



Angry expressions induce extensive processing of persuasive appeals



Jimmy Calanchini ^{a,*}, Wesley G. Moons ^b, Diane M. Mackie ^c

^a University of California, Davis, United States

^b Moons Analytics, United States

^c University of California, Santa Barbara, United States

HIGHLIGHTS

- Angry expressions led to more favorable attitudes towards strong than weak arguments.
- Other expressions led to equally favorable attitudes towards strong & weak arguments.
- Angry expressions induced processing in people who do not normally process carefully.
- Threat signaled by angry expressions induced extensive processing of appeals.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 July 2015

Revised 8 February 2016

Accepted 15 February 2016

Available online 17 February 2016

Keywords:

Emotion expressions

Persuasion

Attitudes

Anger

Threat

ABSTRACT

Persuasive appeals sometimes include expressions of anger in an attempt to influence message recipients' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. The current research investigated how angry expressions change the way in which a persuasive appeal is considered. In five experiments, participants reported more favorable attitudes towards strong than weak appeals attributed to sources expressing anger, indicating careful processing of those appeals. However, participants reported equally favorable attitudes towards appeals attributed to sources expressing other emotions, indicating a lack of careful processing. Angry expressions induced extensive processing even in those not dispositionally inclined to do so, and also influenced attitudes towards issues related to, but not specifically addressed in, the appeal. Mediation and causal-chain analyses indicate that extensive processing was induced by the threat signaled by angry expressions.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. More extensive processing of persuasive appeals from angry sources

Imagine you are on a jury that must decide the guilt or innocence of a person charged with murder. The life-or-death decision facing you depends not only upon the facts presented in the case, but also upon the interpersonal dynamics that transpire among you and your fellow jurors during deliberations. Such was the situation depicted in the film *12 Angry Men*. For example, Juror 10 argues angrily that the defendant's ethnicity and socioeconomic status are sufficient evidence of his guilt. This blatantly racist claim offends the other jurors who collectively turn their backs to him. In contrast, Juror 8 rises to anger in order to draw attention to inconsistencies in the prosecution's case that had been overlooked by the inept public defender, which sets in motion a cascade of attitude change among his fellow jurors that ultimately produces a verdict of not guilty.

Juror 10's arguments apparently lacked merit and were rejected, whereas Juror 8's arguments were apparently well-founded and won over his fellow jurors. However, as the saying goes, sometimes it is not just what you say, but also how you say it. Perhaps the ultimate outcome of these deliberations was not due to the content of the arguments alone, but also was influenced by the angry manner in which the arguments were delivered. Did expressing anger make Juror 10's weak arguments even less persuasive, but make Juror 8's strong arguments even more persuasive? More broadly, does the source of a persuasive appeal's simultaneous expression of anger influence the way in which that appeal is considered?

Angry expressions signal important information about the angry person's inner states. According to Van Kleef's (2009) emotions as social information (EASI) model, emotion expressions provide information about how the source of the emotion regards a situation which, in turn, can activate inferential processes in the perceiver. Specific emotions arise in response to appraisals of specific situations (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991), so emotion expressions provide relatively precise information about the source of the emotion's intentions (Fridlund, 1994; Keltner & Haidt, 1999), inner states (Ekman, 1993), and orientation

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, 134 Young Hall, 1 Shields Ave, Davis, CA 95616, United States.

E-mail address: jcalanchini@ucdavis.edu (J. Calanchini).

towards others (Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000; Knutson, 1996). Inferential processes have been shown to influence perceiver's judgments and behaviors across a variety of domains. Angry negotiators receive larger concessions than do those expressing other emotions (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). In the workplace, managers who strategically feign anger induce greater compliance among subordinates (Fitness, 2000; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Team members high in information-processing motivation infer from their leader's anger that their performance is unsatisfactory and, subsequently, increase their engagement and work harder to improve their performance (Van Kleef, Anastasopoulou, & Nijstad, 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2009). However, expressing anger can decrease compliance when anger is seen as inappropriate, such as when making a request for help (Van Doorn, Van Kleef, & Van der Pligt, 2015). Similarly, work groups that contain an angry confederate exhibit poorer cooperation than groups with a happy confederate (Barsade, 2002). Thus, expressions of anger can influence judgments and behaviors across a host of domains, sometimes facilitating and sometimes impeding the expresser's intended outcome.

Given that expressed emotion can have consequences for negotiation, leadership, and compliance, we propose that the inferential processes activated by angry expressions also influence how a persuasive appeal is considered. When people receive persuasive appeals, they consider them in two main ways (Chaiken, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; for a review, see Smith & DeCoster, 2000). Decades of research have demonstrated that people can engage in a relatively fast, effortless, and superficial style of information processing that requires few cognitive resources. This *non-analytic* information processing is often driven by heuristic cues.¹ Heuristics are quick and efficient decision strategies that operate, in part, by prioritizing some information over other information (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). For example, the status of the source of a persuasive appeal can act as a heuristic for expertise: A doctor might be more persuasive than a layperson, even if both make identical appeals. Thus, heuristic-driven attitude change can happen independently of the content of a persuasive appeal itself. Consequently, non-analytic processing is often characterized by impoverished analysis of the information such that non-analytic processors are typically unable to distinguish between strong, compelling persuasive arguments and weak, specious arguments (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983).

