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Communicating anger and contempt in intergroup conflict

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Chapter 4

When Does the Communication of Group-based Anger and Contempt About Past Events Have Positive Effects? Examining Anger and Contempt's Opposite Relational Functions

This chapter is based on De Vos, B., Van Zomeren, M., Gordijn, E. H., & Postmes, T. (2015b). *When does the communication of group-based anger and contempt about past events have positive effects? Examining anger and contempt's opposite relational functions*. Unpublished manuscript.

When does the communication of group-based anger and contempt about past events have positive effects?

Examining anger and contempt's opposite relational functions

Within interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, the communication of anger has the potential to de-escalate them (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; De Vos et al., 2013; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007) presumably because it has a positive relational function (De Vos et al., 2013, 2015a; see Chapters 2 and 3): It grabs the attention of outgroup members, emphasizes the presence of a conflict between ingroup and outgroup, but most importantly signals the importance of maintaining the intergroup relationship (Averill, 1983; Fischer & Roseman, 2007). As such, anger also invites the other party to empathize with the angry group and that making amends is necessary (De Vos et al., 2013, Chapter 2; Fischer & Roseman, 2007). In the current article, we build on this notion by examining whether this positive relational function of communicating group-based anger still operates in long-standing conflicts in which anger can also be felt about past events.

This is important because research has focused thus far on intergroup conflicts in which anger is triggered by *current* events (De Vos et al., 2013, 2015a; Chapter 2 and 3). Many intergroup conflicts, however, are defined by a history of animosity in which past events may be hard to forget, let alone forgive. In such history-laden conflicts, group-based anger can be communicated in a way to imply that the group was either angry in the past, or still angry in the present. Because the relational function of anger operates in the present, we expect that when group-based anger about past events is communicated as still being experienced in the present (which we refer to as 'contemporizing'), it has the potential to transform anger about the past into a powerful plea for reconciliation in the present. However, not 'contemporizing'

the conflict in this way should make the relational function cease to exist.

This focus on history-laden intergroup conflicts and past events further enables us to contrast the *positive* relational function of the communication of anger with the *negative* relational function of the communication of contempt. Indeed, long-standing conflicts are more likely to give rise to contempt rather than anger (Fischer & Roseman, 2007) and its communication is thought to serve to avoid or discontinue the relationship altogether (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). This may certainly be the case when ‘contemporizing’ the conflict in this way, but this negative effect may cease to exist when group-based contempt is communicated with reference to the past. Against this backdrop, we examined in two experiments *when* the positive relational function of group-based anger operates and where it ceases to exist; moreover, we contrasted this with the communication of contempt, which we expected to operate in opposite ways.

Communicating Group-based Anger about Past Events

Research on the role of the communication of group-based anger in intergroup conflict focused on anger about *current* events in often short-term conflicts (De Vos et al., 2013, 2015a). In this research, the communication of group-based anger has been found to have a positive relational function (meaning it de-escalated conflict through increasing empathy for the outgroup), compared to the communication of contempt, which may actually escalate conflict because of its negative relational function (De Vos et al., 2013, Chapter 2). More specifically, these studies showed that individuals from an advantaged group responded with stronger empathy for a disadvantaged group that communicated anger (versus the communication of contempt) about a present event, which in turn predicted stronger constructive conflict intentions among them. These findings fit the notions of *opposite* relational functions of anger and contempt. Anger is thought to signal a desire to maintain a long-term relationship when that relationship is at stake, whereas contempt is thought to signal a desire to dissolve the relationship altogether (Fischer & Roseman,

2007). These opposite functions operate in the present and are triggered, as the above studies suggest, by present events.

However, many real-life conflicts are of a long-term nature, whereby one or more pivotal events in its history can be identified as enduring bases of intergroup conflict (Fisher, 2000). The conflict that ensues can take new forms and change meaning, but the reason why it often persists over time, is because the original conflictual events have not been resolved yet (Fisher, 2000). Consequently, in long-term conflicts the communication of anger is often about *past* events, despite the fact that the conflict is still very much alive in the present. For instance, Dutch colonial history suggests a number of past events that current Dutch individuals still feel guilty about (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998) and can thus be ‘contemporized’. This suggests hope and scope for improving the relevant intergroup relationship.

Indeed, we suggest that the relational function of the communication of group-based anger can operate when focused on *past* events in long-standing conflicts, but only when group members communicate it to mean that they *still feel angry*. Specifically, when they communicate group-based anger about a past event, they can communicate it as anger that was felt in the past (e.g., we were angry) or as anger that is still felt in the present (e.g., we are angry). If the positive relational function only operates in the present, then these subtle differences in framing may have a strong impact on whether the communication of group-based anger has any positive effects. Indeed, the relational function of anger emphasizes the importance of maintaining the relationship at stake while asking the outgroup to make amends. This means that individuals should respond to an outgroup communication of anger about past events with empathy and constructive conflict intentions, as long as it is clear that the anger is still felt in the present. However, when it is clear that the anger is *no* longer felt, its positive relational function should no longer be able to operate and thus cease to produce its positive effects (and might even result in indifference).

Communicating Group-based Contempt about Past Events

The relational function of contempt is opposite to that of anger, meaning that communicating contempt about past events in the present signals that the group wants to dissolve the relationship right here, right now (De Vos et al., 2013, Chapter 2). Needless to say, we do not expect this signal to lead to increased empathy for the outgroup and increased constructive conflict intentions – rather, communicating contempt about past events in the present should only affirm and potentially even increase conflict (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). For instance, this may apply particularly to long-standing conflicts where initial anger may have turned into contempt over time (e.g., Fischer & Roseman, 2007; see also: Halperin et al., 2011). Following this line of thought, the communication of contempt may indeed be so negative at any time that it does not matter whether it is communicated as being felt in the past or in the present.

Nevertheless, and in line with the notion of opposite relational functions of anger and contempt, we also entertained the possibility that communicating contempt in the past (e.g., we felt contempt at the time) may signal to let ‘bygones be bygones’, that things (and times) have changed, and that, currently, contempt is no longer felt. This would imply that communicating contempt in the past (i.e., not ‘contemporizing’ the conflict in this way) signals the offering of a second chance to the other group. It follows that individuals should respond to an outgroup communication of contempt about past events with higher empathy and constructive conflict intentions, as long as it is clear that the contempt was *only felt in the past*. Thus, when it is clear that contempt is *no longer felt*, its negative relational function should no longer be able to operate and thus cease to produce its negative effects.

Hypotheses and the Current Research

In line with the opposite relational functions of anger and contempt, we hypothesized that (1) the communication of group-based anger increases outgroup empathy and constructive conflict intentions when communicated as

present rather than past anger; and that (2) the communication of group-based contempt increases outgroup empathy and constructive conflict intentions when communicated as past rather than present contempt.

We tested our hypotheses in two experiments. Both experiments used the same long-standing intergroup conflict in which a pivotal past event was made salient. Within this context, we assessed the effects of the disadvantaged group's communication of past or present anger or contempt on measures of outgroup empathy and constructive conflict intentions. Experiment 1 provided a straightforward test of our hypotheses by manipulating the communication of group-based anger and contempt, framed as felt in the present or in the past. Experiment 2 built on Experiment 1 by zooming in onto the psychological process involved.

