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Cultural Variance in the Interpersonal Effects of Anger in Negotiations

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Abstract

The current research offers the first investigation of how the effects of expressing discrete emotions in negotiations vary across cultures. In a hypothetical negotiation scenario (Study 1) and a computer-mediated negotiation simulation (Study 2), expressing anger elicited larger concessions from European-American negotiators, but smaller concessions from Asian and Asian-American negotiators. A third study provided evidence that this effect is due to different cultural norms about the appropriateness of anger expressions in negotiations: When we explicitly manipulated anger expressions to be appropriate, Asian and Asian-American negotiators made larger concessions to the angry opponent, as large as was typical for European-American negotiators; when we explicitly manipulated anger expressions to be inappropriate, European-American negotiators made smaller concessions to the angry opponent, as small as was typical for Asian and Asian-American negotiators. Implications for our understanding of culture, emotions, and negotiations are discussed.

Keywords: Culture; anger; emotions ; negotiations; norms

Cultural Variance in the Interpersonal Effects of Anger in Negotiations

In the early 1990s, the United States' trade deficit with Japan amounted to almost \$60 billion. Determined to reduce this deficit, President Bill Clinton employed a particularly tough and aggressive stance in trade negotiations with Japan. In one summit with Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in February 1994, Clinton used "some of the bluntest language [...] by a U.S. president with a Japanese leader" to persuade Japan to open its automobile, insurance, medical equipment, and telecommunications markets. Even though Hosokawa urged Clinton to "abandon threats and anger," Clinton kept up his combative tone throughout the negotiations, and hours of heated discussion ended in an impasse (Rennert, 1994, p. A1). Critics of Clinton's trade policy toward Japan considered the negotiations a failure. The Japanese openly disapproved of Clinton's confrontational approach (Sterngold, 1993) and subsequently responded with only "grudging minimal concessions" (Curtis, 2000, p. 3).

The above example illustrates the inherent difficulty of negotiating when counterparts come from different cultures. Indeed, one of the striking aspects of this specific example is the differential use of and response to expressions of anger by the American president and the Japanese prime minister. Hosokawa's plea to put anger aside and the negative reactions of the Japanese to Clinton's behavior suggest the possibility that anger displays may be perceived as relatively inappropriate in negotiations in East Asian cultures, perhaps leading to an unwillingness to give in to angry opponents. Such a possibility stands in stark contrast to previous empirical findings that expressing anger induces larger concessions in negotiations (e.g., Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a, b). However, this and other related research on the effects of expressing discrete emotions (e.g., anger, happiness, disappointment) in negotiations is almost exclusively based on Western (e.g., North American

and Western European) subject populations (e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2004a, b, 2006, c.f. Kopelman & Rosette, 2008).¹ Research examining these effects across different cultures is conspicuously lacking but more and more critical as negotiations increasingly involve parties with different cultural backgrounds who negotiate in markedly different ways (Adair & Brett, 2005; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Gelfand et al., 2001; Tinsley, 1998).

Thus, the present research offers the first investigation of how the interpersonal effects of discrete emotions in negotiations vary across cultures. In this paper, we focus specifically on the emotion of anger, perhaps the most common emotion in conflict situations (Allred, 1999), and the focus of most studies on the interpersonal effects of emotions in negotiations (e.g., Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef et al., 2004a, b). These studies have generally shown that expressing anger is an effective negotiation strategy that elicits larger concessions compared to expressing other emotions (e.g., happiness) or no emotions. Results suggest that angry negotiators are perceived to be tougher and to have higher reservation prices (i.e., higher standards for the worst deal they are willing to accept), signaling that there will be negative consequences (e.g., reaching an impasse) unless concessions are made (e.g., Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006; Van Kleef et al., 2004a).