In contrast, people can engage in *analytic* information processing, a slower, more effortful, and more extensive scrutiny of information. Analytic processing is characterized by effortful, deliberate, and systematic consideration and evaluation of information. Because analytic processors attend to the content of an appeal, their judgments are sensitive to variations in information quality. Thus, an individual processing analytically will be more persuaded by strong, compelling arguments than by weak, specious arguments. However, in order to engage in this more taxing analytic processing style, persuasive appeal recipients need both the ability and the motivation to do so (Cacioppo et al., 1983; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984).

If angry expressions influence how a persuasive appeal is considered, do they act as heuristics, induce analytic processing, or both? Although no previous research (to our knowledge) has examined the relation between emotion expressions and processing, there have been numerous demonstrations that the personal and subjective experience of felt emotions can determine whether or not people engage in analytic or non-analytic processing. Some research has shown that people experiencing anger are more likely to base judgments on heuristics than people experiencing other emotions (e.g., Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994; Tiedens & Linton, 2001). These findings are often interpreted as anger reflecting physiological or motivational states, such as high arousal or high certainty, that reduce the ability or

motivation to process analytically (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Walley & Weiden, 1973). In contrast, other theoretical perspectives view the negative internal states associated with anger as conducive to analytic processing (e.g., Schwarz, 1990; Wegener & Petty, 1994). For example, negative affect may signal that something is wrong in the environment and, consequently, motivate careful scrutiny. That the personal experience of anger can both increase reliance on heuristics and also induce analytic processing is consistent with the idea of multiple roles articulated in the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Schumann, Richman, & Strathman, 1993): the same cue might serve as a heuristic when processing is constrained to be low, but induce careful processing in less constrained circumstances.

Although previous research has demonstrated that people experiencing anger can engage in both analytic and non-analytic processing, there are reasons why these findings might not directly translate into predictions about how emotion expressions influence processing. For example, an angry expression signals information about the inner state of the source of the persuasive appeal, rather than the inner state of the person receiving the appeal. It is unknown whether such information about the source's inner state has effects on judgments similar to the effects a target's inner state might have. Similarly, inner states are hard to fake, whereas emotion expressions can be feigned strategically. Thus, it is uncertain whether perceivers will assign the same legitimacy to a source's anger as they would to their own. Thus, it remains an open question whether and how angry expressions will influence how a persuasive appeal is considered.

We conducted three experiments to assess the basic effect of angry expressions on analytic and non-analytic processing. Moreover, we began by constraining processing to be low by presenting participants with persuasive appeals of little relevance to them. If angry expressions influence processing in a similar manner as other source cues (e.g., Petty et al., 1993), then they should be used as heuristics under such low-processing conditions and participants will report more (or less) favorable attitudes towards appeals attributed to angry relative to other sources, regardless of appeal quality. However, it is also possible that angry expressions influence judgments differently than do other source cues and, thus, induce analytic processing. If so, then participants should report more favorable attitudes towards strong than weak appeals attributed to angry sources but, because processing is otherwise constrained to be low, report equally favorable attitudes towards strong and weak appeals attributed to sources expressing other emotions. Again, these outcomes are not mutually exclusive: participants could simultaneously use angry expressions as heuristics and also process the persuasive appeal analytically. The first three experiments were designed to assess all of these possibilities.

2. Experiments 1–3: assessment of the anger expression-processing effect

The purpose of Experiments 1–3 was to investigate how angry expressions influence the processing of a persuasive appeal. To test our competing hypotheses regarding the ways in which angry expressions might influence processing, participants read an appeal consisting of strong, compelling statements or weak, specious statements attributed to a source who was pictured expressing anger or other emotions. Because of the similar design of these three experiments, we report them together.

2.1. Participants and design

All participants in Experiments 1–3 were undergraduates at the University of California, Davis (UCD) who participated for partial course credit. In Experiment 1, 233 participants (150 women, three did not report, $M_{age} = 19.85$, $SD_{age} = 2.69$) were randomly assigned to a 5 (Emotion Expression: anger, disgust, fear, sadness, or neutral) \times 2 (Appeal Quality: strong or weak) \times 2 (Emotion Source

¹ Throughout this paper, we primarily use the terms *analytic* and *non-analytic* to refer to the two types of processing described in many dual-process models of cognition. Rather than adopting the terminology of one specific model, we choose these terms for both their generality and neutrality.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/947697>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/947697>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)