Experiment 1

Method

Participants were 83 Dutch psychology students (69 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.83$; $SD = 1.93$) who participated for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions within a 2 (Emotion: anger vs. contempt) X 2 (Framing: present vs. past) between-subjects design.

Participants were told that the study was about the conflict between Moluccans residing in the Netherlands and the Dutch government. Prior to reading a (fictitious) newspaper article that contained the manipulations, participants were given some actual background information on the context of the Moluccan-Dutch conflict. They read that in 1951 over 12,500 South-Moluccans were transported to the Netherlands for what was to be a temporary stay. The Dutch government had made them a promise to help them establish their own Republic of South Maluku, separate from Indonesia. However, that promise was never kept, and Moluccans were forced to live under abysmal living conditions, often residing in former concentration camps in the Netherlands. After waiting for 25 years, a new generation refused to sit by idly

and took matters into their own hand. Within the time frame of two years, Moluccans had hijacked two trains, which resulted in the death of a total of eleven people, among which seven hostage takers.

Following this introduction, participants read a fictitious newspaper article about an upcoming Moluccan commemoration for the Moluccans that gave their life for what they considered a valiant cause. The article read that a recent survey showed that a majority (71%) of the Dutch population felt that the Dutch government had done enough to help the Moluccans establish their own state and that the Moluccan hijackings were unjustifiable and inexcusable and a commemoration of this kind was inappropriate. The Moluccan community, on the other hand, broadly (92%) supported the commemoration and a majority indicated that feelings of contempt (or anger) play a role in their feelings towards the Dutch government. The communicated emotion (anger vs. contempt) as well as the tense in which it was presented (e.g., are angry vs. were angry) was manipulated in the title of the article, the introductory paragraph, and in the final paragraph in which a Moluccan inhabitant (Martin Sahuleka) responded on behalf of his group (“Right now we are very angry with the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Present Anger] / “In the past we were very angry with the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Past Anger] / “Right now we have a lot of contempt for the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Present Contempt] / “In the past we had a lot of contempt for the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Past Contempt]). We thus manipulated both the type of emotion present and the tense in which it was communicated alongside each other.

After reading the article, participants had to fill out a questionnaire. All variables in both experiments, unless otherwise specified, were measured on 7-point Likert-type scales (*1 = absolutely not, 7 = very much*). For the manipulation check of the communicated emotion we asked participants, using a

dichotomous item, which of the two emotions had been communicated in the article. For the manipulation check of tense, we asked them, using a dichotomous item, whether the communicated emotion referred to how Moluccans felt in the past or to how they felt right now.

Empathy for the outgroup communicating the emotion was measured with four items ($\alpha = .81$), two of which were related to aspects of perspective taking (“I could imagine well how Moluccans such as Martin Sahuleka must have felt”, and “I found it easy to take the perspective of Moluccans such as Martin Sahuleka”), while the other two were related to affective empathy (“I empathized with Moluccans such as Martin Sahuleka”, and (“I could not help but feel sympathy with Moluccans such as Martin Sahuleka”).

Additionally, constructive conflict intentions were measured with 8 items ($\alpha = .86$). Originally, two subscales consisting of four items each were devised, one of which measured a general tendency to move toward (based on a scale by Horney, 1945; e.g., “To what extent would you, as a native Dutch person, want to help Moluccan people like Martin Sahuleka by trying to find a solution for the conflict?”), and one measured specific action tendencies (“To what extent would you, as a native Dutch person, want to help Moluccan people like Martin Sahuleka by signing a petition against their unfair treatment?”). Because results on both separate subscales revealed a highly consistent pattern across all experiments, and because the two subscales also correlated strongly ($r = .59, p < .001$), we decided to collapse all items into one scale measuring constructive conflict intentions for all subsequent analyses.¹

Finally, we included two scales that were related to participants’ perception of the *current* conflict. These scales served as measures for whether past

¹ In addition to a constructive conflict intentions scale we included a destructive conflict intentions scale in both the first and second experiment which has also been used in prior research (De Vos et al., 2013) and consisted of items related to tendencies of moving away, moving towards, moving against, and inaction. Analyses on this scale however failed to yield any significant effects. We argue that this is due to the conflict context in which it is quite obvious that Moluccans deserve some kind of compensation and any kind of destructive conflict intentions would be deemed quite inappropriate. See the general discussion for a further discussion on this finding.

conflicts were perceived as still present and needing to be resolved, based on the emotion communicated. The first scale, possibility of conflict resolution, consisted of two items ($r = .70, p < .001$) that measured participant's perceived *possibility of a conflict resolution* ("To what extent do you think the present conflict is resolvable?" and "To what extent do you think it is possible for the conflict to end right now?"). The second scale measured participants' *need for a government apology* and consisted of 6 items (e.g., "The Dutch government has to apologize to Moluccans for not following through on their promise", "The Dutch government has to officially acknowledge not having done enough to keep their promise"; $\alpha = .93$).

Results

Manipulation checks. The results showed that all participants in the anger conditions correctly indicated that anger was communicated, while in the contempt conditions all but two people correctly indicated that contempt was communicated. Moreover, in the present framing condition, all but two participants indicated the correct tense, while in the past framing condition all participants indicated the correct tense. The four errors were made by three participants who were dropped from further analysis, which were subsequently conducted over the remaining 80 participants.²

Empathy. In line with anger and contempt's relational functions, a 2x2 ANOVA showed the predicted significant two-way interaction effect, $F(1, 76) = 4.27, p = .042, \eta_p^2 = .05$ (see Figure 1). The pattern of results is consistent with our hypothesis that the communication of group-based anger leads to stronger empathy when communicated as present anger rather than past anger, whereas contempt leads to stronger empathy when it is framed as past contempt rather than as present contempt (although the respective simple main effects were non-significant, with p -values of 0.12 and 0.18, respectively).

² For both experiments, analyses were also conducted while still including the people who failed to answer the manipulation checks correctly (three in the first experiment, six in the second) and their exclusion did not significantly alter the results of the experiments.

