Anger Communication in Bicultural Adolescents

Little is known about bicultural adolescents’ emotional competence. The aim of the present study was to examine anger communication by comparing 38 16-year-old Moroccan-Dutch adolescents with 40 Dutch and 40 Moroccan peers using hypothetical anger-eliciting vignettes. Findings show that although Moroccan and Dutch adolescents were equally likely to feel angry, they differed in their anger communication in accordance with what could be expected from their cultural models: Moroccan adolescents were more likely to express their anger indirectly than their Dutch counterparts, whereas Dutch adolescents were more likely to react directly or even aggressively. Critically, the bicultural Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication styles barely differed from those of the two monocultural groups, implying that in terms of anger expression Moroccan-Dutch youngsters fall in-between the two cultural groups.

This chapter is based on: Novin, S. & Rieffe, C. (under review). Anger communication in bicultural adolescents.
Introduction

The ability to appropriately communicate one’s emotion within relationships is considered one of the central aspects of children’s emotional competence (Saarni, 1999). Through the course of development, children learn how, when, and where to express their emotions according to what is culturally expected. This so-called process of emotion socialization seems already complicated for children who are brought up in one cultural setting. Yet, this process of emotion socialization might be even more challenging for youngsters who are influenced by two cultures that could signal conflicting ideas about appropriate emotion communication (Matsumoto et al., 2008). The aim of the present study was therefore to examine bicultural adolescents’ anger expressions by comparing Moroccan-Dutch adolescents with their Dutch and Moroccan counterparts.

Anger communication

From a functionalistic perspective on emotions, anger is perceived as a common and typically interpersonal emotion aimed at restoring a former balance within the relationship (Averill, 1983; Frijda, 1986; Van Kleef, van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & van Beest, 2008). It is often the perception of another’s wrongful action, rather than the outcome of the act itself, that generates anger (for critical overview on anger antecedents see Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). Yet, many studies are focused on the possible negative consequences of anger expression by indicating the need for controlling the level and expression of anger in social situations, overlooking the beneficial side of anger communication. Suppression or concealment of anger is consequently often the subject of research among both adults and children (e.g., Mauss, Butler, Roberts, & Chu, 2010; Novin, Banerjee, Rieffe, & Dadkah, 2009; Underwood, Coie, & Herbsman, 1992). However, as is the case for any other emotion, anger has a strong adaptive social function if expressed appropriately within its social or cultural context (Frijda, 1986). In fact, it has been stated that learning to manage anger within social relationships in accordance with socio-cultural expectations is a critical aspect of children’s emotion socialization (Lemerise & Harper, 2010).

Various studies indeed show that expressing one’s anger can be beneficial to the social relationship, as long as the angry feeling is perceived by oneself and others as justified, the expression style is in line with socio-cultural expectations, and the communication style leaves room for the other person to make up again or show remorse (Rieffe & Meerum Terwogt, 2006). The quality of a friendship might even increase when friends openly discuss the angering event with one another (Von Salisch &
Vogelgesang, 2005). One study shows that preadolescents who subtly expressed their anger during peer conflict situations had more friends and more supportive friendships than those who would react in a more confrontational, hostile manner (Rose & Asher, 1999). More recently, Thomas and Smith (2005) found that discussing one’s anger with the peer was related to higher likability scores by peers and to lower loneliness scores. In other words, not the question if, but how one’s anger is expressed seems a crucial factor in understanding how children and adolescents develop and maintain social relationships.

Whether certain anger communication styles are beneficial to the social relationship cannot be properly understood unless it is examined within its social context. Developmental psychologists argue that children’s emotions are socialized from a young age, in accordance to ancient gender roles, where women are expected to nurture and to be social, whereas men are expected to be autonomous, dominant, and tough (Zeman, Perry-Parrish, & Cassano, 2010). With respect to anger socialization specifically, one study for example shows that mothers are twice as likely to respond positively to anger expressions by boys than by girls (Cole, Teti, & Zahn-Waxler, 2003). And indeed, various studies across many cultures reveal that boys are more likely to express anger than girls, who in turn are more likely to conceal anger (Zhou, Eisenberg, Wang, & Resier, 2004). These gender differences are likely to not stand-alone, but to be in accordance with broader cultural models.

Cultural models
Cross-cultural theorists argue that cultural models are intertwined in human life and influence all aspects of emotions, including the meaning, goals, appropriateness, and effectiveness of emotions and their expressions in certain situations (Mesquita & Albert, 2007). These meaning-making models specify the relation of the self to others in the environment and are therefore referred to as ‘cultural models of the self and relating’. A typical Western model is characterized by an independent and autonomous self, emphasizing the individual needs and concerns. Having close relations is important, but within these relationships, the independence of each individual is highly stressed (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000). Consequently, expressing personal desires and goals is appropriate in a broad range of social events. Descriptions of the Dutch culture seem to correspond with these features. It has been stated that Dutch people more strongly stress independence, assertiveness, self-expression, and being true to one’s feelings (Pels, 1991; Fischer, Manstead, & Rodríguez Mosquera, 1999). Note that autonomy is the most important goal in childrearing according to Dutch parents (Pels & Nijsten, 2003).
Where separateness, uniqueness, and autonomy are characteristics of Western models, North African cultural models more strongly highlight relatedness, modesty, and obtaining honor and respect from others (Gregg, 2005). Avoiding dishonoring the family is likely to motivate acting socially and responsibly in interaction with others. A key concept in Moroccan culture, for example, is the Arabic term ‘aql’, referring to acting in a reasonable, mature way appropriate to Moroccan norms (Pels & de Haan, 2007). Adolescents are expected to act in a socially responsible manner by finding a balance between individual needs and social expectations in each situation (Pels, 2003). Conformism, respect, and social responsibility are key functions in Moroccan childrearing (Pels & de Haan, 2007). Note however that these functions are likely to be less important outside than inside the home and that assertiveness among Moroccan adolescents, especially among boys, in presence of peers is not uncommon (Pels, 2003). Nevertheless, it is likely that assertiveness in Morocco and that in the Netherlands have different meanings, since standing up for oneself in the Netherlands is not necessarily related to family honor and respect as in Morocco. Other persons’ evaluation and judgments are more likely to motivate social behavior for North African than Western populations (e.g., Leung & Cohen, 2011). Expressing anger has different meanings in both types of cultures and these differences between cultures can provide a framework to understand bicultural individuals’ anger regulation and expression.

