On Feeling Good and Being Rude: Affective Influences on Language Use and Request Formulations

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How does mood influence verbal communication, such as the use of requests? On the basis of the Affect Infusion Model (J. P. Forgas, 1995a), 3 experiments predicted and found that (a) negative moods increase and positive moods decrease request politeness and (b) they do so most in difficult situations that require more substantive processing. In Experiment 1, sad mood enhanced and happy mood reduced request politeness, especially in difficult situations. In Experiment 2, similar mood effects on the politeness and elaboration of self-generated requests were found. In Experiment 3, these findings were replicated in a variety of request situations by use of a different mood induction. Recall data confirmed that more substantive processing enhanced mood effects on requesting. The cognitive mechanisms mediating mood effects on requesting are discussed, and the implications of the results for interpersonal communication and for recent affect–cognition theories are considered.

Finding the right words when formulating an interpersonal message can be a complex and demanding cognitive task. Surprising, very little is known about how short-term moods may influence verbal communication strategies and the production of requests in particular. Yet the ability to effectively use requests is of critical importance in many everyday areas of strategic interaction, such as bargaining (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) and the management of successful personal relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1996; Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Reis & Shaver, 1988). This article extends recent work on affect and social cognition to the domain of verbal communication by demonstrating that temporary good or bad moods can have a systematic and predictable influence on request formulations (Argyle, 1991).

Requesting is a common yet strategically highly demanding verbal task. Formulating a request often presents communicators with a double-avoidance conflict, as they seek to satisfy the contradictory requirements of being sufficiently direct in order to maximize compliance yet being sufficiently polite so as to avoid giving offense (Bavelas, 1985; Forgas, 1985, in press; Gibbs, 1985; Jordan & Roloff, 1990). Recent research based on the Affect Infusion Model (AIM; Forgas, 1995a) suggests that mood effects tend to be especially marked on such inferential cognitive tasks in which more elaborate substantive processing is required to deal with a complex, problematic situation (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1994, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b; Sedikides, 1995). On the basis of past research on language use as well as recent affect–cognition theorizing (Forgas, 1995a), the three experiments in this article predicted that negative mood should increase and positive mood should decrease request politeness and that situational difficulty should magnify these mood effects.

The Language of Requests

Requests are very common in everyday discourse and play a central role in coordinating social behaviors, achieving interpersonal objectives, and managing social situations and personal relationships. Even though many routine conversations can be processed in a relatively mindless fashion, requests often do require more elaborate processing (Gibbs, 1983). Given the ever-present dangers of rejection or giving offense, requests are typically formulated so as to allow participants to present and maintain an appropriate face or social persona (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1974). Requests are thus an example of strategic communication and require actors to actively interpret and monitor the social context and to select their words so as to communicate the ideal level of politeness appropriate for the task and the situation (H. H. Clark, 1989; H. H. Clark & Schunk, 1980; Forgas, 1985). Despite the great variety of requests in terms of content and form, most requests can be readily characterized in terms of a single critical psychological dimension: their level of politeness or directness. Politeness is a pragmatic, normative concept (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and directness refers to the degree of immediacy

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in the syntactic and semantic formulation of the request. Request directness and politeness are closely and inversely related characteristics and are used interchangeably here, given strong consensual agreement about the level of politeness signaled by more or less direct request formulations (H. H. Clark & Schunk, 1980; Gibbs, 1985).

The optimum level of politeness for a given request depends on a complex set of variables such as the risk and cost of losing face; the status, age, gender, and intimacy between the interactants; and perceptions of the relationship (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fletcher & Fitness, 1996). With the multiple influences on request formulation, there seems to be no direct or universal relationship between the level of politeness of a request and its ultimate success, which makes requesting a particularly demanding cognitive task (Gibbs, 1985; Jordan & Roloff, 1990). Several lines of evidence suggest that producing requests indeed requires complex and elaborate cognitive processes. For example, the rules governing request politeness are so elaborate that usually they are not fully mastered until about the age of 9 by most children (Axia & Baroni, 1985). The more difficult and demanding a request situation, the more systematically and extensively it tends to be processed, and the more likely it is that it will be remembered accurately later on (Gibbs, 1985; Kitayama & Burnstein, 1988). One of the counterintuitive hypotheses to be evaluated here is that more difficult situations requiring more elaborate processing should increase rather than decrease the biasing influence of affect on people's request formulations.

Mood Effects on Request Formulation

What are the psychological mechanisms that may be responsible for affect infusion into request production? Early explanations of affective influences on thinking and behavior typically emphasized psychoanalytic (Feshbach & Singer, 1957) or conditioning principles (Berkowitz, 1993). Contemporary theories in turn focus on the cognitive mechanisms that link affect and thinking (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996; Bower, 1991; Branscombe & Cohen, 1991; Forgas, 1995a; Kaplan, 1991; Mackie & Worth, 1989, 1991; Mayer, 1986; Niedenthal, 1990; Sedikides, 1992a, 1992b; Sinclair & Mark, 1992). Two kinds of affective influences on cognition have been identified: (a) *informational* effects, in which affect impacts on what people think (the content of cognition), and (b) *processing* effects, in which mood influences how people think (the process of cognition). Informational mood effects occur largely because of the operation of memory mechanisms, as a result of the selective priming and greater use of mood-related information (Bower, 1991; Mayer & Hanson, 1995; Salovey & Birnbaum, 1989; Sedikides, 1995). It is these mood-congruent informational biases that are most likely to influence people's assessment of complex social situations, ultimately impacting on their interactive behaviors, including requesting (Forgas, 1998b). In light of past evidence for the demanding, highly constructive, and memory-based nature of formulating requests (H. H. Clark, 1989; Forgas, 1983; Gibbs, 1985), affect priming mechanisms are likely to be the dominant source of mood effects on request formulations (Bower, 1991; Forgas, 1995a).

