

Emotional Consequences of Categorizing Victims of Negative Outgroup Behavior as Ingroup or Outgroup

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This research examined whether people experience anger after perceiving intentional and unfair behavior of an outgroup which has negative consequences for others, but not for themselves. It was predicted that such outgroup behavior causes anger in the observer, dependent on the categorization of the victims as part of its own group or as part of another group. Participants were primed with information that made either differences or similarities between them and the victims salient, after which they were confronted with negative behavior of an outgroup. Results confirmed the prediction that the same information concerning unfair and intentional behavior of an outgroup harming others led to more anger in the observer when the victims were perceived as ingroup rather than outgroup. Moreover, anxiety was not affected by perception of victims as part of the ingroup or outgroup, suggesting that specific emotions rather than just negative affect were influenced.

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RESEARCH on intergroup relations generally conceptualizes prejudice as a (negative) evaluation of an outgroup (Fiske, 1998). However, according to Mackie, Devos, and Smith (2000) such an approach cannot explain the variety of negative reactions people might have to outgroups (see also Mackie & Smith, 1998; Smith, 1993). Smith (1993) argued that such reactions to outgroups are determined by the kind of emotions that are

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experienced as the consequence of the way in which outgroup behavior, the consequences of such behavior for one's ingroup, and the relations between one's ingroup and the outgroup are appraised. To deal with this issue, Smith (1993) alternatively defined prejudice as 'a social emotion experienced with respect to one's social identity as a group member, with an outgroup as a target' (pp. 304). When prejudice is conceptualized as a social emotion, the appraisal of outgroup behavior not only involves the target, but also the self and the current situation.

The aim of the current research was to investigate such social emotions. We were especially interested in under what circumstances people will experience negative emotions with respect to the outgroup following negative behavior of this outgroup, which harms others, but does not have negative consequences for themselves. There are different kinds of negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or sadness, that can be aroused as a function of the situation and the specific behavior of the outgroup. In the current research we chose a situation that was specifically likely to arouse anger. We examined to what extent an observer will experience *anger*, rather than other negative emotions in the situation under consideration, dependent on the categorization of the victims as belonging to the same group as the observer or not.

Important for a specific emotion, such as anger, to be experienced is that the situation activates beliefs and cognitions that are related to the emotion under consideration (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989; Smith, 1993). According to De Rivera (1977), people will experience anger when something or someone challenges what 'ought' to happen. This will be especially true when it seemed unnecessary or avoidable, and when it was perceived to be intentional (Frijda, 1986). Smith (1993) argued that anger will be experienced when the perpetrator is behaving in an intentional and unfair way with respect to the victims, and when the victims feel they have the power to do something about it. This suggests that someone's intentional and unnecessary or unfair behavior could lead to anger when it has negative consequences. However, such behavior will only cause anger in

the observer when the observer interprets the situation as self-relevant (cf. Frijda et al., 1989).

What does this imply for a situation in which not oneself but *other people* are harmed by someone's behavior? Can people feel angry on behalf of somebody else? Previous research has shown that observers prefer to believe that other people get what they deserve, especially when they do not have the possibility to compensate the victims (e.g. Lerner & Miller, 1978). Consequently, observers are not very likely to empathize with victims. One way of inducing more empathy with victims is by telling observers to imagine themselves in the negative circumstances of the victims (Aderman, Brehm, & Katz, 1974). It could be argued that in this case observers see the victims as more similar to themselves. If so, they may also be likely to experience anger toward the perpetrator, especially if the perpetrator can be seen as part of an outgroup (cf. Smith, 1993).

Other people will be perceived as part of oneself when they are part of a group one identifies with: the ingroup. According to the social identity approach/self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) group memberships can become a part of the psychological self, and will consequently influence thoughts, behaviors, and feelings (see also, Smith & Henry, 1996). On the other hand, when the observer does not identify with the harmed group anger will not be expected. The opposite (i.e. the experience of pleasure) might even occur when the observer perceives the victims as an outgroup.