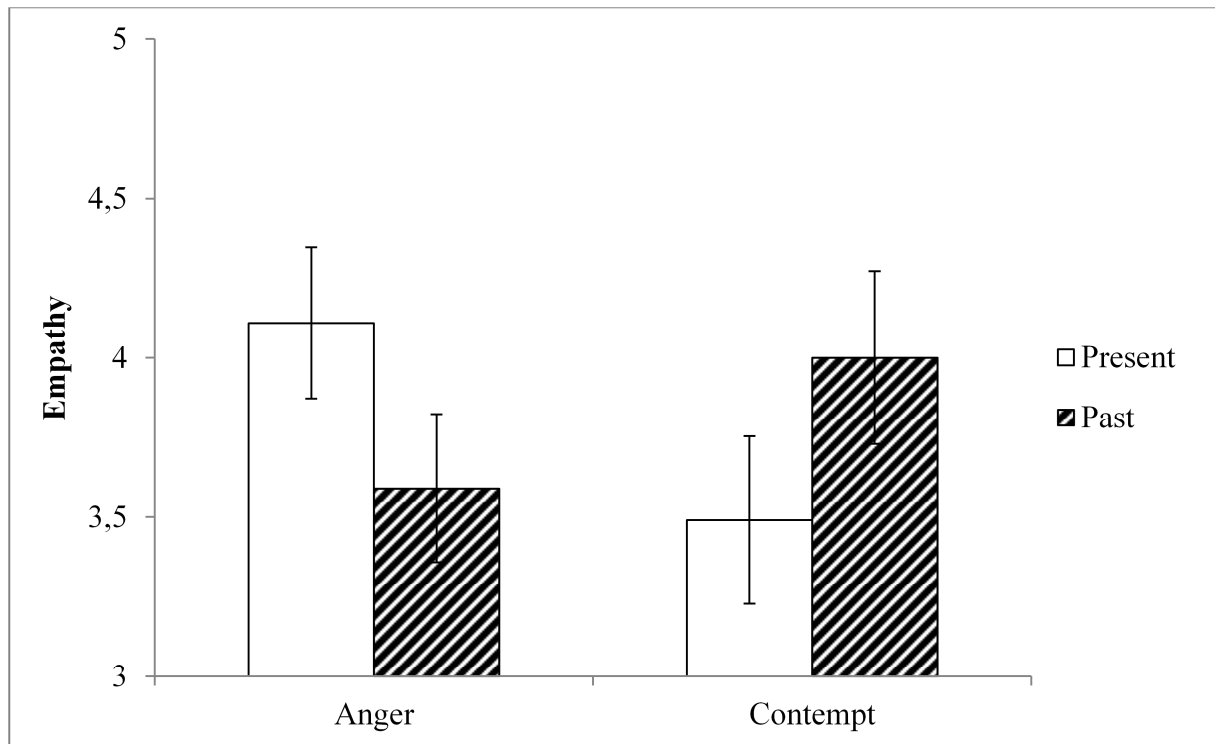


Figure 1. Means and standard errors of empathy towards Moluccans as a function of type of emotion and tense in which it is communicated, Experiment 1.

Looking at the interaction pattern in a different way, results replicated previous research (De Vos et al., 2015; see Chapter 3) in the form of a marginally significant simple main effect showing that stronger empathy was felt after present anger ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.08$) rather than present contempt ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.15$), $F(1, 76) = 3.12$, $p = .081$. The pattern of past anger ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.24$) versus present contempt ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.94$) appeared to go in the opposite direction, yet proved to be non-significant, $F(1, 76) = 1.34$, $p = .251$.

Constructive conflict intentions. As predicted, a 2x2 ANOVA on constructive conflict intentions revealed the predicted significant two-way interaction effect, $F(1, 76) = 8.12$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$ (see Figure 2). A simple main effects analysis showed that anger resulted in significantly stronger constructive conflict intentions when communicated as present anger ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.03$) rather than past anger ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 76) = 4.33$, $p = 0.041$).

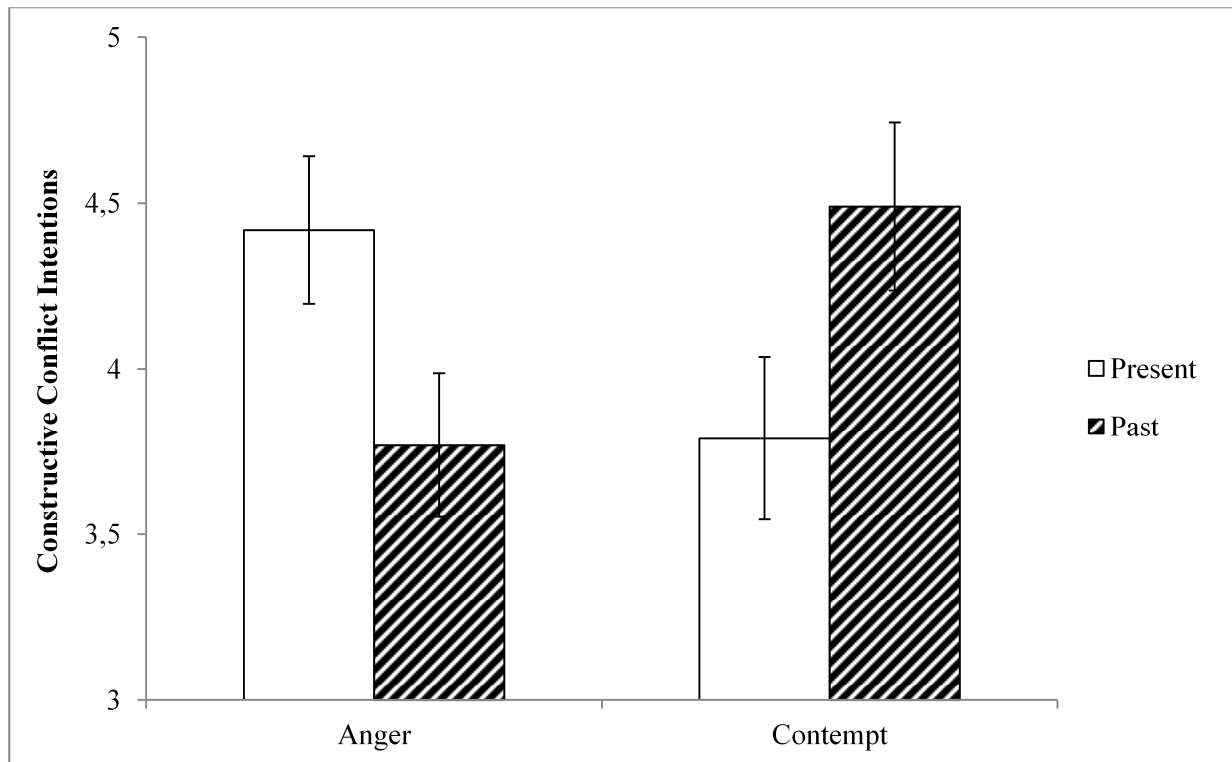


Figure 2. Means and standard errors of constructive conflict intentions towards Moluccans as a function of type of emotion and tense in which it is communicated, Experiment 1.

This supports the idea that the communication of anger about a past event is more effective in de-escalating conflict when it is communicated as being experienced in the present. Furthermore, contempt resulted in marginally significantly stronger constructive conflict intentions when communicated as past contempt ($M = 4.49, SD = 0.92$) rather than present contempt ($M = 3.79, SD = 0.94$), $F(1, 76) = 3.85, p = 0.053$. If anything, this supports the idea that the communication of contempt about a past event may be more effective in de-escalating conflict when it is communicated as being experienced in the past.

Looking differently at the interaction pattern, the simple main effects for constructive conflict intentions provided a further replication of prior research (De Vos et al., 2013; see Chapter 2) in showing that present anger resulted in marginally stronger constructive conflict intentions ($M = 4.42, SD = 1.03$) than when present contempt was communicated ($M = 3.79, SD = 0.94$), $F(1, 76) = 3.58, p = 0.062$. In addition, results revealed that past anger resulted in

significantly weaker constructive conflict intentions ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.21$) than past contempt ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.92$), $F(1, 76) = 4.56$, $p = 0.036$).