**Cultural models and anger communication**

In Western cultures, displaying one’s anger when an individual concern is put at risk by someone else fits with the Western cultural model, as it is a de-contextualized communication style that emphasizes personal concerns and needs. Communicating one’s anger in interpersonal conflict situations in a Western culture is therefore more likely to be encouraged than in more collectivistic-oriented cultures. In North African cultures the expression of anger is incongruent with the cultural model that stresses attainment and maintenance of group membership, especially when family honor is not subject of the conflict. Consequently, direct anger communication is less desirable because it might be perceived as disrespectful and might reflect a negative image upon one’s family. In fact, a large body of studies in East Asian countries support these assumptions and show that in cultures where group harmony and ‘not sticking out’ are emphasized, negative emotions, such as anger, are more likely to be concealed in the presence of others than in Western countries (e.g., Cole, Bruschi, & Tamang, 2002; Gross & John, 2003; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Chung, 2010). A recent lab study found that whereas European American and Asian American women did not
differ in their physiological responses to anger provocation, Asian American women reported and displayed less anger than their European American counterparts (Mauss et al., 2009). Going beyond examining the distinction between expressing versus suppressing anger within social relationships, a few studies focused on anger communication and indicated cultural differences in ways that anger is expressed, ranging from neutral, avoiding or indirect subtle styles to more direct, explicit, or even aggressive styles to articulate one’s anger. Deffenbacher and Swaim (1999) for example focused on specific forms of aggressive anger expression (verbal aggression, physical aggression toward others, and physical toward things in the environment) and found that Mexican American boys and girls were less likely to express verbal aggression than their White non-Hispanic peers. Another study using hypothetical parent-conflict scenarios showed that both avoidant/neutral and indirect/subtle anger expression (showing that one is upset without being explicit about one’s anger) were most likely and aggressive anger expressions were least likely to be reported by Taiwanese undergraduates (Cheng, Mallinckrodt, & Wu, 2005). Additionally, a recent study comparing Hong Kong Chinese and Dutch children revealed that whereas Dutch children were more likely to express their anger aggressively than their Chinese peers in a peer conflict situation, Chinese children reported calmly discussing the situation with the peer more often (Novin, Rieffe, Banerjee, Miers, & Cheung, 2011). These findings emphasise that going beyond the suppression-expression distinction is important when studying cross-cultural differences and indicate that individuals from collectivistic-oriented cultures are more likely to use indirect anger communication styles, whereas individuals from individualistic-oriented cultures are more likely to use aggressive communication styles.

Where previous studies have focused on cross-cultural differences in anger communication styles, it is equally important to shed light on these aspects with respect to bicultural adolescents. Emotional development of bicultural children and adolescents is even more complex as it is influenced by not one, but two, possibly contradicting, cultural models. Moroccan-Dutch adolescents are an example of a group where the parental and societal dominant cultures stem from different cultural models, which should be especially evident in their anger communication.

**Biculturalism and anger communication**

With more than 10% of the immigrant population, the Moroccan-Dutch population consists of one of the largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands (Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). In the 1960s Moroccan men were encouraged to come to the Netherlands to fill the gaps of unskilled labor in the Dutch labor
market. Although initially expected to return to Morocco, many of these migrants brought their families to the Netherlands some years later (Stevens, Pels, Vollebergh, & Crijnen, 2004) and especially in major cities, the second generation, the current Moroccan-Dutch adolescents form a substantial part of the population.

Similar to other Western countries experiencing difficulties with one specific ethnic minority group, the behavior of Moroccan-Dutch adolescents has been the subject of discussion for many years in Dutch society, mostly stressing behavioral problems among this group. Empirical studies mainly tend to focus on youth delinquency and behavioral problems (e.g., Stevens, Vollebergh, Pels, & Crijnen, 2007; Eichelsheim et al., 2010) that contribute to the impression that Moroccan-Dutch adolescents in particular externally regulate and communicate their anger differently (i.e. more aggressively) than their Dutch peers, at least in situations outside the home. Yet, these studies have been focused on externalizing behaviors that apply to a small proportion of the population (Veen, Stevens, Doreleijers, & Vollebergh, 2011), and do not address different ways of adaptive anger communication in common daily situations.