In line with other influential multiprocess theories (Brewer, 1988; Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993), the various informational and processing consequences of mood were recently integrated in the comprehensive, multiprocess Affect Infusion Model (AIM; Forgas, 1992a, 1995a). According to this model, the extent of affect infusion into cognition and social behavior varies along a processing continuum. The AIM identifies four alternative processing strategies in terms of (a) the kind of information search strategies used by judges to perform a task (open search vs. restricted search) and (b) the exhaustiveness of the information considered in constructing a response (full search vs. partial search). Two of the processing strategies—(a) *direct access processing,* based on reproducing a previously stored reaction, and (b) *motivated processing,* involving highly targeted search strategies—are highly constrained and directed and should not produce affect infusion effects. In contrast, (c) *heuristic processing* can lead to affect infusion through the affect-as-information mechanism, and (d) systematic or *substantive processing* is most likely to produce affect infusion because of the affect priming mechanism. According to the AIM, as substantive processing becomes more elaborate and extensive, affect infusion effects should also increase as mood-primed associations are more likely to be incorporated in a more elaborate and constructive cognitive process. Several experiments have now supported this prediction in a range of cognitive and judgmental tasks (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995b, 1998a; Salovey & Birnbaum, 1989). Thus, mood effects tend to be greater when people (a) think about difficult, peripheral aspects rather than readily accessible, central aspects of their self-concept (Sedikides, 1995) and (b) form judgments about complex, atypical rather than simple, typical people and events (Forgas, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1998a).

Could it be that more difficult and demanding communication tasks have a similar nonobvious effect, enhancing rather than reducing the biasing effects of mood on the strategic messages produced? These studies test the possibility that, as a result of affect priming processes in interpreting the situation, positive moods produce greater optimism and more direct requests and negative moods produce greater pessimism and more polite request strategies. However, the effects of both positive and negative moods should be magnified when more elaborate, substantive processing is required to deal with a more difficult, demanding request situation. Such task-contingent mood effects have not been demonstrated previously in the domain of language use and are among the issues explored here.

Aims and Predictions

Surprisingly little work has been done so far on the influence of psychological states, such as moods, on verbal communication strategies. However, there is strong evidence that mood states can infuse a variety of complex cognitive processes involved in attention, learning, memory, associations, and judgments. These mood priming effects can have significant consequences for how people interpret and deal with complex and ambiguous social information (Bower, 1991; Fiedler, 1990; Forgas, 1994, 1998b; Mayer, Gaschke, Braverman, & Evans, 1992; Mayer, McCormick, & Strong, 1995; Sinclair, 1988). The present studies aim to extend earlier work on mood effects on perception and cognition by demonstrating the influence of affect on strategic social behaviors, such as the formulation of requests.

When faced with a complex communication task such as making a request, people need to engage in extensive, substantive processing in order to interpret the situation and formulate the appropriate kind of message. Affect infusion should thus be an important feature of request production (Forgas, 1995a). Happy persons tend to be more confident and ambitious, set themselves higher goals, overestimate the likelihood of success, take more moderate risks, and prefer simple and direct solutions (Forgas, 1995a; Mackie & Worth, 1989, 1991; Mann, 1992; Sinclair & Mark, 1992; Stroessner & Mackie, 1992). People in a happy mood may thus underestimate the likelihood of giving offense and come to use more direct and less polite request strategies to maximize compliance because of the selective priming and greater accessibility of positive memories and experiences about similar successful situations in the past.

Negative mood in turn tends to produce more negative assessments of the self, reduce self-confidence and self-efficacy, increase vigilance, and lead to more self-deprecating and pessimistic attributions and judgments (Cervone, Kopp, Schaumann, & Scott, 1994; Forgas, 1994; Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984; Mayer & Hanson, 1995; Sedikides, 1992a, 1994, 1995). Accordingly, sad people might selectively recall incidents when they suffered a loss of face because of overly direct requests and may use a more cautious, indirect, and polite requesting strategy. Negative mood was thus expected to result in more polite and elaborate request formulations throughout.

Furthermore, in a counterintuitive prediction, both positive and negative mood effects on requesting were predicted to be significantly greater in circumstances that call for more elaborate, substantive processing, such as a more difficult and demanding interpersonal situation. Thus, situational difficulty was expected to increase the effects of both positive and negative moods on request formulations. The three experiments reported here examine these predictions by use of a variety of request scenarios, different mood induction procedures, and a range of different dependent variables.

Experiment 1

On the basis of these considerations, the first experiment was designed as an initial exploration that temporary mood states can indeed have a significant influence on request preferences. It was expected that people would adopt a more confident, direct requesting strategy when experiencing a positive mood, consistent with the greater availability and use of positively valenced thoughts and more optimistic associations. In contrast, people experiencing a temporary bad mood were expected to prefer more cautious, polite request strategies because of their more pessimistic assessment of the felicity conditions for their requests. Furthermore, these mood effects were expected to be significantly greater in a more complex and demanding situation that tends to require more substantive and elaborate processing, increasing the scope for affect infusion to occur.

Method

Overview and participants. Participants believed that they were taking part in two separate experiments, one concerned with "memory for social events" (in fact, the mood induction procedure based on the autobiographical recall of happy or sad events) and the other an interpersonal behavior task (designed to evaluate requesting strategies). Participants were 120 students who participated in this experiment for course credit. There were 64 persons in the positive mood condition (32 men and 32 women) and 56 persons in the negative mood condition (28 women and 28 men).

Materials and procedure. The session was introduced as comprising two independent experiments concerned with memories for social events and with interpersonal behavior. As part of the first task, participants were instructed as follows:

> Remember a specific social event that has occurred in your life that has made you very happy [or sad] . . . imagine the situation as vividly as you can. Picture the event actually happening to you. Try to experience all the details of the situation . . . think through the thoughts that occurred to you . . . feel the same feelings you felt- . . . describe the event you remembered as vividly as you can including all the important details.

Participants then took 10–12 min to reflect on and to write down their positive or negative experiences. This procedure was found highly effective in inducing negative or positive mood states in the past (Forgas, 1995a). After the mood induction, participants completed a brief questionnaire, ostensibly to elicit feedback but in fact designed to establish the effectiveness of the mood induction. Participants were asked to rate how they were feeling on 7-point *happy–sad* and *good–bad* scales, which were embedded among several distractor items (e.g., "Have you done similar memory tasks before?").

The second task was introduced as a study of interpersonal behavior. Participants were instructed as follows:

> In this task, you will be presented with some typical everyday situations involving verbal exchanges. Your task will be to think about how you would respond in a given situation. This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers.

