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The impact of incidental fear and anger on in- and outgroup attitudes

Abstract: *The aim of this research was to examine the impact of two specific negative emotions of anger and fear on intergroup attitudes. In Study 1 we measured emotions of anger and fear and in Study 2 we evoked these emotions incidentally, that is independently of any intergroup context. In both studies we measured attitudes towards the ingroup (Polish) and the outgroup (Gypsies). We expected that fear would lead to more positive ingroup attitudes and anger to more negative outgroup attitudes. The results of the correlational study (Study 1) confirmed the predictions regarding anger and decreased outgroup evaluations, and the experimental study (Study 2) revealed that fear enhanced positivity towards the ingroup, but anger increased negativity towards the outgroup. The impact of fear and anger on social attitudes in the specific context of a negatively self-stereotyped ingroup is discussed.*

Key words: *fear, anger, intergroup attitudes, negative ingroup stereotypes*

Traditionally, research on emotional influences on intergroup perception and attitudes highlighted the core role of negative emotional states in the development and maintenance of prejudice (Allport, 1954; Mackie & Hamilton, 1993). Over time, researchers started mentioning the insufficiency of a simple and clear-cut distinction between the role of negative and positive affect and claimed that it was crucial to distinguish between specific, discrete emotions in order to fully understand their impact on intergroup attitudes and stereotypes (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, 2006; Smith, 1993). An important contribution to this line of research was made by Bodenhausen and colleagues, who distinguished between a differential impact of specific negative emotions, like anger and sadness, on social judgment (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994). They found that only the experience of anger (but not sadness) led to a stronger tendency to form more stereotypic judgments of others. Other research has shown that incidental anger has also an impact on implicit attitudes towards specific outgroups (Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams, & Hunsinger, 2009; DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Cajdric, 2004). On the other hand, evoked fear was shown to activate tendencies to move away from the outgroup (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Based on this research, it can be stated that anger as

well as fear might lead to increased ingroup bias effects. However, it seems to be still not clear, what would be the specific impact of incidentally evoked anger and fear on intergroup attitudes (ingroup and outgroup evaluations). For example, would experiencing fear, irrespectively of the social context, lead to more positive attitudes towards the ingroup, to more negative attitudes towards the outgroup, or to both effects at the same time? Would anger mainly affect outgroup attitudes, or might it also lead to the protection of the image of the ingroup? We addressed those questions in the present studies. Additionally, we placed those questions in a specific cultural context, in which the image of the ingroup itself is ambiguous and rather negative than positive.

Emotions and intergroup attitudes

Previous research showed that incidentally evoked emotional states can be treated as primes that activate state-congruent memories or knowledge, which in turn can influence the way particular social groups are evaluated (Niedenthal, Krauth-Gruber, & Ric, 2006). Allport (1954) pointed out that negative emotions could be displaced on available outgroups, often leading to increased prejudice. Still, more recently it has been emphasized that an appraisal

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mechanism could account for the effects of specific emotions on social perception and evaluation (Manstead & Fischer, 2001). Based on a research on the role of cognitive appraisal in emotional functioning, it can be argued that the emotions of anger and fear are related to different appraisal schemes and therefore lead to a differential evaluation of in- and outgroups. Lerner and Keltner (2000) described an appraisal tendency approach, in which they contrasted the negative emotions of fear and anger and found that anger appears in appraisals of control and certainty, whereas fear in appraisals of low control and low certainty, and showed their differential effects on judgments and choice. In a similar vein, studies performed in an intergroup context have shown that fear, evoked in the context of mortality salience, is associated with a tendency to regain feelings of control by enhancing the ingroup bias (Fritsche, Jonas, & Fankhanel, 2008). Other research showed that fear induces a tendency to defend the image of the ingroup by avoiding the outgroup rather than to act against the outgroup (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). Those findings are consistent with an assertion that fear doesn't lead to a devaluation of threatening outgroups, but is rather related to the protection and enhancement of the ingroup image. In case of anger, no such ingroup enhancement processes are necessary, instead, an increased negativity towards the outgroup is observed. Indeed, Skitka and colleagues have shown that anger experienced after the 9/11 terrorist attacks was related to increased outgroup derogation, confrontational responses (support for military actions) and reduced political tolerance of Arab Americans (Skitka, Bauman, Aramovitch, & Morgan, 2006). At the same time, fear was related to ingroup enhancement and value affirmation (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004).