However, according to the social identity approach/self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987) the way in which one perceives other people is rather flexible. As a function of the salience of contextual information at a certain moment in time one might perceive others as part of one's own group or as part of an outgroup. Therefore, it could be hypothesized that the same information concerning intentional and unfair behavior of someone harming others could lead to anger in the observer, or not, dependent on the categorization of the victims as part of the ingroup or as part of the outgroup.

Some previous research and theorizing are relevant to this specific hypothesis. For example, research on collective relative deprivation has shown that feelings and behaviors of group members are influenced by the belief that their group had been materially deprived by an outgroup. Such an experience of collective relative deprivation will lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent, which could cause collective protest. (e.g. Cook, Crosby, & Hennigan, 1977; Grant & Brown, 1995; Kawakami & Dion, 1993; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddan, 1990). However, in this research most group members, and therefore, also the observers, will share the same unfair disadvantageous experiences. In the current research we are interested in circumstances in which only the victims, but not the observers experience the negative events, to examine whether people can feel angry on behalf of somebody else.

Other research has shown that people experience changes in level of arousal and in positive and negative affect when a group they identify with succeeds or fails on a certain task (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; McFarland & Buehler, 1995; Ouwerkerk et al., 1997; Van Rijswijk & Ellemers, 1998). Moreover, Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998) have demonstrated that people can experience guilt on behalf of the behavior of a group they are associated with. This suggests, in line with our hypothesis, that feelings of observers can be affected by the fate of their group. However, in most of these former studies identification with a specific group was measured, after which people were divided on the basis of a median split into low identifiers and high identifiers. Still, it could be argued that, compared to low identifiers, high identifiers are people who feel more empathy toward other people, which leads to the experience of stronger emotions. If so, the findings should be attributed to a personality characteristic rather than to the situational salience of group membership. In contrast, in the current study it is examined under what circumstances people, independent of their personality characteristics, are emotionally affected by the negative fate of others.

Furthermore, previous research did not examine the experience of anger on behalf of other people. As argued before, emotion theories assume that anger is only experienced when one perceives a situation that concerns oneself (Frijda et al., 1989). It still needs to be examined to what extent people experience anger when other people are harmed by unfair and intentional outgroup behavior, and in what way the role of categorization of those victims as ingroup or as outgroup is relevant.

In a preliminary study that addressed these criticisms (Gordijn, Wigboldus, Hermsen, & Yzerbyt, 1999), categorization of the victims as part of the ingroup or as part of the outgroup was manipulated by using the crosscutting categorization paradigm (see Brown & Turner, 1979; Urban & Miller, 1998). In the crosscutting categorization paradigm the target is part of the outgroup on one dimension and part of the ingroup on another dimension. By focusing attention of observers on their similarities to the target, the target will be categorized as part of the ingroup. However, when the attention of observers is focused on their differences to the target, it will be categorized as part of the outgroup. Results of this study indicated that when attention of observers was focused on similarities to the victims, observers felt angrier and less happy than when attention was focused on differences to the victims.

However, this study has several methodological and theoretical limitations. First of all, it is not clear whether people get *angrier* when similarities with the victims are salient, or whether they get happier and *less angry* when differences are salient. This last conclusion is also possible. According to the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) people are inclined to discriminate against groups they do not belong to, in order to enhance their self-esteem. In line with this reasoning, seeing another group of people being harmed could make people happy rather than angry. Especially when intergroup rivalries are at stake, such positive reactions to another group's negative outcomes might be likely.

Second, it could be possible that negative affect in general was influenced rather than just anger related feelings. It is important, however,

to distinguish between different kinds of emotions, because, although they share the same valence, they are based on different appraisals of the situation, and they might have different consequences (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). For example, according to Frijda (1986; see also Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Smith, 1993; Mackie et al., 2000), anger related emotions are based on appraisals of personal control and certainty, and will lead to approach behavior (i.e. moving against). On the other hand, personal control and certainty are low in the case of anxiety related emotions, which will therefore lead to avoidance behavior (i.e. moving away). It is therefore very important to know which emotions occur in a specific situation, as it will have serious consequences for intergroup relations.