Participants were then presented with two scenarios representing an easy and a difficult request context. The first scenario described a highly legitimate request situation involving a request for the repayment of a loan: "An acquaintance borrowed twenty dollars from you some time ago, and you think that they may have forgotten. What would you say to ask for your money back?" Participants were asked to select one of five possible ways of formulating this request, ranging from the very polite and indirect to the relatively impolite and direct, as follows: "1. I wonder if I have enough money on me today? 2. Do you have any money on you? 3. I could do with twenty dollars now . . . ; 4. I think you owe me twenty dollars; 5. I want you to repay my twenty dollars."

The second scenario described a more difficult and potentially more embarrassing request situation during a dinner party, where the danger of giving offense was greater:

> You are eating a meal at a friend's place who is proud of her cooking. You would like to ask for some ketchup with your meal without offending her. Select the form of words you would be most likely to use from the five alternatives shown below: 1. This meal might need something . . . ; 2. Have you tried this with ketchup? 3. Do you have ketchup? 4. There is no ketchup on the table; 5. I want some ketchup.

The two scenarios and the five request alternatives for each scenario were selected from a larger sample of situations and request alternatives on the basis of a careful review of the literature and were validated in a detailed pilot test. Prior ratings ($N = 40$) indicated that, as intended, the two scenarios were seen as significantly different in terms of their perceived difficulty, $t(38) = 12.37$, $p < .004$; $M = 3.05$ versus 5.72. The five alternative requests for each situation were also pretested and were found to be significantly different and approximately equally spaced on a 10-point continuum of politeness. A detailed debriefing concluded the procedure. Care was taken to eliminate any residual mood effects. Extensive

questioning of the participants revealed no evidence of any awareness of the manipulations or the hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

Mood validation. Participants' self-rated mood on the combined *happy–sad* and *good–bad* scales (r = .88) indicated an overall significant difference in mood between persons assigned to the positive and negative mood conditions, $F(1, 118) = 49.44$, $p < .01$. Those receiving a positive mood induction rated their moods as significantly better than those in the negative mood group (M = 4.81 vs. 2.32). These results confirm that the mood induction was highly successful in generating significantly different positive and negative moods.

Mood effects on requesting strategies. As a preliminary analysis indicated no main or interaction effects attributable to gender ($p > .18$), data for men and women were combined in all subsequent analyses. An analysis of variance evaluated the effect of mood (good vs. bad) and the request context (easy vs. difficult) on the politeness of participants' preferred request choices. Results showed that mood did have a significant main effect on requesting. Participants in a positive mood were more likely to prefer more direct and less polite requests, and sad persons were more likely to select indirect, polite request alternatives, $F(1, 118) = 7.84$, $p < .01$. Simple effect tests confirmed that this mood effect was significant in both the easy, $t(118) = 2.07$, $p < .05$, and the difficult, $t(118) = 3.64$, $p < .01$, request situations (Figure 1). The situation context also had a significant influence, with participants generally preferring more direct and less polite requests in the easy situation and opting for more polite, indirect requests in the more difficult situation, $F(1, 118) = 11.29$, $p < .01$. Finally, the present study's main theoretical prediction was also confirmed: A significant interaction between mood and situation difficulty was found, $F(1, 116) = 4.33$, $p < .05$, indicating that mood effects on request preferences were markedly greater in the more difficult situation than in the less embarrassing and easy situation (Figure 1).

The results of this first experiment indicate that short-term mood states can indeed have a significant influence on preferred request strategies. It is particularly interesting that these mood effects were sufficiently robust to influence request preferences even on such a relatively insensitive measure as the five prestructured request alternatives used here. Clearly, these findings are encouraging and suggest that short-term moods may have a subtle and yet insufficiently understood influence on peoples' verbal preferences, especially in such strategic situations as requesting. These results also support the prediction derived from the AIM that more complex, demanding tasks are likely to recruit more elaborate processing strategies, leading to more extensive affect infusion effects. Conceptually similar results have been obtained in a number of recent studies, in which greater mood effects were associated with more demanding or unfamiliar tasks that required more extensive processing (Forgas, 1992b, 1994, 1995b, in press; Salovey & Birnbaum, 1989; Sedikides, 1995). Although the results of the first experiment are highly encouraging, clearly more evidence is needed to confirm and elaborate on these results. This was the task of the second experiment.

Figure 1. The effects of happy and sad moods on request politeness in easy and difficult situations.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 was designed as a replication and extension of Experiment 1. One obvious limitation of Experiment 1 is the use of just a few predetermined request alternatives to assess verbal strategies. Although such prestructured responses have the benefit of ease of administration and coding, they are less realistic, do not require as much constructive processing by respondents, and also may distort participants' naturally preferred verbal strategies. In Experiment 2, happy and sad participants were asked to generate and write down in their own words the requests they wanted to use in response to each situation. A related problem with prestructured response formats is that they give little insight into the kind of cognitive strategies participants rely on in producing a response. Yet it is increasingly clear from theories such as the AIM that an understanding of the cognitive strategies used by participants is essential to any explanation of mood effects on social judgments and behavior (Forgas, 1995a). The use of an open-ended response format in Experiment 2 also allowed the analysis of multiple features of the requests produced as a function of participants' mood and the request situation.

Method

Overview, design, and participants. Participants again believed that there were two separate experiments: a study of memory for social events (actually the autobiographical mood induction procedure) and the interpersonal behavior task (actually the evaluation of requesting strategies). Participants were 96 students (48 women and 48 men) who received course credit for their involvement. There were equal numbers of men and women in the happy and sad mood conditions. The study again evaluated the influence of mood (happy vs. sad) and situation context (easy vs. difficult) on a number of features of the free-response requests produced.

Materials and procedure. The mood induction procedure was the same as in Experiment 1. Participants were asked to recall and write about a specific event that had made them happy or sad and were allowed 10–12 min to get into the appropriate mood state. The effectiveness of the mood induction was again assessed with a postexperimental questionnaire. This time, participants were asked to rate their current mood on a more sensitive mood validation instrument containing four 7-point scales (*happy–sad, good–bad, relaxed–tense, aroused–not aroused*) embedded among several distractor items. Next, the two requesting scenarios (easy vs. difficult) were described as in Experiment 1. Rather than indicating their responses by selecting from predetermined request alternatives, participants were asked

to "Please write down the actual words you would use to make this request." Participants had no difficulty understanding these instructions, and it usually took just a few minutes to read the request scenarios and to write a request for each of the target situations.

