

Process or Outcome: The effect of assessment orientation on decision making

Xi Zou, Kirstin C. Appelt, and E. Tory Higgins
Columbia University

Theoretical Background

We investigated the effect of decision making process on the decisions made.

Thus far, two different lines of research have demonstrated that decision making procedures (strategies) are critical.

1) Procedural justice research has demonstrated the unique outcome values of procedural justice (e.g., enhancement of organization commitment; for a review see Tyler & Blader, 2000).

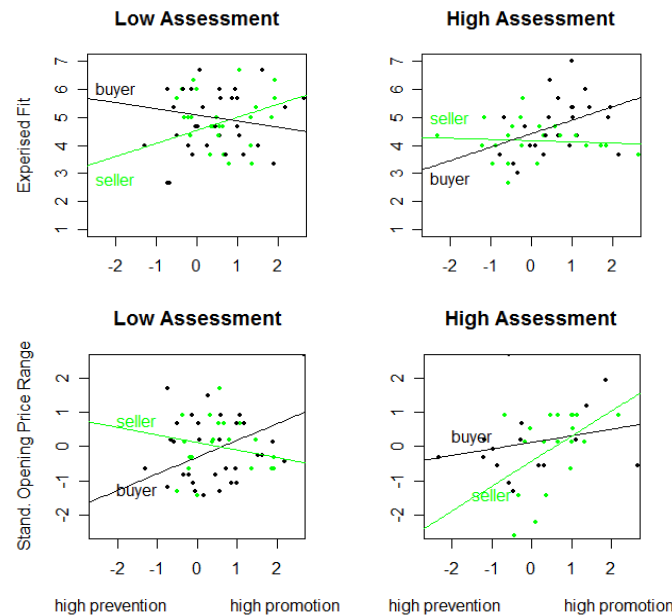
2) Research on regulatory fit has shown that fit between individual regulatory focus or regulatory mode and the decision-making strategy intensifies outcome values (for a review see Higgins, 2000, 2006).

We suggest that decision making process may even outweigh decision outcomes: People may make the decision that enables them to follow their preferred decision-making processes, even though it may lead to sub-optimal outcomes. For people with an assessment orientation (Kruglanski, et al. 2000), this means preferring decisions allowing consideration of more options, even if the end result is less optimal.

Study 1 N=86, 52% female

Method: Binding negotiation over a note book. We build on the effect of “focus-role” fit effect (Appelt, Zou, Arora & Higgins, in press); in a price negotiation, seller fits with promotion focus and buyer fits with prevention focus. Fit is measured by a three-item experienced fit measure and by opening price demandingness (lower range = increased demandingness).

Results: A significant three-way interaction among regulatory focus, assessment orientation and negotiation role, for both dependent measures (for the experienced fit: Standardized $\beta = -.30$, $t(86) = -2.78$, $p < .007$; for the opening price demandingness: standardized $\beta = .26$, $t(86) = 2.72$, $p < .008$). The focus-role fit is significant only among low assessment participants. High assessment participants, who are eager to seek alternatives, generate “non-fit” strategies in the fit condition and “fit” strategies in the non-fit condition, and thereby display opposite patterns.



Study 2 N=97, 67% female

Method: Participants given information on earning profits by forming coalitions with one or more firms. Profits earned depend on the coalition formed. All coalitions equally likely & all profits equally divided among coalition members. Participants were asked to choose which of the two firms in each condition to represent.

Control condition, Firm A or B

AB: If A & B form coalition, earn 120M together.

AC: If A & C form coalition, earn 120M together.

BCD: If B,C,& D form coalition, earn 180M together.

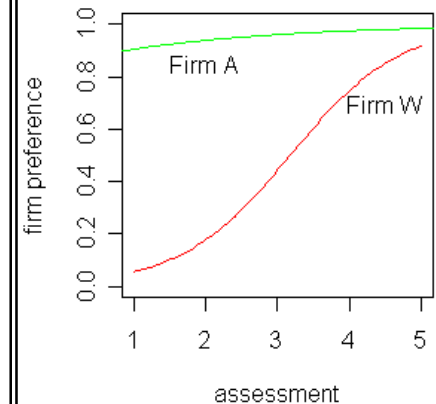
Trade-off condition, Firm Y or W

WX: If W & X form coalition, earn 120M together.

WY: If W & Y form coalition, earn 120M together.

WZ: If W & Z form coalition, earn 120M together.

XYZ: If X,Y,& Z form coalition, earn 220M together.



Results: Assessment uniquely predicts Firm W preference, odds ratio= 3.64, $p < .007$

Reference
Appelt, K.C., Zou, X., Arora, P., & Higgins, E.T. (in press). Regulatory fit and negotiation: Effects of “promotion-seller” and “prevention-buyer” fit. *Social Cognition*.
Higgins, E.T. (2000). Making a good decision: Value from fit. *American Psychologist*, 55, 1217-1230.
Higgins, E. T. (2006). Value from hedonic experience and engagement. *Psychological Review*, 113, 439-460.
Kruglanski, A. W., Thompson, E. P., Higgins, E. T., Atash, M. N., Pierro, A., Shah, J. Y., Spiegel, S. (2000). To “do the right thing” or to “just do it”: Locomotion and assessment as distinct self-regulatory imperatives. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 79, 793-815.
Tyler, T.R. & Blader, S.L. (2000). Cooperation in groups: Procedural justice, social identity and behavioral engagement. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.