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Report

Longer-term consequences of anger expression in negotiation: Retaliation or spillover?

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ABSTRACT

Negotiators often concede to angry partners. But what happens when they meet again? According to the spillover hypothesis, negotiators demand less from previously angry partners because they perceive them as tough. According to the retaliation hypothesis, negotiators demand more from previously angry partners because of negative impressions and a desire to get even. Experiment 1 showed that participants demanded less in later negotiations when their partner in a previous negotiation had expressed anger (rather than no emotion) and the later negotiation was with the same (rather than a different) partner. Consistent with the spillover hypothesis, this effect was mediated by inferences regarding the partner's toughness. Experiment 2 showed that apologies reduce the negative effects of anger on impressions and desire for future interaction. Behavioral reactions were moderated by social value orientation: extending the established might/morality effect, prosocial participants responded cooperatively to an apology, whereas proselfs responded competitively.

Introduction

Emotions are part and parcel of conflict and negotiation, influencing not only the people who experience them but also those who observe them. Anger in particular stands out as a pervasive driver of negotiation and dispute resolution behavior (Adler, Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998; Allred, 1999). Anger arises when an individual's goals are frustrated and she/he blames another person for it (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991), and it triggers a tendency to "move against" the source of frustration (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Lazarus, 1991). Expressions of anger in negotiation do not always have the effects one might intuitively expect. Whereas many predict anger to beget anger, thus creating an escalatory spiral of increasingly hostile feelings and competitive exchanges, research has revealed that negotiators often *concede* in the face of a counterpart's anger (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). It thus appears that expressing anger may help to extract concessions and secure an advantageous agreement.

A limitation of prior research is that it has focused exclusively on single-shot interactions and ignored longer-term effects. Friends, spouses, employees in large organizations, and diplomats in the political arena often negotiate on repeated occasions, yet we know very little about the longer-term consequences of expressing anger. Do the effects of anger spill over to future interactions, making the other conciliatory on subsequent occasions as well? Do they wear off over time? Or do expressions of anger backfire in subsequent negotiations, rendering counterparts relatively demanding in the longer run?

To address these questions, we draw on the emotions as social information (EASI) model and previous research on emotions in negotiations. This work inspires two competing hypotheses regarding the longer-term effects of anger expression in negotiation. According to the EASI model (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010), emotional expressions provide information about the expresser's feelings, intentions, and social orientation (see also Keltner & Haidt, 1999). In particular, because of the associated "moving against" tendency, expressions of anger signal toughness and power (Frank, 1988; Tiedens, 2001). Such inferences carry strategic importance in negotiations. Negotiators with an angry partner tend to infer that the other has tough limits and is "hard to get," which often leads them to moderate their claims to prevent impasse (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, 2004b).

Although never tested, it is conceivable that such inferences spread to future encounters. Research on the fundamental attribution error indicates that people tend to attribute others' behavior to internal rather than external causes (Ross, 1977). A negotiation study by Morris, Larrick, and Su (1999) demonstrated that even though a partner's behavior was determined by his or her bargaining position, participants attributed the other's toughness to personality characteristics, and these attributions

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informed behavior in subsequent interactions with that person. We propose that inferences drawn from others' emotions may similarly spread from one encounter to the next. Thus, a negotiator dealing with an angry counterpart may infer that the other is tough and ambitious, and this inference may generalize to inform the negotiator's strategy in subsequent negotiations with the counterpart. Accordingly, we advance the *spillover hypothesis*: negotiators who dealt with an angry (rather than non-emotional) counterpart in a previous negotiation demand less in a subsequent negotiation when dealing with the same (rather than a different) counterpart because they infer that the other has tough limits and may be easily provoked.

According to the EASI model, emotional expressions also evoke affective reactions in observers that may subsequently influence their behavior (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010). Again, anger is particularly interesting because it arouses strong negative sentiments in targets and hurts interpersonal relations (Axelrod, 1984; Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996; Van Kleef et al., 2009). Expressions of anger may be perceived as violating principles of interactional justice (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007)—the fairness of interpersonal treatment (Bies & Moag, 1986). Feelings of injustice in turn breed mutual anger and hostility (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005), aggression (Baron, Neuman, & Geddes, 1999; Kennedy, Homant, & Homant, 2004), and a desire to get even (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Such retaliatory reactions to anger are especially pronounced in exchange relationships, of which negotiation is a prime example (Clark & Taraban, 1991; De Dreu, 2010).