Mediation Analyses. Given the two generally similar interaction patterns on the empathy and intentions variables, we tested whether the pattern on empathy explained the pattern on intentions (De Vos et al., 2013). Results showed, first, that the two-way interaction predicted constructive conflict intentions ($\beta = .51$, $p = .006$) and empathy ($\beta = .38$, $p = .042$). Second, empathy significantly predicted constructive conflict intentions ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) above and beyond the interaction effect (which was reduced to: $\beta = .34$, $p = .042$). A bootstrapping macro for mediated moderation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was used to test the significance of the indirect path. Confirming the above results, bootstrapping 5,000 samples at a 95%, a confidence interval showed that the indirect effect of empathy was significant (95% CI [0.067, 1.000]). In line with our conceptualization of the relational functions of anger and contempt, empathy partially mediated the positive effects of present anger (vs. past anger) and past contempt (vs. present contempt) on constructive conflict intentions.

Conflict Perception. We conducted additional analyses on the two scales measuring how participants perceived the severity of the conflict. The *possibility of conflict resolution* scale using a 2x2 ANOVA yielded a significant two-way interaction effect, $F(1, 76) = 4.08$, $p = 0.047$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. The overall pattern mirrored that of empathy and constructive conflict intentions with present anger and past contempt leading to a higher perception of the possibility of conflict resolution than past anger and present contempt, respectively. However, simple main effects revealed, if anything, rough trends in that direction for both anger ($F(1, 76) = 1.70$, $p = 0.196$) and contempt ($F(1, 76) = 2.38$, $p = .127$). Furthermore, analyses on the *need for government apology* scale using a 2x2 ANOVA also yielded a significant two-way interaction effect, $F(1, 76) = 6.63$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Simple main effect analyses again revealed a similar pattern in showing that the communication of group-based anger resulted in significantly

higher need for government apology when communicated as present anger ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.53$) rather than past anger ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.26$), $F(1, 76) = 4.35$, $p = 0.040$. On the other hand, for contempt there was a trend towards a higher need for government apology when past contempt ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.14$) rather than present contempt ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.39$) was communicated, $F(1, 76) = 2.53$, $p = 0.116$. These results complement the main findings of this experiment by showing that the communication of anger and contempt and the tense in which it was communicated not only affected the targets' empathy and subsequent constructive conflict behavior, but also their perception of the conflict as a whole: Whether they perceived it to have been resolved or to have continued until this day.

Discussion

The current findings extend prior research by showing that the communication of group-based anger in the context of conflicts with a history also has the potential to de-escalate conflicts based in *past* events. Indeed, our findings suggest that the communication of anger has positive effects on empathy and constructive conflict intentions when the anger is about past events – provided that it is clear that the group still feels anger about it in the present (i.e., ‘contemporized’). Furthermore, and in line with the opposite relational functions of anger and contempt, results showed the opposite pattern for the communication of contempt. Finally, mediation analyses suggested that our findings were in line with the theoretical account in which empathy mediates the effect of the positive (versus negative) effects of the communication of anger (versus contempt) on constructive conflict intentions.

We note that although the key results were significant (for intentions) or close to conventional levels of significance (for empathy) at the level of the two-way interaction, unfortunately results failed to achieve significance at the level of the more specific simple main effects. Although this could be due to the study being somewhat underpowered, there is also a theoretical reason for why the

Experiment 1 results were not ideal. That is, whereas the communication of *present* anger and contempt is clear about how the group feels about the past event in the present, the communication of *past* anger and contempt is less clear about how the group feels about it in the here and now. We therefore wanted to clarify this in Experiment 2 by zooming in onto the psychological process that occurs in the past anger and past contempt conditions.

We did so in two ways. First, we added four conditions to our experimental design in which we explicitly mentioned whether or not anger or contempt about a past event was still experienced in the present. This constitutes a 2 (Emotion: anger vs. contempt) X 3 (Framing: past vs. past but not present vs. past *and* present) between-subjects design. Following our line of reasoning, we hypothesized that the communication of group-based anger or contempt in the past tense would be interpreted as emotions experienced in the past *but no longer in the present* and thus would mirror findings in the past-but-not-present condition; however, this should not be the case for the past-and-present condition. We decided to use the same intergroup context in order to enable a strict comparison with Experiment 1.

Second, we included new measures aimed at key aspects of the opposite relational functions of anger and contempt. We included measures of to what extent participants perceived the outgroup communicating anger or contempt to 1) have the desire to improve the intergroup relationship, 2) have trust in the maintenance of a future positive intergroup relationship, and 3) actually would engage in behavior aimed at improving the relationship. We expected the results on those measures to match our predictions for the empathy and conflict intention measures.

Experiment 2

Method

Participants were 100 Dutch psychology students (75 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.31$; $SD = 2.36$) who participated for course credit. Participants were randomly

assigned to one of six conditions within a 2 (Emotion: anger vs. contempt) X 3 (Framing: past vs. past-but-not-present vs. past-and-present) between-subjects design.

Participants read the same introduction to the conflict and (apart from the change in manipulations) the same fictitious newspaper article as in Experiment 1. As in Experiment 1, manipulation of emotion (anger vs. contempt) and framing (past vs. past but not anymore vs. past and still to this day) occurred in the title of the article, the introductory paragraph, and in the final paragraph in which a Moluccan inhabitant (Martin Sahuleka) responded on behalf of his group (“In the past we were very angry with/ had a lot of contempt for the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Past Anger/ Past Contempt] / “In the past, but not anymore, we were very angry with/ had a lot of contempt for the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Past but not present Anger/ past but not present contempt] / “In the past, and still to this day, we were very angry with/ had a lot of contempt for the Dutch government for their reluctance to follow through on their promise.” [Past and present Anger/ past and present contempt] We thus manipulated both the type of emotion present and the specific tense in which it was communicated (or absence thereof) alongside each other.

As in Experiment 1, for the manipulation check of the communicated emotion we asked participants, using a dichotomous item, which of the two emotions had been communicated in the article. For the framing manipulation check, participants indicated if and how the article had framed the communicated emotion by choosing one of three options (past tense, past but not anymore, or still today). Constructive conflict intentions were again measured with the same 8 items collapsed into one scale ($\alpha = .83$), empathy was again measured with four items ($\alpha = .86$), and we again measured participants’ need for a government apology which consisted of the same 6 items ($\alpha = .96$).

We added several measures to try to tap more closely into the relational functions of anger and contempt. The three scales asked participants about their perception of how Moluccans' viewed the intergroup relationship. This perception of Moluccans' view of the relationship was measured as 1) their desire to improve the relationship, 2) their trust in attaining a positive future intergroup relationship, and 3) their approach intentions with the aim of directly improving the intergroup relationship. The scale measuring participants' perception of Moluccans' desire to improve the relationship was measured with 3 items (e.g., "To what extent do you think Moluccans would like to improve the relationship?"; $\alpha = .81$). The scale measuring participants' perception of Moluccans' trust in a positive future intergroup relationship consisted of 4 items (e.g., "To what extent do you think Moluccans look toward the future relationship with hope?"; $\alpha = .79$). And finally, a scale measuring participants' perception of Moluccans' approach intentions consisted of 3 items (e.g., "To what extent do you think Moluccans seek out positive contact with native Dutch people?"; $\alpha = .83$). As the three factors correlated strongly ($r_s = .32, .47, \text{ and } .50, p_s < .001$), we decided to collapse all items into one scale measuring perceived Moluccans' relationship importance ($\alpha = .85$).³

Results

Manipulation checks. All of the participants in the anger conditions correctly indicated that anger was communicated, whereas in the contempt conditions all but three people correctly indicated that contempt was communicated. Moreover, in the framing conditions, a total of six participants, spread out over the three conditions, failed to indicate the correct framing that was given to the emotion. The nine errors were made by six people who were dropped from further analysis, which were subsequently conducted over the remaining 94 participants.²

³ We additionally conducted separate analyses for each of the three perceived Moluccans' relationship importance scales. Results revealed a highly consistent pattern of results across the scales, further justifying our decision to collapse them into one single scale.