However, the effects of anger in negotiations may vary across cultures because anger displays are differentially normative in different cultural contexts. For example, work in anthropology has demonstrated that Utku Eskimos apparently neither feel, express, nor talk about anger (Briggs, 1970), whereas the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea are actually encouraged to express anger (Schieffelin, 1983). Research in social psychology has also demonstrated that display rules – norms that dictate when emotion expressions are appropriate – differ significantly across cultures. In one classic study, Japanese and American participants seated alone in a room

expressed negative emotions such as disgust and anger when watching stressful videos; when an experimenter was in the room, however, Japanese participants masked the negative emotional displays with smiles, whereas American participants' expressions remained unchanged (Ekman, 1972; Friesen, 1972). Subsequent work has repeatedly demonstrated that different cultural display rules make it relatively normative to express or even amplify emotion expressions in Western, individualistic cultures, but to deamplify or altogether suppress emotion expressions in East Asian, collectivistic cultures (Matsumoto, Takeuchi, Andayani, Kouznetsova, & Krupp, 1998; Matsumoto, Yoo, Hirayama, & Petrova, 2005; Matsumoto et al., 2008; Yuki, Maddux, & Masuda, 2007). These cultural differences in display rules have been demonstrated for a variety of emotions, including anger (Matsumoto et al., 1998; Matsumoto et al., 2005). Indeed, because anger is particularly confrontational and socially disengaging, it is arguably the emotion that most conflicts with the East Asian emphasis on interdependence and social harmony (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, expressing anger may be perceived as relatively appropriate in Western cultures, but as relatively inappropriate in East Asian cultures.

Importantly, according to the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) model (Van Kleef, 2009), the perceived appropriateness of emotion expressions can have a significant impact on their utility in negotiations. In particular, anger expressions can elicit both concession-inhibiting reactions (e.g., desire to retaliate) and concession-inducing reactions (e.g., perceptions of toughness of the counterpart). The relative strength of each type of reaction depends on, among other things, social-relational factors (including culture) that influence the perceived appropriateness of the anger expression. Thus, if cultural norms render anger expressions inappropriate (appropriate), they can make concession-inhibiting (concession-inducing) reactions

relatively stronger. Consistent with this prediction, previous research has shown that when anger expressions in negotiations are explicitly manipulated to be inappropriate, they lead to smaller rather than larger concessions (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). Hence, we hypothesized that (1) anger would elicit larger concessions from Western negotiators (consistent with prior research), but smaller concessions from East Asian negotiators, and (2) this influence of culture is due to anger expressions being perceived as relatively appropriate among Western negotiators, but as relatively inappropriate among East Asian negotiators.

We tested and found support for these hypotheses across three studies. In a hypothetical negotiation scenario (Study 1) and in a computer-mediated negotiation simulation (Study 2), we found that expressing anger elicited larger concessions from European-American negotiators, but smaller concessions from Asian and Asian-American negotiators. A third study explicitly manipulated the appropriateness of anger expressions and showed that Asian and Asian-American negotiators made larger concessions to the angry opponent when anger was manipulated to be appropriate; conversely, European-American negotiators made smaller concessions to the angry opponent when anger was manipulated to be inappropriate.

Study 1

Method

Design and participants. Study 1 had a 2 (anger: anger vs. no anger) x 2 (perceiver's culture: European-American vs. Asian and Asian-American) factorial, between-subjects design. One hundred thirty students (64 female, 66 male) at a large university in the western United States participated in the study for a \$10 payment. Sixty-three participants were of European-American ethnicity, and all were from the United States. Sixty-seven participants were of East

Asian ethnicity and were from the United States (11), China (31), Vietnam (9), Hong Kong (6), South Korea (5), Taiwan (3), Indonesia (1), and the Philippines (1).

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two anger conditions and read a vignette adapted from Sinaceur and Tiedens (2006). Participants were asked to imagine that they were playing the role of a negotiator selling technical equipment. Their character did not want to include a warranty in the deal, but their counterpart kept insisting on it. The subsequent negotiation dialogue comprised eleven statements made alternately by the participants' character and their counterpart.

Anger manipulation. In the *no anger condition*, the last four statements made by the counterpart were presented with the prefix "Client, without being angry". In the *anger condition*, the prefix was changed to "Client, in an angry tone", and periods were replaced by exclamation marks. The dialogue itself did not vary across conditions.

Dependent measures. The dependent variable was concession-making, operationalized as the probability that participants would include the warranty in the deal, which their counterpart wanted but they did not. Responses ranged from 1 (*very low probability*) to 7 (*very high probability*). For the anger manipulation check, participants rated the extent to which they perceived the client as angry. Responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Results

Manipulation check. The client was perceived as angrier in the anger condition compared to the no anger condition ($M = 4.38, SD = 0.75$ vs. $M = 2.02, SD = 1.00, F(1, 119) = 232.28, p < .001; \eta^2_p = .65$). There were no main or interaction effects due to perceiver's culture (both F s $< 0.68, ns$).