Bicultural adolescents, such as the Moroccan-Dutch, are socialized according to norms, values, and goals of the parental culture at home, whereas teachers, peers, and media teach them how to behave according to the expectations of the dominant culture. Possibly, these distinct influences can be confusing to youngsters and might result in acting-out behaviors outside the home (Stevens et al., 2003). Conversely, based on the collectivistic cultural model, one would expect Moroccan-Dutch adolescents to avoid getting involved in heated interpersonal conflict situations, which could threaten their group membership and have negative impact on their social reputation and honor. Consequently, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents may be more likely to express their anger in a non-aggressive, direct and even indirect manner. In an initial study, Novin and Rieffe (2009) compared Moroccan-Dutch and Dutch middle school children’s spontaneous reactions to hypothetical peer-conflict situations. In line with what would be expected from Dutch and Moroccan cultural models, Moroccan-Dutch primary school children were less likely to report demanding and aggressive reactions to protect their personal needs than their Dutch peers were. The amount of reported neutral and assertive/direct responses was equal between the groups. Although these findings provide initial insight in bicultural children’s anger communication, two important issues are still left unaddressed.

First, the findings of Novin and Rieffe (2009) failed to address how differences between the Moroccan-Dutch and Dutch children can be understood in terms of culture: do Moroccan-Dutch
children’s response styles correspond with a ‘Moroccan way’ of responding, or do their response patterns differ from both cultural groups, leaving them in an ‘in between cultures’ position? In order to examine the cultural position of bicultural adolescents’ anger communication, it is essential to compare their responses to anger-evoking vignettes not only to responses by peers from the dominant culture, as did Novin and Rieffe in their study, but also to responses by peers from the parental culture.

Second, by focusing only on middle school children, it is unclear whether these differences hold when children reach adolescence. From a developmental perspective, children and adolescents are likely to differ in their anger regulation and communication. During adolescence, increases in negative affects become prevalent (Larson & Sheeber, 2008) and adequate regulation of negative emotions is critical due to physiological, psychological, and social changes (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Silk, Steinberg, & Morris, 2003). In this period, hormones and brain regions that are associated with emotion regulation appear to mature (Lewis & Stieben, 2004), the prevalence of various forms of psychopathology dramatically increases, and adolescents experience new anger-provoking situations in which they have to handle their emotions and resolve social conflicts.

Moreover, compared to children, adolescents spend an increasing amount of time outside the home, which is likely to have consequences for how emotions such as anger are externally regulated and communicated. Both mono- and bicultural adolescents become more influenced by peers and feelings of belonging is increasingly significant, while themes like ‘who am I’ and ‘To which group do I belong to’ become prevalent (Faircloth, 2009). For bicultural Moroccan-Dutch adolescents this transition phase may also mean that they are increasingly influenced by the Dutch culture in general, which might result in Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication patterns similar to those of their Dutch peers as opposed to the varying patterns between Moroccan-Dutch and Dutch children.

In order to attend to these two points, we extended the study of Novin and Rieffe by comparing Moroccan-Dutch sixteen-year-olds with their Dutch and their Moroccan peers. In the design of the current study adolescents were presented with hypothetical anger-eliciting vignettes in which a friend or unknown peer caused harm to the participant. After each vignette, adolescents were asked about their and the peer’s verbal reactions, their anger intensity before and after communication, and whether they expected to remain friends.

**The present study**
The aim of the present study was to shed light on bicultural Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication from a
cultural perspective. One bicultural group (Moroccan-Dutch) and two mono-cultural groups (Dutch and Moroccan) of adolescents were presented vignettes describing peer-conflict situations in a face-to-face interview setting and asked how they would react. In order to examine if and how Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication differs from their parental culture and from the societal dominant culture, we initially needed to establish the validity of the assumed differences between Moroccan and Dutch adolescents in this respect.

Based on previous cross-cultural studies (Novin & Rieffe, 2009), it was expected that the mono-cultural groups would differ in line with their cultural models. Congruent to the collectivistic cultural model, where maintaining group membership and obtaining honor and respect are central, it was hypothesized that Moroccan adolescents would be more likely to report avoiding the situation (neutral style) and/or to express their anger subtly (indirect style) compared to their Dutch peers. Compared to their Moroccan peers, Dutch adolescents are more likely to report to explicitly express their dislikes (direct expression) or even more aggressively, because expressing one’s true feelings in terms of honesty and expressing personal desires is more congruent with the typical Dutch culture than with the typical Moroccan culture.

Expectations about differences and similarities between the bicultural group and the Moroccan and Dutch group are less straightforward since no previous studies exist with this design. Usually, studies on cultural differences include two cultural groups. Yet, similarities with the Moroccan group can be expected, especially in terms of fewer notifications of aggressive expressions than the Dutch group, which is consistent with the outcomes of Novin and Rieffe’s study (2009). Alternatively, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication styles may show more similarities with the Dutch than with the Moroccan group. Novin and Rieffe’s study outcomes showed no differences in the number of neutral and direct responses between Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch children. Moreover, the outcomes of other studies suggest that the prototypical collectivistic behavior toward predominantly authoritarian figures is not necessarily reflected in a Dutch context among peers, due to Dutch influences (e.g., Huiberts, Oosterwegel, van der Valk, & Meeus, 2006; Pels, 1991). Especially during adolescence might this result in more ‘typical’ Dutch reactions also among the bicultural youngsters.

