcomes achieved by all of the group's members. Finally, in the individual condition, participants performed the decision task with another individual, no groups were distinguished, and the outcomes determined only either person's payment.

Assessing own transformations

The instructions proceeded to address the experimental task itself, the Ring Measure of Social Values. This task consists of 24 decomposed games, each consisting of a choice between two alternatives. Each alternative represents a distribution of valuable points between the self and the interaction partner. Allegedly, participants' choices in this task would determine the amount of points that either player would receive.

The points divisions that comprise each alternative are derived from a circle in the self-other outcome plane, with both (orthogonal) dimensions varying from 50 to 350 points. In every decomposed game, the alternatives are two (equidistant) outcome distributions, which are located next to each other on this outcome circle, but which may reflect different interaction goals. An example is the choice between Alternative A: 345 points for the self and 239 points for the other, and Alternative B: 350 points for the self and 200 points for the other. In this case, a choice for alternative A could reflect the other-regarding goals MaxOther, MaxJoint and MinDiff (as this alternative yields the highest outcome for the other, the highest joint outcome, and the smallest difference between outcomes), while a choice for alternative B could reflect the self-regarding goals of MaxOwn or MaxRel (as it yields the highest outcome for the participant, and the biggest difference between outcomes).

From their choices over all 24 items, we can derive the orthogonal weights that participants assign to MaxOwn, MaxOther, MaxJoint, MinDiff and MaxRel (see Van Lange, 1999). Each weight varies from −1.00 to 1.00, with −1.00 representing the minimal concern for this interaction goal, and 1.00 the maximal concern. The resulting five weights were our dependent variables for Study 1.

Upon completion of the task, the experiment ended. Participants were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and paid €4.50, irrespective of their actual performance.

Results

As our theoretical framework primarily suggests differences between the interaction goals of representatives on one hand, and group members and individuals on the other, we computed two orthogonal contrasts: (1) a contrast comparing representatives with individuals and group members (the representative contrast), and (2) a contrast comparing individuals with group members (the group member contrast).

We analyzed the five weights in 3-level (interaction type) analyses of variance. The analyses revealed main effects of interaction type on the weights attached to MaxRel (F (2, 79) = 4.32, p<.05), MaxJoint (F(2, 79) = 4.46, p<.05), and MaxOther, (F (2, 79) = 6.00, p<.005). Significant representative contrasts indicated that these effects reflected a significant difference between representatives on the one hand, and individuals and group members on the other: as depicted in Fig. 1, representatives attached a significantly greater weight to MaxRel (M = 0.53, SD = 0.36) than individuals (M = 0.27, SD = 0.31) and group members (M = 0.39, SD = 0.32, F(1, 79) = 7.11, p<.01); attached a significantly smaller weight to MaxJoint (M = 0.33, SD = 0.34) than individuals (M = 0.58, SD = 0.30) and group members (M = 0.51, SD = 0.37, F (1, 79) = 8.43, p<.01), and attached a significantly smaller weight to MaxOther (M = −0.14, SD = 0.41) than individuals (M = 0.22, SD = 0.35) and group members (M = 0.09, SD = 0.45, F (1, 79) = 10.71, p<.005). The analysis revealed no effect of interaction type on the weights attached to MaxOwn (F (2, 79) = 0.16, *ns*) and MinDiff (F (2, 79) = 0.13, *ns)*, however: there were no differences between the weight attached to MaxOwn by representatives (M = 0.60, SD = 0.28) and by individuals (M = 0.60, SD = 0.26) and group members (M = 0.64, SD = 0.19), nor between the weight attached to MinDiff by representatives (M = 0.25, SD = 0.29) and by individuals (M = 0.26, SD = 0.26) and group members (M = 0.22, SD = 0.26).