Also, it was not clear whether the observers were angry with the outgroup perpetrator or with others that were involved in the situation. It is important, however, to know who caused anger and who did not, as this will have consequences for future behavior toward those involved. That is, if one wants to examine how people will respond to people or groups that caused negative emotions, one should first know who is held responsible for these emotions. Moreover, the perpetrator may have represented only himself, and not his group. That is, he did not appear to be acting on behalf of his group nor did his actions appear to be normative for that group. It is therefore still necessary to investigate what happens when a whole group or social category is clearly held responsible for harming others, which is important for research that examines prejudice toward outgroups instead of negative affect with respect to individuals. A final limitation is that the perpetrator seemed to have no intention to harm the victims of his behavior. However, the perception that the perpetrator is intentionally harming the victims of his behavior is a necessary precondition for inducing anger.

Together, the review of previous research and our own preliminary data suggest that the hypothesis still needs to be properly investigated. The aim of the current research was therefore to examine whether people will experience anger when they are confronted

with intentional and unfair behavior of an outgroup which has negative consequences for others, but not for themselves. A control group, in which the focus of attention of observers was not manipulated, was included in the design. In this way it is possible to see whether people get angrier when attention is focused on similarities with the victims, or less angry when the attention is focused on differences. Further, a situation was chosen which is likely to cause anger rather than anxiety. That is, if the situation that is described is appraised as if the perpetrator is behaving in an intentional and unfair way with respect to the victims, and when the victims feel they have the power to do something about it, anger rather than anxiety will be experienced (Smith, 1993). Both anger and anxiety will be measured to examine whether negativity in general, or anger in particular is induced. Finally, a situation is chosen in which it is clear that a specific outgroup, and not an individual, is causing anger in the observers.

It is predicted that anger and happiness are influenced by categorization of the victims as ingroup or outgroup, such that people feel angrier and less happy when similarities rather than differences to the victims are salient. Moreover, it is predicted that in this specific study anger rather than anxiety as a function of categorization of the victims is influenced. In addition, the direction of influence is explored: that is, it will be tested whether the perception of the victims as outgroup causes happiness or whether the perception of the victims as ingroup causes anger in comparison to the control group.

Method

Participants and design

Forty-three male and 57 female undergraduates of the University of Amsterdam participated in the experiment in order to partially fulfill course requirements (mean age = 21.26, *SD* = 3.39). The participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (categorization of the target), in which attention was focused on either similarities or differences between participants and the target, or in which focus of

attention on the categorization of the target was not manipulated (control condition).

Experimental materials

A story was developed in order to induce anger. In this story it is described that 'the board of Leiden University is thinking about drastically increasing study load. According to the article, professors at the university formed a committee that will investigate to what extent and in what way they will increase study load. The committee will consider possibilities such as introducing admission exams, increasing tuition for slow students, removing students who do not pass their exams, and more. In this way, Leiden University will become a smaller and more exclusive university with only the best students of the Netherlands'. The article further describes that 'student unions and student societies at Leiden University are furious and shocked. Besides the fact that they totally disagree with the plan to increase study load, they are also angry about the fact that they were not informed about this decision, and especially about the fact that they are not allowed to participate in the committee. They are planning demonstrations and other forms of protest'. Thus, the negatively behaving source was described as a committee of professors of Leiden University. Furthermore, students of Leiden University are harmed by the behavior of the committee of professors of Leiden University.

This story was presented in a pilot study to 18 students of the University of Amsterdam. They were asked to what extent they would feel angry, anxious, and happy (measured on 7-point Likert scales: 1 = absolutely not; 7 = absolutely) if the story concerned the University of Amsterdam instead of the University of Leiden. To examine whether the story influenced feelings, an analysis of variance with feelings (angry, anxious, and happy) as a within-subjects factor was carried out. This analysis revealed a main effect for feelings ($F(2, 34) = 23.57, p < .0001$). Further analyses showed that participants felt more angry ($M = 5.5, SD = 1.58$) than anxious ($M = 4.83, SD = 1.79; F(1, 17) = 9.71, p < .01$) or happy ($M = 1.94, SD = 1.31; F(1, 17) = 30.59, p < .0001$).

