

Why Are You Mad? The Effect of Different Anger Sources on Cooperation

Daphna Motro, Tamar Kugler, Terry Connolly
University of Arizona



Abstract

Two studies ($n = 455$) showed that angry people paired together contributed less in a public goods game than pairs of neutral participants or mixed pairs. However, we found that when angry people were angry for the same reason they contributed much more than when the reason for the anger was different. The perception of a common bond mediated this relationship.

Previous Evidence & Hypotheses

- Angry people think more analytically than neutral people.
- People have lay theories that anger leads to less cooperative behavior than neutral moods.
- Angry people exhibit less cooperative behavior than neutral people.
- People cooperate more with people who they view as “like them.”

Hypothesis 1. Angry people will cooperate less with other angry people compared to neutral people.

Hypothesis 2. Angry people will cooperate more with other angry people if they are angry for the same reason.

Hypothesis 3. The effect of different anger sources (reasons for the anger) on cooperation will be mediated by the perception of a common bond.

Methodology: Study 1

Participants: 260 Mturkers in four conditions; between-subjects design

1. Participants read a story about a drunk driver that made them angry or a story about marine life that induced a neutral mood.

2. They were paired with another participant who was either angry or neutral.

3. They engaged in a public goods game with this participant. All participants were given \$1 and had the opportunity to put any part of the \$1 into a shared pot. Any money in the pot would be multiplied by 1.5 and split evenly.

	Partner is Angry	Partner is Neutral
Participant is Angry	M = 44*	M = 57
Participant is Neutral	M = 61	M = 54

M = mean contribution of each participant, ranging from 0 (no contribution) to 100 (full contribution). The higher the contribution, the greater the cooperation.

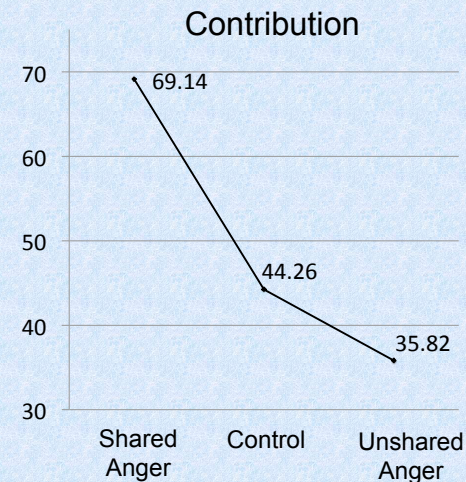
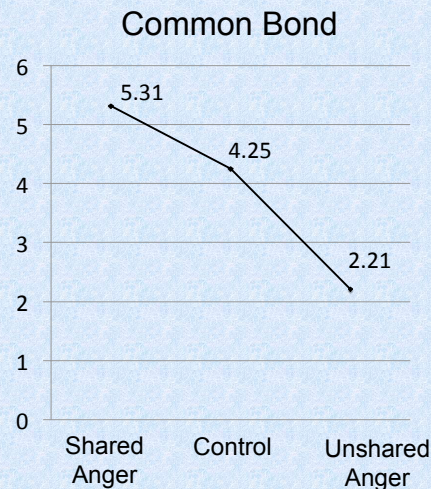
Methodology: Study 2

Participants: 195 Mturkers in three conditions; between-subjects design

1. All participants read the same story about a drunk driver from Study 1.

2. They were then paired with an angry partner. In the **shared anger** condition, their partners were also angry at the drunk driver. In the **unshared anger** condition, the partners were angry because of a faulty internet connection. In the **control condition** the participants were not told why their partner was angry.

3. Participants then answered the question “How strong of a bond do you feel with the other person?” on a scale from 1-7 and participated in the same public goods game from Study 1.



Main Findings

- Angry people paired with other angry people contributed the least.
- However, when the two people were angry for the same reason the participants contributed more. These differences were mediated by the perception of a common bond.

Discussion

- Angry people are more likely to think analytically and thus consider the emotional state of their partner.
- Lay theories of anger suggest that it decreases cooperative behavior.
- Angry people are more likely to use these theories and contribute less when paired with another angry person.
- However, when angry people share the same reason for their anger they are more likely to forge a common bond and contribute more.

References

- Moons, W. G., & Mackie, D. M. (2007). Thinking Straight While Seeing Red The Influence of Anger on Information Processing. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(5), 706-720.
- Kausel, E.E. & Connolly, T. Emotional chess: How beliefs about others' affect can shape expectations and behavior in interactive decisions. In review, 2013.
- Gaspar, K., & Clore, G. L. (2002). Attending to the big picture: Mood and global versus local processing of visual information. *Psychological Science*, 13(1), 34-40.
- Allred, K. G., Mallozzi, J. S., Matsui, F., & Raia, C. P. (1997). The influence of anger and compassion on negotiation performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 70(3), 175-187.
- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this “We”? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83.