Finally, with respect to gender it was expected that independent of cultural group, boys would report aggressive expression styles more often than girls, whereas girls would report neutral and/or indirect anger expression styles more often (e.g., Cheng et al., 2005; Zahn-Waxler, 2010).
Method

Participants
The sample consisted of 40 Moroccan-Dutch, 40 Dutch, and 38 Moroccan adolescents. All adolescents participated in an extensive project that examined emotional functioning of adolescents in the Netherlands and Morocco. The Moroccan-Dutch and the Dutch adolescents lived in the Netherlands at the time of the study and were recruited from schools in one of the three largest cities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam). All of these adolescents received schooling at junior vocational level. The adolescents in the Moroccan-Dutch group (35% boys; mean age 15 years and 4 months; SD=7 months) had at least one parent who was born in Morocco (90% of the adolescents’ parents were both born in Morocco). The adolescents themselves were all born in the Netherlands or had immigrated before their first birthday. They all reported that they were Muslim. All Moroccan-Dutch adolescents were fluent in Dutch, but 41% reported speaking only Arabic or Berber at home and also 41% reported being bilingual (both Dutch and Arabic or Berber) at home.

The adolescents in the Dutch group (48% boys; mean age 16 years and 1 month, SD=4 months) and both their parents were born in the Netherlands. They all reported speaking only Dutch at home. More than the half of the Dutch participants reported not being religious (55%) and 25% reported that they were Protestant.

The other mono-cultural group consisted of 38 native Moroccan adolescents (50% boys; mean age=16 years and 7 months, SD=6 months) who lived and attended a school in Tetouan, a city in Northern Morocco. Tetouan is one of the cities in the Rif area where the Moroccan-Dutch population has its origin (Benali & Obdeijn, 2005). The Moroccan education system is not comparable with that of the Dutch. The secondary school system in Morocco has mixed educational levels. All Moroccan adolescents, as well as both their parents, were born in Morocco and spoke Arabic and/or Berber at home. They all reported that they were Muslim. Overall, the Moroccan-Dutch group was younger than the Dutch ($t(78)=9.02$, $p<.001$) and the Moroccan group ($t(76)=.79$, $p<.001$).

Instruments

Anger interview. The interview consisted of eight vignettes, which were designed to be applicable in various Western and non-Western countries. Initial research has proven that the stories would elicit a reasonable level of anger in Dutch and Hong Kong Chinese children (Novin et al., 2010). For the current study, the stories were first adjusted to the age of the participants (e.g.
instead of drawings, we now used digital photo collages) and then discussed by Dutch and Moroccan teachers, who commented on the content in order to ensure the appropriateness of the stories in both countries. Each vignette describes a conflict situation with a peer (friend or unknown peer) that was expected to evoke anger (see Appendix for instruction and vignettes). Analyses revealed no differences between friend and unknown peer vignettes and therefore the analyses were conducted collapsing all eight stories. Consistent with previous studies, participants’ gender matched the gender of the peer (e.g., Banerjee, Rieffe, Meerum Terwogt, Gerlein, & Voutsina, 2006; Rieffe & Meerum Terwogt, 2006). Participants were told that they would hear eight stories that would probably make them angry if they were to experience these situations for real. They were asked to imagine the events had actually taken place and were told that there were no good or bad answers. In order to prevent order-effects, the vignettes were presented in random order. After reading aloud each vignette, it was stated that the participant would feel angry.

An example of a story is as follows:
Together with a friend you are on your way to a party. Your parents have bought new clothes for you to wear to this party! You have dressed up and think you look nice. You feel good about yourself. On the way to the party your friend gets a can of coke out of his/her pocket. (S)he opens the can in a way that the coke spills on you. Your face and clothes are now covered in coke. You feel angry.

Following the presentation of each story, adolescents were asked five questions: 1) How angry would you feel? (Time 1) 2) What would you say to your friend (to the boy/girl)? 3) What would your friend (the boys/girl) say? 4) How angry would you feel now? (Time 2) 5) Would you still be friends? (This last question was only asked following the friend vignettes).

The vignettes were presented in Arabic for the Moroccan group and in Dutch for the other two groups. The vignettes were translated from Dutch into Arabic by two native speakers who are fluent in both Arabic and Dutch and back-translated by a colleague with a Ph.D. in Arabic. Inconsistencies between the languages were subsequently resolved through discussion.

**Scoring**

*Anger intensity (Question 1 and 4).* Adolescents’ anger intensity was measured using a six-point scale (from 0=not angry at all to 5=extremely angry).
Initial response (Question 2). Initial verbal reactions to the peer were coded with reference to four categories based on previous studies focusing on anger reactions (O’Conner, Archer, & Wu, 2001; Kuppens, van Mechelen, & Meulder, 2004; Novin & Rieffe, 2009): (a) neutral: not actively trying to reinstate own position of thwarted goals and plainly accepting the disadvantaged position (e.g., ‘I would walk away’ or ‘Don’t worry, it doesn’t matter’); (b) indirect anger expression: showing that one is upset without being explicit about one’s anger and without being verbally or physically aggressive (e.g., ‘what are you doing?’, or ‘now I have to go home and change’, or ‘look, my clothes are ruined’); (c) direct anger expression: explicitly expressing one’s emotion, without being verbally or physically aggressive (e.g. ‘I don’t like this’ or ‘I’m disappointed in you’ or ‘Can’t you watch out?’); (d) aggressive: accusing, using aggressive language or behavior, demanding a solution (e.g., ‘Now you have to buy me a new shirt’). Note that adolescents’ reactions could fall into more than one category.