Discussion

The results of Study 1 provide insight into the interaction goals of representatives, and suggest that their mindset indeed differs from that of individuals and group members — the two interaction situations which their role intersects. The results indicate that participants in the representative condition attached greater weight to the self-regarding goal of MaxRel than participants in either the individual or the group member condition. Furthermore, representatives attached smaller weights to the other-regarding goals of MaxJoint and MaxOther. Taken together, these findings provide support for the idea that interactions between representatives activate more competitive, and less cooperative, interaction goals than interactions between individuals or group members.[2]

Study 2

In Study 2, we examine how interactions as representatives may affect the goals that people expect interdependent others to pursue, compared with their expectations in interactions as group members or individuals. To do so, we again presented participants with the Ring Measure of Social Values (Liebrand et al., 1986; Van Lange, 1999). In contrast to Study 1, however, participants were instructed to choose the alternatives they expected their *interaction partner* to

[2] Study 1 revealed no differences between representatives, individuals, and group members on the weight attached to outcomes for self (MaxOwn). Although representatives might be expected to attach considerable weight to maximizing the interests of their group, the absence of such an effect is not entirely surprising. Previous work on people's interaction goals has indicated that people are generally inclined to attach a substantial positive weight to self-interest, irrespective of their interpersonal orientation (Van Lange, 1999). The results of Study 1 suggest that this basic concern for self-interest extends to interactions in which people act on behalf of others as well: as representatives, people do not appear to be *more* concerned with self-interest, but rather *less* concerned with the interest of others, and more with outperforming them. In a similar vein, a reason why representatives were not less concerned with minimizing differences in outcomes may be that this motive prevents disadvantageous inequality (i.e., aversive competition).