Concession-making. A 2 (anger: anger vs. no anger) x 2 (perceiver's culture: European-American vs. Asian and Asian-American) between-subjects ANOVA showed the predicted interaction between anger and perceiver's culture, $F(1, 129) = 8.91, p = .003; \eta^2_p = .07$. Specifically, pairwise mean comparisons revealed that European-Americans made larger concessions in the anger condition compared to the no-anger condition, $F(1, 62) = 4.44, p = .04; \eta^2_p = .07$. In contrast, Asians and Asian-American negotiators made smaller concessions in the anger condition compared to the no-anger condition, $F(1, 66) = 4.53, p = .04; \eta^2_p = .07$ (see Figure 1).

Study 2

The results of Study 1 provided initial evidence that one's cultural background affects responses to anger in negotiations. Whereas European-American negotiators made larger concessions to angry opponents, Asian and Asian-American negotiators made smaller concessions. However, self-reported behavioral intentions following a hypothetical negotiation scenario may not reflect actual behavior in a real negotiation (e.g., Cook & Campbell, 1979). Thus, Study 2 used a computer-mediated negotiation simulation to measure concession-making as an actual behavioral outcome.

Method

Design and participants. The study again had a 2 (anger: anger vs. no anger) x 2 (perceiver's culture: European-American vs. Asian and Asian-American) factorial, between-subjects design. One hundred fifty-five university students (89 female, 66 male) at a large university in the western United States participated in the study for a \$15 payment. Sixty-seven participants were of European-American ethnicity, and all were from the United States. Eighty-eight participants were of East Asian ethnicity and were from the United States (21), China (23),

Hong Kong (11), Taiwan (9), South Korea (8), Indonesia (6), Vietnam (5), Japan (3), and the Philippines (2).

Procedure. Participants arrived in groups of at least six for each session and were randomly assigned to one of the two anger conditions. After being seated in separate cubicles in front of a computer, instructions indicated that participants would engage in a computer-mediated negotiation with another participant. In reality, the other participant's behavior was simulated by the computer in order to ensure consistent behaviors from participants' "negotiation partners." The negotiation task was adapted from Van Kleef and colleagues (e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2004a). Participants played the role of a seller of mobile phones who had to negotiate the price, warranty period, and duration of the service contract. For each of the three negotiation issues there were nine possible levels of agreement yielding different payoffs. The objective was to earn as many points as possible, and participants were repeatedly informed that the more points they earned, the greater their chances of winning a cash prize in a lottery after the negotiation. They were also told that they had to reach an agreement to participate in the lottery. Participants and their simulated counterpart then exchanged offers during each of a maximum of six rounds. The computer always made the first offer and always followed the same pre-determined concession-making strategy.

Anger manipulation. Participants were told that one goal of the study was to examine the effects of having information about the counterpart's intentions. The cover story informed participants that the computer randomly determined that they would receive information about their counterpart's intentions, but the counterpart would not receive information about their intentions. After rounds 1, 3, and 5, participants received pre-determined messages from their simulated counterparts. In the *no anger condition*, participants received only an intention

statement; in the *anger condition*, participants received an anger statement in addition to the intention statement (see Table 1). Intervals and statements were identical to those used in previous research (e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2004a).

Dependent measures. The dependent variable was again concession-making, operationalized as the final offer made by participants (controlling for their first offer, before any manipulation occurred). The final offer was obtained by adding the number of points participants demanded for each negotiation issue. This number was deducted from the maximum number of points participants could have demanded so that a higher number indicated larger concessions. After the negotiation, participants completed the same anger manipulation check as in Study 1.

Results

Manipulation check. The buyer was perceived as angrier in the anger condition compared to the no anger condition ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.98$ vs. $M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.80$, $F(1, 154) = 266.59$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2_p = .64$). There were no main or interaction effects due to perceiver's culture (both F s < 0.08 , ns).

Concession-making. A 2 (anger: anger vs. no anger) x 2 (perceiver's culture: European-American vs. Asian and Asian-American) between-subjects ANCOVA (controlling for participants' first offers) showed the predicted interaction between anger and perceiver's culture, $F(1, 154) = 13.12$, $p < .001$; $\eta^2_p = .08$. Pairwise mean comparisons revealed that that European-Americans made larger concessions in the anger condition compared to the no anger condition, $F(1, 66) = 5.83$, $p = .02$; $\eta^2_p = .08$. In contrast, Asians and Asian-Americans made smaller concessions in the anger condition compared to the no anger condition, $F(1, 87) = 6.85$, $p = .01$; $\eta^2_p = .07$ (see Figure 2).