Reaction from the peer (Question 3). Adolescents’ responses to the third question were coded with reference to five categories: (a) positive: apologizing or giving a solution (e.g., ‘He would say he is sorry’ or ‘She would say that I could wear her dress’); (b) explanation: the peer would explain his or her actions (e.g., ‘He would say he couldn’t help it’ or ‘He would say that he lost track of time’); (c) avoidant: the peer would distance him or herself from the situation (e.g., ‘He would walk away’ or ‘He wouldn’t say anything’); (d) aggression: the peer would express verbal or physical aggression (e.g., ‘He would say it’s my own fault’ or ‘He would say that I’m so stupid’). Again, adolescents’ responses were not exclusive to one category.

Continuation of the relationship (Question 5). Whether adolescents expected their friendship to continue was asked in the fifth question. This question was only asked after the vignettes with the friend.

All responses were tape-reccoded and transcribed. The transcribed responses were coded afterwards by two independent judges. Cohen’s Kappas for the own and other responses ranged from .79 (own response, unknown peer vignette) to .92 (other response, unknown peer vignette). Disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Procedure
Adolescents in the Netherlands and in Morocco were individually interviewed by a Dutch and a Moroccan female interviewer respectively. The interviews took place in a quiet room in the adolescent’s school during school hours. Before the stories were read aloud by the interviewer, adolescents’ were informed of the strict confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. This
assessment took approximately 15 minutes. With the adolescents’ consent, all interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed by native speakers for coding.

Results

**Degree of anger evoked**
Adolescents’ reported anger intensity, in response to the vignettes, was analyzed by a 3 (cultural group: Dutch, Moroccan, and Moroccan-Dutch) x 2 (gender) analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analysis showed no significant main effect of cultural group, \( F(2,112) = 2.16, p = .12, \eta_p^2 = .04 \). The main effect of gender, \( F(1,112) = 4.79, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .04 \), indicates that girls reported a higher anger intensity than boys (Means (SDs)=3.95 (.57) and 3.74 (.57), respectively). With a maximum of five, the vignettes evoked a reasonable amount of anger and thus appeared to be useful for the purpose of this study (Mean (SD)= 3.86 (.58)).

**Initial verbal responses in anger-evoking stories**
Adolescents’ initial verbal responses were counted with reference to the four categories (neutral, indirect anger expression, direct anger expression, aggression). Collapsing over all eight stories adolescents could thus receive a minimum score of 0 and a maximum of 8 for each category. A 3 (cultural group) x 2 (gender) x 4 (own response) repeated measures ANOVA revealed a main effect of own response, \( F(3,110) = 396.85, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .92 \), indicating that adolescents were most likely to report expressing anger indirectly, whereas neutral responses were least likely reported.

With respect to cultural group differences, a main effect of cultural group was revealed, \( F(2, 112) = 5.64, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .09 \), which was qualified by a Cultural Group x Own Response interaction, \( F(6,222) = 7.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17 \). Largely consistent with our hypotheses, post-hoc testing with Bonferroni correction showed that Moroccan adolescents were more likely to report indirect anger expressions than their Dutch peers (Table 1). Dutch adolescents in turn were more likely to report direct or aggressive anger expressions than their Moroccan peers. Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ responses did not differ from the two native groups, except for aggressive responses. Like the Moroccan group, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents were less likely to report aggressive expressions than their Dutch peers, although Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ did report these responses more often than their Moroccan peers.
5. Anger Communication (Interview)

Table 1
Means (SDs) for Own Reaction as a Function of Cultural Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>Moroccan</th>
<th>Moroccan-Dutch</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect expression</td>
<td>3.95_{2} (1.72)</td>
<td>5.55_{2} (2.27)</td>
<td>4.60_{12} (1.61)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct expression</td>
<td>3.08_{1} (2.03)</td>
<td>1.45_{2} (1.29)</td>
<td>2.25_{12} (1.43)</td>
<td>2.27 (1.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>2.63_{3} (1.98)</td>
<td>1.42_{3} (1.48)</td>
<td>1.57_{2} (1.58)</td>
<td>1.88 (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0.43_{1} (0.59)</td>
<td>1.00_{1} (1.31)</td>
<td>0.95_{1} (1.34)</td>
<td>0.19 (0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.08_{1} (1.67)</td>
<td>9.42_{1} (1.22)</td>
<td>9.38_{1} (1.29)</td>
<td>10.08 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed a main effect of gender, $F(1,112) = 3.87$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .03$, which was qualified by a Gender x Own Reaction interaction, $F (3, 110) = 5.87, p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .14$. Post-hoc testing reveals that whereas boys were more likely to report aggressive reactions than girls, girls in turn were more likely to report either direct or indirect anger expressions (Table 2). Within group analyses show that girls were more likely to be direct than aggressive in their responses, whereas there was no difference between these strategies for boys.