Dependent variables. Participants' responses were analyzed in terms of six dependent variables: the degrees of directness, politeness, friendliness, elaboration, hedging, and complexity of each request produced. Two raters, blind to the mood conditions, were trained in rating each of these features. They were then asked to go through each of the response protocols independently and rate each request on each of six 7-point bipolar scales (*polite–impolite, direct–indirect, friendly–unfriendly, elaborate–simple, hedging–not hedging, simple–complex*). Their judgments showed considerable interrater reliability (r = .82). The ratings by the two raters were then averaged and used as dependent variables in subsequent analyses.

Results and Discussion

Mood validation. Mood ratings on the four self-report scales were first subjected to a principal-components analysis to determine the underlying structure of these judgments. All four scales loaded on a single factor, with an eigenvalue of 3.08 and accounting for 71.5% of the variance, which indicated that all judgments were highly correlated and could be combined into a single self-report mood measure (Cronbach's α = .83). An analysis of mood self-ratings on this index indicated a significant difference between persons assigned to the happy and sad conditions, $F(1, 94) = 30.25, p < .01$. Those receiving a positive mood induction rated their moods as significantly better than did sad persons (M = 4.97 vs. 2.43). These results confirm that the mood induction again was highly successful in eliciting markedly different good and bad moods in participants.

Mood effects on free-response requesting strategies. Each free-response request was rated on a total of six scales (directness, politeness, friendliness, complexity, hedging, and elaboration) by the two raters. As these ratings may also be correlated, a preliminary principal-components factor analysis was undertaken to reduce the number of dependent variables by combining highly correlated scales; thus the probability of Type I error in subsequent analyses also was reduced. The analysis with oblique rotation identified two factors with eigenvalues > 1.0, accounting for 39.5% and 27.1% of the variances, respectively. The first factor was marked by three scales (*polite–impolite, direct–indirect,* and *friendly–unfriendly*) and was labeled *politeness.* The remaining three scales (*elaborate–not elaborate, hedging–not hedging,* and *simple–complex*) clearly loaded on the second factor, and this was labeled *elaboration.* The six scale ratings of each request were next combined to create two new dependent variables, politeness and elaboration, with the factor scores as weights (Cronbach's α > .80). As a preliminary analysis revealed no main or interaction effects associated with gender ($p > .21$), data for men and women were combined in all subsequent analyses.

A two-way analysis of variance assessed the influence of mood (happy vs. sad) and the request situation (easy vs. difficult) on the two dependent variables: (a) the politeness of self-generated requests and (b) their degree of elaboration. Results confirmed that mood did have a significant effect on politeness, $F(1, 94) = 8.86$, $p < .01$. Happy persons again tended to formulate their requests in a significantly more impolite and direct manner than did sad individuals (Figure 2), thus confirming the results of Experiment 1 with this more sensitive free-response format. Simple effect tests

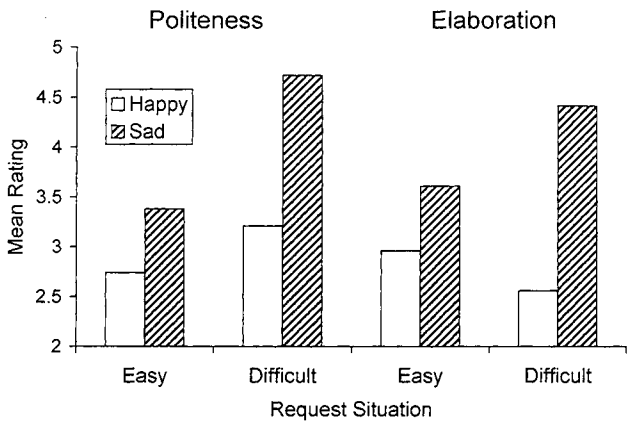

Figure 2. The effects of mood and situation difficulty on (a) the politeness of requests (left-hand side of the figure), and (b) the elaboration of self-generated requests (right-hand side of the figure).

confirmed that this pattern occurred both in the simple request situation, $t(96) = 2.41, p < .02$, and in the more difficult request situation, $t(96) = 4.03, p < .01$. Situational context also had a significant influence on politeness: Self-generated requests were significantly more polite in the more problematic and difficult request situation than in the easy situation, $F(1, 94) = 9.77, p < .01$, as was found also in Experiment 1. More important, a significant interaction effect between mood and situational context on request politeness also was found, $F(1, 92) = 7.81, p < .01$, indicating that the mood effects were greater in the more difficult situation than in the more simple and more legitimate request situation (Figure 2).

An analysis of the level of elaboration or complexity of free-response requests also revealed a significant mood effect, $F(1, 94) = 11.39, p < .01$. Sad participants used more complex, elaborate, and hedging linguistic forms in producing their requests than did happy participants (Figure 2) and did so both in the easy, $t(96) = 2.33, p < .05$, and in the more difficult request situations, $t(96) = 5.13, p < .01$. There was no significant main effect attributable to the two different situational contexts. However, there was once again a significant interaction between mood and situational difficulty, $F(1, 92) = 8.08, p < .05$. This result indicated that the effects of mood on request elaboration were significantly greater in the more complex and difficult situation than in the easy request situation (Figure 2).

These findings further confirm that short-term mood states indeed have a marked influence on the quality and elaboration of self-generated requests. Sad people were found to produce more polite and more elaborate request formulations in both of the situations examined here, as found also in Experiment 1. Previous research was limited largely to demonstrating such informational mood effects on memory and judgments (Bower, 1991; Branscombe & Cohen, 1991; Kaplan, 1991; Forgas, 1995b; Mayer & Hanson, 1995). The present results extend this principle to an entirely new domain: the production of strategic verbal messages.

Of particular interest is the significant interaction found here between mood and the request situation on both request politeness and request elaboration (Figure 2). Why should the effects of mood be greater on requests in a difficult rather than an easy situation? Dealing

with a more difficult task is likely to require more elaborate, substantive processing strategies, allowing greater scope for affectively primed thoughts and associations to infuse people's assessment of the situation. According to the AIM, the more problematic and difficult the task, the more substantive processing is required, and the greater the likelihood that mood-primed associations influence the outcome. As a result of affect infusion, sad participants may overestimate the dangers of rejection and thus use more polite forms. In contrast, happy participants access more optimistic, confident associations, underestimating the dangers of giving offense, and should thus produce more direct requests, as was found here in fact. Although Experiment 2 confirmed just such a pattern of mood effects on requesting with open-ended requests, this study does not as yet provide direct evidence for the predicted processing differences. Experiment 3 was designed to further explore this issue.