Overview of the studies

Although the research referred above was performed in various theoretical and empirical contexts, it reveals a consistent pattern regarding the type of attitudinal reactions towards in- and outgroups when fear or anger is experienced. Still, there is only scant evidence that the experience of incidental emotions of fear or anger (i.e. not related to any specific intergroup context) can provoke certain shifts in attitudes towards the ingroup and the outgroup. Thus, we predicted that incidental emotions of anger and fear lead to different patterns of in- and outgroup attitudes. More specifically, we expected to find an increased negativity towards the outgroup when anger is experienced and an enhancement of positivity towards the ingroup when experiencing fear.

It is worth stressing that in previous research, the ingroup was always positively stereotyped (e.g., Fritsche et al., 2008). Previous research on self-stereotypes in Poland, however, showed that they are largely based on negatively evaluated traits (Błuszkowski, 2005; Bochenska, 1995; Lachowicz – Tabaczek & Gamian, 2005; Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996). Thus, although we expected increased positivity toward ingroup when experiencing fear, the case of a negatively evaluated ingroup needs to be taken into

consideration. We selected the Gypsies as an outgroup, as they are generally perceived negatively by the Polish population (Winiewski, 2013). However, other data suggest that attitudes towards the Gypsy minority in Poland is not clearly negative and it tends to be even positive among people who have contact with this population or have more liberal and egalitarian worldviews (CBOS, 2008). Therefore, we might expect that in a student population (which was our sample in the second study) there will be some variability in the attitudes towards Gypsies, which would leave space for a shift to more negative attitudes when experiencing anger. Thus, we examined, whether the case of negatively stereotyped ingroup and not very negatively stereotyped outgroup might modify the expected results.

We performed two studies (one correlational and one experimental) in which we tested the impact of participant's affective states (Study 1) and experimentally evoked emotions of anger and fear (Study 2) on intergroup attitudes.

Study 1

In the first, correlational study, we tested the predictions regarding a positive relation between experienced anger and negative attitudes towards Gypsies, and a negative relation between experienced fear and negative attitudes towards Poles. The strength of specific negative emotions was measured by asking the participants how often have they experienced a given emotion last week. Therefore, the experience of given emotions was independent from the intergroup context. However, because emotions were not experimentally manipulated, we included in our analysis not only fear and anger, but also other negative emotions (guilt and sadness) in order to control for the effect of an overall negative affective state.

Method

Participants

Three hundred and sixteen Internet users (166 men, 150 women) answered all measures in the survey. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 45 years ($M = 27.83$, $SD = 7.69$). 32% of the respondents completed higher education, 48.1% completed secondary education, and 19.9% had lower education level.

Materials and procedure

Emotional dispositions. The Emotion Questionnaire (Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995, Polish version prepared by Wojciszke & Baryła, 2006) consists of 24 emotion words representing six discrete emotion categories: fear, anger, sadness, guilt, happiness, and love. Participants were asked how often had they felt each emotion during the past month on a scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (7). Since we focused only on fear, anger, sadness and guilt in this study, we computed a score for each of these emotions by taking the sum of ratings on the four emotion words representing the relevant category and using them as indicators of the emotions in latter calculations. The fear,

anger, sadness and guilt scales ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.29$; $M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.18$; $M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.36$; $M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.13$) achieved acceptable levels of internal consistency (Chronbach's $\alpha = .91, .87, .88$ and $.79$ respectively).

In- and outgroup evaluations. Participants were asked to evaluate to what extent they agree that Poles and Gypsies can be described by a set of negative characteristics using a scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Both groups were described by six negative stereotypical traits ($\alpha = .86$; for Gypsies and $\alpha = .81$ for Poles. Evaluations of Gypsies: $M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.15$, evaluation of Poles: $M = 3.84$, $SD = .91$).

Results

To test our predictions, we conducted a series of hierarchical multiple regressions, in which we investigated the effect of anger and fear on evaluations of Gypsies (analysis 1) and on evaluations of Poles (analysis 2). In all analyses, in the first step we added emotions of guilt and sadness, and in the next two steps we included emotions of fear, and lastly anger.

In the first analysis (negative evaluations of Gypsies), adding emotions of guilt and sadness did not increase the percentage of variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .008$, $p = .28$). Emotion of fear also did not improve explanatory power of the model ($\Delta R^2 < .001$, $p = .72$), but emotion of anger did ($\Delta R^2 = .018$, $p = .018$), influencing the negative attitudes towards Gypsies in the predicted, positive direction ($\beta = .19$), $t(310) = 2.38$, $p = .018$.