We also measured on 7-point Likert scales (1 = absolutely not; 7 = absolutely) to what extent the committee of professors at Leiden University (the perpetrator) is perceived to behave fairly with respect to the students at Leiden University (victims). As expected, the situation was seen as unfair to the students ($M = 2.44, SD = 1.54$). In addition, participants were asked whether they believed that the committee is aware of the harm they will cause to the students. Indeed, most participants believed that the committee is relatively aware of the fact that their plans will harm the students ($M = 4.89, SD = 1.41$). Finally, participants were asked whether they believed that the students have the power to do something about it. As expected, most participants believed that the students have some power to take action against the plans of the committee ($M = 5.28, SD = 1.41$). Together, these findings suggest that the story can be used to induce anger.

Procedure and independent variables

Participants were invited in groups of 10 to the laboratory, where they were seated in front of personal computers. Because the experiment was carried out via the computer, all instructions, experimental information and questions appeared on the screen. Answers were given via the keyboard. First, instructions were given about using the computer and participants were asked to type their age and their gender. After this, the study, which allegedly was about differences in impression formation between students, was introduced.

In order to manipulate *categorization of the people who get harmed (target)*, participants were told that the researchers were interested in differences in impression formation between students of different universities (for example, University of Amsterdam versus Leiden University), or they were told that the researchers were interested in differences in impression formation between students and professors, or they were just told that the study was about impression formation (focus not manipulated). By focusing attention on differences between students and professors, the target appeared to belong to the same group as the participants

(students), while by focusing attention on differences between students of different universities, the target appeared to belong to a different group than the participants (students of Leiden University). Then, participants in all conditions were asked to carefully read an article that allegedly had appeared in the Leiden University newspaper. This article is described in the 'Experimental materials' section (p. 321).

Dependent variables

After reading the information participants were asked to rate their *feelings* on 7-point Likert scales (1 = absolutely not; 7 = absolutely) with respect to the information in the article. There were three anger-related feelings (angry, outraged, and aggressive), three happiness-related feelings (happy, elated, and cheerful), and three anxiety-related feelings (anxious, powerless, and helpless).

After this, the *manipulation of target* was checked by asking participants in the different and in the similar target condition among which groups the study was carried out (this question was not asked in the control condition, because the question was not relevant for this condition). This was an open-ended question; the manipulation is successful if participants replied in the case of similar target 'among students and professors', and in the case of the different target 'among students of different universities such as the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University'. Furthermore, we checked the manipulation by asking to what extent they felt similar to students of Leiden University, and to what extent students of Leiden University and of the University of Amsterdam are similar. Both questions were answered on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = very dissimilar, 9 = very similar). The internal reliability for these questions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$) was good; therefore, we constructed a similarity scale. Finally, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

Results

Manipulation check of categorization of the target

All participants responded in line with the manipulation that the study was either carried

out with students of different universities such as the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University or with students and professors. Furthermore, an analysis of variance on the similarity scale revealed a significant effect ($F(2, 97) = 4.99, p < .01$). Simple effects analyses showed that the similar target condition ($M = 4.65; SD = 1.34$), was perceived to be more similar than both the different target condition ($M = 3.94; SD = 1.35, F(1, 97) = 4.06, p < .05$), and the no target condition ($M = 3.57; SD = 1.57, F(1, 97) = 9.72, p < .01$). The different target condition and the no target condition did not differ significantly ($F(1, 97) = 1.10, ns$). Both measures indicate that the manipulation was successful.

Feelings We performed a principal component analysis (followed by varimax rotation) on the nine reported feelings. Three factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were extracted (see Table 1). The factor happiness was characterized by the items happy, elated, and cheerful (eigenvalue = 4.02; explained variance = 44.7%; Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). The factor anger was characterized by the items angry, outraged, and aggressive (eigenvalue = 1.48; explained variance = 16.4%; Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). The factor anxiety was characterized by the items anxious, powerless, and hopeless (eigenvalue = 1.01; explained variance = 11.2%; Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$).