Experiment 3

Based on the success of Experiments 1 and 2 as a convergent demonstration of mood effects on requesting strategies, Experiment 3 sought to confirm and extend these findings in several directions. Once again an open-ended response format was used; happy and sad participants were asked to generate and write down in their own words the requests they wanted to use in a number of realistic situations. Their requests were subsequently rated and analyzed in terms of a number of features, such as their politeness and elaboration. The number and variety of easy or difficult request situations also was increased in Experiment 3 in order to enhance the external validity of the findings.

Experiments 1 and 2 also indicated that mood effects were most marked on requests that were produced in response to a more difficult and demanding social situation. Experiment 3 was designed to collect specific evidence to link these greater mood effects to more extensive processing strategies, as indicated by recall memory data. If mood effects are indeed enhanced by the more substantive processing experienced in more difficult social situations as predicted by the AIM, it may be expected that people also better remember such more elaborately processed requests later on. Accordingly, in Experiment 3, participants' recall of their requests formulated in happy, control, or sad moods also were assessed in order to link directly mood effects and processing strategies.

Experiment 3 also included a different mood induction method. Most mood manipulations (such as guided imagery, autobiographical memory, audiovisual stimuli, hypnosis, false feedback, etc.) tend to have unintended cognitive and motivational consequences. The use of a variety of mood induction procedures within a series of related experiments helps to establish that the effects obtained are indeed attributable to induced mood and not to the secondary consequences of the particular mood induction method. This approach has now been successfully applied in several investigations to "triangulate" mood effects (Forgas, 1994, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b). Accordingly, a different audiovisual mood induction procedure was used here. A further change incorporated in Experiment 3 was the inclusion of an intermediate control group condition. Although it is not possible to induce experimentally a genuinely neutral mood in participants, the inclusion of a control condition here was expected to help assess the relative influence of positive and negative moods in producing different request strategies.

Method

Overview, design, and participants. The study once again was presented to participants as two separate experiments evaluating perceptions of audiovisual stimuli (actually the mood induction procedure) and looking at an interpersonal behavior task (actually studying requesting strategies). Participants were 152 students of both sexes who received course credit for their involvement. There were 54 participants in the positive mood condition (26 men and 28 women), 50 in the control condition (24 men and 26 women), and 48 in the negative mood condition (24 men and 24 women). The experiment evaluated the influence of mood (happy, control, sad) and situation difficulty on the quality and features of requests produced and the subsequent recall memory for these requests in a surprise cued-recall task.

Procedure and materials. Videotapes were used to induce happy, neutral, or sad moods in participants. This mood manipulation was described as a separate study designed to validate films for later use in another experiment. The use of films to manipulate mood has been tried and tested extensively both in laboratory and in field research and has been found to produce salient and enduring moods in the past (Forgas, 1994, 1995b). The 10-min films used included scenes from (a) a popular comedy series (happy mood), (b) a program on architecture (control mood), and (c) a film dealing with death from cancer (sad mood).

Next, a series of more or less difficult requesting scenarios were presented to participants in a questionnaire. They were instructed, "Write down the actual words you would use to make this request." It usually took just a few minutes to read each of the request scenarios and to write a request for each of the target situations. The three easy scenarios included (a) asking an acquaintance to change a small note, (b) asking an assistant for the price of a product in the supermarket, and (c) asking a stranger on the street to tell you the time. The three more difficult request scenarios were (a) asking a professor for an extension on an essay, (b) asking for a refund for a product in the supermarket, and (c) asking a stranger on the street to give you some money for a telephone call. A pilot test ($N = 36$) established that the three easy scenarios were indeed rated as significantly less embarrassing, $t(34) = 8.26$, $p < .01$ ($M = 2.75$ vs. 5.54), and less difficult, $t(34) = 11.45$, $p < .01$ ($M = 2.48$ vs. 5.76), than the difficult scenarios on the two 7-point bipolar scales.

The open-ended requests produced were subsequently rated in terms of six dependent variables by two independent raters. The raters were blind to the experimental condition and rated each request on each of six 7-point bipolar scales (*polite–impolite, direct–indirect, friendly–unfriendly, elaborate–simple, hedging–not hedging, simple–complex*). Their judgments showed good interrater reliability ($r = .84$). These ratings were then averaged across the two raters and used as dependent variables in subsequent analyses.

Immediately after the request task, a postexperimental questionnaire was administered to establish the effectiveness of the mood induction. Participants rated their current mood on four 7-point scales (*happy–sad, good–bad, relaxed–tense, aroused–not aroused*) embedded among several distractor items. Next, participants performed an unrelated interference task (completing some questionnaires) that took about 10–15 min to complete. At the end of this task, they were administered a surprise cued-recall test instructing them to write down "word for word, or as accurately as you can remember, the words you used in your request" in each of the situations. These recall protocols were subsequently rated for overall accuracy of recall on a 10-point scale by two independent raters who were blind to the experimental condition and achieved an interrater reliability of .78. A careful debriefing, designed to eliminate any residual mood effects, completed the procedure. Questioning of the participants revealed no evidence of any awareness of the manipulations or hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

Mood validation. A principal-components analysis was first performed on mood self-ratings on the four scales to determine the relationship between these judgments. Results showed that the scales were highly related, all loading on a single factor, with an eigenvalue of 2.64 and accounting for 59.8% of the variance. Accordingly, judgments on the four scales were combined into a single self-report mood measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). An analysis of variance of self-rated mood on this combined measure revealed a highly significant mood effect, $F(2, 149) = 33.19, p < .01$. Those receiving a positive mood induction rated their moods as significantly better than those of the control group, $F(1, 102) = 8.44, p < .01$ ($M = 2.55$ vs. 3.78), and those in a negative mood condition rated their mood as significantly worse, $F(1, 96) = 10.51, p < .01$ ($M = 5.19$ vs. 3.78). The induction was thus highly successful in producing in participants significantly different mood states that endured until after the request task was completed.