Table 2
Means (SDs) for Own Reaction as a Function of Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys (n=52)</th>
<th>Girls (n=66)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect expression</td>
<td>4.25_{2} (0.23)</td>
<td>5.03_{1} (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct expression</td>
<td>1.77_{2} (1.58)</td>
<td>2.67_{1} (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>2.48_{1} (2.11)</td>
<td>1.41_{2} (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0.84_{1} (0.98)</td>
<td>0.74_{1} (1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.35_{1} (1.34)</td>
<td>9.85_{1} (1.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Verbal responses expected from the peer

Next, the expected reactions of the peer were assessed by a 3 (cultural group) x 2 (gender) x 4 (peer’s response: positive, explanation, avoidant, aggression) repeated measure ANOVA. The analysis showed a main effect of peer’s response, $F_{GG}(1.82, 204.03) = 216.41, p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .66$. In general, adolescents expected most often an apology and least often an avoidant response from the peer (Table 3).
Additionally, the analysis revealed a main effect of cultural group, $F(2,112) = 9.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .14$), which was qualified by a Cultural Group x Peer’s Reaction interaction, $F_{GG}(3.64, 204.03) = 5.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .08$. Post-hoc analyses with Bonferroni correction show that Moroccan adolescents were more likely to expect an explanation from the peer than their Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch peers (Table 3). Moreover, Moroccan adolescents were equally likely to expect a positive response or explanation by the peer, whereas within the Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch group positive responses were more often expected than explanations.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>Moroccan</th>
<th>Moroccan-Dutch</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>4.93 (2.07)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.93)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.79 (1.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>2.68 (1.67)</td>
<td>4.60 (2.22)</td>
<td>3.28 (1.54)</td>
<td>3.50 (1.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>1.20 (0.88)</td>
<td>1.16 (0.79)</td>
<td>0.98 (0.13)</td>
<td>1.11 (0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>0.33 (0.53)</td>
<td>0.26 (0.64)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.33)</td>
<td>0.24 (0.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.80 (1.98)</td>
<td>11.05 (2.01)</td>
<td>9.78 (1.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

The Gender x Peer’s Reaction interaction, $F_{GG}(1.82, 204.03) = 5.19$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = .04$, indicates that boys were more likely to expect a positive reaction from the peer than girls, whereas girls expected to hear an explanation more often than boys (Table 4).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>5.19 (1.77)</td>
<td>4.47 (1.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>3.08 (1.99)</td>
<td>3.83 (1.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>1.15 (0.89)</td>
<td>1.08 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>0.17 (0.43)</td>
<td>0.29 (0.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.23 (2.23)</td>
<td>10.17 (1.80)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Reduction of anger after verbal interaction

The degree to which adolescents expected their anger to be reduced after communicating with the peer was calculated by subtracting their reported anger intensity after communication (Question 4) from the reported intensity before communication (Question 1). A 3 (cultural group) x 2 (gender) univariate ANOVA revealed a main effect of cultural group, $F(2,112) = 3.40$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .06$, indicating that Moroccan adolescents’ anger would be more likely to be reduced than Dutch adolescents’ anger.
(Means (SDs) = 1.03 (.65) and .67 (.52), respectively). Again, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ degree of anger reduction (Mean (SD) = .84 (.64)) did not differ from either of the two native groups.

**Expected friendship continuation**

Whether adolescents expected the friendship to continue was counted over the four friend-vignettes (min=0; max=4). A 3 (cultural group) x 2 (gender) ANOVA showed a main effect of cultural group, $F(2,117) = 8.63, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .13$. Post-hoc analyses with Bonferroni correction showed that although adolescents largely reported having positive expectations (92%), Dutch adolescents more often expected their friendship to be continued than their Moroccan peers (Means (SDs)= 3.93 (.27) and 3.39 (.72), respectively). Crucially, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ expectations (Mean (SD)= 3.53 (.68)) did not differ from their Moroccan peers, but they did expect to terminate the relationship more often than their Dutch peers.

**Discussion**

The aim of the current study was to examine bicultural adolescents’ anger communication in a peer-conflict situation by comparing patterns of expected communication styles with those of their mono-cultural peers from the dominant as well as from the parental culture. Specifically, we compared Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication with those of both their mono-cultural Dutch peers living in the Netherlands as well as their mono-cultural Moroccan peers living in Morocco. The initial comparison between Dutch and Moroccan adolescent provides a framework to understand the cultural position of Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication. The results show that although adolescents’ self-reported anger level did not differ between the cultural groups, reported anger communication styles by Dutch adolescents are distinguishable from those reported by Moroccan adolescents as could be expected from Dutch and Moroccan cultural models. Crucially, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ reported anger communication pattern did not differ from those of both their mono-cultural peer groups.

Our interest in Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ anger communication was initially triggered by the distinct cultural frameworks they are brought up with. And indeed, our results reveal that consistent with the Dutch cultural framework Dutch adolescents were more likely to report speaking up for themselves than their Moroccan peers by explicitly letting the peer know about their negative feelings or even by demanding a solution from the peer that meets their personal concerns. Although Moroccan adolescents also reported expressing their anger in
these peer-conflict situations, they reported that they would do so more indirectly by calmly asking for an explanation or mentioning the consequences. In turn, Moroccan adolescents more often expected an explanation by the peer than the Dutch adolescents. This anger communication style seems to be in line with the importance of behaving respectfully and responsible in an interpersonal situation, which is emphasized in the Moroccan culture (Pels & de Haan, 2007). Moreover, asking for an explanation takes into account the sentiments of other people that is described to be more significant in North African cultures than in Western cultures, where the individual’s own internal standards are valued more strongly (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Yet, the distinct cultural frameworks that are likely to play a role in the differences found between the Dutch and Moroccan group, both seem to influence Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ reported anger communication. The findings in our study show that the Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ reported anger communication styles overall did not differ from neither their Dutch nor Moroccan peers. Or more precisely, the reported anger communication by the bicultural youngsters fell ‘in between’ their parental and the societal dominant culture. Moroccan-Dutch adolescents’ reported anger communication did not include a high amount of typical Dutch (direct and aggressive expression) nor Moroccan (indirect expression) styles.