Empathy. In line with anger and contempt's relational functions, a 2x3 ANOVA showed the predicted significant two-way interaction effect, $F(2, 88) = 6.33, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .13$. As can be seen in Figure 3, the pattern in the past anger condition is similar to the pattern of past-but-not-present anger, suggesting that past anger is indeed interpreted as anger that is no longer experienced in the present.

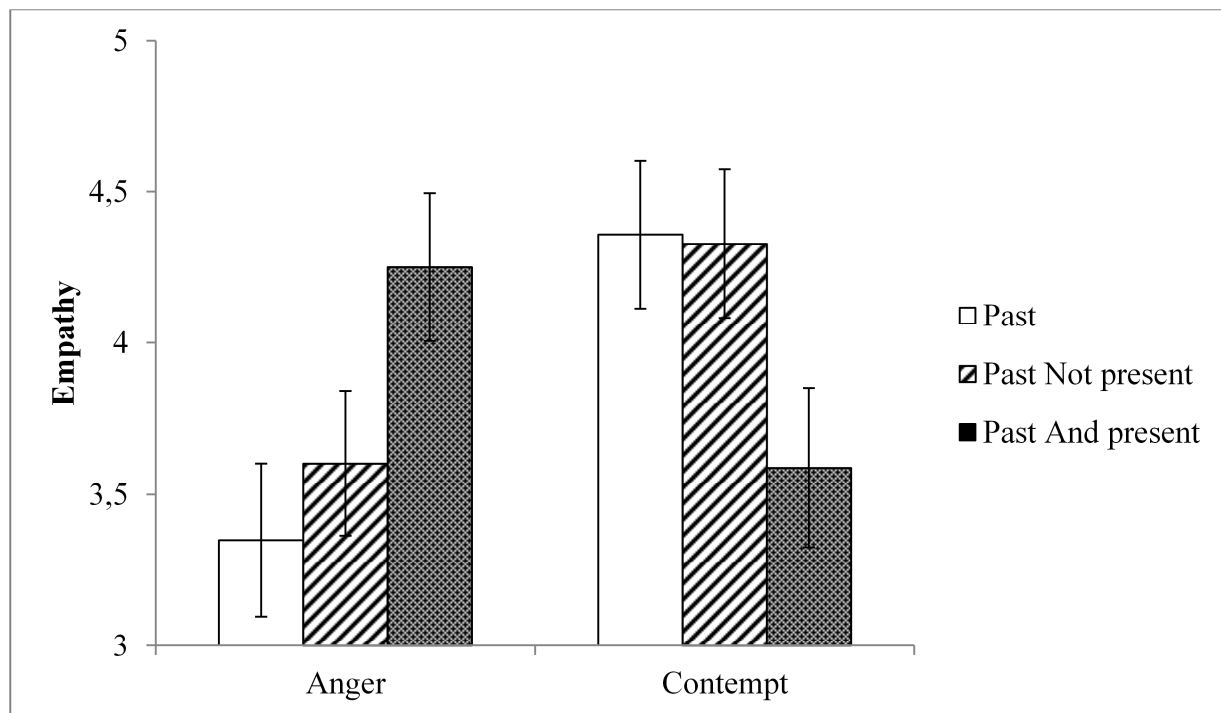


Figure 3. Means and standard errors of empathy towards Moluccans as a function of type of emotion and framing of the emotion tense, Experiment 2.

A planned contrast analysis (contrasting past anger & past-but-not-present anger with past-and-present anger) showed that anger resulted in significantly weaker empathy when communicated as either past anger ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.19$), or past-but-not-present anger ($M = 3.60, SD = 0.88$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present anger ($M = 4.25, SD = 0.91$), $F(1, 88) = 6.65, p = 0.012$. Thus, the communication of group-based anger about past events can still benefit from its relational function as long as it is made clear that the anger is still experienced in the present (i.e., it needs to be ‘contemporized’).

Furthermore, the pattern in the past contempt condition is similar to the patterns of past-but-not-present contempt, suggesting that past contempt is interpreted as contempt which is no longer experienced in the present. A planned contrast analysis showed that contempt resulted in significantly stronger empathy when communicated as either past contempt ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.00$), or past-but-not-present contempt ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.97$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present contempt ($M = 3.59, SD = 0.90$), $F(1, 88) = 5.78, p = 0.018$. This implies that the communication of past anger and past contempt, without further explication, are typically interpreted as being no longer experienced in the present. For anger, this means something *negative* for the intergroup relationship because it implies that its positive relational function can no longer operate; yet for contempt, it actually suggests something *positive* because its negative relational function can no longer operate.

To further test this notion, we compared the effectiveness of anger and contempt for each of the framings of past anger. In the past emotion conditions, simple main effects analyses showed that less empathy was felt for Moluccans when they communicated past anger ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.19$) rather than past contempt ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 88) = 8.22, p = .005$. Furthermore, we found a similar pattern in the past but not present emotion conditions, where simple main effects analyses showed that less empathy was felt for Moluccans when they communicated past but not present contempt ($M = 3.60, SD = 0.88$) rather than past but not present anger ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.97$), $F(1, 88) = 4.52, p = .036$. To the contrary, results in the past and present emotion conditions showed a reversed, but marginally significant pattern: Participants tended to feel *more* empathy for Moluccans when they communicated past and present anger ($M = 4.25, SD = 0.91$) rather than past and present contempt ($M = 3.59, SD = 0.90$), $F(1, 88) = 3.40, p = .069$. These findings suggest that, when an outgroup communicates emotions felt solely in the past, communicating group-based contempt may paradoxically be more effective in increasing empathy than

communicating group-based anger. For the communication of those emotions felt in the here and now, the reverse seems true.

Constructive conflict intentions. Similar to the empathy pattern of findings, a 2x3 ANOVA on constructive conflict intentions showed the predicted significant two-way interaction effect, $F(2, 88) = 4.92, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .10$. Figure 4 reveals that the pattern for past anger is highly similar to the pattern of past-but-not-present anger, suggesting that past anger is interpreted as anger that is no longer experienced in the present.