In the second analysis (negative evaluations of Poles) we did not find any effects of negative emotions on negative ingroup evaluation (all regression coefficients, except constant, were statistically insignificant).

Discussion

Obtained results confirmed our hypothesis that anger increases negativity towards Gypsies and fear does not. Since in our analysis we also controlled other negative emotions, we can rule out alternative explanations that obtained results are due to overall negative mood. Only the discrete emotion of anger, and not other negative emotions, increased the negativity towards Gypsies. This result is consistent with previous research that shows the impact of incidental anger on negative outgroup stereotyping (Bodenhausen et al., 1994).

Our results did not reveal decreased negativity towards the ingroup. Thus, the results of this study only partially supported our hypotheses. The fact that we used negative, and not positive traits in order to describe the in- and outgroup made it more difficult to show an increased positivity effect towards the ingroup when fear

was experienced. In fact, it can be argued that positive and negative substrates of attitudes are separable and can be activated independently (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). Therefore, we performed an experimental study in which emotions of anger and fear were induced experimentally and applied a different measure of intergroup attitudes that allows to capture the effects of increased positivity or negativity at the same time.

Study 2

In this study, we experimentally manipulated incidental emotions of fear and anger by asking participants to recall memories related to these emotions. We focused on the emotions of fear and anger, as our predictions concerned the change in the positivity vs. negativity of attitudes towards the in- and outgroup (Polish vs. Gypsies). We predicted that fear will increase positive evaluations of the ingroup and anger will increase negative evaluations of the outgroup.

Method

Participants and design

Ninety eight Social Science first-year students (84 women, 14 men; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.9$; $SD = 1.9$) from the Jagiellonian University participated in the study in exchange for course-credits. Twenty one participants did not list any traits in the open-ended attitude measure, therefore only the data obtained from seventy seven participants was included into the analysis.

The experiment had a 3 (type of emotion evoked: anger vs. fear vs. neutral) x 2 (attitude target: ingroup vs. outgroup) design with the second factor as a repeated measure.

Materials

Emotion manipulation: We used the procedure adapted from Strack, Schwarz, and Gschneidinger (1985) to induce emotions. In the anger (fear) condition, participants were asked to vividly recall an episode that had made them feel angry (or threatened) and to describe it in detail. In the control condition participants were simply asked to recall and describe in detail some mundane events that happened the previous days.

Intergroup attitudes¹: We applied the open-ended attitude measure described by Esses and Zanna (1995) as follows; participants were asked to generate a maximum of ten typical characteristics of Poles and Gypsies. Having completed this task they were asked to read again each characteristic and rate it on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 (*very negative valence*) to +3 (*very positive valence*). Finally, they were asked to go again through the traits they listed out and prescribe a number from 1 to 100 to each

¹ We have labeled this index as referring to attitudes, not only stereotypes, since it provides a measure of a categorization of an attitude object along an evaluative dimension (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993). The range of the index was from -3 to 3, with maximum values for Gypsies of 2.13 and minimal -2.7 and maximum values for Poles 1.61 and minimal -1.17.

attribute, what would reflect a percentage of the target group population (i.e. Poles or Gypsies) that could be described with this attribute. In all conditions, the ingroup was evaluated first, and then the outgroup second.²

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (fear, anger and neutral). Emotions were induced using the Strack et al. (1985) recall of episodes procedure described above. Participants were given 12 minutes to complete the task. Next, they completed the attitude towards Polish (ingroup) and Gypsies (outgroup) questionnaire. Finally participants were debriefed.