The possibility that these bicultural youngsters might report acting-out behaviors most often was not supported by these outcomes. In fact, the outcomes in our study do not seem to denote a misfit in either group. Instead, we could interpret this remarkable outcome in a positive way: the anger communication of the bicultural youngsters may not attract attention within a Dutch nor a Moroccan peer group. Expressing anger in a similar way as both mono-cultural groups may be highly beneficial for the bicultural group in terms of avoiding interpersonal difficulties by not sticking out. Our findings might suggest that being influenced by both a Dutch and Moroccan culture as a bicultural adolescent leads to an integration of “typical” Dutch and Moroccan anger communication styles, resulting in less extreme cultural communication patterns. However, much more research is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms and specific cultural influences that could explain the differences and similarities between the cultural groups. Including individual differences in terms of acculturation patterns, ethnic identification, and cultural values might contribute to the understanding of the cultural position of bicultural adolescents’ anger communication styles.

The only difference in anger communication styles found between the Moroccan-Dutch and mono-cultural groups concerned the reported aggressive expressions. Consistent with a previous study focusing on children (Novin & Rieffe, 2009), our
results imply that Moroccan-Dutch adolescents are less likely to report aggressive responses in a peer-conflict situation than their Dutch peers. Some scholars suggest that peers are especially important for Moroccan-Dutch youngsters, because they receive less support and understanding from their parents due to a lack of knowledge of the Dutch society (Pels & Nijsten, 2003). Responding aggressively could possibly jeopardize the relationship with their peers. Another possibility is that responding aggressively in the presented conflict situations might be considered unnecessary and even undesirable, as it might decrease the adolescents’ respect from others. In other more severe conflict situations where adolescents’ honor and respect are at stake, one could expect more aggressive expressions by Moroccan-Dutch adolescents in order to defend one’s honor.

Additionally, Moroccan-Dutch youngsters might be more cautious in their expressions in a Dutch context than their Dutch peers, due to the fact that their reactions could more easily be interpreted as more severe behavior. They might not want to pour oil on the fire with regard to further damaging the image of the Moroccan-Dutch population in Dutch society. However, the use of self-reports could have promoted socially desirable answers in this respect. Moroccan-Dutch adolescents might have been more aware of their group image in their responses in the individual interview setting than their Dutch peers. In vivo observations could shed more light on this issue.

In line with a functionalistic perspective (Frijda, 1986; Gross, 1998), the outcomes suggest that anger communication would be beneficial for all groups in terms of intrapersonal as well as interpersonal consequences: all groups expected experiencing less anger after than before the communication and the majority of the adolescents expected the friendship to be continued. However, communicating with the peer contributed more strongly in reducing anger in Moroccan than Dutch adolescents. Dutch youngsters may need more time (alone) to down-regulate their anger, because their first reaction might be to respond to individual concerns (Novin et al., 2010). Cross-cultural researchers argue that individuals from Western cultures tend to be rational, behave according to own internal standards, rather than being driven by impulse or by what other people might think (Leung & Cohen, 2011).

Furthermore, Dutch adolescents more often expected their friendship to continue after the conflict situation than their Moroccan peers. In line with cultural models, personal damage done by a friend could be interpreted as more severe and less acceptable in collectivistic-oriented cultures where group harmony, especially within the in-group, is highly stressed. Personal damage done by a friend might be interpreted as more severe and a threat to one’s honor and therefore might be less
acceptable than in individualistic-oriented cultures. Interestingly, similar to their Moroccan peers, Moroccan-Dutch adolescents expected terminating the relationship more often than their Dutch peers. Do Moroccan-Dutch adolescents have different expectations and norms about friendship than Dutch adolescents? To what extent could cultural values such as obtaining honor and respect explain the differences and are the same mechanisms underlying the similarities between the Moroccan-Dutch and Moroccan group? These are questions that future research could attend to.

Surprisingly, the closeness of the relationship (friend or unknown peer) failed to influence adolescents’ reported anger communication style, despite previous studies suggesting otherwise. For example, it has been argued that in East Asian cultures indicating the expression of negative emotions is less likely toward in-group members, for the sake of harmony maintenance, than toward out-group members (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Conversely, in Western cultures it is more likely to express negative emotions toward in-group than out-group members (e.g., Von Salisch & Vogelgesang, 2005), because one feels an obligation to be honest about one’s feelings and showing true feeling is appreciated. We can only speculate about the reasons for the lack of differences between anger communication toward friends and unknown peers across cultural groups in the current study. It might be that although adolescents reported similar answers in the friend and unknown peer condition, their underlying motivations may have differed. For example, one might express anger toward a friend indirectly in order to prevent damaging the relationship, while the indirect anger expression toward a stranger might be due to not wanting to make a public scene.

In addition to cultural differences, several gender differences were found. None of these gender differences interacted with the cultural groups. Although girls reported a higher level of anger intensity than boys, they were more likely to report expressing their anger indirectly or directly and to expect receiving an explanation from the peer than boys. Boys in turn were more likely to report responding aggressively than girls and expected more often a solution or apology from the peer. In line with previous studies, boys tend to express their negative emotions more overtly than girls (Garrett-Peters & Fox, 2007; McDowell, O’Neil, & Parke, 2000). However, our outcomes might suggest that the more frequent reported aggressive responses of boys are not necessarily unconstructive, because positive reactions might follow. Future research should examine whether gender differences in anger communication can be explained by differences in adaptiveness in terms of interpersonal consequences.
Limitations and directions for future research

The present findings provide an initial framework for studying the cultural position of bicultural adolescents' emotion communication. Yet, several limitations of study should be noted. First, one should be cautious with generalizing our outcomes, due to the relatively small sample sizes and our specific focus on Moroccan-Dutch adolescents. So far it is unclear whether investigation of another bicultural group would reveal similar effects. Future studies examining the causal effects that explain the group differences directly would make this matter more insightful.

