

*Chapter 17*

## **ANGER REGULATION IN NEGOTIATIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this chapter, we review the impact of anger on negotiations and examine emotion regulation interventions that have the potential to minimize anger's negative effects. Anger is associated with the "irrational" rejection of offers in the Ultimatum Game. Evidence from neuroimaging studies suggests that accepting unfair offers recruits brain regions involved in emotion regulation. Cognitive reappraisal is an emotion regulation strategy which involves re-interpreting an event in neutral terms to reduce the emotional impact of the event. Reappraisal is an adaptive strategy which decreases anger in comparison to other strategies including rumination. Despite the importance of emotion regulation, these strategies have not yet been applied to negotiation contexts. The ability to regulate anger and aggression during negotiations has several important practical implications. Regulating anger may improve negotiation outcomes within organizations and positively influence interpersonal relationships.

### **INTRODUCTION**

On January 21, 1990 John McEnroe made history as the first tennis player in nearly 30 years to be disqualified from a grand slam tournament for misconduct. In the quarterfinal match at the Australian Open, McEnroe was in the lead against his opponent Mikael Pernfors. After collecting one code violation for intimidating a lineswoman McEnroe collected a second code violation for racket abuse. The outraged McEnroe rejected the second code violation considering it unfair and called in the Grand Slam chief of supervisors Ken Farrar to intervene. After McEnroe argued his case, Ken Farrar sided with the umpire and the game was ordered to resume. Rather than accepting the verdict, McEnroe began to swear at officials including the umpire Gerry Armstrong. His explosive temper resulted in his third and final code violation and the first ever disqualification from an Australian Open tournament. Consequently, McEnroe was heavily fined, Pernfors was not able to complete the match and

tennis officials including Armstrong were subjected to verbal abuse. If instead, McEnroe had accepted the second violation and regulated his anger he may have won the match and perhaps even the tournament.

This anecdote illustrates how anger can detrimentally influence negotiations even when all parties would have been objectively better off accepting an offer. Although anger is a leading cause of negotiation breakdown, there is little research on the effect of this emotion on negotiation outcomes (Adler, Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998; Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997). This chapter focuses largely on research using the Ultimatum Game which is a recently developed paradigm within the context of game theory that can be used to explore the influence of anger on negotiation performance (Kravitz & Guntto, 1992; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996). In the Ultimatum Game, one player known as the “proposer” decides how to divide a sum of money between two players. The other player, the “responder”, chooses whether to accept or reject the proposed offer. If the responder accepts the offer, the money is divided accordingly. However, if the responder rejects the offer, both participants receive nothing (Güth, Schmittberger, & Schwarze, 1982). This simple game has been used extensively in past studies to explore the final stages of the negotiation process (Leliveld, Van Dijk, & Van Beest, 2008; Sanfey, Rilling, Aronson, Nystrom, & Cohen, 2003). The Ultimatum Game can be viewed as a model for many real life negotiation scenarios including peace negotiations and labor-management conflicts. Although these examples vary in scope and the extent to which aggression is involved, presumably conflict scenarios share many of the same underlying psychological principles.

In this chapter we review the literature on negotiation and emotions with an emphasis on studies examining anger and the Ultimatum Game. This will be followed by an examination of the mechanisms and motivations underlying the “irrational” rejection of offers when angry. Finally, we examine the potential role of emotion regulation strategies in reducing the negative effects of anger during negotiation. Specifically, this chapter investigates adaptive and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies and proposes how one such strategy, cognitive reappraisal, can be applied to benefit negotiation performance by reducing the negative effects of anger.