Study 3

Results from Studies 1 and 2 provided consistent evidence that expressing anger elicits larger concessions from European-American negotiators, but smaller concessions from Asian and Asian-American negotiators. However, the mechanism underlying this cultural variance is still unclear. To investigate our hypothesis that norms for cultural differences in norms for anger expressions are responsible for our findings, Study 3 employed a “moderation-of-process design” and experimentally manipulated the appropriateness of anger expressions (see Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). We predicted that when anger expressions were explicitly manipulated to be appropriate, responses of negotiators from both cultures would resemble default responses of European-American negotiators (for whom anger is typically seen as relatively appropriate); when anger expressions were explicitly manipulated to be inappropriate, responses of negotiators from both cultures were predicted to resemble default responses of Asian and Asian-American negotiators (for whom anger is typically seen as relatively inappropriate). This reasoning is consistent with the idea that cultural knowledge only influences behavior when it is applicable to the situation at hand (e.g., Hong, Benet-Martinez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003), as well work showing the critical influence of cultural norms in determining behaviors across cultures (Zou et al., 2009).

Method

Design and participants. The study had a 3 (anger: default anger vs. inappropriate anger vs. appropriate anger) x 2 (perceiver’s culture: European-American vs. Asian and Asian-American) factorial, between-subjects design. One hundred eighty-two university students (111 female, 71 male) at a large university in the western United States participated in the study for a \$15 payment. Ninety-two participants were of European-American ethnicity, and all were from the United States. Ninety participants were of East Asian ethnicity and were from the United

States (22), China (32), South Korea (11), Hong Kong (8), Taiwan (5), Vietnam (5), Indonesia (4), Burma (1), the Philippines (1), and Thailand (1).

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three anger conditions. The procedure was the same as in Study 2, except for the manipulation of anger appropriateness.

Appropriateness manipulation. In the inappropriate and appropriate anger conditions, participants were told that the university's laboratory research committee had examined the experiments that took place during the previous academic year. In the *appropriate anger condition*, participants were told that most people express anger in negotiations and that it was acceptable to express anger during the study. In the *inappropriate anger condition*, participants were told that most people do not express anger in negotiations and it was unacceptable to express anger during the study (see Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). In the *default anger condition*, participants received no such information. Thus, the default anger condition was identical to the anger condition in Study 2.

Dependent measures. The dependent variable was again concession-making (see Study 2). For the appropriateness manipulation check, participants were asked after the study what they were previously told with regard to expressing anger in the study.

Results

Manipulation check. Ten participants (one in the default anger condition, four in the inappropriate anger condition, and five in the appropriate anger condition) did not correctly indicate what they were told with regard to expressing anger. These ten participants (5.5 % of all participants) were dropped from subsequent analyses.²

Concession-making. Consistent with the results in Studies 1 and 2, a 3 (anger: default anger vs. inappropriate anger vs. appropriate anger) x 2 (perceiver's culture: European-American

vs. Asian and Asian-American) between-subjects ANCOVA (controlling for participants' first offers) showed the predicted interaction between anger and perceiver's culture: European-Americans made larger concessions than Asians and Asian-Americans in the default anger condition, $F(1, 57) = 9.71, p = .003; \eta^2_p = .15$. However, this cultural difference disappeared in both the inappropriate anger condition, $F(1, 55) = 0.40, ns$, as well as the appropriate anger condition, $F(1, 57) = 0.01, ns$.

Comparisons with the default anger condition in each culture elucidated the nature of these effects. Compared to the default anger condition, European-Americans made fewer concessions in the inappropriate anger condition, $F(1, 58) = 5.40, p = .02; \eta^2_p = .09$, but the same amount of concessions in the appropriate anger condition, $F(1, 60) = 0.10, ns$. Conversely, compared to the default anger condition, Asians and Asian-Americans made the same amount of concessions in the inappropriate anger condition, $F(1, 54) = 0.23, ns$, but more concessions in the appropriate anger condition, $F(1, 54) = 6.33, p = .02; \eta^2_p = .11$ (see Figure 3). Thus, when we explicitly manipulated anger expressions to be appropriate, Asian and Asian-American negotiators made larger concessions to the angry opponent (as large as was typical for European-American negotiators). However, when we explicitly manipulated anger expressions to be inappropriate, European-American negotiators made smaller concessions to the angry opponent (as small as was typical for Asian and Asian-American negotiators), suggesting that cultural norms for the appropriateness of anger expressions were driving our results.

