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Emotions in negotiations: The role of communicated anger and disappointment

Emotions play an important role in everyday life. Until recently, emotions were regarded as detrimental or disruptive forces that interfere with rational decision-making, instead of as social tools that facilitate decision-making. Increasingly, however, this thought has made way for a functional approach to emotions (Frijda, 1986). This approach emphasizes that emotions contain valuable information about one’s feelings and intentions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). They thus also have a social function. The information that emotions communicate to others can have consequences for the behavior of others (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010).

When people make decisions they are often dependent on others. Conflicts that arise in such situations are often resolved by negotiations. Although most research agrees on the assumption that emotions play a crucial role in negotiations, it is still unclear what role exactly. Research on the interpersonal effects of emotions (how emotions affect others’ feeling, intentions, and behavior) in negotiations has thus far focused mainly on comparing the communication of anger and happiness. Angry bargainers are perceived to be tough negotiators and, compared to happiness, anger communicates high limits (e.g., Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, b). Research has also shown that these appraisals of the bargainer’s limits lead opponents to make more concessions to angry negotiators, than to happy negotiators (Van Kleef et al., 2004a, b).

This first line of studies thus showed that communicating emotions may affect the bargaining behavior of opponents. It is, however, important to consider the effects of specific emotions and to not only investigate emotions that differ in valence, such as anger and happiness. Few studies have considered the interpersonal effects of different negative emotions in negotiations. This dissertation aims to compare different negative emotions,
by focusing on two of the most often communicated and experienced emotions in negotiations: anger and disappointment.

Anger arises when a person's goals are frustrated (Berkowitz, 1993; Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Lewis, Alessandri, & Sullivan, 1990). It mostly arises when others are blamed for the goal blockage (Roseman, Antoniou, & Jose, 1996). Disappointment, on the other hand, arises when progress towards a goal is below expectations (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Van Kleef & Van Lange, 2008) and/or when a desired outcome is not achieved (Bell, 1985; Frijda, 1986; Van Dijk & Van der Pligt, 1997). It involves feelings of powerlessness, a tendency to turn away from an event, and wanting to do nothing (Zeelenberg, Van Dijk, Manstead, & Van der Pligt, 1998a). Anger and disappointment are both emotions that are reactions to undesirable behavior of others, and at the same time desire behavioral change of others (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002b). However, when taking a closer look, both emotions are very different in terms of their effects on others. In this dissertation we compare the interpersonal effects of anger and disappointment in negotiations and show that both emotions have distinct effects on opponents and that they have different underlying mechanisms. We do not only look at the effects that they have on the behavior of others (see Chapter 2, 4, and 5), but also on the underlying neural mechanisms (see Chapter 3).

In the first empirical chapter (Chapter 2), it was investigated when anger and disappointment change bargaining behavior of others. Whereas previous research has mainly focused on the information that anger and disappointment communicate (see Van Kleef & Van Lange, 2008), in Chapter 2 I investigated the emotions that anger and disappointment evoke in others and how they subsequently influence behavior. Anger and disappointment can both evoke reciprocal emotions (anger evokes anger and disappointment evokes disappointment). They can, however, also evoke different, but corresponding (i.e., complementary) emotions in others (Van Kleef et al., 2008). A complementary emotion that is often associated with anger is fear (Dimberg & Öhman, 1996; Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Chapter 2 shows that a complementary emotion that disappointment evokes in negotiations is guilt. The findings show that power is a key determinant of whether reciprocal or complementary emotions are evoked. When a high-power bargainer communicated anger, the complementary emotion fear was evoked, which led opponents to make higher offers. When it was communicated by a low-power bargainer, anger was reciprocated, which led opponents to make lower offers.
Communicating disappointment, however, always evoked the complementary emotion guilt and increased offers, regardless of the bargainer's power position. Although both emotions elicited generous offers when they were communicated by high-power bargainers (but for different reasons), disappointment was more advantageous than anger, when communicated by low-power bargainers.

In **Chapter 3**, the study of how anger and disappointment affect bargaining behavior is continued by considering underlying neural mechanisms. Moreover, the effects of the communication of these emotions were compared to the effects of the communication of the positive emotion happiness. The results showed that bargainers more often made lower offers to angry opponents than to happy or disappointed opponents. With regard to the underlying neural mechanisms, the results showed increased activation in the temporoparietal junction (TPJ) for receiving happy reactions, in comparison to receiving angry or disappointed reactions. In prior studies TPJ has been associated with perspective-taking. It is possible that the recipient's happiness encouraged participants to take the perspective of the recipient. This is in line with behavioral research that showed that happiness leads to more closeness and increased perspective taking (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000; Fredrickson, 1998). The difference in neural reactions to anger and disappointment was also investigated. Compared to disappointment, expressions of anger increased activation in the MPFC. In previous research this region has been implicated in strategic bargaining (i.e., maximizing own outcomes and defecting in a trust game, see Van den Bos, Van Dijk, Westenberg, Rombouts, & Crone, 2009, 2011) and, more broadly, in self-referential thinking. This is in line with the behavioral results that showed that bargainers with angry opponents more often made self-serving offers and maximized their own outcomes.

Whereas the first two empirical chapters thus showed that communicating disappointment in negotiations is more advantageous than communicating anger, in **Chapter 4** I addressed the question of whether disappointment would always yield higher outcomes than anger. The findings showed that the interpersonal effects of anger and disappointment depend critically on the target of the emotion, that is, whether they are directed at the person or at the offer. Anger pays when it is directed at the offer, but disappointment pays when it is directed at the person. Offer-directed anger elicited higher offers than person-directed anger, because people inferred higher limits from opponents who communicated offer-directed anger. Person-directed disappointment elicited higher
offers in others than offer-directed disappointment, because it evoked higher feelings of guilt.

**Chapter 5** completes the analyses of anger and disappointment. In this chapter it is argued that disappointment communicates a sense of dependency and weakness that is less present in anger. I then propose that this weakness has benefits and downsides depending on whether disappointment evokes guilt or not. When disappointment evokes guilt, the communicated weakness elicits a prosocial tendency. When it does not evoke guilt, disappointment elicits a selfish tendency. Key determinants of whether or not disappointment evokes guilt are the group membership of the expresser and the type of negotiation. When disappointment is communicated by an out-group member or in a representative negotiation, it evokes lower levels of guilt in people, which lead them to make lower offers. When disappointment is communicated by an in-group member or in an individual negotiation, it evokes higher levels of guilt in people, which lead them to make higher offers.

To sum up, the current dissertation shows that the two negative emotions anger and disappointment have different effects on the behavior and brain regions of others in negotiations. Anger is an emotion that communicates power and opponents in negotiations give in to avoid impasse. When opponents do not have to care about these negative consequences (when anger is communicated by a low-power bargainer, see Chapter 2 and 3) or when the information about the high limits is not communicated in the right way (when it is directed at the person, see Chapter 4), anger may backfire. Disappointment is an emotion that communicates weakness. Opponents give in when this communicated weakness evokes guilt, but when it does not evoke guilt, communicating disappointment backfires (see Chapter 5). This dissertation thus not only shows that the interpersonal effects of anger and disappointment differ, but also what their underlying mechanisms are and what the different consequences are for behavior. By taking a close look at how these two emotions affect others’ behavior and underlying neural mechanisms, this dissertation provides a more in-depth view of the social functions of negative emotions.