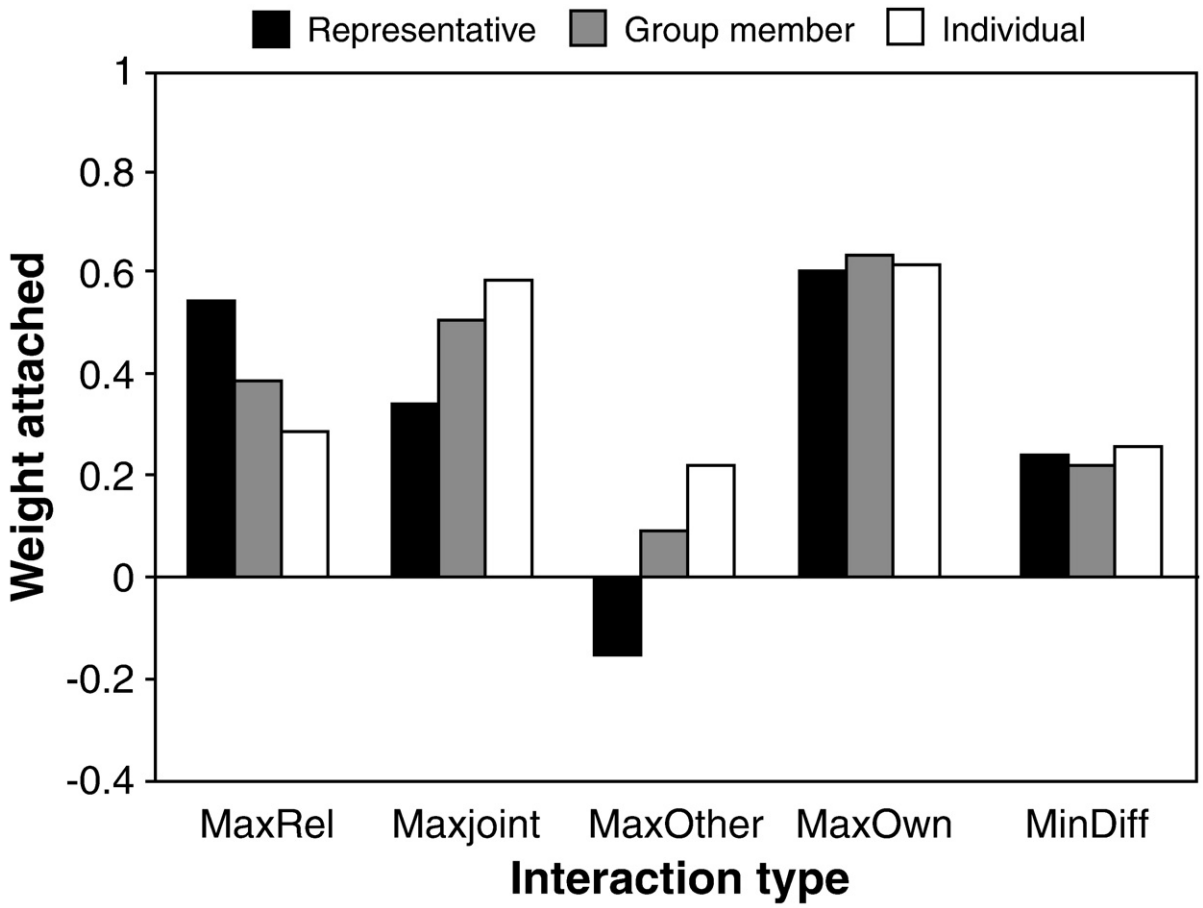

Fig. 1. Own transformations: weights [−1; 1] attached to outcomes for self, other, and equality in three interaction type conditions (Study 1).

select, rather than those they preferred themselves. We then examined how expectations of the partner's goals differed between interactions in the role of representative and interactions in the role of group member or individual.

Method

Participants and experimental design

Participants were 67 students at VU University Amsterdam, 23 men and 44 women (*M*age = 21.36, *SD* = 3.92). They were randomly assigned to conditions in a three-level (interaction type: representative vs group member vs individual) between-participants design.

Procedure

The procedure of Study 2 was similar to that of Study 1, with the exception that participants now were asked to select the alternatives they expected their interaction partner to choose on the Ring Measure.

Assessing expected transformations

As our aim for Study 2 was to examine what interaction goals participants expected their partner to have, we used a modified version of the Ring Measure. Participants were presented with the same 24 decomposed games as in Study 1, but were asked to indicate which alternative they expected *their partner* to select; for example "Which of the following two alternatives do you think your partner would choose? Alternative A: 345 points for himself/his side and 239 points for you/your side, and Alternative B: 350 points for himself/his side and 200 points for you/your side." From their answers, we derived the weights participants expected their partner to attach to the self-regarding goals MaxOwn and MaxRel, and to the other-regarding goals MaxOther, MinDiff, and MaxJoint. These weights were our dependent variables for Study 2.

Results

We computed the same contrasts as in Study 1: (1) the representative contrast, and (2) the group member contrast.

We analyzed participants' expected weights for MaxOwn, MaxRel, MaxJoint, MinDiff and MaxOther in 3-level (interaction type) analyses of variance. These analyses revealed a significant main effect of interaction type on the expected weights for MaxRel,(F (2, 64) = 5.82, p<.01), MaxOther (F (2, 64) = 8.36, p<.005), and for MaxJoint (F(2, 64) = 3.71, p<.05). Significant representative contrasts for MaxRel and MaxOther indicated that these effects indeed reflected a significant difference between representatives on one hand, and individuals and group members on the other: as depicted in Fig. 2, representatives expected their partner to attach a significantly greater weight to MaxRel (M = 0.70, SD = 0.26) than did individuals (M = 0.34, SD = 0.55) and group members (M = 0.36, SD = 0.32, F(1, 64) = 11.60, p<.01), and a significantly smaller weight to MaxOther (M = −0.22, SD = 0.34) than did group members (M = 0.20, SD = 0.38) and individuals (M = 0.08, SD = 0.35, F(1, 64) = 15.43, p<.001). For MaxJoint, the representative contrast was marginally significant, as was the group member versus individual contrast. Representatives therefore expected their partner to attach a somewhat smaller weight to MaxJoint (M = 0.39, SD = 0.30) than both group members (M = 0.65, SD = 0.30) and individuals (M = 0.45, SD = 0.37, F (1, 64) = 3.56, p<.10), while individuals expected their

partner to attach a somewhat smaller weight to this motive than group members (F (1, 64) = 3.85, p<.10).