General Discussion

Across three studies, we found consistent evidence that expressing anger elicits larger concessions from European-American negotiators, but smaller concessions from Asian and Asian-American negotiators. We also found evidence that this influence of culture is due to

anger expressions being seen as relatively appropriate among European-Americans, but as relatively inappropriate among Asian and Asian-Americans. Importantly, our findings are the first to show cultural differences in the interpersonal effects of discrete emotions in negotiations. Despite a host of research demonstrating that anger typically leads to greater concession-making in Western cultural contexts (e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2004a), our findings indicate that anger may not only be less effective in East Asian cultural contexts, but may actually backfire and lead to worse outcomes. Consistent with the EASI model (Van Kleef, 2009), these results show that the utility of emotional displays in negotiations depends on salient social-relational factors, such as the cultural context, suggesting the importance of considering the cultural context when assessing the likely effectiveness of emotion displays in negotiations.

Furthermore, the current research connects and contributes to several different research literatures that have developed independently: First, research on cross-cultural negotiations has typically studied cultural differences with respect to behaviors and cognitions (e.g., Adair & Brett, 2005; Brett & Okumura, 1998; Gelfand et al., 2001). Our findings, however, highlight the importance of considering emotions as well. Second, while research on emotions has begun exploring factors that might influence their interpersonal effects (e.g., power (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006)), culture constitutes a critical and so far overlooked factor. Finally, research on culture and emotion expressions has focused mostly on cultural display rules (e.g., Matsumoto et al., 2008) and cultural differences in perceptual reactions to emotion expressions, such as emotion recognition accuracy (e.g., Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). The current research demonstrates the important implications of cultural display rules for behavior in interpersonal settings, and shifts the focus from cultural differences in *perceptual* reactions to *behavioral*

reactions. Thus, even when emotions are accurately recognized, culture plays an important role by influencing the behavioral reactions to emotion expressions.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of our studies is that they did not show that perceived appropriateness mediated the differential responses to anger by East Asian and Western negotiators. Future work demonstrating the mediational role of perceived appropriateness would be welcome to provide further support for our hypotheses. However, because significant methodological difficulties exist when using self-report instruments across cultures (e.g., Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002; Kitayama, 2002), Study 3 employed a “moderation-of-process design” rather than a “measurement-of-mediation design” (Spencer et al., 2005), providing experimental rather than correlational evidence for the causal role of perceived appropriateness by directly manipulating the proposed mechanism.

Another limitation is that our studies did not involve face-to-face interactions. The current procedures, however, had the advantage of allowing us to obtain a high level of experimental control and culturally neutral manipulations of anger (i.e., the cultural background of the anger expresser was always unknown), thus providing a rigorous empirical test of our hypotheses. Furthermore, we are reassured by the consistency of past findings using computerized procedures (Van Kleef et al., 2004a, b), field studies (Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006), and face-to-face experiments (Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006). Nevertheless, future research should examine the current hypotheses in the context of face-to-face negotiations, which would also allow an exploration of how the cultural background of the negotiator expressing the emotion (as opposed to the negotiator perceiving the emotion) may influence negotiation outcomes.

In addition, most research on emotion expressions in negotiations, including the present research, has focused on distributive negotiations where one party's gain is necessarily another party's loss. Future research should also examine how culture and emotion expressions affect behavior in integrative negotiations where parties are looking to help each other create rather than claim value (Lax & Sebenius, 1986). Future research should also investigate emotions other than anger. For example, it is possible that low arousal emotions (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006) and socially engaging emotions (Kitayama et al., 2006) – which are more common and valued in East Asian cultures – will have more utility in negotiations with East Asians, but that high arousal emotions and socially disengaging emotions – which are more common and valued in Western cultures – have more utility in negotiations with Westerners. Our finding that anger (a high arousal, socially disengaging emotion) had more utility in negotiations with Western compared to East Asian negotiators speaks to this possibility of a broader, general effect.