Several studies point to the negative reactions that are elicited by expressions of anger in negotiation. Negotiators typically develop a negative impression of angry counterparts (Van Kleef et al., 2004a), become angry themselves (Friedman et al., 2004; Van Kleef et al., 2004a), and are unwilling to engage in future interaction with them (Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004b). These negative reactions can have detrimental longer-term effects for negotiators who express anger. In an illustrative study, participants engaged in coalition negotiations developed a negative impression of parties who verbally expressed anger, which led them to exclude those parties from a coalition (Van Beest, Van Kleef, & Van Dijk, 2008). In another study, powerful negotiators became more competitive when they deemed their partner's anger expressions inappropriate (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). In short, expressions of anger often fuel a desire to retaliate (especially when the opportunity for revenge arises shortly after the provoking situation; Bies & Tripp, 2001), which may lead negotiators to adopt a competitive stance (Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008). Thus, we propose the *retaliation hypothesis*: negotiators who dealt with an angry (rather than non-emotional) counterpart in a previous negotiation demand more in a subsequent negotiation when dealing with the same (rather than a different) counterpart.

Experiment 1

To test these competing hypotheses, we engaged participants in two subsequent computer-mediated negotiations. We employed a verbal manipulation of anger to allow for optimal experimental control (note that verbal and nonverbal expressions of anger have similar effects on negotiation behavior; Van Kleef et al., 2010). In Negotiation 1, participants were confronted with a counterpart who expressed either anger or no emotion. In Negotiation 2, participants were paired with the same or a different partner, who in this case expressed no emotions. We assessed participants' appraisals of the partner's limits to test whether perceptions of toughness in Negotiation 1 can account for demands in Negotiation 2, as implied by the spillover hypothesis. We measured impressions of the counterpart to test whether these mediate demands in Negotiation 2, as suggested by the retaliation hypothesis.

Method

Participants and design

Seventy-four students (49 females, 25 males; M_{age} = 20.23 years, SD = 2.33) participated for course credit. We used a 2 (partner's emotion in Negotiation 1: anger vs. no emotion) × 2 (partner in Negotiation 2: same vs. different) design.

Procedure

Participants sat in separate cubicles in front of a computer, which presented all instructions, questionnaires, and tasks. They learned that they would engage in a computer-mediated negotiation with another participant (whose behavior was in fact simulated by the computer).

Negotiation 1. We used an existing computerized distributive negotiation task (for details, see Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b). In the current version, participants assumed the role of seller of mobile phones, negotiating price, warranty, and service with a buyer. Participants learned that the better they negotiated, the greater their chance of winning a EUR 50 prize. The buyer (the computer) made the first offer, and throughout the negotiation the buyer's offers followed a standardized pattern (see Van Kleef et al., 2004a). After the fourth round participants read that the negotiation was "interrupted" for some questions, leaving open the possibility that the negotiation would continue later.

Manipulation of counterpart's emotional expression. After the first round, participants in the anger condition received the following message from their partner: "This offer makes me really angry, I am going to offer [next offer]"). After the third round, participants read "This is really getting on my nerves, I am going to offer [next offer]." Participants in the control condition only received the neutral information ("I am going to offer . . ."). This anger manipulation has been extensively pre-tested and used in previous research. The angry statements are perceived as credible and realistic (Van Kleef et al., 2004a, 2004b), and they produce similar effects as manipulations involving pictures of angry faces (Pietroni, Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Pagliaro, 2008), video clips of anger expressions (Côté, Van Kleef, & Hideg, submitted for publication), and face-to-face expressions of anger (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006).

Partner manipulation. Participants read that, in the interest of time, they would proceed with the next task, which was Negotiation 2. In the same-partner condition, participants read that they would negotiate with the same partner as before; in the different-partner condition they would be paired with a different partner. We emphasized that the two negotiations were unrelated.

Negotiation 2. The second negotiation was adapted from Pietroni et al. (2008). To stress that the two negotiations were unrelated we changed the structure of the task in several ways: participants made the first offer; there were two issues rather than three; the context and subject were different; the payoffs were different; and the structure of the payoff schedule was reversed. These changes reinforced the cover story that the second negotiation would "enhance generalizability of the findings across different types of negotiations." Besides these changes, the procedure of Negotiation 2 was identical to that of Negotiation 1. Importantly,