## **NEGOTIATION AND THE STUDY OF EMOTION**

Early negotiation studies from the 1960s focused on static personality variables and structural features of negotiation settings. The practical implications of investigating personality and structural variables are limited because typically such variables are not influenced by negotiators (see Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, & Valley, 2000 for a review). It was not until the 1980s that researchers within the cognitively-oriented behavioral decision perspective recognized that humans possess bounded rationality. This led to the discovery of cognitive biases that negatively influence negotiations. More recently, the importance of social factors such as emotional experience during negotiations has received growing attention. The benefit of studying emotions is that unlike factors such as personality and structural variables, emotions are internally generated and therefore can be potentially controlled by individuals trained in emotion regulation techniques. By providing negotiators with adaptive emotion regulation strategies, it should be possible to increase rationality and

thereby improve negotiation performance during situations such as those modeled by the Ultimatum Game without altering the structure of the task or the personality characteristics of the negotiators.

Traditional economic models describe human behavior in the Ultimatum Game in purely rational terms. Specifically, proposers should offer the lowest share possible to their opponent to maximize their gain as it is assumed that responders will accept all positive amounts because receiving a small sum is better than receiving nothing. One does not have to look far, however, to notice that negotiators in the Ultimatum Game do not always act as one would expect from a purely rational perspective. First, unlike the predictions derived from rational models, proposers often do not offer the lowest possible amount. Instead, proposers tend to commonly offer median splits (Handgraaf, Van Dijk, & De Cremer, 2003). Interestingly, these offers made by proposers tend to be primarily motivated by a fear that responders will reject the offer, rather than due to principles of fairness (Kravitz & Gunto, 1992). To illustrate, when responders are unaware that the chips to be divided are worth double, proposers tend to offer less chips than when both participants have access to this information (Kagel, Kim, & Moser, 1996; Van Dijk & Vermunt, 2000). If fairness were the primary concern then proposers would offer an equal division regardless. Second, responders typically do not accept all offers and angry participants in particular often reject offers to their own detriment. Specifically, angry participants are often willing to suffer a financial loss by accepting no money rather than a small sum due to spite toward their negotiation partner (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996). This illustrates that our emotions are fundamental to consider when predicting negotiation outcomes.

Although fairness does not seem to motivate the amount proposed, the perception of fairness is a key factor when determining whether to accept or reject offers. For example, injustice-related feelings resulting from receiving unfair offers is a better predictor of offer acceptance than the actual fairness of the offer (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996). Similarly, participants tend to respond differently to human and computer opponents despite receiving the same unfair offer. That is, we expect others to treat us fairly and become upset when they fail to do so, but not when a computer does. Indeed, when playing against human opponents, but not a computer, unfair offers increased skin conductance, indicating an emotional response (Van't Wout, Kahn, Sanfey, & Aleman, 2006). Higher skin conductance was also associated with a greater rejection of offers illustrating that emotion is implicated in the "irrational" rejection of offers (Van't Wout et al., 2006). A second study also found that participants are more likely to reject unfair offers made by humans rather than computer simulated opponents (Sanfey et al., 2003). These studies converge on the notion that participants simply do not respond in the same angry, emotionally driven way when playing against computers. Presumably, this is because offers made by humans are more personal as they are assumed to be purposefully determined and motivated.

Human aggression is defined as behavior enacted with the intent to harm another person (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Angry participants may reject unfair offers because rejecting an unfair offer can be rewarding in the sense that responders can aggress against (i.e., "punish") proposers by refusing the unfair offer (Nowak, Page, & Sigmund, 2000; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996). This possibility is consistent with the literature on *altruistic punishment*. Altruistic punishment occurs when people are willing to accept a loss in order to enforce social norms that have been broken. According to the universal norm of reciprocity there is an expectation that we will be treated fairly by others (Axelrod, 1984; Gouldner, 1960). This

principle of fairness is so robust that participants would rather withdraw from a profitable but inequitable task and participate in a less profitable individual task instead (Schmitt & Marwell, 1972). Altruistic punishment has been found to be associated with the activation of the neural reward system (i.e., the dorsal striatum) when playing an economic trust game (de Quervain et al., 2008). More generally, the reward system is also active during retaliatory acts of aggression (Krämer, Jansma, Tempelmann, & Münte, 2007). This suggests that punishing unfairness can feel good even when a loss has been suffered in order to enforce this punishment. Therefore, unfairness can be viewed as a powerful way of inducing anger which then leads to “irrationally” rejecting offers. Interestingly, if participants are given an opportunity to express their emotions after receiving an unfair offer by sending a comment to the proposer, they are less likely to subsequently reject the unfair offer (Xiao & Houser, 2005). This comment allows participants a form of procedural justice by allowing them to express their discontent (Folger, 1977).