Mirroring the findings for participants' own goals, there were no significant effects of interaction type on expectations of MaxOwn (F (2, 64) = 1.90, *ns*) and MinDiff (F (2, 64) = 0.89, *ns*): there were no differences between the weight for MaxOwn expected by representatives (M = 0.77, SD = 0.20) and by individuals (M = 0.56, SD = 0.56) and group members (M = 0.70, SD = 0.22), nor between the weight for MinDiff by expected by representatives (M = 0.11, SD = 0.18) and by individuals (M = 0.13, SD = 0.18) and group members (M = 0.19, SD = 0.26).

Discussion

The results of Study 2 provide insight into the expectations of others that are salient in the role of representative. The results reveal a pattern that complements the findings on representatives' interaction goals (Study 1): participants in the representative condition expected their partner to attach greater weight to the self-regarding goal of MaxRel than participants in either the individual or the group member condition. Moreover, representatives expected their partner to attach a smaller weight to the other-regarding goals of MaxOther and MaxJoint. Thus, the results of Study 2 suggest that interactions between representatives may not just activate competitive interaction goals (Study 1), but also competitive expectations of interdependent others.

General discussion

The major purpose of the present research was to examine the psychological consequences of acting as the representative of a group. Although this role features prominently in many interactions in social life, in decisions that affect the lives of great numbers of individuals (e.g., collective bargaining, negotiations, politics, diplomacy, and so forth), its impact to date was not well understood, as findings on the interactions of representatives have been inconsistent and difficult to compare (see Druckman, 1994). In the present research, we therefore have focused directly on the psychological impact of representing a group, by assessing its influence on people's interaction goals and expectations of others. The present findings converge to the important conclusion that compared with interactions as individuals or group members – roles that share considerable overlap with representatives – interactions as representatives evoke a more competitive mindset, characterized by 1) more competitive interaction goals, and 2) more competitive expectations of others. In contrast, we found no evidence that selfish or cooperative goals become more salient in this role, as could be assumed from research that revealed substantial cooperation or flexibility among representatives (e.g., see Ben-Yoav & Pruitt, 1984; Enzle et al., 1992; Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Haccoun & Klimoski, 1975).

How can we understand such a pronounced shift in people's mindset? In the present contribution, we have advanced a theoretical framework on the psychology of representatives, based on principles from interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and research on negotiation and on interpersonal and intergroup interactions (e.g., Druckman, 1994; Insko & Schopler, 1998). This framework suggests that the competitive mindset of representatives may result from two processes: firstly, processes related to acting *as* representative, and secondly, processes related to interacting *with* a representative. When acting *as* representative, people are faced with a powerful responsibility to provide good outcomes for their constituency, and