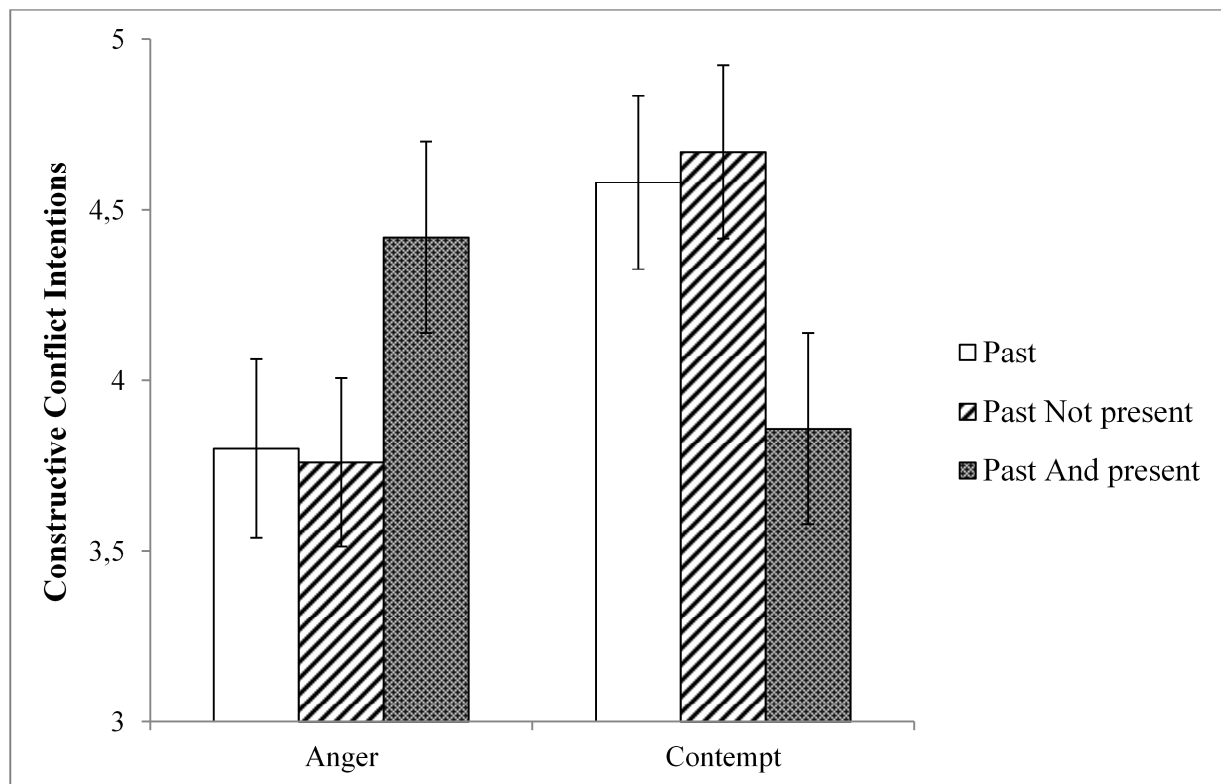


Figure 4. Means and standard errors of constructive conflict intentions as a function of type of emotion and framing (or absence thereof) of the emotion tense, Experiment 2.

A planned contrast analysis showing that anger resulted in significantly weaker constructive conflict intentions when communicated as either past anger ($M = 3.80, SD = 1.24$), or past-but-not-present anger ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.32$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present anger ($M = 4.42, SD = 0.99$), $F(1, 88) = 4.22, p = 0.043$. The pattern for past contempt shows a strong similarity

between the patterns of past contempt and past-but-not-present contempt, suggesting that past contempt is typically interpreted as contempt that is no longer being experienced in the present. Again, this is corroborated by a planned contrast analysis showing that contempt resulted in stronger constructive conflict intentions when communicated as either past contempt ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.72$), or past-but-not-present contempt ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.72$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present contempt ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.99$), $F(1, 88) = 5.56$, $p = 0.021$.

Moreover, replicating Experiment 1, simple main effects analyses showed less constructive conflict intentions toward Moluccans when they communicated past anger ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.24$) rather than past contempt ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1, 88) = 4.54$, $p = 0.036$. We found a similar pattern in the past but not present emotion conditions, where simple main effects analyses showed less constructive conflict intentions toward Moluccans when they communicated past but not present anger ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.32$) rather than past but not present contempt ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1, 88) = 6.56$, $p = 0.012$. However, when an emotion was communicated as both past and present, the pattern was reversed, but turned non-significant, as participants tended to report *more* constructive conflict intentions when the outgroup communicated past and present anger ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.99$) rather than past and present contempt ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.95$), $F(1, 88) = 2.30$, $p = 0.133$. The similarity in patterns supports our hypothesis that past anger is interpreted as past but not present anger. The resulting lower constructive conflict intentions – combined with a trend towards more constructive conflict intentions when communicated as past and present anger – suggests that anger needs to be ‘contemporized’ in order for it to have positive effects.

Perceived Moluccans’ Relationship Importance. A 2x3 ANOVA showed a significant two-way interaction effect, $F(2, 88) = 13.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$ (see Figure 5).

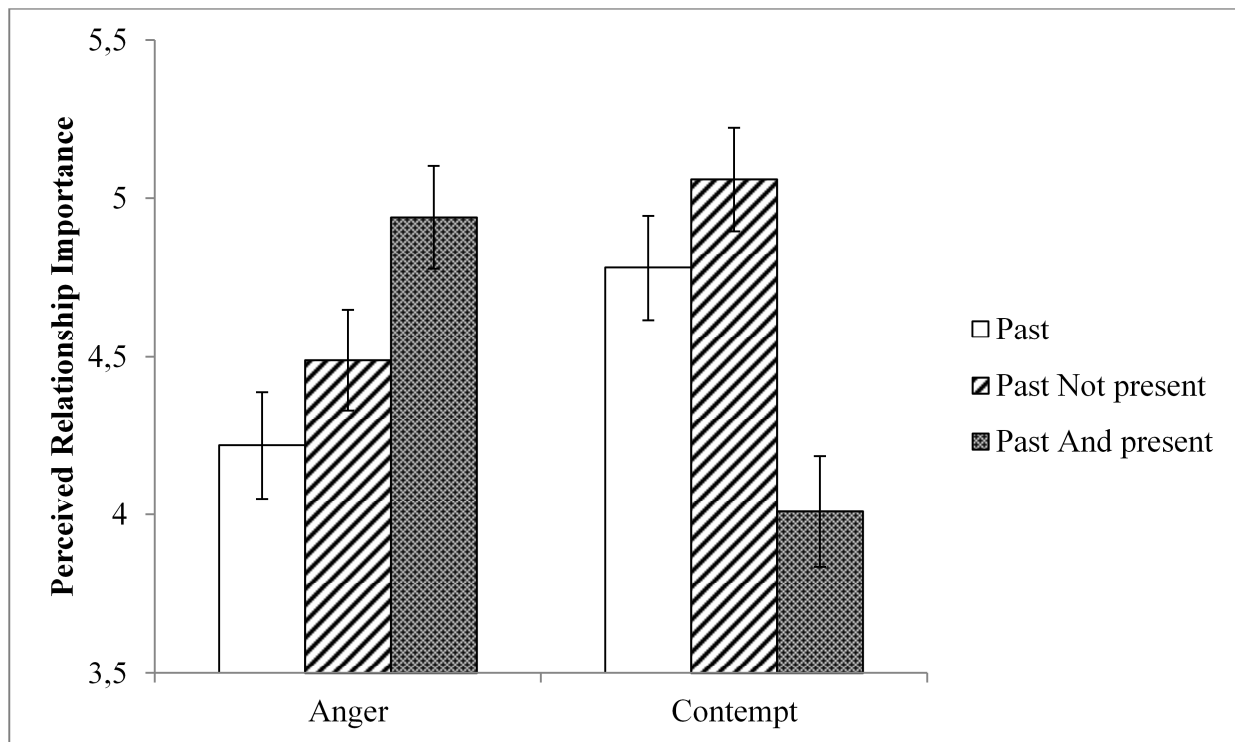


Figure 5. Means and standard errors of perceived Moluccans' relationship importance as a function of type of emotion and framing of the emotion tense, Experiment 2.