### **IS EXPERIENCING AND EXPRESSING ANGER HARMFUL OR BENEFICIAL IN NEGOTIATIONS?**

Research on the effects of anger during negotiations has produced mixed results. For instance, anger expression has been found to either impair or enhance negotiation performance. Despite these contradictory findings, these effects can be disentangled by exploring negotiation performance from either an *intrapersonal* or *interpersonal* perspective. This dichotomy was adopted in a recent literature review examining anger and negotiation performance across a variety of negotiation games (Van Kleef, Van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & Van Beest, 2008). Intrapersonal studies examine how *experiencing* anger influences one’s negotiation outcomes. Although, very few studies have explored anger intrapersonally in negotiation tasks and even fewer have explored intrapersonal anger specifically within the context of the Ultimatum Game, being angry generally has negative effects on negotiation performance (Van Kleef, et al., 2008). Two studies provide insight into anger as a motive underlying the “irrational” rejection of offers in the Ultimatum Game. Pillutla and Murnighan (1996) found that anger was a much better account of why offers are “irrationally” rejected than the fairness of the offer. Kravitz and Gunto (1992) explored how the framing of an unfair offer can influence whether these offers are accepted or rejected. Offers were accompanied by either no comment, a comment expressing that the participant really needed the money or a high power comment that emphasized the inequality of the offer (i.e., “*I know you’d like more but that’s the way it goes. Take it or leave it*”). The authors attributed the high proportion of offers rejected in the power condition to anger at the unfair offers and accompanying comment.

By contrast, interpersonal studies of anger explore the effects that anger has when communicated by another person (Van Kleef et al., 2008). Several of these studies suggest that expressing anger may in fact be an effective strategy for achieving higher personal gains in negotiation. Expressing anger works by signaling to opponents that they have high monetary limits. This leads opponents to offer a considerable share of their money to the angry participant because they fear that angry participants will reject their offer if it is not high enough. This effect has been found in several recent experiments using written

statements to communicate emotions such as anger and happiness. For example, in a series of experiments, participants received a written comment from their opponent communicating either happiness or anger (Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008). Participants then played a single trial of the Ultimatum Game in which they played the proposer. Participants allocated angry opponents a greater share of chips than happy opponents and thought that angry opponents had higher monetary limits. Furthermore, participants playing angry opponents also felt more self-reported anger in contrast to participants playing happy opponents. Similarly, several other studies using different negotiation tasks have also found that participants tend to concede more to angry rather than happy opponents (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead 2004; Sinaceur & Tidens, 2006). These findings illustrate the benefit of strategically displaying anger. However, this tactic can be costly and only effective under certain conditions. Although displaying anger may generate short term gains, it can be detrimental in the long-term as this tactic may impact negatively on relationships and make opponents less willing to negotiate again in the future (Allred et al., 1997).

Further investigation has revealed that a variety of variables moderate the effectiveness of anger displays. Varying the power that participants have by manipulating the number of alternative options participants have available or allowing some participants access to information that their opponent does not have can weaken the effectiveness of anger as a strategy to obtain greater financial gain. Van Kleef and Côté (2007) observed that the detrimental or beneficial effect of anger was contingent on the perceived appropriateness of the anger display and the relative status of the negotiating parties. Van Kleef and Côté (2007) communicated anger through the use of computer generated statements such as *“This offer makes me really angry. I expect a better offer”*. When participants possessed low power on a negotiation task, they were more likely to demand less value from an angry competitor in comparison to a non-emotional competitor regardless of the appropriateness of the anger display. By contrast, participants with high power claimed more value from opponents who displayed anger inappropriately than opponents who displayed appropriate anger or were non-emotional. Thus, low power was associated with a strategy of co-operation whilst high power elicited competition.