Results

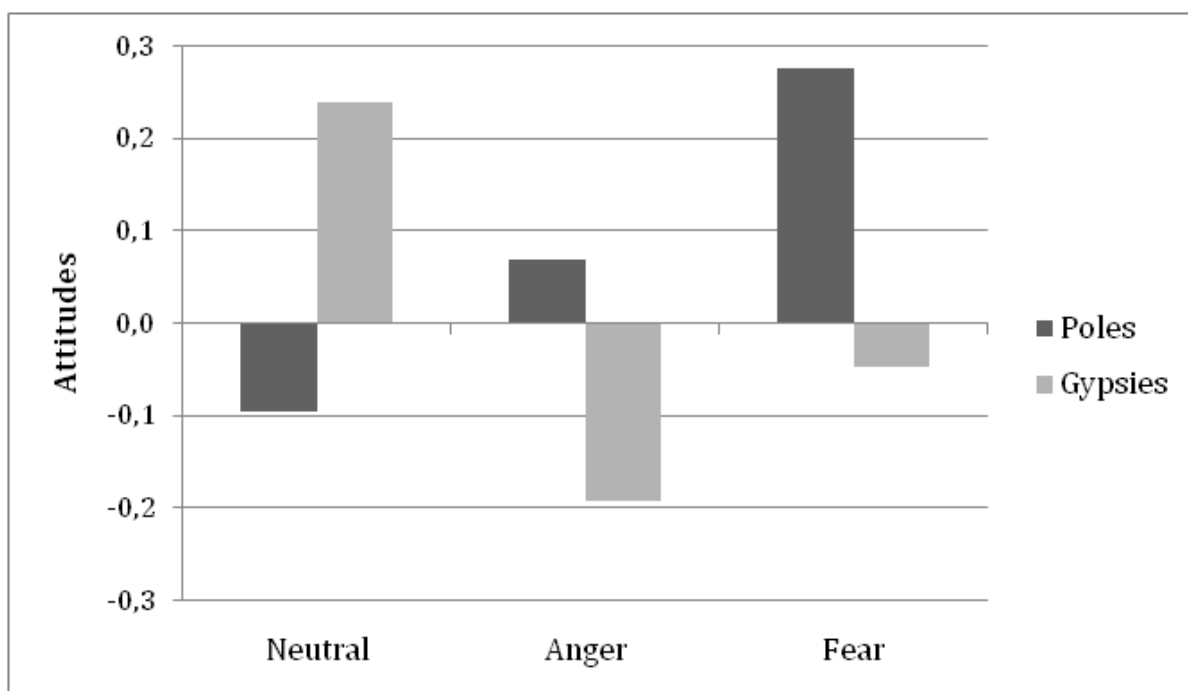
The effectiveness of the emotions manipulation was checked by three trained judges, who used a 7-point scale to rate to what extent the descriptions of the recalled episodes considered fear or anger. On this scale, 1 indicated that the episode was not related to anger (fear), and 7 indicated that the episode was highly related to anger (fear). The judges consistency index was adequate, indicating that the evaluated descriptions referred to different emotional episodes ($Kendall-W = 0.55$, $\chi^2 = 107$, $p > .001$).

For the open-ended attitude measure we calculated indexes according to the formula proposed by Esses and Zanna (1995), in which the evaluation score equals $E = \Sigma(P \times V)/n$, where V is the evaluation for each of the listed traits (possible range from -3 to +3), P is the prescribed percentage

of in- or outgroup members that could be described with a certain trait (divided by 100, so they ranged from 0 to 1.00) and n equaled the number of characteristics attributed to the group. Additionally, we calculated an evaluation index, which consisted of a simple mean of all valences prescribed to each listed trait (the range of the index was from -3 to +3). This index allowed us to detect the purely evaluative aspect of attitudes, not contaminated by an assessment of the typicality of each trait.

In order to test the specific impact of fear and anger on the positivity vs. negativity of intergroup attitudes, we performed a 3 (type of emotion: anger vs. fear vs. neutral) \times 2 (attitude target: ingroup vs. outgroup) ANOVA with a repeated measure on the attitude index. We found a significant interaction for the attitude index ($F(2,74) = 3.15$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .08$). A graphic illustration of the interaction is provided on Figure 1 and all the means and standard deviations for this measure are given in Table 1. Simple effects analysis showed that the Gypsy group was evaluated more negatively in the anger priming condition than in the neutral one ($t(53) = 2.18$, $p = .034$), but the scores in the fear priming condition were not significantly different from the ones in the neutral condition ($t(46) = 1.06$, $p = .3$). There were also no differences between anger and fear conditions ($t(49) = .50$, $p = .6$). The ingroup was evaluated more positively in the fear priming condition in comparison to the neutral condition ($t(46) = 2.15$, $p = .039$) and there were no differences between evaluations in anger and neutral conditions ($t(53) = 1.23$, $p = .2$), as well as anger and fear priming conditions ($t(49) = 1.14$, $p = .3$).³

Figure 1. Attitudes towards in- and outgroup in neutral, anger and fear conditions



² The order of the group evaluation was fixed since a previous pilot study revealed that the evaluation of the ingroup is enhanced when an intergroup context is present in the form of a previous evaluation of an outgroup. In this study we wanted to avoid obtaining such effects.