Similar to the effects on empathy and constructive conflict intentions, a planned contrast analysis showed that anger resulted in significantly lower perceived relationship importance when communicated as either past anger ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.71$), or past-but-not-present anger ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.71$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present anger ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.68$), $F(1, 88) = 8.64$, $p = 0.004$. The results for contempt were again reversed, with a planned contrast analysis showing that contempt resulted in significantly higher perceived relationship importance when communicated as either past contempt ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 0.48$), or past-but-not-present contempt ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 0.64$) rather than when communicated as past-and-present contempt ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.68$), $F(1, 88) = 18.73$, $p < 0.001$.

Further in line with findings on empathy and constructive conflict intentions, simple main effects analyses showed less perceived relationship importance of Moluccans when they communicated past anger ($M = 4.22$, $SD =$

0.71) rather than past contempt ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 0.48$), $F(1, 88) = 5.69$, $p = 0.019$. Moreover, we found a similar pattern in the past but not present emotion conditions, where simple main effects analyses showed less perceived relationship importance of Moluccans when they communicated past but not present anger ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.71$) rather than past but not present contempt ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 0.64$), $F(1, 88) = 6.20$, $p = 0.015$. However, when an emotion was communicated as both past and present, the pattern was reversed, as participants report more *perceived* relationship importance of Moluccans when the outgroup communicated past and present anger ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 0.68$) rather than past and present contempt ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.68$), $F(1, 88) = 15.16$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, participants perceived the communication of past contempt (and past but not present contempt) as implying that the Moluccans deemed the relationship as more important than when past anger or past but not present anger was expressed. On the contrary, when anger was said to have persisted until now, the relationship was valued as more important than when contempt was still present. These findings are in line with the proposed opposite relational functions of anger and contempt.

Mediation Analysis. We conducted mediation analyses to test whether the negative effects of the past but not present anger condition as compared to the past and present anger condition (and the reverse for contempt) on constructive conflict intentions was due to reduced empathy for Moluccans. This analysis thus did not include the past emotion condition (absent framing) because the other two are more informative about the process as they explicitly qualify the emotions' meanings (not present vs. still present). Results showed, first, that the two-way interaction predicted constructive conflict intentions ($\beta = -.58$, $p = .006$) and empathy ($\beta = -.61$, $p = .004$). Second, empathy significantly predicted constructive conflict intentions ($\beta = .37$, $p = .004$) above and beyond the interaction effect (which turned non-significant: $\beta = -.36$, $p = .087$). A bootstrapping macro for mediated moderation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was

used to test the significance of the indirect path. Confirming the above results, bootstrapping 5,000 samples at a 95%, a confidence interval showed that the indirect effect of empathy was significant (95% CI [-1.226, -0.157]). Empathy thus fully mediated the positive effects of past and present anger (vs. past not present anger) and past not present contempt (vs. past and present contempt) on constructive conflict intentions.⁴

Need for Government Apology. Analyses using a 2x3 ANOVA again yielded a significant two-way interaction effect, $F(2, 88) = 5.46, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .18$. Planned contrast analyses revealed a trend towards anger resulting in a lower need for government apology when communicated as either past anger ($M = 4.42, SD = 1.80$), or past but not present anger ($M = 4.53, SD = 1.84$) rather than when communicated as past and present anger ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.41$), $F(1, 88) = 2.40, p = 0.125$. The results for contempt were again reversed, with planned contrast analyses showing that contempt resulted in a significantly higher need for government apology when communicated as either past contempt ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.17$), or past not present contempt ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.65$) rather than when communicated as past and present contempt ($M = 3.20, SD = 0.98$), $F(1, 88) = 9.42, p = 0.003$. Again, these findings give further support for the reliability of the interaction effect across different measurements.⁵

⁴ We conducted additional mediation analyses using perceived Moluccans' relationship importance as a mediator for the effects of past and present anger and contempt on both empathy as well as constructive conflict intentions. We hypothesized that Moluccans communicating past anger and present contempt would indicate that they perceive the relationship as less important than when communicating past contempt and present anger which could either reduce their levels of empathy or weaken their constructive conflict intentions, or possibly even both. The two-way interactions predicted constructive conflict intentions ($\beta = -.58, p = .006$), empathy ($\beta = -.61, p = .004$), and perceived relationship importance ($\beta = -.81, p < .001$). As bivariate correlations revealed relationship importance to be unrelated to positive conflict intentions ($r = .55, p = .67$), and only mildly related to empathy ($r = .30, p = .017$), we only conducted mediation analyses over the latter. However, these analyses revealed that perceived relationship importance did not significantly predict empathy over and above the effects of past and present anger and contempt ($\beta = .18, p = .46$), and thus did not prove to be a significant mediator. See the general discussion for a further discussion on these findings.

⁵ In Experiment 2 in addition to empathy, we included a range of other emotion scales to test whether the effect of past and present anger and past (not present) contempt on increasing constructive conflict

Discussion

The results of Experiment 2 are in line with those of Experiment 1 in showing that the communication of group-based anger has less positive effects on empathy and constructive intentions when framed as past anger, whereas for group-based contempt, communicating it as a past felt emotion seems to be relatively beneficial. Moreover, in Experiment 2 we found similar results on several relational variables suggesting the outgroup's communication of anger and contempt to not only affect participants' own response (i.e. their empathy for the outgroup and their constructive conflict intentions), but also their perception of how the outgroup viewed and approached the intergroup relationship. Indeed, as hypothesized, we found highly similar patterns on all of these measures for past anger and past-but-not-present anger, as well as for past contempt and past-but-not-present contempt. This suggests that those on the receiving end of the communication of past anger and contempt interpreted them as meaning that those emotions were no longer felt today. Because of the opposite relational functions of the communication of group-based anger and contempt, the absence of those emotions in the present had different consequences for their empathy and constructive action tendencies toward the outgroup. That is, the communication of group-based anger has less positive effects when not 'contemporized'; but paradoxically the communication of group-based contempt, if anything, had more positive effects on empathy, conflict intentions, and a number of other relevant variables.

intentions could be just as well if not better explained by increases or decreases in other emotional states. These emotions were participants' own feelings of guilt, shame, regret as well as anger and contempt in response to the Moluccans' plight as outlined in the article. Separate analyses using 2x3 ANOVAs yielded non-significant (main- and) interaction effects across the measured emotions ($F_s < 1.86, p_s > .16$). Participants experienced similar levels of guilt, shame, regret, anger and contempt. Where there did appear to be (albeit non-significant) differences, they were in the direction of the main effects. This further substantiates the relational function of anger and the special role of empathy which seems more finely attuned to differences in anger and contempt communication and as such is more strongly related to subsequent behavioral intentions.