Analogous findings have also been obtained in studies specifically examining the Ultimatum Game. Varying the structure of the game and changing the amount of power the players have alters how participants attend to and respond to angry opponents and can influence the offers made. For instance, participants are more likely to deceive angry opponents in comparison to happy opponents when given the opportunity (Van Dijk et al., 2008). Specifically, Van Dijk et al., (2008) found that when the value of the chips was worth double, proposers were more likely to disclose this information to their negotiation partner if their partner was happy rather than angry. Proposers also tended to provide more generous offers to happy opponents (Van Dijk, et al., 2008). Similar effects have also been obtained by weakening the power of responders. For example, in the standard Ultimatum Game, responders have a small amount of power over the game because if responders reject offers then both the proposer and the responder receive nothing. Van Dijk, et al., (2008) altered the game by reducing the negative consequences of rejecting offers such that if responders rejected the offer, proposers would only receive ten percent less than the proposed amount. When rejection had low consequences, participants offered more generous proposals to happy rather than angry opponents. Collectively these studies illustrate that the expression of anger

as a strategy is limited particularly when opponents have other alternatives and when the balance of power is no longer in their favor.

## EVIDENCE FROM NEUROECONOMICS

Although the study of anger regulation within the context of negotiation has not yet been examined, recent evidence suggests that proper emotion regulation can improve negotiation performance. As reviewed above, anger has been implicated in the “irrational” rejection of offers. Therefore, reducing the negative affective consequences of receiving unfair offers could benefit negotiation performance. By regulating emotions participants can make better decisions rather than simply acting on emotional impulses.

Several recent studies within the field of neuroeconomics have illustrated that emotions have an important role in influencing negotiation performance using the Ultimatum Game. For example, Sanfey et al., (2003) identified areas of the brain that are associated with the acceptance of unfair offers. Unfair offers were operationalized as \$1 and \$2 out of \$10. When rejecting unfair offers, the anterior insula, which is associated with negative emotions, was found to be active. Participants who experienced greater negative affect and higher insula activity were more likely to subsequently reject offers suggesting that emotions play an important role in decision-making during negotiations. The dorsolateral prefrontal cortex which is implicated in executive control was also active. In addition, the anterior cingulate cortex was active and possibly reflects the self-regulatory conflict between choosing to act on emotions or maximizing financial gain in the Ultimatum Game. Playing against a human opponent activated these brain regions greater than playing against computer-simulated opponents further reinforcing the importance of the human aspect of receiving unfair offers rather than simply the unfair offer in and of itself.

Tabibnia, Satpute, and Lieberman (2008) examined neural activity when rationally accepting unfair offers. The acceptance of unfair offers was associated with decreased activation in the anterior insula, which likely reflects the negative affect associated with receiving an unfair offer. However, the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex was also active; this region is implicated in emotion regulation and was inversely correlated with activation in the anterior insula. Thus, accepting unfair offers seems to require the ability to effectively regulate negative emotions as participants who accepted these offers displayed decreased activity in the anterior insula and increased activity in the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex. Further evidence for the importance of emotion regulation during negotiations has been illustrated in adults with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex responsible for both emotion regulation and social functioning. Participants with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex are more likely to “irrationally” reject unfair offers in the Ultimatum Game in comparison to controls without ventromedial prefrontal cortex damage (Koenigs & Tranel, 2007). Taken together these studies collectively illustrate that unfair offers activate areas of the brain associated with emotion. Effective regulation of these negative affective states should increase rational behavior and improve negotiation performance. This chapter will now explore the application of specific emotion regulation strategies for reducing both anger and aggression in negotiations.