Finally, future investigations should go beyond negotiation contexts and examine how our cultural backgrounds influence how we react to emotion expressions in other types of social interactions. The vital role of emotions in influencing the behavior of those around us has been demonstrated in personal relationships (Clark & Taraban, 1991), parent-child interactions (Klennert, Campos, Sorce, Emde, & Svedja, 1983), the political arena (Glaser & Salovey, 1998), customer service situations (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), and leadership settings (Van Kleef et al., 2009). While we believe the present results are an important step in understanding how culture and emotions interact in negotiations, the increasingly global nature of our society speaks to the importance of continuing to investigate the interplay of culture and emotions in a broad array of social settings.

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Table 1

Statements Used for the Manipulation of the Counterpart's Anger (Studies 2 and 3)

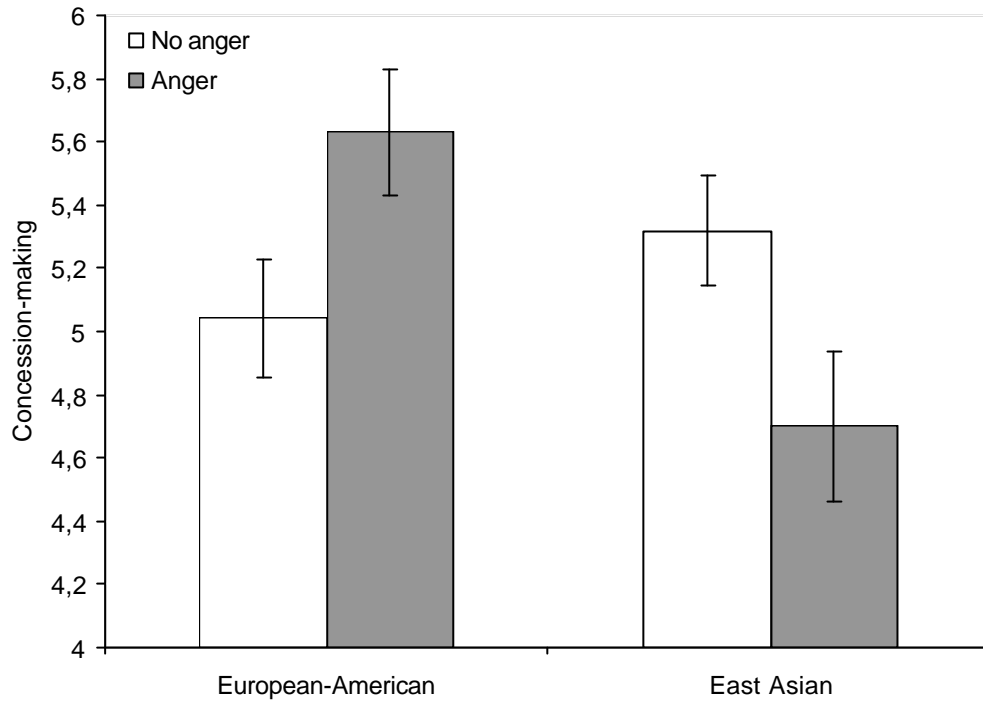
Counterpart's emotion	Statements
	After round 1
Anger	This offer makes me really angry, I think I'll offer 8-7-7.
No anger	I think I'll offer 8-7-7.
	After round 3
Anger	This is really getting on my nerves. I'm going to offer 7-6-7.
No anger	I'm going to offer 7-6-7.
	After round 5
Anger	I'm going to offer 6-6-6, because this negotiation pisses me off.
No anger	I'm going to offer 6-6-6.