To examine whether experimental manipulation influenced feelings, a 3 (categorization of the target: similar or different or not manipulated) \times 3 (feelings: angry or happy or anxious) analysis of variance with the last factor within-subjects was carried out. First, this analysis revealed a main effect for feelings ($F(2, 194) = 28.76, p < .0001$). As expected, participants felt more angry ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.45$), than happy ($M = 2.70, SD = 1.23$); anxiety was intermediate ($M = 3.74, SD = 1.30$). Second, an interaction effect between feelings and categorization of the target was obtained ($F(4, 194) = 3.87, p < .01$). Means are reported in Table 2.

Simple main effects analyses showed that anger was differentially influenced by the manipulation of similarity ($F(2, 97) = 3.72, p < .03$). It was found that when attention was

Table 1. Rotated factor matrix

	Factor 1 Anger-related emotions	Factor 2 Happiness-related emotions	Factor 3 Anxiety-related emotions
Aggressive	.83	-.07	.25
Angry	.81	-.24	.25
Outraged	.77	-.27	.05
Happy	-.09	.92	-.08
Optimistic	-.25	.76	-.16
Cheerful	-.18	.84	-.19
Anxious	.50	.00	.60
Powerless	.14	-.17	.82
Hopeless	.14	-.21	.78

focused on the fact that the target and participants belong to similar categories they felt more angry than when attention was focused on differences, or when focus of attention on category was not manipulated. No differences with respect to anger were found between the manipulation of differences and the condition in which attention on category was not manipulated.

Happiness was also differentially influenced by the manipulation of similarity ($F(2,97) = 3.39, p < .04$). It was found that when attention was focused on the fact that the target and participants belonged to similar categories they felt less happy than when attention was focused on differences, and less happy when focus of attention on category was not manipulated. No differences with respect to happiness were found between the manipulation of differences

and the condition in which attention on category was not manipulated.

Finally, no significant differences were found for anxiety-related emotions as a function of the manipulation of target category ($F(2, 97) = 2.03, ns$).

Discussion

The aim of the present research was to investigate in what way people react to unfair and intentional negative behavior of an outgroup which harms others, but not themselves. We were especially interested in the influence of such behavior on the experience of anger. It was predicted and found that the same information concerning negative behavior of an outgroup harming others leads to more anger and less happiness in the observer when its perception is

Table 2. Anger, happiness, and anxiety-related feelings as a function of categorization of the target

	Categorization of target		
	Different category (outgroup) ($N = 32$)	No category ($N = 35$)	Same category (ingroup) ($N = 33$)
Happiness	3.03 _a (1.43)	2.79 _a (1.25)	2.27 _b (.88)
Anxiety	3.42 _a (1.36)	3.74 _a (1.14)	4.01 _a (1.37)
Anger	3.68 _a (1.36)	3.95 _a (1.39)	4.61 _b (1.50)

Note: Standard deviations are given in parentheses. Within each row means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$, one-sided).

focused on similarities rather than on differences between the harmed group and itself. Moreover, it is shown that compared to a situation in which no categorization is made salient, a focus on similarities tends to lead to an increase in anger and a reduction in happiness, while the focus on differences does not differentially influence anger or happiness. A comparison to the control group suggests that observers get more angry and less happy when similarities are salient, rather than less angry and more happy when differences are salient after perceiving the negative behavior of the outgroup. Although these findings might be due to the fact that the manipulation of differences was less successful, it also suggests that a focus on differences rather than on similarities is the default situation. That is, observers appear to be more likely to categorize the victims as different rather than as similar.