## REAPPRAISAL AND THE REDUCTION OF ANGER

We propose that cognitive reappraisal is likely to be a particularly promising adaptive emotion regulation strategy in the context of negotiations. Cognitive reappraisal involves reinterpreting an anger-eliciting event by adopting a neutral or objective perspective to reduce the emotional impact of the event (Gross, 1998; Ray, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2008). For example, effective reappraisal could involve interpreting the provoking behavior of a negotiation partner as a challenge to overcome rather than anger-inducing and thereby lessen the emotional impact of the scenario. The timing of reappraisal is a critical determinant of its effectiveness. According to Gross' (1998) process model, reappraisal is an antecedent-focused strategy which means that reappraisal works by intervening prior to a full-scale emotional response. By intervening early on, this strategy is able to change the course of how an emotion is experienced and its associated consequences.

Research confirms that in order to gain the benefits of reappraisal, it is important for this regulation strategy to be implemented prior to the full onset of the emotion. In comparison to late distraction, late or "online" reappraisal was found to be less effective in reducing sad mood in response to a film induction (Sheppes & Meiran, 2007). In a subsequent experiment by Sheppes and Meiran (2008) implementing late reappraisal was associated with decreased performance on a Stroop task in comparison to late distraction suggesting that late reappraisal temporarily depletes self-regulatory resources. Reappraisal is an effortful process that involves changing the meaning of an event. However, late reappraisal requires overriding the progression of the emotion after it has already begun to unfold and changing the meaning of this emotion midway. Therefore, late reappraisal may be costly as it depletes resources that may be needed to further regulate emotions. Suppressing emotions is also depleting (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). In addition Denson (2009) has argued that rumination is also depleting. Therefore, early reappraisal is likely to be an effective emotion regulation strategy as late reappraisal, suppression and rumination all deplete self-regulatory resources.

Reappraisal is associated with decreased anger relative to other emotion regulation strategies such as rumination and emotional suppression (Butler et al., 2003; Ray et al., 2008). Both angry rumination and emotional suppression are response-focused emotion regulation strategies. Response-focused strategies regulate the emotional reaction and the associated physiological and behavioral consequences after the emotion has already occurred. For instance, hiding your disappointment as your colleague receives a coveted promotion or brooding about it typically occur during or following the initial emotional response. Rumination involves repetitively focusing on one's emotions and the consequences of these feelings without engaging in constructive problem-solving (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Rumination is associated with the maintenance of an angry mood (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998).

Emotional suppression involves inhibiting emotions. Suppression is associated with decreased social functioning. The formation and development of close relationships requires self-disclosure and the sharing of emotions. Perhaps not surprisingly, Butler et al. (2003) found that suppressing emotions during conversation is associated with poorer rapport and less willingness to develop a friendship than responding naturally (Butler et al., 2003). Poorer

rapport was indicated by greater distraction and less responsiveness when conversing with a stranger about an upsetting topic. Several studies have illustrated that developing a rapport through self-disclosure prior to negotiation is associated with better financial outcomes. This is likely because self-disclosure facilitates cooperation and results in a positive perception of the negotiation process (Moore, Kurtzberg, Thompson, & Morris, 1999; Morris, Nadler, Kurtzberg, & Thompson, 2002). Therefore, suppressing emotions during negotiation is not likely to be an effective technique for improving negotiations or reducing anger because it prevents rapport building.

Only two studies have explored emotion regulation in the context of anger (Mauss, Cook, Cheng, & Gross, 2007; Ray et al., 2008). Mauss et al., (2007) examined individual differences in reappraisal by using the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire and found that trait reappraisal was positively associated with more adaptive cardiovascular responses and less self-reported anger when insulted by a confederate. Similarly, when thinking about an anger-inducing event, rumination is associated with sustained anger over time and greater physiological responses in comparison to reappraisal (Ray et al., 2008). Collectively these results illustrate that reappraisal is physiologically, socially, emotionally and behaviorally more adaptive than suppression and rumination.

