Parochial and Universal Cooperation in Intergroup Conflicts
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This dissertation investigates when people in intergroup conflicts will display universal versus parochial cooperation (serving one’s own group, potentially at a cost to rivalling other groups). We specifically investigate how cues from a person’s personality (intrapersonal), cues from other members of the own group (intragroup), and cues about the relation between the groups (intergroup) direct an individual towards each form of cooperation. Seven experiments are reported using two different paradigms. The first three empirical chapters employ negotiation paradigms. In negotiations, searching for a mutually beneficial agreement and making concessions reflects universal cooperation while refusing to concede and forcing the other party into concessions reflects parochial cooperation. The last empirical chapter employs an experimental game paradigm, where individual and group outcomes depend on individuals’ and (opposing) group members’ contributions to their own group (parochial) or the collective of both parties (universal).

Our results show that individuals, especially pro-socials, are inclined to show parochial cooperation. However, they are sensitive to intragroup factors such as constituencies’ preferences and approval. Representatives will increase their universal cooperation when their constituency communicates either a clear preference for cooperation towards the out-group, or emotional approval of a cooperative first offer towards the out-group. They are also influenced by intergroup factors, such that their universal cooperation increases when parochial cooperation comes at the cost of the other party- But only when there is a clear option accessible for mutual gain. Thus, their parochial cooperation efforts can be redirected to more universal cooperation with potentially value creating outcomes.