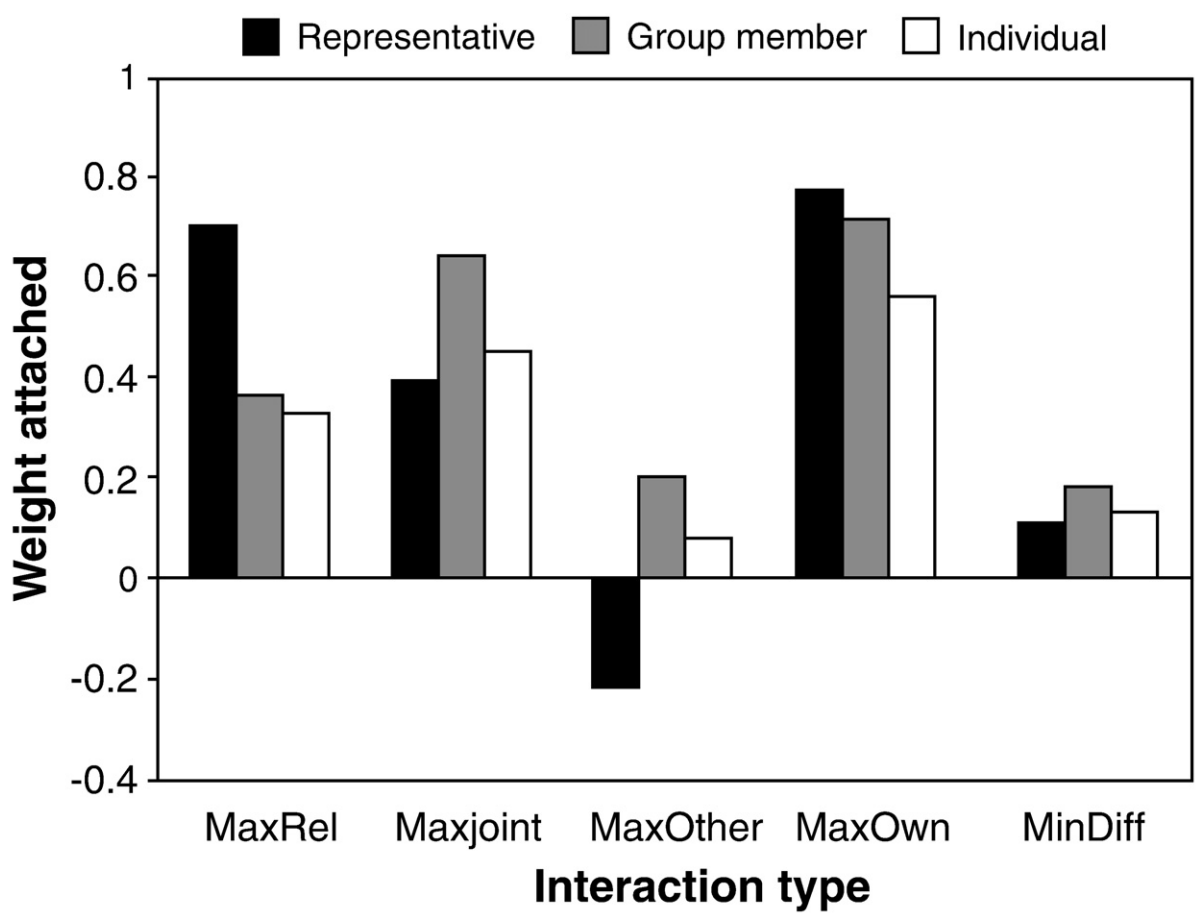

Fig. 2. Beliefs about other's transformations: expected weights [−1; 1] attached to outcomes for self, other, and equality by partner in three interaction type conditions (Study 2).

may face strong face pressures due to being monitored and evaluated. Similarly, when interacting *with* a representative, people face a counterpart who may be expected to face similar pressures while representing a distrusted outgroup (i.e., schema-based distrust). Either of these processes has been associated with competitive beliefs and behaviors (see Benton & Druckman, 1974; Blake & Mouton, 1961; Insko & Schopler, 1998).

Studies 1 and 2 provide support for this reasoning by revealing differences between representatives and group members that cannot be explained solely by mechanisms related to group membership and categorization (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979; also see Insko & Schopler, 1998; Wildschut et al., 2003). Specifically, both studies reveal pronounced differences between the goals and expectations of individuals and representatives, but virtually no reliable difference between the goals and expectations of individuals and group members. As the same group identities were activated in both the group member and the representative condition, these findings therefore suggest that the activation of contrasting identities is insufficient to explain the competitive mindset of representatives. Of course, in light of previous research, it is plausible that these motives do nevertheless typically play a role in these kinds of interaction. But the difference with group members does suggest that the mindset of representatives is also likely to be rooted in psychological processes that are specific to this role — such as (explicit or implicit) feelings of responsibility toward one's group, and schema-based beliefs about the competitiveness of others.