This brings us to a second limitation that concerns the question to what extent cultural models are accountable for the variation between the groups, instead of other non-cultural factors, such as age. In our study the bicultural group was approximately eight months younger than the Dutch and Moroccan group. One way to directly test the effects of cultural models on anger communication is to activate or prime individualism, collectivism, or honor mindsets in each cultural group before they are presented with the hypothetical stories (see review of cultural priming in Oyserman & Lee, 2008). This would not only clarify which underlying (cultural) mechanisms are accountable for the differences, but may also give us insight in the behavior of Moroccan-Dutch adolescents in a Dutch context when primed by either a Moroccan or a Dutch mindset.

Another kind of limitation concerns a methodological one. Using self-report by means of hypothetical vignettes may not reflect actual emotion responses in the real world (Parker et al., 2001). Instead, issues such as social desirability might have played a role. Moreover, the use of vignettes in cross-cultural research addresses another difficulty; language and translation equivalence cannot fully be guaranteed and interpretation differences due to variable cultural perspectives could play a role in adolescents' responses. Direct observation of behavior in semi-structured or naturalistic situations would therefore be recommended for future research.

In conclusion, the bicultural adolescents in our study seem to navigate efficiently in the parental and dominant cultural contexts. This optimistic outcome calls for further examination, taking individual differences and specific cultural influences into account. For example which of the bicultural adolescents use the differing cultures to their advantage and which adolescents are caught in between two worlds? Investigation of adolescents' acculturation, migration factors, and parental cultural attitudes in relation to their behavior in the two cultural contexts might shed further light on this issue.
Appendix

Instruction
I’m going to read eight short stories. For each story I could imagine that you would feel angry if you would actually experience it. After each story I will ask you how angry you would feel if you would actually experience the situation and what you would say to the other person. Note that there are no good or bad answers; I am only interested in the way you think. The stories might sometimes seem similar, but try to listen carefully, since they are different every time. Try to imagine how you would feel and what you would say if you would experience the situation, okay?

Friend vignettes
1. You are on your way to a party together with a friend. Your parents bought new clothes for you to wear to this party! You dressed up and think you look nice. You feel good about yourself. On the way to the party your friend gets a can of coke out of his/her pocket. (S)he opens the can in a way that the coke spills on you. Your face and clothes are now covered in coke. You feel angry.

2. Your teacher is leaving the school to move to another city. You feel very sorry, because it is your favorite teacher. Together with your friend you decide to make a digital collage with the pictures you've taken with your cell phones. You are determined to make a nice collage, because you want to be sure that the teacher will remember you well. You are very happy with the result; you have never made something this nice. When you want to give the collage the next day to the teacher, your friend spills a drink all over your collage! You feel angry.

3. Today, you have an appointment to meet two friends from your class to visit a fair close to your school. You have not been there yet and are very excited to go. You wait for your friends at the playground after school, but you don’t see them. You wait a long time, and eventually, you go home alone. The next morning, you meet your friends at the school playground. They walk up to you and tell you how much fun they had the other day. You feel angry.

4. Your family has planned a daytrip to visit your aunt, who is only in the Netherlands/Morocco for a short while. She is your favorite aunt. She lives abroad, so you hardly ever see her. But now your friend has asked you to help him/her with his/her math assignment. You are very good at math and your friend is scared to fail his/her exam. You promised to help him/her, so you can’t
go to your aunt. But...when you get to your friend’s house, s/he tells you that s/he doesn’t have time to do math because s/he is busy with something else. Your family has already left. You feel angry.

**Unknown peer vignettes**

5. You have bought new shoes. You are very happy with these shoes. They were very expensive, but you think they are awesome! The first day you are wearing your shoes, you buy yourself your favorite milkshake. When you leave the store, a boy/girl your age bumps into you very hard. The shake falls out of your hands and spills over your new shoes. You feel angry.

6. Your teacher, who is really nice, is immigrating to Spain. You decide to make a scrapbook for him with pictures and facts about Spain. You find the information from the Internet. It takes you a lot of time, because it’s hard to find nice websites. Finally you finish the scrapbook. You are very happy with the result and you think that the teacher will be proud of you! On the way to school a boy/girl your age bumps into you very hard and your scrapbook falls into a puddle of water. It’s soaking wet and it’s ruined. You feel angry.

7. There is a festival in town, and you really want to go there. You have heard that your friends’ acquaintance has a ticket left that (s)he is willing to sell. You arrange to meet with this acquaintance in front of the festival entrance to buy the ticket. You wait a long time, but the boy/girl does not show up. The next day you see that boy/girl at school. (S)he talks up to you and tells you how much fun (s)he had the other day at the festival. You feel angry.

8. An old friend, who moved to Belgium, is back in town for one day. You have missed him/her. But now your teacher has asked you to help a boy/girl from another class to search the Internet for information for his/her presentation. You promised your teacher to help, so you can’t meet with your old friend. But...when you meet with the boy/girl s/he tells you that s/he doesn’t have time to search the Internet because s/he is busy with something else. Your old friend now has made other arrangements. You feel angry.