³ The same set of analyses was performed for the evaluation index in order to test for ingroup and outgroup evaluation effects more directly. An analogous pattern of results was found for in- and outgroup evaluations ($F(2,75) = 3.64$, $p = .031$, $\eta^2 = .09$), replicating the findings for the attitude index.

Discussion

In this study we have examined how fear and anger influence people's evaluations of their ingroup and outgroup. When no negative emotions are evoked, our participants showed a tendency to evaluate their own group negatively, which was in line with previous research that revealed the negative (or at least ambivalent but not clearly positive) character of the Polish self-stereotype (Bilewicz & Kofta, 2011; Błuszkowski, 2005; Bochenska, 1995; Micki & Ellemers, 1996). Interestingly, we also found a surprising tendency to evaluate slightly more positively, yet not significantly, the Gypsy outgroup than the Polish ingroup in the control group. This effect can be explained by the type of sample, which was composed of social science students (mainly sociology), who could hold more egalitarian attitudes than the general population. The aim of our study was to show the shift in the attitudinal valence, that is to test whether negative emotion of anger weakens those self-presentational concerns and leads to increased negativity of explicit attitudes. The evoked emotions of fear and anger changed this pattern obtained in emotionally neutral conditions, i.e. the induced fear increased positivity towards the ingroup; induced anger increased negativity towards the outgroup, not affecting the attitude towards the ingroup.

General discussion

The results of two studies (correlational and experimental) presented here are consistent with previous findings on the effects of fear and anger on intergroup attitudes. For example, previous research has shown that fear predicts ingroup protective strategies (Skitka et al., 2006). Moreover, enhancing the ingroup can also help people to cope with fear and mortality threat (Fritsche et al., 2008). Anger was shown to increase negative stereotypes and attitudes towards outgroups on the explicit as well as on the implicit level (Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer, 1994; DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Caidric, 2004). It was also related to the tendency to move against the outgroup and to confront them (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Skitka, Bauman, Aramovitch, & Morgan, 2006). The results of the two studies are coherent with the previous research but they also provide some important new contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, we have shown in a correlational and experimental design that experienced anger increases negativity towards outgroups. Secondly, Study 2 showed the differential effects of fear and anger on ingroup and outgroup evaluations in one experimental design. Thirdly, we measured or activated the specific emotions incidentally, independently of the intergroup context, therefore we think that the results can be also an interesting indicator of what effects on the intergroup level could be expected when other psychological states that evoke anger or fear take place (e.g.

threat of societal crises or terrorism threats). Finally, we tested our assumptions in a specific cultural context, in which the ingroup attitude is ambiguous or even negative, based mainly on a self-stereotype of negative competence (Błuszkowski, 2005). Our research shows that in the case of a group with negative self-stereotypes, such as Poles, fear (but not anger) activates a strong tendency to boost the ingroup image.⁴ Anger mainly acts upon outgroup devaluation and slightly weakens the initial negativity towards the ingroup. Interestingly, we did replicate the effect for anger in a correlational and experimental design but not for fear. This result might be due to the fact that in the first study only negative traits were assessed, therefore the positivity towards the ingroup could be more difficult to find. It is also possible that measuring emotional states has different effects than evoking them; we found that fear based emotions need to be activated in order to influence ingroup enhancement effects.

One clear limitation of Study 2 was that the population was limited to social science students, who share specific, more egalitarian attitudes. This might have influenced the result in the baseline condition, in which Gypsies are evaluated in a slightly more positive manner. However, the correlational study performed on a more diverse sample revealed that even when Gypsies are evaluated negatively, anger can increase negativity towards this group. Further research would need to be done in order to determine the universality of the obtained effects across different target groups with ambivalent or even positive stereotypes.

An interesting way of following up this research might focus on the question, whether all types of in- and outgroups are equally affected by the emotions of anger and fear or some sort of fit between the type of emotional appraisal and the stereotypical contents that describe the outgroup has to be considered (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006). The dynamic and content specific nature of emotional carry over effects seems to be a promising research line to follow.

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⁴ We have found an analogical result in a different study, where only fear was manipulated and negativity towards the Polish group was measured in a sample of Polish students. Results showed that, as expected, participants in the fear condition perceived the ingroup on traits with negative valence less negatively ($t(62) = 2.00, p = .05, M = -1.22; SD = .35$) as compared to the neutral condition ($M = -1.41; SD = .40$).

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