Implications of a competitive mindset

By revealing that acting as representative may activate a competitive mindset, the present research also provides an important warning on the use of representatives. Certainly, in many situations, it can be sensible to conduct the interactions of the group through a representative, as it may make interactions more fluid and manageable than when the whole group joins in. However, it is important to realize that the mindset that is activated in this role may not always be conductive to the interests of the group. In contrast to selfish goals (i.e., maximizing own outcomes), competitive goals are satisfied through outperforming others, and maximizing the relative advantage over their outcomes. In many cases, the decisions that satisfy this goal are not necessarily the decisions that afford the best outcomes for the constituency: for example, on the Ring Measure, the alternatives that maximized self-interest (i.e., MaxOwn) would have afforded the constituency with higher outcomes. This problem is exacerbated in other contexts: for example, competitive goals are strongly associated with counterproductive deadlocks in negotiations (Jones & Worchel, 1992), due to an inability to consider alternative solutions (e.g., preferring poor absolute outcomes that represent a relative gain over one's counterpart over better absolute outcomes that would represent a relative loss; see Bacharach & Lawler, 1980). Therefore, although representatives may be highly motivated to benefit their group, their competitive mindset may result in inferior or detrimental outcomes. This should be an important consideration when groups consider to appoint one.

Theoretical implications and avenues for future research

By directly examining the impact of representing a group on people's goals and expectations, the present research provides important new insight into the psychological impact of representing a group, and may help to better understand the contrasting behavioral findings reported in previous research. At the same time, as our approach to this subject is relatively new, there also are many related issues that would warrant further investigation. In the following, we describe some implications for related literatures, and outline some avenues for further research.

To begin with, the present research extends research on representatives and on intergroup interactions in several ways. The literature on intergroup interactions has focused primarily on the contrast between individuals and groups, but has devoted little attention to intergroup interactions conducted *through* individuals, namely their representatives (Insko & Schopler, 1998). In contrast, the literature on negotiations has devoted considerable attention to interactions between representatives, but has revealed contrasting results, in part due to a range of contextual factors that may have influenced these effects (Druckman, 1994). The present research therefore extends either literature by providing insight into the psychological impact of the role of representative, and doing so in the absence of contextual or situational factors that may obscure this impact (e.g., explicit accountability, paradigms conductive to competition, partner strategies, etc.). By directly examining which goals and expectations became more, or less salient in this role, we could provide an accurate picture of the motivational changes that are associated with interactions in the role of representative, and of how these may differ from related situations, like interactions as individuals or group members. As such, the present research extends research into representatives and into intergroup interactions by providing detailed insight into the psychological impact of the role of representative, and by revealing how this impact differs from that of the two roles with which it overlaps.

Second, by providing such insight, the present findings help to better understand the behavioral findings that have been reported in previous research. Social behaviors may reflect very different motives and expectations (Joireman et al., 2003), and this has important implications for how such actions should be understood. While previous research has often revealed tough and competitive patterns of interaction between representatives, it was unclear whether this behavior reflected the motivation to maximize the interests of the group (MaxOwn), or the motivation to maximize relative difference (MaxRel). As noted, either motive has very different implications for the interests of the group, for example in terms of people's willingness to compromise. The present research suggests that such competitive negotiations may indeed reflect competitive goals, and competitive expectations. As such, the present results are useful for interpreting previous findings on negotiations between representatives, and for predicting how such interactions may unfold in different contexts or situations (see e.g. Van Lange, 1999; Van Lange et al., 2007).

In relation to the above, an important question for future research would be to further examine the processes that underlie the competitive mindset of representatives. The notion that not only competitive goals, but also competitive expectations of others were activated in the role of representative is interesting in this respect because it is reminiscent of aversive competition (Messick & Thorngate, 1967) — the notion that people may display competitive goals not so much out of the desire to get more than others, but rather out of fear of the competitiveness of interdependent others. The role of representatives has many features that seem conductive to aversive competition: in this role, people face strong pressure to protect the interests of their group, and to make a favorable impression. The worst possible outcome in this regard would be to be exploited by one's counterpart. Therefore, if outgroup representatives are expected to be competitive, then adopting competitive tactics oneself could seem the only way to protect oneself and one's constituency (e.g., see Kelley & Stahelski, 1970). According to this reasoning, the competitive mindset of representatives therefore could reflect aversive, rather than appetitive, competition.