To further explore the possibilities of using reappraisal as a strategy for reducing the negative impact of anger on negotiations different emotion regulation styles can be initiated through the use of guided statements (e.g., Ray et al., 2008). A limitation of past studies including Mauss et al. (2007) is that emotion regulation was explored by simply examining naturally occurring pre-existing individual differences. The benefit of directly manipulating emotion regulation strategies is that it allows for the causal inference of the effectiveness of using reappraisal as an intervention regardless of what an individual's natural tendency may be. Therefore, for this technique to be effective in negotiation settings more generally, it must be able to be induced without simply relying on pre-existing abilities. The benefit of exploring emotion regulation is that these strategies can be directly implemented by negotiators. This stands in contrast to other variables such as static situational or task variables that are less likely to be under the control of the individual. By changing how we express our emotions and experience them through the use of adaptive strategies it should be possible to teach negotiators how to adaptively regulate their emotions.

In comparison to other emotion regulation strategies including suppression and rumination, early reappraisal should be associated with increased acceptance of unfair, yet mutually beneficial offers. The "irrational" rejection of offers is a result of experiencing anger, as has been illustrated by several studies which have been previously discussed (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Sanfey et al., 2003). The ability to accept unfair offers requires emotion regulation (Tabibnia, Satpute, & Lieberman, 2008). Therefore, reappraisal should increase rationality because this strategy has been illustrated to be effective in regulating anger and involves considering a negotiation in objective or neutral rather than emotional terms (Mauss et al., 2007; Ray et al., 2008). As well as increasing financial gain, other potential negotiation benefits include decreased self-reported anger and reduced physiological responding and decreased risk of aggression. For example, one can speculate that if McEnroe had made use of reappraisal to regulate his anger he would have been far more likely to accept the umpire's decision rather than responding aggressively. Thus by regulating his anger McEnroe would have been able to continue his lead and win the match and possibly the tournament. Reappraisal should also be associated with improved relationships between the

negotiating parties by decreasing the likelihood that responders will display their anger which may encourage further competition. Furthermore, when responders are given the opportunity to propose counteroffers it can be expected that after engaging in reappraisal, participants should propose fairer offers to their opponent. This is because reappraisal reduces anger and therefore, participants should be less likely to engage in altruistic punishment by proposing unfair offers. Thus, participants who reappraise should be less affected by their anger and display more cooperative behaviors by proposing less selfish offers

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The ability to effectively regulate anger during negotiations has several important practical implications both at an individual and organizational level. Anger is important to regulate, as it impairs well-being and is associated with health problems including hypertension (Diamond, 1982). However, simply venting anger can have negative side effects that can actually lead to escalated aggression (Bushman, Baumeister, & Stack, 1999). Therefore, regulating anger through the use of healthy emotion regulation strategies is fundamental particularly in occupations that rely on negotiations (e.g., lawyers, sales managers). Employing reappraisal during negotiations may not only provide the negotiator with an advantage but may also encourage greater cooperation and preserve the relationship between parties to encourage future negotiations. Incidents of workplace violence have been increasing (Elliott & Jarrett, 1994) and may range from arguing with co-workers and clients to more extreme forms such as physical violence. Effectively regulating anger during negotiation may not only increase productivity and time efficiency by reducing the likelihood of reaching an impasse, but may also improve relationships amongst colleagues and clients and thereby achieve better social and financial outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although the study of emotions and in particular anger has been neglected for a long time, emotions play an important role in negotiations. We believe that the influence of anger on negotiation performance is important to consider. Although anger has been associated with both advantageous and detrimental outcomes, generally anger negatively influences rational thought during negotiations. Future research might investigate the effects of interventions designed to teach reappraisal strategies to negotiators. By doing so, all individuals might benefit, not only those who are naturally predisposed to use this strategy. This may not only benefit negotiation performance but also might be helpful in reducing conflict within organizations and prevent workplace violence.

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