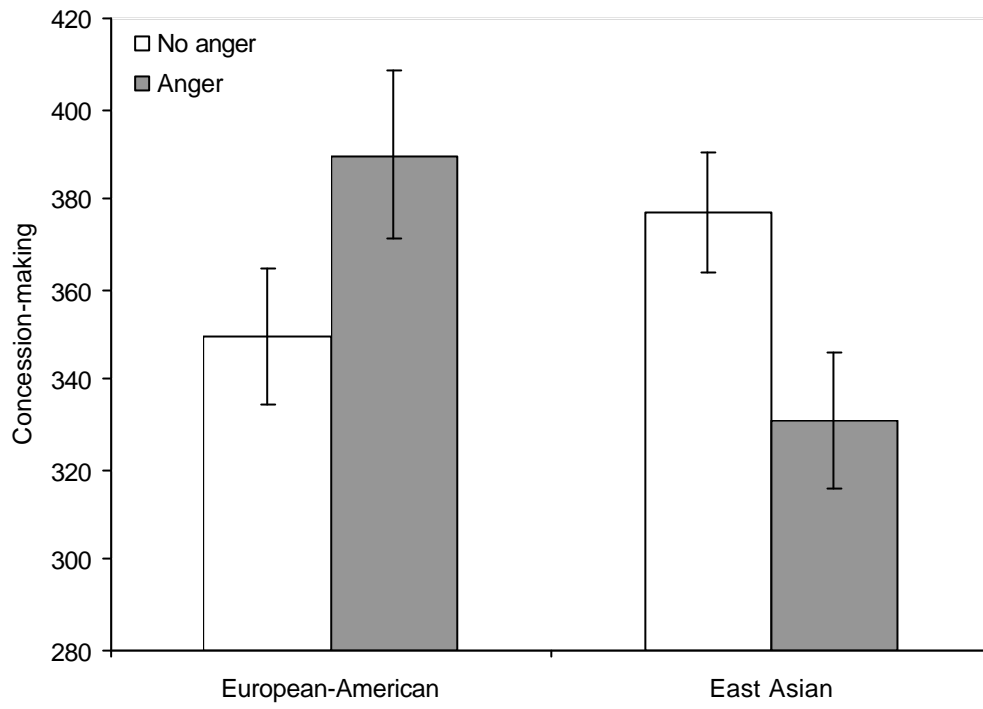
Figure Captions

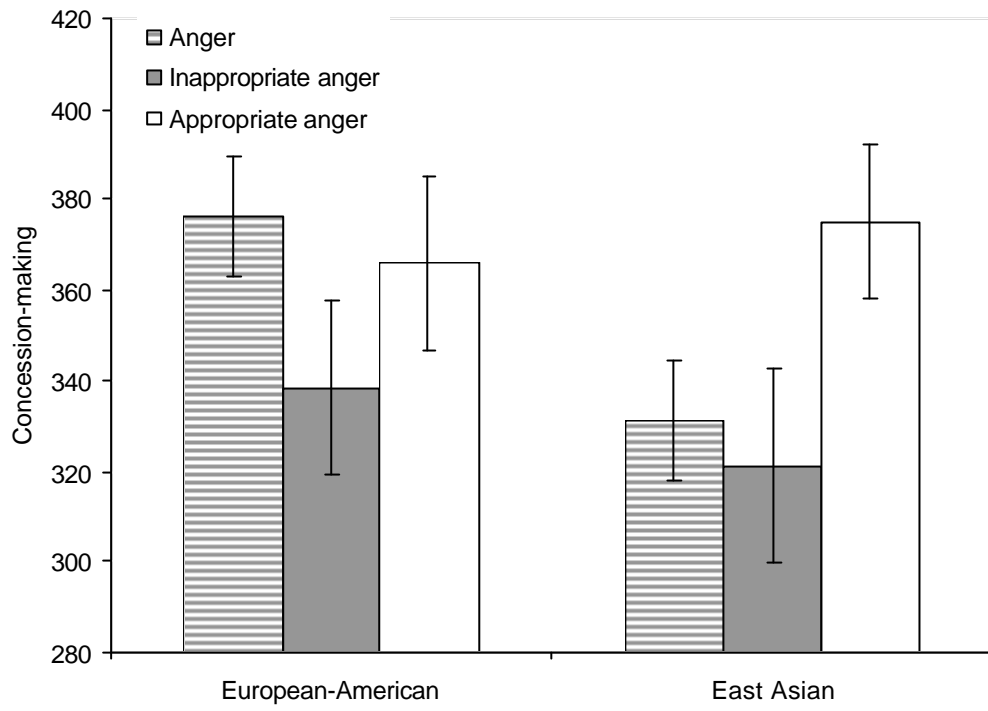
Figure 1. Concession-making as a function of condition and participants' cultural background (Study 1).

Figure 2. Concession-making as a function of condition and participants' cultural background (Study 2).

Figure 3. Concession-making as a function of condition and participants' cultural background (Study 3).







Footnotes

¹ One study by Sinaceur and Tiedens (2006) involving Moroccan participants also found that anger expressions led to larger concessions.

² Retaining these participants did not change the results.