

# Investigating Focus-Role Fit in Negotiations Emphasizing Non-Price Issues

Kirstin C. Appelt & E. Tory Higgins  
Columbia University

## Abstract

In price-emphasizing negotiations, buyers adopt non-loss/loss frames with the goal of minimizing monetary losses and sellers adopt gain/non-gain frames with the goal of maximizing monetary gains (Appelt, Zou, Arora, & Higgins, in press). The present study investigated a negotiation emphasizing a non-price issue – information, which buyers needed and sellers couldn't reveal. As predicted, we obtained a framing reversal. Buyers adopted gain/non-gain frames and sellers adopted non-loss/loss frames. Implications for focus-role fit are discussed.

## Theoretical Background

**Are negotiation frames fixed or do they depend on the key issue of the negotiation? What are the consequences for focus-role fit?**

**Focus-role fit in price-emphasizing negotiations:**

- Buyers adopt non-loss/loss frames and seek to minimize monetary losses, a goal best met by a vigilant strategy.
- Sellers adopt gain/non-gain frames and seek to maximize monetary gains, a goal best met by an eager strategy.
- There is a strategic commonality between role and regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997) that creates regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000).
- Prevention buyers (shared vigilant strategy preference) and promotion sellers (shared eager strategy preference) are in focus-role fit whereas promotion sellers and prevention buyers are in non-fit (Appelt et al., in press).

**The present study investigated a negotiation emphasizing a non-price issue.**

- In an adaptation of the Bullard Houses negotiation case, client instructions directed buyers to obtain information and sellers to not reveal information.
- **We predicted a frame reversal such that buyers would adopt gain/non-gain frames to maximize information gain and sellers would adopt non-loss/loss frames to minimize information loss.**
- Again, an eager strategy is best suited to gain maximization and a vigilant strategy is best suited to loss minimization.
- **We expected promotion buyers (shared eager strategy preference) and prevention sellers (shared vigilant strategy preference) to be in focus-role fit, as measured by task engagement and experienced role fit.**

## Methods

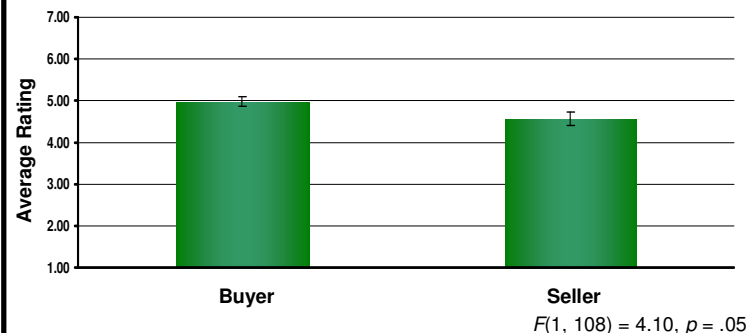
- Participants ( $N = 111$ ) completed "study 1," the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (Higgins et al., 2001).
- The experimenter introduced "study 2" by randomly assigning participants to the buyer or the seller role and to dyads.
- Participants were given their role information, which emphasized obtaining information (buyers) or not revealing information (sellers), and a pre-negotiation questionnaire.

## Results

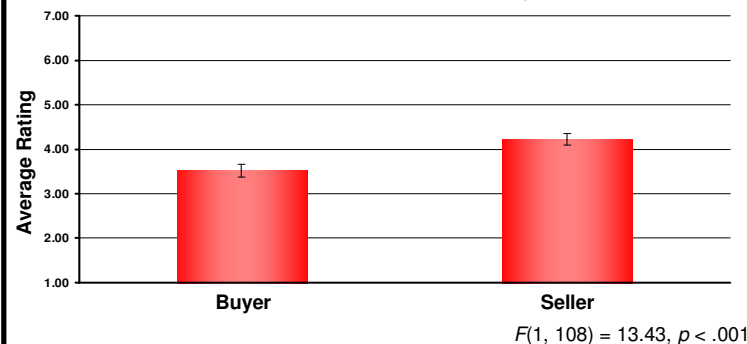
### Negotiation Framing

- **Gain/non-gain frame:** Average of ratings of the negotiation as a chance to create value and to attain resources ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ).
- **Non-loss/loss frame:** Average of ratings of the negotiation as a chance to minimize loss and to maintain resources ( $r = .31, p < .002$ ).
- We performed a one-way ANOVA on each of these measures.

### Gain/Non-gain Framing



### Non-loss/Loss Framing



## Experience of Fit

- **Task Engagement:** Average of ratings of task attention, focus, and involvement (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ).
- **Experienced Role Fit:** Average of ratings of role fit, comfort, engagement, and rightness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ).
- We performed a  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA on each of these measures.
- The Regulatory Focus  $\times$  Role interactions were not significant in either case,  $F < 1$ .

## Discussion

The present study explored a negotiation emphasizing an issue other than price.

- As predicted, requiring buyers to obtain information and sellers to not reveal information reversed their framings of the negotiation. **Buyers adopted gain/non-gain frames and sellers adopted non-loss/loss frames.**
- However, the frame reversal did not lead to a focus-role fit reversal for task engagement or experienced role fit. **Instead, the focus-role fit effects observed in prior research were eliminated.**
- These findings imply that the price negotiation focus-role fit conditions (prevention-buyer and promotion-seller) are indeed more natural and difficult to override.

**The current manipulation was sufficient to reverse buyers' and sellers' framing of the negotiation and to eliminate, but not reverse, focus-role fit. Future research will explore fixed-price negotiations for framing and focus-role fit reversals.**

## References

- Appelt, K.C., Zou, X., Arora, P., & Higgins, E.T. (in press). Regulatory fit in negotiation: Effects of "prevention-buyer" and "promotion-seller" fit. *Social Cognition*.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1280-1300.
- Higgins, E.T. (2000). Making a good decision: Value from fit. *American Psychologist*, 55, 1217-1230.
- Higgins, E. T., Friedman, R. S., Harlow, R. E., Idson, L. C., Ayduk, O. N., Taylor, A. (2001). Achievement orientations from subjective histories of success: Promotion pride versus prevention pride. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31, 3-23.

Contact: Kirstin Appelt <kappelt@psych.columbia.edu>