Mood effects on request formulations. Two raters blind to the experimental condition read and rated each of the requests produced on six bipolar scales (directness, politeness, friendliness, complexity, hedging, and elaboration), achieving an interrater reliability of .84. Their ratings were next averaged and subjected to a principal-components analysis in order to define a smaller number of nonredundant dependent measures by combining highly correlated scales and thus control Type I error in subsequent analyses. Two factors were again identified with eigenvalues > 1.0, accounting for 41.7% and 23.6% of the variances. The *polite–impolite, direct–indirect,* and *friendly–unfriendly* scales loaded on the first factor, which was labeled *politeness.* The three other scales, *elaborate–not elaborate, hedging–not hedging,* and *simple–complex,* loaded on the second factor, labeled *elaboration.* This factor structure is similar to the results reported in Experiment 2, which suggests that politeness and elaboration may be basic features of requests. On the basis of this analysis, two new combined dependent variables were created (politeness and elaboration) with the factor scores as weights (Cronbach's $\alpha > .82$).

The effects of mood (happy, control, sad) and the request situation (easy vs. difficult) on request quality (politeness and elaboration) were assessed using two-way analyses of variance. As there was no evidence for main or interaction effects related to gender ($p > .16$), data for men and women were again combined in all analyses. Results indicated a significant mood main effect on request politeness, $F(2, 149) = 10.22, p < .01$. People in a positive mood formulated their requests in a significantly more direct and impolite manner than did those in the control group, $F(1, 102) = 5.13, p < .05$, and those in the negative mood condition produced significantly more polite and indirect requests than did controls, $F(1, 96) = 7.41, p < .01$ (Figure 3). Simple effect tests showed that in the easy situation, happy mood reduced request politeness compared with both control mood, $t(102) = 1.99, p < .05$, and negative mood, $t(100) = 2.44, p < .02$. In the difficult request situation, happy participants were significantly more direct, $t(102) = 2.49, p < .02$, and sad participants were less direct, $t(96) = 3.26, p < .01$, than controls. This result confirms the pattern reported in Experiments 1 and 2 with a different and larger set of request situations and with a different mood induction procedure, which attests to the reliability of this effect. The ease or difficulty of the situation also had a significant main effect on politeness: Requests were more polite when the situation was difficult rather than easy, $F(1, 150) = 6.99, p < .01$, which was found also in Experiments 1 and 2 and confirms the generality of these effects. Of greatest theoretical interest is the significant interaction between mood and situational context on request politeness identified here, $F(2, 146) = 5.82, p < .01$. This result clearly shows that mood effects were overall significantly greater on the requests produced in difficult rather than easy situational contexts (Figure 3).

The level of elaboration or complexity of the requests produced also was significantly influenced by mood, $F(2, 149) = 13.22, p <$

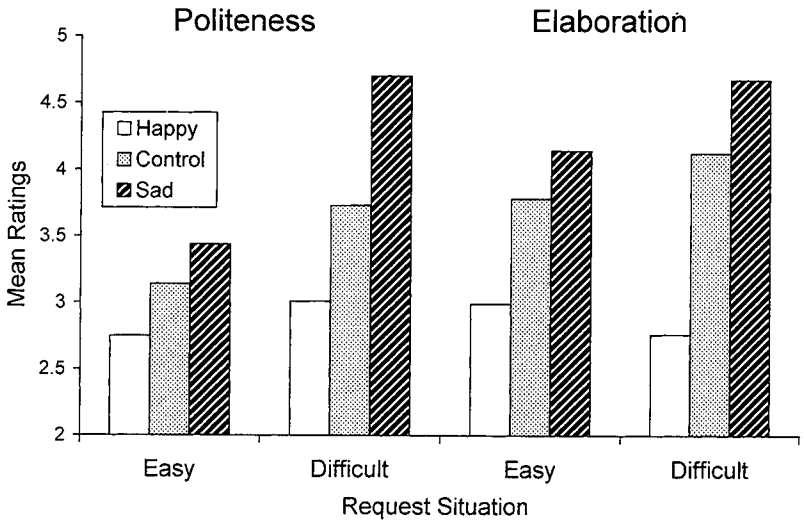

Figure 3. The effects of mood (happy, control, and sad) and of situation difficulty on the politeness (left-hand side) and elaboration (right-hand side) of self-generated requests: Mood effects are enhanced by situation difficulty.

.01. Participants experiencing a happy mood produced more simple, less elaborate, and less hedging request formulations than did the control group, $F(1, 96) = 8.31$, $p < .01$, and those in a bad mood used somewhat more complex and elaborate forms than did controls, although this second difference did not reach significance (Figure 3). Follow-up tests showed that in easy situations, happy mood reduced request politeness compared with both the control mood, $t(102) = 2.39$, $p < .02$, and the sad mood, $t(100) = 2.74$, $p < .01$. In the difficult request situation, happy participants were again significantly more direct than both controls, $t(102) = 3.26$, $p < .01$, and sad participants, $t(100) = 3.41$, $p < .01$. Situation difficulty did not have a significant main effect on request elaboration. The key prediction of greater mood effects on requests produced in more difficult situations was once again confirmed: There was a significant interaction between mood and situational difficulty, $F(2, 146) = 3.65$, $p < .05$. This finding again confirms that mood effects on request formulation tend to be greater in more complex and demanding situations that are likely to require more extensive and elaborate processing (Figure 3).

These findings further establish that temporary moods not only can influence thoughts and judgments (Bower, 1991; Forgas, 1995a; Kaplan, 1991; Mayer & Hanson, 1995; Sedikides, 1995; Stroessner & Mackie, 1992) but also may have a significant informational effect on the way strategic verbal messages are formulated. Thus, negative mood may prime negative associations leading to an overestimation of the dangers of giving offense, resulting in more polite and elaborate request formulations. Positive mood in contrast may cue more optimistic, confident associations, which produce more direct requests, as found in all three experiments here. The interaction between mood and situation difficulty on request politeness is of particular interest (Figure 3). The difficult request scenarios were independently rated as more demanding by a pilot sample. In terms of the AIM, situational difficulty should recruit more substantive, elaborate processing strategies, and it is such constructive, generative processing strategies that increase the likelihood that mood-primed associations will influence the outcome (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1995a; Sedikides, 1995). The next section presents more direct evidence for these predicted processing differences in the form of memory data.

