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Open Peer Commentary

When organization meets emotions, does the socio-relational framework fail?

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Abstract: We suggest that the framework proposed by Vigil is useful in laboratory contexts but might come up short for in vivo social interactions. Emotions result from cost-benefits trade-offs but are not solely generated at the individual level to establish emotional social spheres. In organizational contexts, emotion expression can be a constitutive part of a professional activity, and observed sex differences might vanish.

We wish to discuss Vigil's views regarding emotions in light of data collected either in a "neutral" context (i.e., lab experiments) or in a more *social* one (i.e., field research). From his target article we gathered that the exhibition (or perception) of *capacity displays* is associated with *risk-taking* tendencies (see sect. 3.3), whereas *trustworthiness displays* give rise to *altruism* (sect. 2.1.1.1). In addition, the author claims that *capacity cues* are more specific to male than to female behavior as opposed to *trustworthiness* ones (sect. 3.2.1.1). Nevertheless, both compose the *cost-benefits trade-offs* that constitute the core of the *social sphere*.

To apprehend individual *emotive behavior* from a functional and conscious perspective, we have decided to consider results from experimental economic games. In general, these protocols not only pay little attention to, but do their best to elude the role played by facial expressions and gesture in social interactions (but see Oullier & Basso 2010, for novel perspectives). In spite of this obvious reductionism, these games offer original insights on risk-taking and altruistic behaviors, therefore allowing the implementation of contexts in which interactions favor the analysis of *trade-offs* occurring in these *social spheres*.

Here, we focus on two settings from experimental economics: *The Dictator Game* (DG) and *Ultimatum Games* (UG). In both, a first player A offers a share of the amount of money he owns to a second player B. The DG is a true unilateral division of A's initial capital since what B decides regarding the money sent to him has no effect on what A can keep (Forsythe et al. 1994). The UG extends the DG to a situation where B can refuse A's offer. If he does so, both players lose their respective share (Guth et al. 1982). Player A is somewhat forced to anticipate B's emotions if he does not want to be punished. In the DG, the average share offered to B is 20% of A's capital, whereas another 20% is added in the UG (Elster 2009). The UG is therefore a true revealer of the functional role of emotions.

Interestingly, a meta-analysis of results collected in both games does not permit one to conclude that women exhibit more *trustworthiness* or less *capacity* than men (Croson & Gneezy 2009). However, men appear to have more capacity since they are less *risk-averse* than women. As such, empirical evidence seems to favor Vigil's views: "Recent findings suggest that women are more reluctant than men to engage in competitive interactions like tournaments, bargaining and auctions" (Croson & Gneezy 2009, p. 464). It is noteworthy that this claim is not verified for a certain category of women: namely, managers and entrepreneurs.

For instance, it has been reported that such women's aversion to risk is of the same order as that found with men (Masters & Meier 1988). They are therefore less *risk-averse* than other women.

Two hypotheses can be made to interpret these observations. First, low risk aversion could be considered to be one of these women's intrinsic features that perhaps led them to become managers or entrepreneurs – a kind of *autoselection*. Second, it is possible that the particular training they underwent to prepare for these specific careers modified their aversion to risk (Johnson & Powell 1994). A recent study shows that differences could also emerge between managers and entrepreneurs in their attitude towards risk. Nevertheless, training as well as social and cultural norms are to be considered key factors that can minimize risk aversion (Lawrence et al. 2008). This second interpretation has major consequences for Vigil, for, as Croson and Gneezy (2009, p. 454) observe: "This result [i.e., modified risk-aversion] could also be an adaptive behavior to the requirements of the job."

The importance of one's professional activity in his or her relation to risk entices us into considering the role of organizations in our emotions. Thus, it appears difficult not to include organizations in the *socio-relational framework*. Economically, they account for 80% of America's economic activity (Simon 1996). Socially, they are the product of social interactions that are shaped by multiple kinds of emotions (Simon 1967). As suggested by the aforementioned study, emotions are not only to be considered at the level of our social *individual* sphere but also as a by-product of the organization, therefore leading to the concept of *emotional work* (Hochschild 1979).