Further, it is shown that the unfair and intentional behavior of the perpetrator influenced anger rather than anxiety as a function of categorization. As argued before, it is meaningful to distinguish these different negative emotions, because anger stimulates other reactions than does anxiety, although they both share the same negative valence (Frijda, 1986; Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Smith, 1993). The fact that the outgroup's behavior produced anger rather than just negative affect in general is very important for theories and research that try to go beyond negative evaluations as a determinant for intergroup relations (e.g. Mackie et al., 2000). The current research implies that for different situations it should be determined what kind of specific emotions are affected in order to predict one's actions to people representing the victims and to people representing the perpetrators. For example, future research could investigate the consequences of specific emotions which are aroused by perceiving other people, who are seen as either similar or different to oneself, being harmed by an outgroup (cf. Smith, 1993). More specifically, it could be investigated in what way stereotypes with respect to the outgroup are influenced by these specific emotions as a function of categorization of the victims. Moreover, it would be interesting to

study the consequences of these specific emotions for intergroup behavior: for example, it could be examined whether people who perceive the victims as ingroup members are likely to take action against the perpetrator when they experience anger rather than anxiety.

Together, the current findings support Smith's (1993) ideas on the role of the self and the current situation in the experience of emotions as the consequence of outgroup behavior. What still remains to be investigated is whether the mere perception of similarity drives the findings or whether categorization as ingroup or outgroup is crucial to the process. In our research, we made an effort to measure both categorization and similarity. With respect to similarity, findings suggest, as expected, that when differences were made salient between the observer and the victims, the victims were perceived to be less similar than when similarities between them were made salient. However, this measure does not have to imply that the victims were seen as outgroup in the difference condition, and as ingroup in the similarity condition. With respect to the measurement of categorization of the victims as ingroup or outgroup, it should be noted that this is very difficult to measure. All participants responded in line with the manipulation that the study was either carried out with students of different universities such as the University of Amsterdam and Leiden University or with students and professors, thus categorizing the groups as intended. However, this measure basically reflects what people remembered about the information that was presented to them. Although very likely, it does not necessarily mean that the victims were categorized as ingroup in the similarity condition and as outgroup in the difference condition when participants had to report their emotional reactions.

In the current research the victims belonged to the same outgroup as the perpetrator, when differences were made salient. It is not clear that similar results would have been obtained had the perpetrator belonged to another outgroup. Future research could examine this possibility. Also, in the current research status differences

between perpetrators and victims (and observers) may have influenced the findings, as the perpetrators were university lecturers and the victims (and observers) students. However, a similar pattern of results was obtained in our preliminary study on this issue (Gordijn et al., 1999), in which the perpetrator and the victims (and observers) all belonged to a same status higher order group (i.e. students), suggesting that this is not a problem in the current research. However, future research could examine whether clear status differences between groups influence emotions that occur. According to Smith (1993), for example, fear or jealousy is likely to be experienced by the group that is lower in status, while anger and disgust are emotions which are experienced by the group that is higher in status. Another interesting issue that remains to be investigated is, for example, the extent to which intergroup rivalry influences emotions toward perpetrators and victims.

The findings in this research suggest that theories about anger (e.g. Frijda et al., 1989) should be extended in such a way that they can specify circumstances under which people will perceive a situation as self-relevant or not. This research shows that the same situation will lead to different emotional reactions dependent on the social context. Observers will experience more anger when, in a very subtle way, similarities rather than differences between them and the (same) victims are made salient. In the current research we only investigated a situation that was likely to induce anger. However, future research could also examine the consequences of situations that induce other emotions. In that case it should be determined whether these other emotions are also influenced when people are only indirectly, through the perception of similarity, involved in the emotion-arousing situation.

Furthermore, this research adds new evidence to some basic ideas of the social identity approach/self categorization theory (Tajfel, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). These theories assume that when people identify with a certain group, they will also feel emotionally involved in this group. In addition to previous research

which studied this basic hypothesis (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Doosje et al., 1998; McFarland & Buehler, 1995; Ouwerkerk et al., 1997; Van Rijswijk & Ellemers, 1998), this research indicates that previous findings concerning the influence of identification with other people on feelings are not only dependent on the personality of the observer. That is, it is shown that the perception of other people by observers as similar to themselves is rather flexible, and this will consequently influence their emotional involvement.

Taken together, the current research showed that behavior of an outgroup can influence specific negative emotions rather than just negative affect. Moreover, this research demonstrated that under specific circumstances emotions are experienced on behalf of other people, even when the self is not directly hurt.

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