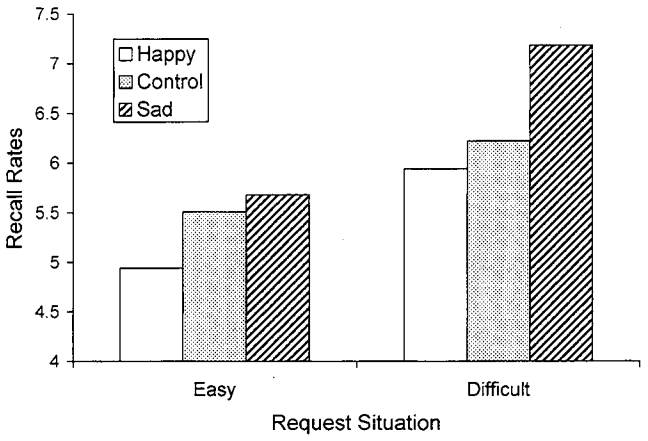

Figure 4. The effects of mood and situation difficulty on recall memory for details of the requests produced.

Mood effects on memory for requests. The effects of mood (happy, control, sad) and situational difficulty (easy, difficult) on recall memory were evaluated using a two-way analysis of variance. Results revealed a significant main effect for mood, $F(2, 149) = 5.81$, $p < .01$. People in a sad mood remembered their requests significantly better than did happy persons, $F(1, 100) = 5.22$, $p < .05$, although overall differences between the control group and the two experimental groups did not reach significance (Figure 4). Simple effect tests showed that mood effects on recall were not significant in easy situations, $p > .14$, although there were significant differences between the happy and sad groups in more difficult situations, $t(100) = 2.41$, $p < .02$. These findings are especially interesting because it was the sad mood group that tended to use more complex, elaborate requests overall (Figure 3), yet the group's memory on the whole was still more accurate for these more demanding utterances than was the case for happy persons. Consistent with the AIM, these memory effects suggest that dysphoria is likely to recruit more situation-oriented, analytic processing styles, with beneficial effects on subsequent recall performance even for these more complex messages (M. S. Clark & Isen, 1982; Forgas, 1998c).

Of greatest theoretical interest is the finding that situational difficulty had the predicted significant influence on recall, $F(1, 150) = 12.68$, $p < .01$. Requests formulated in more difficult and demanding situations were recalled significantly better than were requests produced in easy and less embarrassing situations; this confirms the evidence indicating that more elaborate, substantive processing is recruited when dealing with these more problematic episodes (Figure 4). The fact that requests formulated in difficult situations were on the whole more complex and elaborate than easy requests (Figure 3) makes this recall effect even more impressive. This recall bias confirms the present study's key prediction that more difficult, demanding situations indeed recruit more elaborate, substantive processing and produce greater mood effects. In contrast, more simple, easy situations tended to be processed less elaborately, producing weaker affect infusion and less accurate recall. A significant interaction between mood and situation difficulty also was found, $F(2, 146) = 3.12$, $p < .05$. Overall, these results are consistent with the main theoretical prediction that more difficult situations recruit more elaborate, substantive processing, which accentuates the effects of both positive and negative moods on request production (Figure 4).

The results obtained in this experiment add to the results in Experiments 1 and 2 by establishing a direct link between the strength of the mood effect and the degree of substantive processing associated with particular requests, as indicated by subsequent recall performance. Taken together, these studies were successful in extending previous research, demonstrating mood effects on attention, learning, memory, and judgments (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1990; Bower, 1991; Forgas, 1995a; Niedenthal, 1990; Stroessner & Mackie, 1992), to the new domain of language production. The language choices made by respondents support the predictions that sad persons form more pessimistic associations and thus use more cautious and polite forms and that happy persons use more direct forms as a result of their more optimistic inferences about the felicity conditions for their requests. The memory data in Experiment 3, specifically, confirm the counterintuitive predictions of the AIM that both positive and negative mood effects are greatest

when people need to engage in extended, substantive processing to deal with a demanding cognitive task.

General Discussion and Conclusion

These experiments produced clear and converging evidence showing that moods can have a marked impact on verbal communication strategies. Experiment 1 evidenced that sad persons prefer more polite request formulations than do happy individuals and that these mood effects are significantly greater in more difficult and demanding situational contexts. Experiment 2 confirmed this mood effect with open-ended, self-generated requests. Experiment 3 demonstrated a similar result with a different set of request scenarios and a different mood induction procedure, further extending the reliability of the phenomenon. Experiment 3 also established that greater mood effects on request formulation were consistently linked to the more substantive processing strategies recruited in more difficult situations, as indicated by better recall memory performance. It is remarkable that despite the burgeoning interest in the study of affect in recent years (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996; M. S. Clark & Waddell, 1983; Mackie & Worth, 1989, 1991; Mayer, 1986; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Sinclair & Mark, 1992), the role of moods in interactive social behaviors, such as language production, has received relatively little attention so far.

These results are consistent with multiprocess theories of affect and cognition, such as the AIM, that suggest that affect is most likely to inform thoughts and behaviors in circumstances that require more complex, substantive processing strategies (Forgas, 1995a, 1998a, 1998b). In all three experiments, participants experiencing a negative mood were more likely to adopt polite, indirect requesting strategies than were happy persons, and this effect was consistently enhanced when more difficult situations called for more extensive processing. These findings have several important theoretical as well as practical implications for the understanding of mood effects on interpersonal behavior and on verbal communication strategies.

Theoretical Implications

Verbal communication, in general, and requesting, in particular, present speakers with a complex and indeterminate cognitive task (H. H. Clark, 1989; Gibbs, 1985). The formulation of problematic verbal messages requires sophisticated inferential strategies as people attempt to monitor and assess the situational requirements of the encounter and of the likely costs and benefits associated with various alternative verbal expressions (Forgas, 1983, 1985). Despite considerable recent interest in the pragmatics of everyday language use (Bavelas, 1985; H. H. Clark, 1989; Forgas, 1985; Giles & Wiemann, 1993), little work has been done addressing the impact of psychological states, such as transient moods, on people's communication strategies. Yet recent evidence shows that even weak and temporary moods can bring about major shifts in how people deal with social information (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1990; Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1995b, 1998b; Milberg & Clark, 1988; Niedenthal, 1990; Sinclair, 1988). These findings represent a first important step toward an experimental approach to the study of how and why affect influences verbal communication.