General Discussion

Two experiments examined the empathy-inducing effects of the communication of group-based anger and contempt about past events, depending on their specific temporal framing in the context of history-laden intergroup conflicts. Experiment 1 showed that participants reported stronger outgroup empathy and constructive conflict intentions when an outgroup member communicated presently felt anger or past felt contempt about a past event rather than past felt anger or presently felt contempt. Experiment 2 extended these findings by showing that this is most likely due to participants' interpretation of past anger and past contempt as emotions that are no longer experienced in the here and now. For the communication of group-based anger, this means that its positive relational function cannot operate when it is not 'contemporized', whereas for the communication of group-based contempt the reverse may be true --- which fits nicely with their presumed opposite relational functions. With an eye to inducing outgroup empathy, it thus appears that anger is best communicated as explicitly experienced in the here and now, whereas contempt is best communicated explicitly as an emotion from the past.

Implications

The current studies provide support for the relational functions of anger and contempt, and more specifically, for their *opposite* relational functions. As the relational function of anger is to challenge but in the long-term maintain and improve the relationship, the absence of anger may imply to receivers of anger that the conflict needs no further resolution and the relationship is deemed less important. On the other hand, as the relational function of contempt is to avoid and dissolve the relationship, the perception of contempt dissipating over time may offer a renewed opportunity to engage in contact and suggests an improved long-term perspective for the relationship. Thus, anger is an emotion that seems best communicated when there is ample opportunity for the recipient to engage in an act of reconciliation (through 'contemporizing' the issue), whereas

contempt might be more effective when communicated as a feeling of the past, so as to prevent a threat of relationship dissolution. As such, the current findings are in line with the notion that emotions can be viewed as communicative and relational regulatory 'tools'.

More specifically, our findings replicate and extend prior research on the relational function of group-based anger, which showed how the communication of group-based anger (rather than group-based contempt, or the absence of emotion) can de-escalate intergroup conflict through increasing outgroup empathy (De Vos et al., 2013, 2015a; see Chapters 2 and 3). However, these studies did not focus on intergroup conflicts with a history of animosity and thus the conflict was necessarily 'contemporized'. The current experiments add to this that even in conflicts which are primarily based in past events, the communication of group-based anger can be effective in de-escalating conflict as long as it is 'contemporized'. By contrast, when anger is communicated as felt in the past, this may avoid not only the conflict in the present but also any change for the better in the future. Communicating present felt anger about past events can thus be seen as a way of raising awareness of past injustices that might have been forgotten or avoided by bringing them to the fore.

Furthermore, the current studies shed new light on the relational function of group-based contempt. Prior research on contempt suggests it conveys disregard for, indifference toward, and social distance from another person or group (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Morris & Keltner, 2000). In fact, contempt has on an interpersonal level been shown to be one of the key damaging factors in marital interactions (Gottman, 1993), while on an intergroup level, communication of contempt signals feelings of ingroup superiority and outgroup inferiority and as such have proven to be important in prejudice and racism (Izard, 1977), as well as conflict escalation (De Vos et al., 2013, Chapter 2). Although in the latter case contempt might provide beneficial outcomes for the group conveying the emotion in terms of increased ingroup cohesion and

solidarity (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994, Merten, 1997), it certainly does not seem to contribute to intergroup harmony. The current studies are the first to show that the communication of contempt in the context of intergroup conflict does not always have to be a negative affair. Indeed, as contempt signals a lack of care and concern for the outgroup when it is communicated as presently felt, communicating it as past contempt effectively means that the lack of care and concern for the relationship has dissipated over time and suggests there is scope again for compassion and empathy. Thus, the communication of the *cessation* of contempt may help to restore intergroup harmony, at least in the history-laden intergroup conflicts we have studied.

Finally, as far as we know the current studies are the first to show different relational consequences of group-based emotions as being dependent on the *temporal context* within which they are framed. In line with a view of emotions like anger and contempt as having a relational function, it is clear that temporal dynamics is an exciting direction for future research in this field of study. This is important, not in the least, because of the potential practical importance of knowledge about the temporal framing of group-based emotions in the context of intergroup conflict. For instance, one need only think of intergroup conflicts with a long and troublesome past such as the history of apartheid in South Africa, the conflict between Aboriginals and European settlers in Australia, and the history of racial discrimination in the United States, to see the relevance of our analysis for the psychology of restoring intergroup harmony.

Indeed, in restoring civil societies disrupted by severe intergroup conflicts, one important issue is whether ‘opening old wounds’ implies reviving the conflict and its destructive and painful content – something one could argue might better be avoided. However, our research hints at the possibility that, first and foremost, the communication of group-based emotions such as anger *is* important because they emphasize past misdeeds while inviting the empathy required to also *heal* those old wounds. In communicating one's group-based

emotions, the current findings suggest that it is important to communicate ‘contemporized’ anger, whereas contempt should be explicitly communicated as a feeling from the past, if one is after empathy-inducing effects.

Limitations and directions for future research

We employed an experimental method using a sample of university students (who knew little to nothing about the actual conflict other than what they had read in the presented article or in history lessons at school) to test the internal validity of our ideas. For this reason, the current work offers pointers toward practical strategies to communicate emotion in intergroup conflicts, but future research is necessary to test those specifically. It is indeed not unreasonable to assume that targets who are fully aware of and/or partially responsible for the long-term disadvantage of an outgroup communicating these emotions might be less inclined to react so empathically (and be more inclined to respond defensively) as the participants in the current studies. Future research should test the external validity of our ideas.

A second limitation of the current studies is that although our predictions were supported at the mean level (e.g., stronger empathy in one condition relative to another), we found mixed evidence for the underlying psychological process (e.g., what mediated the effects). For instance, we hypothesized that the communication of group-based anger still felt in the present would positively affect relationship importance as experienced by the Moluccan outgroup. Although this proved to be the case, contrary to our expectations these perceptions were not significantly related to ingroup constructive conflict intentions and only modestly to feelings of empathy toward the Moluccan outgroup. Future research is needed to more closely investigate the psychological mechanisms through which the communication of past felt emotions affect ingroup constructive conflict behavior, with a particular focus on how relational variables might explain this process.

Finally, we note that in the current research we only found effects for constructive rather than destructive conflict intentions (see De Vos et al., 2013; 2015a; Chapters 2 and 3). We believe that this is due to the specific, history-laden intergroup context we focused on in the current studies. In the aforementioned studies, the contexts (e.g., German students complaining about discrimination on the Dutch student room market; city dwellers complaining about students making too much noise) allowed plenty of scope to communicate more destructive tendencies towards the outgroup communicating the anger. In the current experiments, however, the conflict has a longer history of intentional disregard and disadvantage (which was exactly what we wanted given our research questions). Within such a context, we believe that destructive conflict intentions were simply less relevant to participants than constructive ones.

Conclusion

In two experiments we have shown that the positive, empathy-inducing effects of communicating group-based anger in history-laden intergroup conflict depend for an important part on the temporal framing of these emotions. In line with its relational function, the communication of group-based anger seems most beneficial when ‘contemporized’; that is, when communicated as presently felt or as felt in the past yet still felt in the present. In line with group-based contempt's opposite relational function, this emotion appears best communicated as a ghost from the past, no longer felt today. We found this pattern of results across different measures, including empathy and constructive conflict intentions. These findings hint at the possibility that the communication of group-based emotions within long-term intergroup conflicts offer an opportunity to put the spotlight on old wounds in order to heal them together. This may suggest that disadvantaged group members should not hold back on communicating group-based emotions like anger and contempt, but should take care to ‘contemporize’ communications of anger, but to chase contempt back to the past.