What is interesting about this possibility is that it could account for findings that show representatives to display considerable cooperation. The meta-analysis by Druckman (1994) has revealed that the competitiveness of representatives may be attenuated when they are confronted with more cooperative partners (Gruder, 1971), or with circumstances that favor cooperation (Enzle et al., 1992). Such

findings seem inconsistent with a competitive mindset, but they can be reconciled if this mindset reflects aversive competition. Research on aversive competitors reveals that they may display substantial cooperation if expectations that others will compete are attenuated (cf. Ten Velden, Beersma, & De Dreu, 2011). Therefore, if future research can reveal the competitive mindset of representatives to reflect aversive competition, this would enable a framework in which both cooperative and competitive responses can be explained.

Third, with regard to processes that may underlie the mindset of representatives, it is also important to relate our conclusions to research on *intra*group processes that may influence the negotiations of representatives (e.g., Steinel et al., 2009, 2010; Teixeira, Demoulin, & Yzerbyt, 2011; Van Kleef et al., 2007). As noted, representatives interact on behalf of their group, and bear both implicit and explicit responsibility to them. This implies that processes that relate to the group's preferences, or to representatives' responsibility toward them, could have an important impact on the goals, beliefs and decisions of representatives. Indeed, research has revealed that information that contradicts the belief that the constituency favors competition may produce more cooperative behavior (see Steinel et al., 2009, 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2007). Similarly, factors that relate to their responsibility toward the group (i.e., prototypicality or belongingness), or to their autonomy within it (i.e., status) may also guide representatives' preferences for more cooperative or competitive tactics (see Jones & Worchel, 1992; Steinel et al., 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2007). How may such findings be reconciled with the present findings, which revealed a competitive mindset?

We suggest that these two lines of research may complement each other. By focusing specifically on the goals and expectations that are activated in the role of representative, in absence of further contextual factors, the present research provides insight into the psychological impact of representing a group, and on how the resulting mindset may differ from that in the related roles of individual or group member. In this sense, our findings provide insight into the default state that is activated by representing a group. Although our findings suggest that this mindset tends to be competitive, this need not imply that representatives always resort to competition. Rather, it seems likely that this default mindset may be further shaped by intragroup processes, such as the representative's relationship with the group, or the group's preferences. Exactly how this process might work is as of yet unclear. It could be that intragroup processes change the transformations of representatives, but it could also be that they overrule them, and that the competitive mindset of representatives is merely suppressed — and thus may re-emerge (for example when challenges to cooperation emerge, such as unintended errors or noise; see Axelrod & Dion, 1988; Nowak & Sigmund, 1998; Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Tazelaar, 2002). The notion that representatives are more susceptible to competitive constituents, even when those represent minorities within the group (see Steinel et al., 2010), would seem in line with the latter interpretation; however, further research is required to map how intragroup processes may shape the mindset of representatives.

In relation to this, a final important contribution of the present research is that we provide an instrument with which to measure in great detail how social roles and situations may shape people's goals and expectations. While assessing differences between people's goals is in itself not new, previous studies have often relied on self-reported measures (e.g., see Insko, Kirchner, Pinter, Efaw, & Wildschut, 2005), or on measures that did not allow different motives to be measured orthogonally (e.g., see Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). By using the Ring Measure of Social Values (Liebrand et al., 1986; Van Lange, 1999), we could derive what weights people assign to self-regarding and other-regarding interaction goals, and what goals they expected from interdependent others. As such, the present research provides an accurate and more implicit measure of people's mindset, which may help to better understand the motivational changes associated with a host of contexts and situations — from the impact of intragroup processes, as described in the above, to the impact of the multitude of roles that people conduct in their social lives (e.g., individual, partner, parent, employee, group member, and so forth), the impact of which so far is poorly understood (see Weber et al., 2004). This way, the present research may help to understand the question why people may display such different behaviors in their various roles in social life — and can be loving parents as well as perpetrators of great atrocities (see Tsang, 2002).

Conclusion

Groups often put their fate in the hands of representatives. Our findings reveal that in response to this responsibility, representatives may display a competitive mindset. As competition can prove harmful, rather than beneficial to the group, care should be taken when relying on representatives, so that groups may exploit their strengths while curtailing their weaknesses.

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