Of course, it has long been suspected that affective states do have an influence on various kinds of interpersonal behaviors. Happy persons have been found to be more creative, generous, self-confident, and helpful in a number of studies, and sad mood is associated typically with more negative, slow, defensive, and careful reactions to social situations (Berkowitz, 1993; M. S. Clark & Isen, 1982; Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1995a). Consistent with the AIM, the present results suggest that the nature of mood effects on interpersonal behavior largely depends on the kind of information-processing strategy adopted by a person in response to a given situation. Highly directed or truncated strategies, such as *direct access* of a preexisting reaction, and *motivated processing* are generally impervious to affect infusion effects. In contrast, tasks that require a degree of constructive, substantive processing (such as the production of requests here) are most likely to allow affect-primed information to infuse the outcome. This prediction was supported specifically in Experiment 3, in which recall was most accurate for requests that were formulated in response to more difficult, demanding situations and were thus most likely to be processed substantively (Figure 4). Conceptually similar findings were reported in a highly interesting study by Sedikides (1995), who found that thoughts about difficult, peripheral aspects of the self-concept require more elaborate processing and are more influenced by moods than are thoughts about readily accessible, central aspects of the self-concept. These results suggest that affective influences on thinking, judgments, and social behavior are neither simple nor uniform but are mediated by the kind of processing strategy recruited by features of the task.

Practical Implications

Strategic verbal messages of the kind studied here also play an important role in everyday life. Language is the primary medium of interpersonal behavior and plays a critical role in achieving goals and making coordinated social action possible. Indeed, the ability to effectively handle such affectively involved strategic interpersonal tasks as formulating requests is an essential skill in many everyday situations, such as negotiation and bargaining (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) and the development and maintenance of successful personal relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1996; Fitness & Strongman, 1991; Holmes & Boon, 1990; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Despite accumulating evidence for the subtle pragmatic rules that govern language use (H. H. Clark, 1989; Forgas, 1985; Gibbs, 1983; Giles & Wiemann, 1993), researchers still know far too little about the psychological variables that impact the formulation of requests. These experiments extend recent experimental work on mood effects on social cognition to the new area of language production and show that short-term mood states indeed play an important role in informing people's request choices.

Given the strategic significance of requests, the demonstration of marked mood-induced biases in this important area of verbal communication may have considerable practical implications. Excessive politeness in requests induced by sad mood may impair the effectiveness of these messages and may be a factor in the negative interpersonal experiences often accumu-

lated by dysphoric persons (Ottaviani & Beck, 1988; Weary, Marsh, & Gleicher, 1991). The practical effects of mood are likely to go beyond simple request production. There is growing evidence to suggest that many interpersonal behaviors requiring complex, strategic information processing are also likely to be vulnerable to mood-based influences (Cervone et al., 1994; M. S. Clark & Waddell, 1983; Forgas, 1998b; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). These findings also may have important implications for the understanding of some communication deficits associated with depression. Social skills training programs also may benefit from greater attention to the consequences of moods on effective verbal communication strategies. More generally, these results highlight the potentially important practical consequences of affect for strategic interpersonal behaviors in a variety of everyday situations (Milberg & Clark, 1988; Salovey, Mayer, & Rosenhan, 1991).

Limitations and Future Prospects

There are also some obvious limitations to these conclusions. One issue concerns the external validity of these results, a question of particular importance in studies of verbal communication phenomena. Despite the consistency of the findings across the three experiments, it would be desirable to demonstrate that the predicted mood effects on requesting and other interpersonal behaviors also occur in other naturalistic situations. Some recent studies have provided convergent evidence that mood does play an important and predictable role in some complex and naturalistic encounters, such as bargaining interactions or helping situations (M. S. Clark & Waddell, 1983; Forgas, 1998b; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). However, the further demonstration of mood effects on language use in real-life settings is of obvious practical importance (Forgas, in press).

The multiprocess model underlying this work predicts that mood effects are mediated by the kind of processing strategy adopted by participants. Processing choices in turn are determined by a variety of external and internal factors, such as individual differences, the difficulty of the situation, the direction of attention, processing capacity, and a range of other variables (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1990; Forgas, 1994, 1995a, 1998a; Mackie & Worth, 1989; Mayer & Salovey, 1988; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Clearly, there is considerable scope in future studies to examine in greater detail the role various pragmatic variables play in recruiting different processing strategies, thus mediating the ensuing affect infusion effects on verbal messages. The experiments described here present participants with more or less complex and demanding social tasks, and the results support the prediction that situational characteristics can mediate mood effects. However, it would be worthwhile in future studies also to explore the influence of a wider range of personal and contextual variables on processing strategies and outcomes (Argyle, 1991). It would further be of interest to develop additional measures to analyze processing strategies, for example, by recording the processing latencies involved while happy and sad participants produce more or less polite requests. Such a strategy has been used successfully in some studies assessing mood effects on memory and judgments, and results did show that processing latency is an important mediator of many mood effects (Forgas, 1994, 1995b; Forgas & Bower, 1987).

Producing verbal messages in everyday discourse can be a demanding cognitive task that requires elaborate inferences about the partner and the situation and relies on the speaker's on-line access to a rich store of stored memories and associations about past interaction episodes. Much has been discovered about the pragmatic rules that govern everyday language use in recent years, yet far too little is known about how feelings impact the subtle processes that determine the choice of words to communicate a message. These experiments extend recent research on affect and social cognition (Bower, 1991; Branscombe, 1988; Fiedler, 1988, 1991; Forgas, 1995a, 1998a; Mayer, 1986; Salovey & Birnbaum, 1989) and suggest that both good and bad mood can have a significant impact on the way strategic verbal messages are formulated, depending on the kind of processing strategies people adopt. It seems that good mood is most likely to increase the directness of verbal requests as communicators form more optimistic inferences about the felicity conditions of their messages and that bad mood may lead to more pessimistic expectations and therefore more cautious, polite, and guarded verbal communication strategies. The recently developed multiprocess approach (Fiedler, 1991; Forgas, 1995a) appears particularly promising to an understanding of these subtle and process-contingent effects. Further research on affect and verbal communication should be of considerable theoretical as well as applied interest to the understanding of mood effects on cognition and the dynamics of interpersonal behavior in particular.

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