Emotions in the *emotional work* exist, as pointed by Vigil, at the social and behavioral levels (*face-to-face* or *voice-to-voice*) and preserve their conscious and functional features. However, in that context, they somewhat lose their purely individual dimension. The *cost-benefit trade-off* is implemented to extend the social sphere of the organization while being put in emotional conformity with its expectations (Hochschild 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton 1987) or to influence of the emotions of others (Sutton & Rafaeli 1988) as suggested in quadrant II (*controlled and emotional processes*) of the typology provided by Camerer et al. (2005).

In summary, the *organizational context* brings the behavior and the individuals that constitute the organization much closer. Indeed, as we saw that women's professional activity can make them exhibit risk aversion similar to men's, it should also be noted that men, as members of an organization, can be constrained to adopt altruistic behaviors to the level generally exhibited by women (Simon 1996).

All in all, Vigil's conclusions on *social status* (sect. 4.1.1) might need to be put in perspective by stressing that "the imaginary presence of organization" (a kind of *panopticon*) influences the emotions of its members, although there exists a debate as to whether these prescribed emotions would not be basically inspired (or prescribed) by men (Mumby & Putnam 1992).

The role of emotions in adaptations for exploitation

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Abstract: Emotion expression serves functions in exploitative resource-acquisition strategies that may not include relationship reciprocity. These include rendering victims more exploitable and signaling one's status as non-exploitable. A comprehensive theory of emotion expressions must explain their role in adaptations for exploitation, as well as evolved defenses against those pursuing a strategy of exploitation.

In this issue

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The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science

Nicholas Evans and Stephen Levinson

A socio-relational framework of sex differences in the expression of emotion

Jacob Miguel Vigil

To appear in Volume 32, Number 6 (2009)

The evolution of misbelief

Ryan T. McKay, University of Zurich, and Daniel C. Dennett, Tufts University

A default presumption is that, whereas true beliefs are biologically adaptive, misbeliefs are maladaptive. How then are we to account for routine instances of misbelief? We endorse a distinction between two general types: those resulting from a breakdown in the normal functioning of the belief formation system and those arising in the normal course of that system's operations. We argue that a subset of the latter – *positive illusions* – arise not incidentally but, rather, *systematically*, because such misbeliefs (the misbeliefs *themselves*, not just the systems that produce them) are adaptive. We are thus evolutionarily predisposed to form such misbeliefs.

With commentary from JM Ackerman, JR Shapiro & JK Maner; G Ainslie; M Bertamini & R Casati; P Boyer; JD Brown; J Bulbulia & R Sosis; ET Cokely & A Feltz; M Coltheart; D Dunning; CS Dweck; O Flanagan; K Frankish; NL Gjerdsøe & BM Hood; J Hartung; MG Haselton & DM Buss; DDP Johnson; VJ Konečni; DL Krebs & K Denton; J Kruger, S Chan & N Roese; R Langdon; JR Liddle & TK Shackelford; GF Marcus; RG Millikan; AL Mishara & P Corlett; A Norenzayan, AF Shariff & WM Gervais; B Randolph-Seng; JP Schloss & MJ Murray; D Sperber; J Sutton; K Talmont-Kaminski; TJ Wereha & TP Racine; Y Wilks; TW Zawadzki

Grandparental investment: Past, present, and future

David A. Coall, University of Western Australia, and Ralph Hertwig, University of Basel

What motivates grandparents to their altruism? We review answers from evolutionary theory, sociology, and economics. The answers exist side-by-side, with little theoretical integration. Regardless of their motives, can grandparental acts of altruism enhance kin's welfare? Evidence from natural-fertility populations suggests that grandmothers especially can improve grandchildren's survival chances and welfare. The impact of grandparental investment in industrialized societies, however, has received little attention. We found few studies that investigated its impact in low-risk family contexts. Under circumstances of duress, evidence obtained suggests that grandparents could provide support that safeguards their grandchildren. We discuss research and policy implications.

List of commentators is unavailable

Among the articles to appear in forthcoming issues of BBS:

R. T. McKay & D. C. Dennett, "The Evolution of Misbelief"

David A. Coall & R. Hertwig, "Grandparental investment: Past, present, and future"

J. Henrich, S. J. Heine & A. Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People In The World?"

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