

# Whether anger impacts negotiation outcomes depends on ethnicity of negotiator

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(Phys.org) —It's said you should never go to bed angry, but what about to the negotiation table? Researchers at Rice University and New York University suggest that ethnic backgrounds can influence the effectiveness of expressing anger in negotiations. In a series of studies, the researchers found that angry individuals of East Asian descent are perceived as tougher negotiators than their angry European-American counterparts, and consequently elicit greater cooperation at the negotiation table.

"There's no denying it—emotions play a very important role in negotiations," said Hajo Adam, visiting assistant professor of management at Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business. "However, no prior research has investigated how the cultural background of the emotion expresser impacts the negotiation results."

Results from four studies revealed that angry negotiators are perceived as tougher and more threatening when they are of East Asian rather than European-American descent, despite the fact that both parties are perceived as equally angry. As a result, parties in a negotiation are more likely to make concessions to angry East Asian counterparts than to angry European-American counterparts.

Other findings:

- **In study No. 1**, [participants](#) indicated that they would cooperate more with angry East Asian counterparts than with angry

European-American or Hispanic counterparts, ruling out the possibility that the predominantly European-American participants cooperate more with angry counterparts regardless of foreign culture.

- **In study No. 2**, nonangry East Asian negotiators elicited similar cooperation as nonangry European-Americans in negotiations, ruling out the possibility that individuals were cooperating more with East Asian counterparts than European-American counterparts in general.
- **In study No. 3**, both East Asian and European-Americans perceived East Asian counterparts as being tougher and more threatening [negotiators](#) than European-Americans and made larger concessions as a result.
- **In study No. 4**, participants again made larger [concessions](#) to an angry East Asian than to an angry European-American counterpart; however, this effect only emerged for participants who held the stereotype of East Asians being emotionally inexpressive and European-Americans being emotionally expressive. It did not appear when participants did not hold this stereotype, which suggests that the effect emerges because of cultural stereotypes about the emotional expressivity of different cultural groups.

Adam said he hopes the research will add to the body of literature on the interplay of culture and emotions in social interactions, especially as places of employment grow more diverse and rely more on interpersonal communication.

"The workplace is an increasingly diverse place, and it has changed dramatically in recent years," Adam said. "More and more, employees must interact with their fellow workers and other company stakeholders from different cultures, and emotions play a huge role in negotiating this interpersonal dynamic."

Details on the study procedures:

- **Study No. 1** recruited 98 participants (64 men, 34 women, average age of 32.01) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk website to participate in an online negotiation. All participants were from the U.S. and the vast majority of them (79.6 percent) were of European ethnicity. Participants were told they would be randomly matched with another user to conduct an online negotiation; in reality they negotiated with a simulated counterpart. Participants played the role of a project manager negotiating an IT contract and were provided with information about their counterpart, identifying them as European-American, Hispanic or East Asian. After participants made a first offer, they received feedback that read, "Wow, this offer makes me really angry. ... I expect a better offer; I'm pretty pissed off." After receiving the message, participants were told the negotiation was over and were asked questions about their behavior intentions.
- **Study No. 2** included 120 participants (55 men, 65 women, average age of 33.24) from Mechanical Turk. All participants were from the U.S. and the vast majority of them (80.8 percent) were of European ethnicity. Participants were presented with a longer version of the same basic scenario as in study No. 1; however, instead of leading participants to believe that they were to negotiate with another participant, they were simply told to read a scenario and imagine how they would react to the situation. Participants were told that their counterpart in the negotiation responded to their initial offer in either an [angry](#) or an emotionally neutral fashion. The counterpart was described as either European-American or East Asian. At the end of the experiment, participants were asked what their final offer would be.
- **Study No. 3** included 288 participants (122 men, 166 women,

U.S. college students with an average age of 20.58).

Approximately half the participants were of European descent; the other half were of East Asian descent. Students were randomly assigned as "Student 1" or "Student 2" and were paired with a student of the same sex to negotiate how to work on a student project. "Student 1" was randomly assigned to one of two anger conditions: In one condition, they were instructed to express anger; in the other condition, they were instructed to remain emotionally neutral.

- **Study No. 4** included 110 participants (52 men, 58 women, average age of 32.27 years). All participants were from the U.S., and the majority of them (83.6 percent) were European-American. Participants took part in the study on Amazon's Mechanical Turk website and were told that they would complete two separate studies. In the first part of the study, participants were told they participated in a pilot test for another experiment. This part of the study actually assessed whether participants hold the stereotype of East Asians being emotionally inexpressive and European-Americans being emotionally expressive. In the second part of the study, participants engaged in a computer-mediated negotiation with a simulated counterpart who expressed anger throughout the negotiation and was described as either European-American or East Asian.

The paper, "Not All Anger is Created Equal: The Impact of the Expresser's Culture on the Social Effects of Anger in Negotiations," was co-authored by Aiwa Shirako, visiting professor of management and organizations at New York University, and is available online at [bit.ly/101HGTI](http://bit.ly/101HGTI).

Provided by Rice University

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